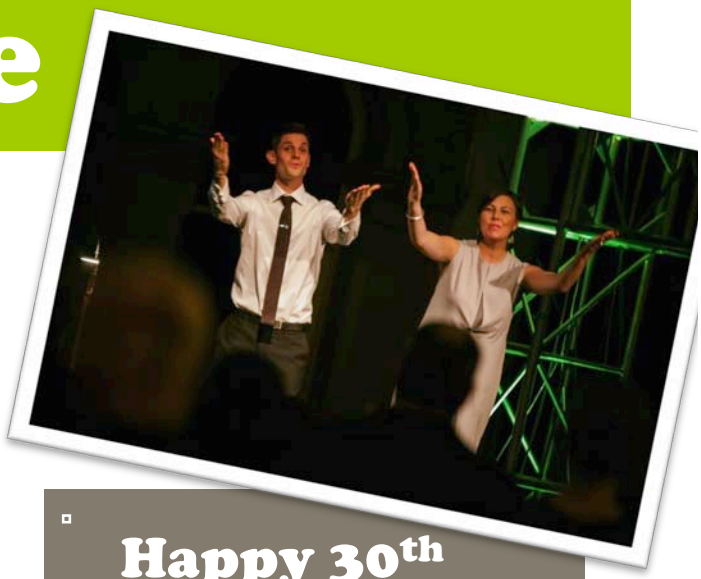
e: auslanstageleft@gmail.com w: auslanstageleft.com.au f: auslan stage left m: 0403 227 978

may update



It's May? Yes, May!

A huge pat on the back goes to our extended family of interpreters, deaf consultants and deaf patrons. Of course, we also thank those people who first recognized a need for Auslan access and who contacted us for help! In 2016, so far, we have had the pleasure of working with, amongst many, The Melbourne International Comedy Festival (a hugely popular event) and in recent weeks, the Sydney Comedy Festival, Sydney Writers' Festival, and The Next Wave Festival (Melbourne) which has seen an improved accessible line up. It seems that the good word of access to Auslan interpreted theatre is spreading…. but there is still a long way to go!

Happy 30th Birthday AV!

Congratulations to ASLIA Victoria who recently celebrated their 30th anniversary. ASLIA Vic serve the professional and social interests of Auslan interpreters in Victoria – and what a sterling job they do under the current leadership of Julie Judd!

ASLIA Vic invited Auslan Stage Left to perform a medley at this special event on 14th May. Thanks to Susan, Daniel, Karen, Sandi and Michelle for performing on the night *(pictured above).*

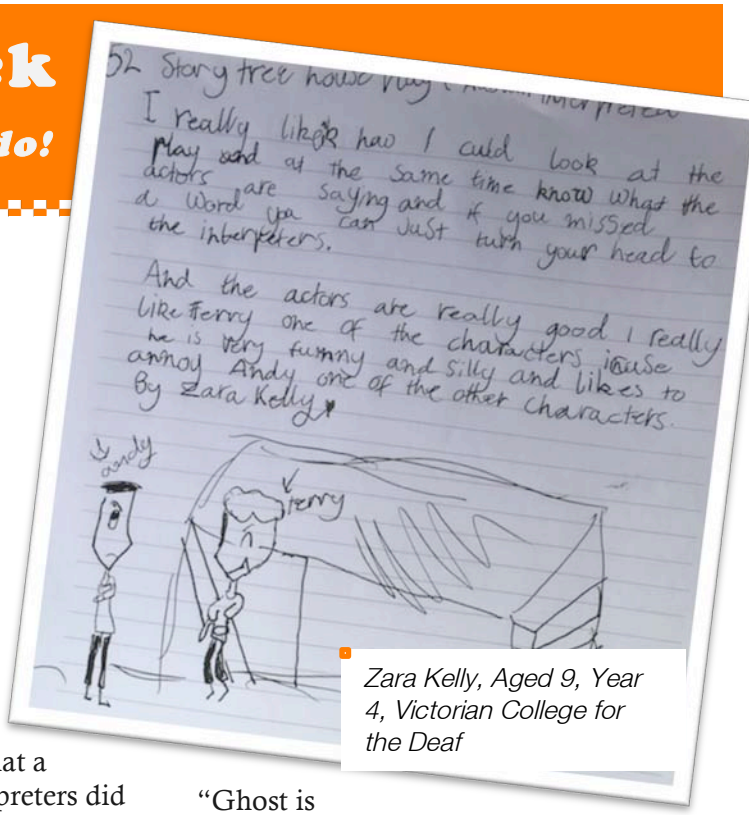
We are proud to work closely with ASLIA Vic and of their achievements over the past 30 years!

Audience Feedback

this is why we love what we do!

