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december update

December 2016

Growing network

If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go with others.
African Proverb

We want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the organisations and teams of people that have helped us deliver quality Auslan interpreted theatre and entertainment across Australia.

Arts Centre Melbourne, Sydney Opera House, Sydney Theatre Company, ASLIA Vic, ASLIA NSW, Vicdeaf, Auslan Connections, The Deaf Society, Deaf Victoria, St Martins Youth Arts Centre, Arts Access Victoria, Turquoise iAuslan, Malthouse Theatre, Disney, Deaf Can Do, Next Wave, Sydney Festival, Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Tasdeaf, Deaf Arts Network, Griffith Queensland Conservatorium, Women's Circus, The School of Life, StageArt, Circus Oz, Midsumma Festival and State Theatre Centre of WA….. to name a few! And, of course our skilled interpreters and Language/Cultural Consultants.

We thank you and appreciate your dedication to access. We are proud of the network in which we belong and we look forward to working together to continually improve access for our Deaf patrons and Auslan users.

We have a social life!

Keep up to date with all the Auslan interpreted events near you....

I leaped, skipped, jumped and flipped across the stage!

Tyson Boal, on interpreting at Circus OZ

Earlier this year Georgia Knight and I had the amazing opportunity to work with the team at Circus OZ during their Auslan interpreted performances. It was an unbelievable experience and one that I will treasure for years to come. What I really loved was that the show wasn't exactly your 'standard' theatre interpreting experience (if any performance ever is).

The crew at Circus OZ are a friendly, caring, high-energy team that value inclusion and ensuring that their performances are accessible to all. It was in this spirit that the Circus OZ team decided they wanted their interpreters to be imbedded into the performance. This meant the interpreters would shadow the performers as they leaped, skipped, jumped and flipped around the stage, occasionally even being required to exhibit their own gymnastic ability (or lack of), in full costume. Artistic license was not only granted but encouraged.

Being on stage as the acrobatics took place did raise some OH&S concerns for the team. To ensure that the interpreted performances ran as risk free as possible both Georgia and I needed to see the live performance a number of times. This gave us a good understanding of where we needed to be (& where we definitely did not want to be) positioned throughout the show. We also had some amazing support from the cast and crew in finalising our placement to make sure the show was accessible as possible for those who attended.

All in all both Georgia and myself learned a lot from the experience and would work with the team and Circus OZ again in heartbeat. It is always such a pleasure working with people who really understand what it means to make a show accessible. Circus OZ not only value the inclusion of audience members but also value and include interpreters as part of their creative process. I think that is pretty special and an accolade to their institution.

Tyson, Therese and Ramas at Our Ladies of Perpetual Soccour

Tyson at Constructed Action Workshop

Tyson and Therese at Blaque Showgirls at Malthouse

Did you catch Tyson at the Enter Sandman event – watch here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vslzSvNUc1Y

Insights of a Deaf / Language Consultant

Alex Jones

You need to be bilingual in both Auslan and English to be an effective Deaf consultant. It also helps if you love theatre or comedy or even poetry. Often, Deaf consultants are challenged because they don't fully understand the content of the performance piece. If you are a theatregoer and know what to expect, it would help you work well in this environment. Being a Deaf consultant does not mean you share or think how you feel, you need to be the Deaf community as a consensus and look at the bigger picture. Where is the deaf audience sitting? Where should the interpreters stand? What's happening on the stage? When is it important to look at the stage and when it's not? It is all about the journey of the performance; it is the Deaf consultant's role to work with interpreters as a team and craft the interpreting performance to a level that's of satisfactory to the consensus of the Deaf community. It's challenging and is never an easy feat to do.

Midsummer Nights Dream was a dream to work on, no pun intended. The show is funny, entertaining and classical. It's a well-known play, and I was honoured to work on this show. It's been years since I've worked on a Shakespeare production. The last time I worked on Shakespeare was probably in New York City as part of Shakespeare in the Park festival over 20 years ago - I think it was Troilus and Cressida.