"I am a fan of The Seekers & followed them all my life. I thoroughly enjoyed stage play of Georgy Girl - interpreted wonderfully by Karen & Sandy. I was moved with the show and thank them for their skill & expression bringing the show alive. Thanks to Auslan Stage Left for giving deaf people the opportunity to enjoy many new stage shows. I'm off to see Ghost next! Keep up the good work!" ***Stephen Lawlor, from Sydney, but saw the show in Melbourne!***

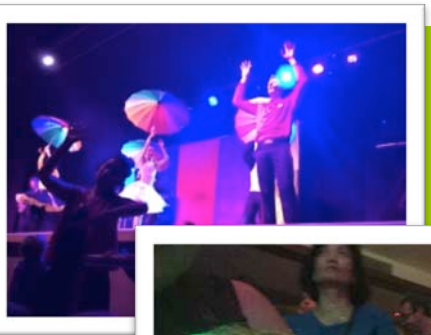
"While on holidays in Sydney, my children and I had the opportunity to go see The Wiggles live with an interpreter. What a fantastic experience that was. Having an interpreter for the show provided access for me as a deaf mother and for my son, Riley who is deaf too. It also ensured that I had access to what my daughter Paige could hear, so the three of us could enjoy the show equally. Emma, the Yellow Wiggle also used Auslan throughout the show which was an extra bonus for the children. Overall, it was a great experience - a big thank you goes to Auslan Stage Left for organising the interpreter and to the Wiggles for being so willing to provide access for their deaf fans." ***Katrina Lancaster-Maggs (Adelaide)***

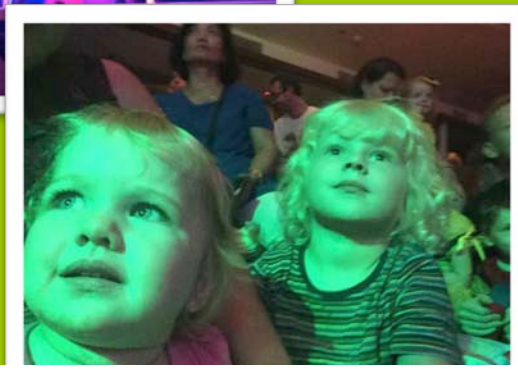


Zara Kelly, Aged 9, Year 4, Victorian College for the Deaf

"Just wanted to say what a fabulous job your interpreters did on Tues night at Sound of Music in Brisbane! I'm not deaf or hard of hearing, and didn't know that they would be part of the performance, but thought they were amazing! It was sometimes more fun to watch their signing than what was happening on stage, and with the high quality of the show, that is saying something! I was also so happy to see all the families who came to the show, cheering and waving to the interpreters." ***Jasmine (in an online message to us!)***

"Ghost is one of my favourite movies - I never get tired of watching the DVD. When the musical came out – I wasn't going to miss it and was wrapt when there was Auslan interpreted performance. Without the Auslan interpreters I would not have been able to enjoy the full atmosphere, and to be able to come away feeling the love and knowing what was going on all the way through, was amazing!" ***Deb Swan (Melbourne)***





Comedy Interpreting workshop

"Between the tears of laughter and a perfect opportunity to try some comedy interpreting in front of a live audience, some hidden talents were definitely exposed!"
Kirri Dangerfield, Interpreter

The night kicked off with Nic Maher and Paul Heuston imparting their words of wisdom on the art of comedy interpreting, leaving the eager punters and PD participants with some laughs and more importantly, some handy hints to successfully interpret a comedian's punch lines with precise timing. We then watched a panel of deaf consumers, experienced interpreters and comedians discuss their experiences of Auslan interpreters and comedy – so many diverse and interesting insights! In small groups participants then had a chance to discuss strategies for if and when we got to meet with the comedian before we had a crack at interpreting their delivery later in the evening.

With so much planning that needs to go into the process of preparing for a comedy gig, the interpreter firstly needs to consider whether or not they are the right fit for the job. Next, one must allocate a substantial amount of time to prepare, meet the comedian and view the performance. Spend the time deconstructing the material and practice, practice, practice.

After the group discussions, PD participants rolled up their sleeves and took to the stage with our three comedic guests: Denise Scott (Packed to the Rafters), Bobby Macumber, and Monica Dullard. Definitely exposed! A fantastic night had by all, thank you Auslan Stage Left and ASLIA Victoria!

Next workshop: Constructed Action w/ Stef & James

Do you tell or show when you're interpreting? How do you shift your focus? How do you multitask with characters?

Date: Thursday 18 August
Time: 6.00 - 9.00pm (three hours)
Venue: JML @ Vicdeaf
Presenters: Stef Linder and James Blyth
Fee: ASLIA Members $40 / Non members $50

NB: the event will not be live streamed, however interstaters welcome to attend.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival

Auslan Stage Left was again busy in 2016 with the recent MICF. We provided interpreters for a record 22 comedians! We are grateful to the hard working interpreters who never knew what to expect on the night!

"Adrian & Dave looked like two peas in a pod"

Tyson Boal (interpreter and audience member)

On Wednesday 13 April, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to check out Dave Hughes' Auslan interpreted show at the MICF. Dave had requested to work alongside interpreter Adrian Priem who had made the trip all the way down from Sydney. The two formed a hilarious duo that made for a really fun night full of lots of laughter. Adrian and Dave looked like two peas in a pod up there on stage and I have to say that Adrian's interpreting style complimented Dave's comedic approach perfectly. It was great to see so many members of Deaf community out and about on the night. Special thanks to Auslan Stage Left for all of their hard work and advocacy leading up to the MICF - playing a pivotal role in ensuring that this year's event was one of the most accessible yet. It was great being able see shows with so many Deaf friends over the past few weeks. I always think interpreters are pretty lucky at interpreted shows as we get the opportunity to laugh twice at all of the jokes but only pay for the one ticket. I'm looking forward to next year already!

"A whole bunch of fun"

Tom Ballard (comedian)

Working with Auslan interpreters for my shows at the Melbourne Comedy Festival was a whole bunch of fun, and not just because they're forced to turn my rude words into ruder actions. Kirri and Mikey (Webb) were the ultimate professionals: they came along to see the shows ahead of time (so they had to suffer my jokes TWICE!), they read over my scripts, they kindly asked me to speak slightly slower and they even put up with my juvenile scoffing at the times they had to sign anything to do with genitalia.

Plus Kirri taught me the new sign for "Tony Abbott", the flicking forward of the two ears. Genius.

Every year I see more and more comics making the effort to have their shows interpreted and I think it's fantastic. Making live performance as accessible as possible is a worthy goal indeed and I was happy and proud to collaborate with Auslan Stage Left again at this comedy festival.

Introducing our 2016 mentees

Tyson Boal (Interpreter) & Hannah Britton (deaf consultant)

HANNAH BRITTON

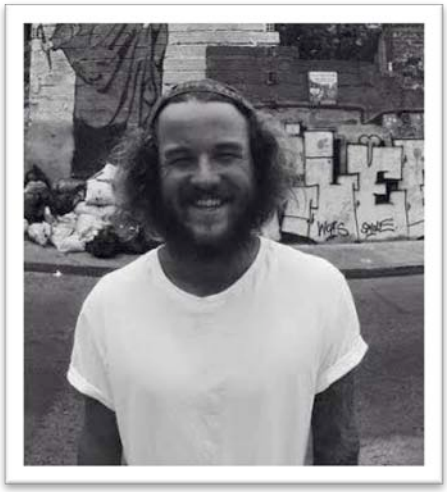
My name is Hannah and I am a 2nd year student studying a double degree in sport science and sport management at Deakin University. I also train full time in the hope of representing Australia at the 2017 Deaflympics in Turkey for swimming. I have recently just started working part time at Vicdeaf as a Production Assistant for Sign Language Video Productions. I enjoy keeping myself busy with things I love to do, and this involves being part of the Auslan Stage Left community. What I hope to gain from this mentorship is the opportunity to watch and learn from experienced consultants and interpreters - how they work together, prepare themselves, how to get involved in certain productions and to collaborate with people involved in the process. FOTI training gave
me the opportunity to analyse the stage set up, enjoy the lay out and think outside the box. It was a great experience working with two new interpreters and I enjoyed finally meeting them in the flesh!

TYSON BOAL

G'day, my name is Tyson. I'm 29 years old and I have spent most of my life on the coast in a little town called Ocean Grove. I call Melbourne home now but surfing is still my jam. I love music, my family, travel, yoga, good food & good company. I have been working as an interpreter for eight years now and I love my job. I think as interpreters we are pretty lucky. Our profession provides us with some pretty amazing opportunities that many people would never get a chance to be a part of. For me, working on stage with some really fantastic people has been one of these amazing opportunities.
I love the challenge of theatre of interpreting and I am hooked on the buzz you feel upon the completion of a tough job.

Like anything, interpreting is a journey and I have always valued my continued learning.

I hope that through this mentorship with Auslan Stage Left I will gain a more in depth understanding of how to best prepare for a show, have the opportunity to work with a more experienced consultant and hopefully give me what I need to grow as a theatre interpreter.



Foundations of Theatre Interpreting – April 2016

Teale Nicholls

What an experience! I have always wanted to be involved in theatre interpreting but the idea of getting up on stage in front of a big audience and attempting to translate & interpret something as complex as Shakespeare is SO daunting! If you feel the same way then this is the workshop for you!

Alex, Della, Susan & Medina are absolute pro's when it comes to the in's and out's of theatre interpreting. I was made to feel so comfortable, with constant debriefing and reassurance throughout the entire workshop. We started off by introducing ourselves – interpreters from all over Australia – and we shared how we were feeling at the time, 'nervous' was a common denominator! It was so nice to share stories and experiences and, our nerves!

We split into groups for some discussions on what we thought theatre interpreting was and where we thought it came from. We were then allocated with a tandem/team interpreter and a Deaf consultant to start the rehearsing process! (This was the fun part! – although, I may not have been thinking that at the time!) You really learn the importance of friendship and teamwork when working so closely on a script. Having a Deaf consultant there was invaluable! They've got perfect 'Deaf eyes' and just know if something's not working or could be improved!

It was so amazing watching everyone's interpretations at the end! I was absolutely blown away. These interpreters, some with no experience in theatre interpreting at all, got up in front of other interpreters and were inspirational! I would encourage any Auslan interpreter, whether interested in theatre interpreting or not, to go along to a FOTI workshop. Not only will it improve your theatre interpreting skills, but also it boosts your confidence in every day community & educational interpreting in incredible ways!

Next FOTI in Perth!

Date: Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th December.
Time: 9.00 to 5.00pm
Venue: TBC, Perth
Trainers: Della Goswell & Alex Jones
Fee: Interpreters $150/ Deaf Consultants $50

Limited numbers! Please send your expression of interest to auslanstageleft@gmail.com.
Training will be cancelled unless minimum number of participants is reached.

Mai Bryant Kelly (Outreach Worker)

What an honour and a privilege it has been to be working for Auslan Stage Left these past few months. It was certainly baptism by fire as my first week included advocating along side members of the Deaf community for access to a famous show involving mice and ice-skating! What a fantastic outcome to see a community rally together and bring about immediate change.