Both interpreters, Maree and Mike live in Brisbane and I am based in Sydney. It can be challenging because we are in different cities but these days - we are fortunate to have access to technology. We used Skype to meet together. When we did the run through, I would play the archive video on my screen and resize both of them to a corner as if I'm at the theatre. Mike goes over to Maree's place and we Skype two-way, I don't know whether this would work three-way as I reckon that would be even more challenging.

"The dynamics of a team and show will be different each time and my constant self-reminder is: this is new, enjoy it and don't take it for granted"

Not all interpreters are the same and every person has different skills and abilities. It's easy to fall into the Auslan-teacher mode or so called Auslan-police mode criticizing interpreters their sign choices or translation. What you need to do is to step back and again, look at the bigger picture, do you understand? Is it clear? If not, then work with them and give them constructive feedback e.g. Sandwich approach. There are occasions where the interpreter may not be suitably selected for the job but you have to work with them nevertheless. What you need to do is to focus on one or two things to help the interpreter to improve on rather than bombarding the interpreter with a list of feedback. It can be ineffective sometimes. Each genre and or interpreting team varies. The dynamic of the team and show will be different each time and my constant self-reminder is 'this is new, enjoy it and don't take it for granted'.

Having a true "Deaf" eye is the most benefit for each interpreting performance. It's a fine line between interpreting the show or performing the show, Deaf consultant can give this honest feedback - and this is what makes the experience of theatre entertaining. At the end of the day, it's all about 'access' and 'experience'.

It's been rewarding to work with hundreds of interpreters over the last 25 years as a consultant, which have contributed, to my abilities to work as a theatre interpreter. It's never a dull moment. My advice is: do you love theatre? Do you like this production? You enjoy reading and like seeing theatre. Then this is for you. It's great to have more consultants with different backgrounds and experiences. Sometimes there are shows I do not feel I'm suitably for and that's OK. Most importantly of all - is to have fun and to be in the moment. Respect interpreters as your peers and to earn their trust to work with you will go very far.

The "Sound Of Music" experience, shared with all of Australia.

Michelle Ashley and Daniel Hately

Michelle, Daniel and language/cultural consultant Ramas

There is only one way to start this article and that is by profusely thanking Auslan Stage Left for not only giving us the opportunity to bring the Sound of Music to life in Auslan, but also for placing us in a team with Ramas McRae and Della Goswell.

Ramas was our language/cultural consultant, and the visual poetry he created for us was sublime. Some examples include the build up to the "cuckoo" in So Long Farewell, and the experimenting with directionality for My Favourite Things, amongst many others. Ramas was very engaged throughout - not only in contributing ideas from his own language base, but taking the initiative to research signs used internationally that were appropriate for this musical, given that it references both Austrian and German terms and places. Ramas was always constructive and encouraging when offering feedback and we must mention his incredible patience in dealing with Michelle's constant struggle to depict mountains.

Although we have worked on other major musicals, we have each been paired with far more experienced interpreters. For Auslan Stage Left to entrust us together with such a classic story and large production speaks volumes about their investment in the interpreting industry in providing opportunities - whether it be via employment or training - for newer interpreters. Auslan Stage Left generously engaged a mentor for us and that was the one and only Della Goswell. Della herself interpreted The Sound of Music on its last Australian tour 15 years ago with Jemina Napier. Della guided us through our approach to the translation process, which included the exploration of different, flexible ways to split the characters via blending and "all against one" (protagonist versus the rest), the balance between finding meaning or intent and being true to the text that many grew up and loved (free v literal), and providing us with constructive feedback all along the way.

We spent hours – and we mean HOURS – preparing for each interpreted performance. In the lead up to the first performance in Sydney we lived in each others pockets for 10 weeks including multiple nights through the week, full weekends and countless

emails, Skype chats, shared meals, and video messages. Working so closely with someone and constantly learning about, with and from them is a luxury compared to our usual practice of flitting between jobs and it has had such a positive influence on how we approach teamwork across all settings now. In addition to that, we share a rich history of our deaf grandparents and deaf parents being friends and it's beautiful that this experience has cemented that familial tradition.