I still have so much to learn, but feel I have come a long way in just a few months learning more about what constitutes true equal access, the legalities behind providing equal access and the complexities of putting together an Auslan interpreted performance. I have come to have an even deeper respect for the passionate Auslan Stage Left directors, the talented Deaf language consultants and the dedicated Auslan interpreters that work with Auslan Stage Left. A personal highlight was meeting Alex Jones and Della Goswell at the Foundations of Theatre Interpreting workshop. It was a real privilege to sit in and observe them both in action. I was like a groupie meeting Alex as my first encounter with Auslan was learning from him on the RIDBC app. I felt like my journey with my daughter's recent Deafness was coming full circle!

I have enjoyed every minute of my time thus far, but the best part so far was watching my little girl's eyes light up watching two amazing interpreters at a performance of 52nd Storey Tree house. Moments like that remind me how fortunate we all are to have an organisation such as Auslan Stage Left.

FROM THE STAFF

The Auslan Stage Left team (L-R): Melissa Lawlor-Smith, Susan Emerson, Mai Bryant Kelly & Medina Sumovic.

Auslan Stage Left would like to acknowledge the work of our outgoing Communications Coordinator Ilana Gelbart, particularly her efforts in setting up the blog, "Encore".

Melissa Lawlor-Smith (Communications Coordinator)

Like Mai, I am honoured and extremely excited that I get to be putting this newsletter together as the Communications Coordinator! I've admired Auslan Stage Left since it started and I'm so proud that I can be a part of team that is dedicated to providing accessible theatre and more to Deaf people.

I'm a CODA and I live in Melbourne with my husband and two young boys (my mum and dad are still in Sydney and yes, I miss them!). For me, music and lyrics can have such a powerful affect on people and I often think of many moments in many songs that would be appreciated by mum and dad - if they could only access it. Songs like "The Circle of Life" in The Lion King (the interpreted version of that left me struggling to hold back the tears!).

So, to have an organisation like Auslan Stage Left is important. Because "A joy that's shared is a joy made double!" (Proverb). It's liberating to witness a Deaf person smiling and nodding along with the songs in 'Georgy Girl', or covering their mouths in shock and in humour in Dave Hughes stand up show, or wiping their tears in 'Ghost - The Musical' right next to a hearing person, who is doing exactly the same thing. I'm also proud of the extremely important work we do in providing essential training for the already outstanding interpreters in our family and for the new, brave interpreters too! What a bright future our community has and I'm certain that the Deaf community are going to reap the benefits!

Upcoming Shows

We have so many interpreted shows coming up, we couldn't list them all here. Check out auslanstageleft.com.au for a complete listing by state. Here are some of the bigger productions coming your way!

MELBOURNE

The Glass Menagerie @ Malthouse Theatre, Fri 3 June

Double Indemnity @ Arts Centre, Sat 18 June

Disney on Ice @ Rod Laver Arena, Sun 3 July

The Sound of Music @ Regent Theatre, Wed 13 July. ALMOST SOLD / OVER 100 SOLD!

Matilda @ Princess Theatre, Sat 20 August

SYDNEY

Sydney Writer's Festival, various, throughout May – see website for details!

All My Sons @ STC, Thu 7 July

Disney on Ice @ All Phones Arena, Thu 14 July

BRISBANE

Disney on Ice, Fri 24 June

We Will Rock You @ QPAC, Sat 13 Aug

ADELAIDE

Disney on Ice, Mon 13 June

PERTH

Disney on Ice @ Perth Arena, Fri 3 June. TICKET SALES END THIS THURSDAY!

Ghost the Musical @ Crown, Sat 11 June

Audience Feedback: The Sound of Music

Firstly I have attended many interpreted plays in the past and I found this performance was just awesome – just like all of the others I have seen.

The lights, background effects, the cast, the music, and the storylines were just amazing! But the best bit was having the two interpreters – they were wonderful! It wouldn't be the same if it weren't for them. I must say 'well done' to Auslan Stage Left and everyone involved in supporting and prepping the interpreters. Their body language, the interpretations, the signing, the translations of the songs…What can I say? Brilliant! Well done to Michelle and Daniel. I am really looking forward to more interpreted plays in Brisbane in the near future. I personally feel everyone should attend at least one interpreted play each year and support the arts.

A great experience, again…. well done!
Neil Woods, Brisbane

Thank you to our volunteers

The best kind of help comes when you do not even ask for it, and that is what Auslan Stage Left received from these two pro-active volunteers, interpreting students Kate Grant and Sarah Field. Both have assisted at a number of recent events and were superstars! Thank you for engaging with us and making our events come together so seamlessly, especially at the recent Foundations of Theatre Interpreting training in Melbourne.

My experiences through Auslan Stage Left

Leonie Jackson

I remember growing up going along (or perhaps dragged along) to the ballet, plays and musical theatres with my family and making up stories in my head because I could not follow what was being said on the stage. Like many parents, I would often wonder what future holds for my sons. My eldest, Tobian who is deaf like his dad, Alex, and me, loves music, dancing, theatre and music. As soon as the curtain is drawn, his eyes lit up and he would wait with huge anticipation and excitement about what is going to happen on the stage. Thanks to Auslan Stage Left, he would never have to make up stories in his head like I did – he can truly enjoy the complexity of the story on the stage. I will never forget the night I took Tobian to see Lion King. Tobian was 6 years of age. We were very fortunate to have great seats near the front of the stage and in directly in front of the interpreters, Susan and Daniel. It was the first time I have seen him so focused on what is happening on the stage while watching the interpreters and making aside comments about what he thinks is going to happen. During the intermission, there were many deaf theatre-goers who have commented that they appreciated Tobian's comments as it helped them understand the story and what was happening on the stage. This moment made me very proud not only of Tobian but also of Auslan Stage Left as they have paved the way for deaf kids like Tobian to appreciate and participate fully in the world of theatre. Since Auslan Stage Left was established, I have seen many main stage productions including plays at the Sydney Theatre Company and quite a few musicals including Les Miserable, The Lion King, Strictly Ballroom, The Sound of Music and Cats. All interpreters were exceptional and I truly benefited from their hard work and passion – I do not need to work hard at understanding what is happening on the stage. Because of the interpreters, I am able to sit back and let the stage enthrall me with their stories. This was not something I had when I was 6 years old or growing up. So thanks to Auslan Stage Left, I have come to truly appreciate the wonderful world of theatre and I look forward to sharing the experience with my sons for many years to come.

Next Wave Festival – Melbourne in May

From theatre to dance, visual art, music, artist talks and more, there are **15** Auslan interpreted events at this year's Next Wave Festival. We are so proud of the network of interpreters we have called on to work on these shows - it is exciting to see that festivals of this kind are really embracing access!

Held across Melbourne from 5-22 May, Next Wave Festival is Australia's biennial festival of the new generation in art, and 2016 event features some of the most intelligent, powerful and thought provoking emerging artists from around Australia. Next Wave is pleased to present its most accessible program yet, with its exciting 2016 line-up more inclusive than ever of both artists and audiences with disability. "We believe that a diverse conversation is the only conversation worth having, and the more expansive the conversation becomes, the better," says Artistic Director Georgie Meagher.

Interpreter experience: Sarah Kennewell - Disney on Ice

When Auslan Stage Left approached me about interpreting for Disney on Ice in Adelaide, there was no hesitation in saying yes. I am working in a team with Sarah Dempsey, and Debbie Kennewell as our Deaf Consultant.

Disney on Ice is performing in five states around Australia. This project has a team of 15, comprising of local interpreters and deaf consultants. This is a fantastic opportunity to work together to produce an experience for the deaf community they are sure to enjoy. To us, it is important to have consistency in sign names and song translations, so Auslan Stage Left have set up a closed Facebook page for us all to be able to communicate with each other effectively. Sarah D and I have found it very beneficial, even in the first stages of reading through the script and rehearsing, especially because this is the first major production we are interpreting. If there is a line and we are not sure how to interpret it, we can seek advice from the Facebook group. We all regularly check in with each other to see if we are on the right track. Taking on this production has been challenging and eye opening, but I have benefited greatly from having close contact with the other experienced interpreters in this group.

Disney on Ice presents Magical Ice Festival will be performing in Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney throughout June and July.

Ghost Production Team:

"We were impressed by the amount of emotion and storytelling!" Fraser

In our recent season at the Regent Theatre in Melbourne, we were lucky enough to have an Auslan interpreted performance of Ghost the Musical. It was a joy to be a part of, and the cast was very appreciative and very moved by the experience. It was clear that Susan and Mikey had done so much preparation for the show and the actual presentation was so polished and perfectly synchronised with the action that was happening on stage. The most impressive part of the show was the amount of emotion and storytelling that was portrayed through the signing - such an important and integral part of our show each night. It was a joy to be able to share our show with this audience.

Rob Mills said "it was such a special experience to be able to share what we do on stage with the hearing impaired audience and feel their love and appreciation at the end - it added a real satisfaction to the performance and it was my pleasure to be a part of it".

Jemma Rix said "it was such a moving experience to share the emotion of this role with Susan and Mikey and for them to portray what we go through on our journey with such emotive signing - I felt like I wanted to just watch them throughout the performance!!!"

Catch up with Todd McKenney

Interview by Melissa Lawlor Smith

Our Patron

He's enjoying life, he's extremely busy and oh, yes, he's still in love with Auslan.

It was no surprise that Todd was talkative and expressive in the interview; I mean, we've all seen him on TV, right? Some of the lucky ones have even attended a workshop he came to, but for me, I was impressed by his sincere attraction to Auslan and interpreting.

Todd first recalls seeing an interpreted performance in 1989.
"It was '42nd Street' and I was absolutely fascinated! I really felt that, even though it looked so beautiful, it served an important purpose. To me it felt like 'hand choreography' so immediately, I could relate. A few years later, I mentioned in an interview that learning sign language was on my bucket list and so, ATOD contacted me and I met a deaf actor - Caroline Conlon - who started teaching me".

So serious, was Todd, about learning sign language that he lived with and worked intensely with Caroline to develop his skills. He jumped - hands first - into the world of Auslan. In 2008, Todd courageously co-hosted the ASLIA Vic Interpreter of the Year Awards and showed off some of his sign language skills. It was here that he met Susan Emerson, co-director of Auslan Stage Left.

In his new show 'What a Life', (a celebration of his 30 years in the industry) Todd will be teaching a few signs to his audience. It is his way of demonstrating how significant his acquisition of Auslan has been to him. He continues to tour the country with the 'Todd McKenney sings Peter Allen' show and he is working on 'Dusty the Musical', where he will play a gay hairdresser. He also enjoys his time on 'Dancing With The Stars' and if goes ahead again this year, will be in its twelfth season. It may seem like Todd has already booked himself up for the year, but he speaks so proudly about 'Todd's Tours' that it hardly seems like work for him!