When approached to write about our experience, the e-newsletter editor asked us set questions. And that's a good thing because we have so much to say about our experience we could go on for days…. or in this case, editions!

(cont…) The "Sound Of Music" experience

How many hours did you spend rehearsing?
In the lead up to Sydney (which included translation time), an average of 30 hours per week over 10 weeks. Each subsequent performance saw the weeks lessen to four before each new city. We focused less on translation, and more on making changes based on our own observations and audience and consultant feedback from the previous show; to ensure we still memorized the show; and to continue to perfect our synchronicity.

How did you translate and rehearse?
We started the translation process by talking about the story and of themes and recurring concepts. We decided which songs or scenes were integral to these themes (which included historical context). The first few scenes were laden with us making the implicit explicit so as to set up the story, and our sign choices. We found these sign choices, applied to themes and recurring concepts, organically weaved their way into the dialogue and songs anyway, producing a natural cohesion. Individually we worked much the same as we did when together. This included translation, discussing ideas with the consultant, filming oneself, sharing it with the team for feedback, and once the translation had been set in stone was the big task of memorizing it. Even after memorizing songs or pieces of dialogue we would film it to watch back and catch out things we could improve upon, as would the entire team via an online sharing platform. Some songs are easier to memorise than others, depending on how much you like it. The Lonely Goatherd, for example (we won't tell you what we really called it) was the most difficult to memorise, let alone translate, and the translation changed for every single interpreted performance we did. It was so difficult to master.

We also worked a LOT on our synchronicity for songs. Initially we responded to the source text differently when interpreting songs. Daniel would be prompted by the lyrics whereas Michelle is prompted by the beat. In the end Daniel adapted to follow the beat and that was the first step of many in achieving the synchronicity that we did.

How did you cope with last minute changes to the cast?
This seems to be every interpreter's nightmare but after rehearsing to the DVD and soundtrack and then interpreting the show so many times, sometimes it was refreshing to hear a different voice. It certainly kept us on our toes. In saying that, poor Daniel had a major character cast change for every single show. Daniel coped so well, which is a testament to the preparation we had put in beforehand in terms of knowing the songs and dialogue verbatim. The only time it proved difficult for us was when Cameron Daddo (Captain Von Trapp) missed the Melbourne performance because we could sense the disappointment amongst the deaf audience that Cameron was not on.

Was there anything else that happened to challenge you?
Where to start? We have spoken about creating a demands constellation chart, with each new set of demands being colour coded according to the city that we did an interpreted performance in. This would prove that although it may appear once the first show is over the process becomes easier, that it in fact doesn't. The biggest challenges we faced included:

(cont…) The "Sound Of Music" experience

Audience activity (Michelle): At an Auslan Stage Left 'Foundations of Theatre Interpreting' workshop, Della shared a story about a hearing man in the front row who had to be taken away by medics during a performance she was interpreting. Della comically relayed the experience and how she and her tandem coped. We all laughed thinking it a freak event… until it happened to Daniel and I! Do-Re-Mi was probably our most challenging, yet anticipated song and in the build up to it we noticed a small

commotion in the deaf audience. Because of the lights beaming into our face, we couldn't work out who it was but I muttered an "oh gawd" under my breath. I could just smell it on Daniel that he knew exactly what I was talking about and had seen it too. We sensed something serious had happened, and had an even stronger sense that it was someone we knew. The start to our song was shaky but we managed to shut out all of the demands and refocus. For all of the preparation in the world, nothing can prepare you for something like that. As soon as the show was over we rushed out to the foyer to find out what had happened and to everybody's relief, all was ok.

Engaging the audience (Daniel): We received some great feedback from an interpreting colleague during the intermission at the Brisbane show that we needed to engage the audience more. Being positioned on the stage your eye gaze naturally sits above the audience as they are sitting below you. As well I found when wanting to concentrate my instinct was to look at the back of the venue, which didn't allow me to engage with the audience. It is easy to overlook the simple elements that can make such a big difference.