"My tours involve an afternoon of sipping champagne over high tea served in my beautiful home which was built in 1896. I really enjoy my time with likeminded theatre enthusiasts. Some of the people have been either too old to go to the theatre anymore, or they're lonely or don't have someone who shares their passion for theatre performance, so I feel honoured to have them my home and to bring them all together, to share anecdotes and to sing for them". Todd's other favourite venues to perform in include The Sydney Opera House.
"It is everyone's favourite, and why not!? I also love the spectacular Princess Theatre, Melbourne. It has history; it has that old theatre smell which I love, the worn stairs and the creaky floors. It's beautiful".

The passion in his voice is clear and I can imagine him being so excited before going onstage. So I asked about his pre show prep:
"I personally don't like to wait too long between leaving the dressing room and going on stage - I like to go straight on deck and of course – rehearse! ***I never want to put myself in a position where I feel underprepared".***

Todd has an amazing attitude towards his work and he is just as enthusiastic when he talks about Auslan. He does recognise however, that our community often faces issues with access and acceptance.
"When I first saw Auslan, I was simply in awe of it and others were confronted and some even freaked out. I couldn't understand it. Others were overwhelmed whereas I have only ever been fascinated".

With Todd's support as a patron of Auslan Stage Left, we can be confident that our network of interpreters and deaf patrons will work towards an increase in accessible events.

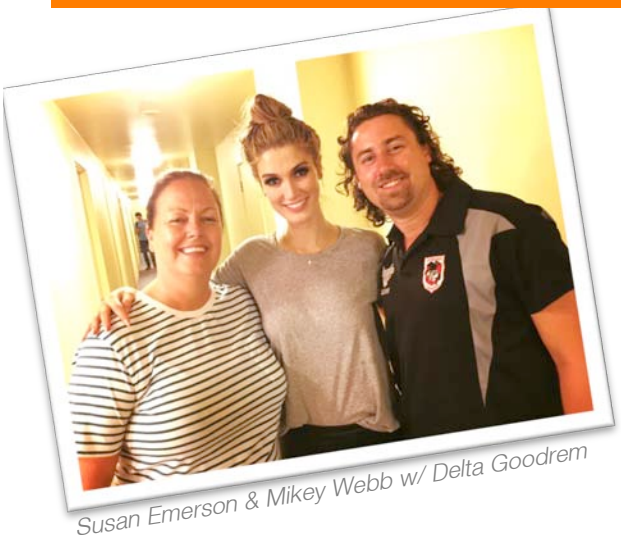
Our Patron

"I'm excited to move onto my next project!"

Erin James

Erin has worked in many facets of the Australian arts industry including musical theatre, film and cabaret. She took a moment to tell us what she's been up to this month!

This year has flown by so fast; I can't believe we are in May already! I've been busy touring around the country with CATS the musical and have been lucky enough to perform in Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth so far in 2016. CATS ended on May 8 and I'm excited to be moving onto other projects once I hang up the tail and put away the leg warmers for the last time. I'm looking forward to doing some television work later this month and there are other things in store for me later in the year, including My Fair Lady! I hope to see the Auslan Stage Left team out front interpreting THIS show!



Susan Emerson & Mikey Webb w/ Delta Goodrem

Audience feedback: CATS

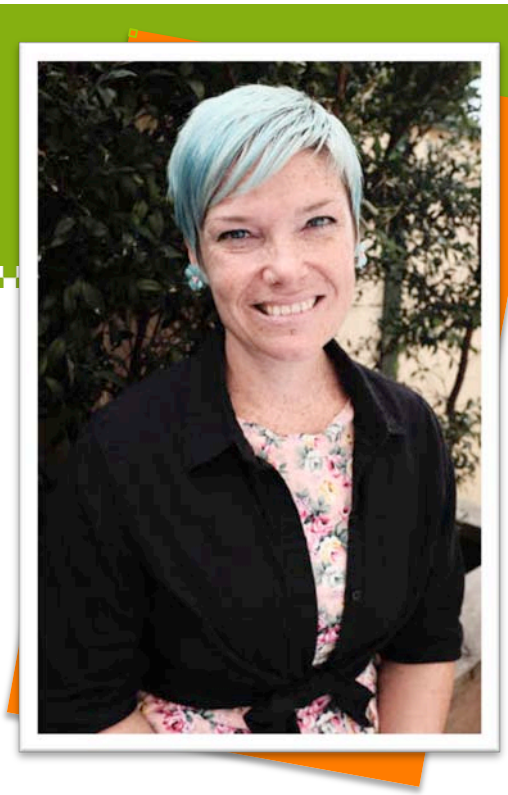
When I first read TS Eliot's collection of poems in high school I was enthralled, and over the years I'd watched a few filmed productions of Cats. So when I found out that Cats was going to be Auslan interpreted by Auslan Stage Left I was thrilled. The interpreters, Susan Emerson and Mike Webb, brilliantly captured the quirks and personalities of the various cats, and very carefully aligned their interpretation with the dialogue and action of the show. This meant I was completely absorbed by the show, which is exactly what the best theatre-going experiences should be about! ***Mija Gwyn***

ASLIA VICTORIA
Australian Sign Language Interpreters' Association

Auslan Stage Left has enjoyed partnering with ASLIA Victoria on a number of professional development opportunities over the last six months, thanks to the like-minded vision of Susan Emerson (Auslan Stage Left) and Julie Judd (ASLIA Victoria). Interpreters have explored Christmas Carols, sign singing and comedy interpreting. We look forward to collaborating more in developing the skills of interpreters in Victoria. Soon we will be engaging in a social night with ASLIA WA. If you would like your state branch to deliver targeted PD with Auslan Stage Left, ask us – or them!

Participants at a combined ASLIA Vic & Auslan Stage Left social event

Deaf Consultant Profile: Danni Wright (Sydney)



"I really love exploring different ways to translate theatrical interpreting so Deaf audiences can enjoy theatre"

I believe I've always had theatre in my blood. I was always a performer in storytelling! I made a very good supporting actor for my little brother's theatrical sagas, like being the "rock" so Superman Todd can "fly" on film!!

At a young age, I also went to dance classes and enjoyed dressing up in costumes for the end-of-year concerts. I have been involved in many amateur Deaf acting groups like "Laugh Through Your Eyes" and eventually got the opportunity at the exclusive professional acting role with Australian Theatre of the Deaf in 2005. I also equally enjoyed watching ATOD shows, the Ballet (a fond memory in my youth is watching Swan Lake with my mum) and interpreted theatre shows.

In watching theatre shows, I really enjoy exploring the visuals of set design, costumes and watching body movements and expressions in the actors, as well as their dialogue and seeing how all this comes together for a fantastic show or a "hit and miss" show (at least for Deaf audience members!). One example was a (interpreted) version of "My Fair Lady" – the set, costumes and body movements were all very plain, and I realised they were relying heavily on the play in words and voices for that show!! Very Deaf-unfriendly!

I first started working with Auslan interpreters, on theatre shows by Language and Cultural Consulting (LCC) in 2013 for Sydney Theatre Company then for Auslan Stage Left and really enjoyed drawing from my previous experiences in Auslan teaching and in various acting experiences.

I really love exploring different ways to translate scripts into theatrical interpreting so our Deaf audiences can enjoy theatre shows the same way as their hearing audience peers.

A few of my favourite shows that I was lucky enough to work on include "Pinocchio" which was a modernised version of the story using a, lot of light-play for the set designs and "One Man, Two Guvnors" which was a very well done, visual, slapstick comedy show.

In my work, I often remind myself of the challenges the interpreters I'm working with would have, like the pace of dialogue and timing of interpreting (for example, when there's a lot of visuals happening on stage with less important dialogue, we sometimes decide not to interpret that part). I also find myself watching out for characterisation and role-shift in the interpreting.

I love the whole process!

Interpreter Profile: Erin Gook (Melbourne)

Early musical theatre and show tunes remain kind of my dirty secret (up until now!), but my new love is independent theatre!

I was asked to contribute a few lines on my theatre interpreting experience but as I sit here banging away at the keyboard, waiting for the pearls of wisdom to flow, I can't help but feel a bit of a phoney. After all, there are many accomplished theatre interpreters with far more years experience and skill than I ever hope to have, interpreters who are the Obe Wan Kenobe to my own Luke Skywalker (did I even get THAT right? I'm not really up with Star Wars). Perhaps it is because I have partnered with such a supportive and experienced interpreters and Deaf consultants (I dare not attempt a Star Wars character equivalent for a Deaf Consultant), I can say that every opportunity has been pretty amazing and I've taken away a lot from each collaboration. In fact, sometimes I even daydream about who I might like to work with next – sad, but true.

My earliest memories of theatre were pre-school, way before my sister or my brother were born, when my grandmother would sometimes care for me. My grandfather (whose name was Bruce Jenner – hand on heart, not a word of a lie), had the greatest collection of record albums, mostly musicals. Anything by Rodgers and Hammerstein; South Pacific, Carousel, The Sound of Music, The King and I, Oklahoma!, Westside Story etc. (there were a few other artists chucked in but only the musicals tamed this ratbag kid – that's according to my grandmother). As I grew older, I continued my love affair with this genre of musical theatre then later on to the more sophisticated works of Stephen Sondheim, which I still love to this day. My long suffering children will tell you while other people's offspring were being driven to childcare to the soundtrack of The Wiggles, mine were beginning to learn "Into the Woods" and "A Little Night Music" by heart – even the spoken dialogue, and performed from the back seat in perfect character. Now only one of the three of my kids holds this against me. Not bad!

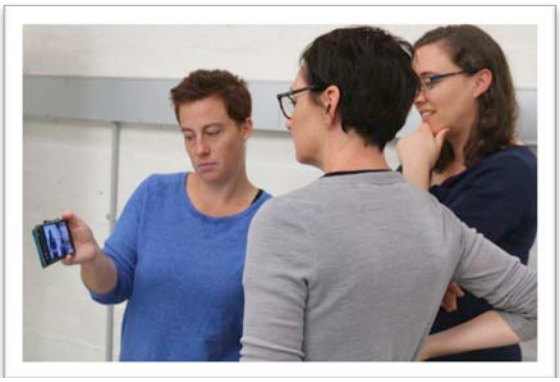
While early musical theatre and show tunes remain kind of my dirty secret, well was up until now, my new love is independent theatre.

Stories on offer by The Malthouse, the MTC and anything and everything in between. I've also developed a real love for contemporary dance over the past number of years and am enjoying being surprised and challenged by each and every performance I've seen lately. It's been especially wonderful to share some of these experiences with Deaf friends in recent times, now that interpreted, accessible theatre is more and more available. It is also exciting to see Deaf performers, artists and dancers appearing more often in the mainstream.