How did you navigate constructed action, given that was the most recent ASL workshop?
With the guidance of an amazing consultant, and with the words of Julie Judd echoing in our heads – "eye gaze, eye gaze"! After working with different consultants, you pick up bits of wisdom along the way. This includes a gem from Stef Linder in "show, don't tell". We worked a lot on characterization from the onset, and because we shared all of the characters at different points, had to work closely together to define this characterization to ensure consistency and clarity for the deaf audience. Having this sorted made the CA easier when it came to characters.

What was the most valuable part of the process for you?
Without a doubt, it was the teamwork and ultimately, trust. They say you don't know someone until you've travelled with them… well you certainly don't know someone until you've worked on a major production together. To share, experiment, to be honest (sometimes brutally), to show vulnerabilities in skill and confidence, to wear your daggiest tracksuit pants, to share a video of yourself signing,

to lose your cool when you just can't get that line right, to disagree on the translation of that one stubborn line, to let someone take over when you lose the plot on stage and know they'll take care of it, to cry and laugh, put the world to rights, drool in front of the other on a flight, and get changed in a shared dressing room… it all boils down to trust.

(cont.)… The "Sound Of Music" experience

Tell us what it was like working with the company?
Stage Management were fantastic. It is always with trepidation that you negotiate the stage positioning and lighting levels, but the crew were generous and flexible from the get go, and in turn Ramas pleasant and professional with them. We were even able to negotiate moments when our lights could be blacked out (to correspond with activity on the stage, but also allow us to scratch our nose, fix our hair, and squeeze hands while sharing encouraging words). The cast were delightful, as most are, in particular the beautiful Jacqui Dark who played the Mother Abbess. Her voice and stage presence was mesmerizing and she was the standout performer during the entire run. This status was also aided by the fact that she was so engaged - Jacqui would come to us before each performance not only to wish us luck, but to talk to us about Auslan and our work. This isn't about being star struck or mingling with celebrities. This is about feeling a welcome part of the team and having yours and the deaf audiences contribution to the overall theatre experience acknowledged.

Would you change anything?
In terms of the interpreting, we can always improve. Sometimes we wish we could go back to the start again (Sydney) because the work was so refined by the end of the tour that we wanted to share that. In terms of the process, we wouldn't change anything. We feel proud of the work we did in preparation and what we produced. We learnt a great deal not only from our consultant and mentor, but from each other and ourselves. We would like to finish with a big thanks to the deaf audiences for trusting us to bring The Sound of Music to life in Auslan.

The Sound of Music was the first interpreted show to visit all five states, with a total of 333 deaf people attending. Big thanks to Gordon Frost Organisation for helping to make this happen.

I was fortunate enough to perform several shows of The Sound Of Music with Auslan interpreters Michelle and Daniel, and it was an utterly beautiful experience. Their interpretations were works of art in themselves, and it was almost impossible to drag my eyes away from the gorgeous, graceful and deeply emotional gestures they were creating and focus back on my own performance! It was also such a joy to know that a large group of our audience who may otherwise have felt shut off from a part of the performance were welcomed with open arms and embraced by everyone involved with the show, becoming an integral part of these very special performances. It was such a moving experience to be a part of, and I was so grateful that Daniel and Michelle took the time to teach me a number of signs, which I have since taught to my little boy. I'd love to learn the whole language one day, as I find it incredibly beautiful. I hope our paths cross again, and cannot praise the work of Auslan Stage Left highly enough in making the art form that we love so much accessible to everyone who desires to be a part of it. ***By Jacqui Dark (Mother Abbess)***

Can you SEE Music?

A unique workshop with Amber Galloway

Recap by Carolyn Montague

It was a great privilege attending the workshop presented by the amazing Amber Galloway. Amber's reputation interpreting music and concerts across America brought over 70 people to the Clyde Hotel in Carlton. Many had seen a variety of clips through YouTube or other media sources, and attended with interest. Others were unashamed fans and were excited to meet and learn from the best.

She didn't disappoint, with three hours of anecdotes and the imparting of knowledge gained over many years of specialising in the field of music. After an introduction to her background, Amber began establishing the basics in the importance of conveying more than just words.

The message was to **"Respect the deaf person's experience**". This brought home the awareness that an interpreter should not make the music a show of his or her own ability to 'perform'. One activity demonstrated this by asking some brave audience members to get up on stage where they were asked to express the music using only facial expressions. Challenge accepted, they put their hands behind their back and exercised every muscle in their faces with minimal body movement. It was amazing when you realised how much you could communicate this way, showing intensity, light and shade.

We enjoyed the benefit of watching video clips of what not to do, followed by an example of the 'right' way. Amber interpreted several of these live, with comments aplenty of how simple she made it look, but also with many saying (or at least thinking), 'I get it!'

The audience comprised members of both deaf and hearing communities, including interpreters ranging from current students to the most experienced, with enthusiasm evident throughout. I'm sure I am not alone in saying that I would love Amber to come back to work with us again- perhaps a full weekend workshop?? In the meantime, I have plenty of new strategies to put in place, in the hope that one day I can confidently purvey music in a way that allows the Deaf community to enjoy the full experience.

One of Amber's quotes was for interpreters to **"Hear it. See it. Be it".** I believe this encapsulates all that she was passing on. The lyrics and the music are just as important as each other. If taken too literally, songs can lose their meaning. Without the expression of the music, they lose their heart.

Thank you to Auslan Stage Left and partners, ASLIA Vic, for providing a much enjoyed and valued experience.

The most important thing to remember is ACCESS.

By Daina Caruana (ASLIA NSW)

The Australian network of interpreters is getting stronger and stronger and when we heard through the grapevine that the Constructed Action course in Melbourne was a great success...ASLIA NSW grabbed the opportunity to run it in Sydney with Auslan Stage Left. We were especially grateful to have James Blyth present the workshop - he was informative, provided great examples and his delivery was interesting and encouraging.

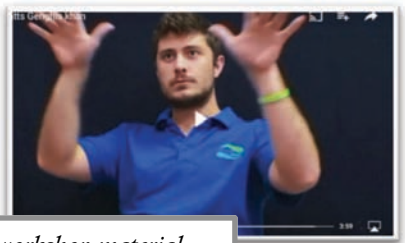
There were many lessons learned in the one day workshop but one of the main things that I personally, took out of the workshop was that we most of us (interpreters) can apply are actually already using CA to various contexts, not just theatre.... but we now have a more in- depth knowledge and understanding, and a title for it! I believe commonly, it has, in the past been identified as "role shift".

What James elaborated on, was the varying levels and subtle degrees that can be implemented through Auslan, and the varying levels of immersion into a particular character an interpreter can become in order to give an authentic message.

He showed an example of a subtle role shift through to a more extreme presentation. His example: a dog running. This could, basically, be signed with a panting tongue and walking hands (as dogs paws) on an implied surface.... or you could use your whole body, and use your arms as the dogs legs as well to show the intensity of the run with leaps and speed and more visual panting showing wide eyes and a tongue showing.

Another important lesson I learned was that CA can be used to portray anything...people, animals, buildings, countries, and in another great example by from James, genetics.

A concept we studied talked about genes spreading through people and across generations and with a simple wiggling of the fingers, palm downwards, we could show "the spread of genes becoming like the blood travelling across countries and into other people". Of course, this sign didn't mean that the actual "blood" was spilling



A snippet from the workshop material, showing constructed action in use.

Katie Hinton, Daina Caruana, James Blyth, Kylie Clear & Lise Clews.

`physically onto other people. The trickling action and movement was so effective in explaining the genetics moving through and out into the world.... it easily showed that it travelled to many individuals and that its continued impact was automatic as it was being passed onto one person and the next and the next.