I recently completed the Foundations of Theatre Interpreting workshop offered by Auslan Stage Left. It was well attended by consultants and interpreters from most states in Australia.

It was two full days of discussion and practice expertly and kindly facilitated by Alex Jones and Della Goswell who provided a safe container in which to learn, to ask questions and eventually, with a peer and the support of a dedicated Deaf consultant, attempt to interpret a small excerpt of script in a simulated, theatre environment.

There was an audible collected sigh of relief from the participants when Della assured us on the morning of the first day that the exercise was voluntary and no one had to present their rehearsed work if they didn't care to. Spoiler… everyone did!



It would have been ideal to have these techniques behind me when I attempted my first Auslan Stage Left show, but given I was paired with an interpreter who had much and varied theatre interpreting experience, I felt I was always going to be okay. For our expertly assigned Deaf consultant, it was also their first show, so I remembered feeling an instant connection with them; we were both approaching the opportunity wet behind the ears, eyes wide and pens at the ready to take down anything and everything offered. I would certainly recommend the course to anyone who has yet to do it and has an interest in theatre interpreting.

I'd also strongly recommend the course to interpreters generally as a PD opportunity. Preparing for a theatre performance is strangely similar to the way one prepares for team-interpreting assignments; negotiation, collaboration, effective communication, accepting and offering useful feedback, familiarity with the material and so on. All of the above occurs with the aim that information is successfully communicated.

The icing on the cake, for me at least, is once all this has taken place, a great relationship has evolved. And as wonderful as it is to have made it through the actual performance (job), it is always the process that I look back on with most affection.

We so often work in isolation so embrace and enjoy this opportunity to spend rehearsal/preparation time with another interpreter and a Deaf consultant who keenly have their eyes on the same prize. And if I'm honest, I'm

not one to bounce into the theatre foyer on performance night alive with excitement and vigour. I practically need to be drugged and pushed out of a moving car. The work beforehand, the unpacking of the script, the watching of the live performance over and over again finding new meaning in the intonation and expression, the meetings where we come together as a team to show one another our ideas, THAT is why I do theatre.

The performance night is all about the Deaf patrons. If they are entertained by the show they have paid to see, if they are moved, if they laugh and experience every emotion with everyone else in the audience, we can feel proud of the choices we made and the work the three of us produced.

I was asked to think of some advice that I could offer those undertaking theatre interpreting for the first time, based on my own experiences. Two pieces of valuable advice I had offered to me, that I take with me into every show are as follows. The first gem, with thanks to Cheryl Sandilands, is "you have to fall in love with the script".

Sometimes, the words on the page can be difficult to wrap your head around or you discover you don't at all like the character you are to take on but immerse yourself in the story and very soon it will become really important to you. I guess it's a little like committing to an HBO series. One doesn't usually immediately engage with the characters and the story but by the time the credits roll on the final season's last ever episode, you're grieving that its over because the characters have become your family and you eventually found yourself emotionally invested in each and every thing they did or said . . . or is that just me? (I miss you, Fisher family from Six Feet Under!).

The second piece of golden advice and perhaps my favourite because it is versatile and can be carried into every interpreting situation, is this. "No one wants you to fail". The very wonderful Nic Maher offered these words up mid pre-performance panic attack just after the lighting check when everything became very, very real. She then proceeded to name some of the people who were going to be in the audience and how lovely they were. "They're all on our side and will be beaming out the love". This immediately calmed me. She was right. No one goes to the theatre to watch an interpreter fall on his or her face. So, one Tanqueray and tonic later, we stepped into position, our lights went up, the house lights dimmed but just enough for us to make out the beautiful smiles and the double thumbs up of encouragement afforded us by those we knew. But no smile brighter or more encouraging than that of our fantastic DC, four rows back, dead centre. After that, I was good to go.

RITUAL:

"a well-defined sequence of words or actions designed to focus attention"

We asked some of our interpreters what rituals they had before interpreting a performance. Some interesting responses indeed….

LINDA BEALES, PERTH

"I was fairly sure I didn't have any quirky or funny ways of preparing for theatre work, but now I think about it I'll always wear my favourite rainbow socks and my favourite black cowboy boots. Every time".

DANIEL HATELY, MELBOURNE

"On performance day my rituals include a few things – one of those is food. I must bring with me to the venue a banana, mandarin, muesli bar and bottle of pomegranate & acai coconut water. I don't always eat them all but they are things I must bring. I must wear a particular pair of black Vans shoes with a particular pair of black socks that have a slight blue stripe through them. Before going out on stage I must spray my neck and shoulders with a zen herbal liniment, clean my teeth, put paw paw on my lips, and have a mint. Once all these things are ticked off and organised then I'm on and ready!"

ALEX JONES, SYDNEY

"On performance day I will start off by exercising at the gym or going for a run. Three to four hours before the show I will eat a big meal. It's disgusting I know, but I try to 'go to the toilet' two times before I leave my house (I usually get a nervous tummy). Lastly, I wear my favourite sexy underpants 'cuz I know nobody knows what I am wearing underneath and it gives me good luck!".

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Did you enjoy reading this edition? Thanks! Stay up to date with all news related to Auslan interpreted theatre and events at our website auslanstageleft.com.au, and our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts.

Thank you to our part-time staff Melissa and Mai for all of their hard work these past few months, as well as to our volunteer Co-Directors Susan and Medina.

Lastly, a big shout out to Michelle Ashley who volunteers many many hours during busy times on the marketing and administration side of things! Thank you!