It was also important to be reminded by James, that from a theatre point of view, an interpreters number one purpose is to provide access - "you are not interpreting as a performer or as an actor or as the entertainment, just because you have a spotlight on you - you are there to provide access to what's happening on the stage next to you".

Over 22 people enjoyed the workshop and had a laugh while practicing our CA tips. The photo of the day has to be Paula Bun (Sydney) interpreting two young boys who were distracted in a conversation by a girl. (Here, the pic says it all. Well-done Paula!)

As with any profession, training and education can only improve our skills and in turn, improve the quality of access we provide. I think it's really important to attend workshops like this and I would love to see CA being talked about in other scenarios we face as interpreters.

We will all be talking about this workshop for some time to come - it was worth it! If you ever get a chance to attend, I'd recommend you jump in.

Foundations of Theatre Interpreting
Perth – Dec 2016

Recap by Dr Karen Bontempo and Natasha Ravlich

"Alex lead the workshop with just the right balance of education, humour, encouragement and expertise"

On 11 & 12 December a group of nervous but excited interpreters and Deaf consultants gathered together at Subiaco Arts Centre in Perth to participate in the first ever Foundations of Theatre Interpreting workshop delivered in WA. Twenty-two interpreters and 12 Deaf consultants had the privilege of learning from the incomparable Alex Jones. Alex usually tag teams with Della Goswell in running these workshops, but unfortunately Della was unable to join us in Perth. Alex ran the show brilliantly in Della's absence, with just the right balance of education, humour, encouragement and expertise. Alex walked us through the preliminaries, with an overview of the history of theatre interpreting in Australia, issues surrounding translation, and a number of the logistical considerations specific to working in a theatre and performing arts context.

Many of the attendees had limited theatre-interpreting experience, and therefore entered the workshop with a sense of trepidation. Alex quickly made everyone feel at ease, and his calm and reassuring manner had all participants willing to step up to the challenges presented by the workshop content. Participants were divided into interpreting pairs and assigned a Deaf consultant (or two in some cases!) each, and were allocated a text - either a scene from "A Streetcar Named Desire" or "Hamlet". A session specific to the requirements of the Deaf consultants was held separately, and interpreters got to work with some initial translation of their respective texts. Some filmed a rough draft ready for their consultant to view, others planned to get feedback prior to filming a draft.

Everyone left the Saturday session feeling as though they were in a very safe space, and returned the next day feeling positive about the work ahead. The feedback from the Deaf consultants on Sunday morning proved invaluable to each interpreting pair. Adjustments and revisions were made and rehearsals to polish the respective texts lasted the morning. In the afternoon, all the interpreting pairs shared their interpretations in the real community theatre space at Subiaco Arts Centre. Deaf consultants provided last minute notes of encouragement and support, then the spotlights fell onto each of the interpreting pairs, in turn. Post-performance, interpreters had the chance to debrief with their Deaf consultants, then a group debrief was held with Alex. Suggestions for refinement and reflections on how to improve were discussed in general terms, and everyone was able to take home new knowledge and confidence gained, as well as practical skills as a result of the hands on approach to learning.

The vibe of the entire weekend was incredibly supportive, undoubtedly shaped by Alex's deft management of the workshop and his interactions with all participants. The culture of encouragement and the non-judgmental space was delightful to work in. New friendships were formed, new skills were learned, and a new awareness of the complexity of the work was raised. For some, the workshop provided validation of their preference not to work in theatre in particular, but offered a chance to learn from the broader translation and interpreting knowledge and skills shared. For others, the weekend provided an impetus to continue learning more in this unique area of practice, and to perhaps dip a toe into deeper

waters in the real world of theatre interpreting sometime soon, if they weren't already doing so.

The weekend ended with celebratory drinks and comestibles, much camaraderie, and a pretty good effort at the mannequin challenge! Days later, interpreters and Deaf consultants alike are still talking about what a great weekend it was. Sincere thanks to Alex for travelling to Perth to share his wisdom and for pressing ahead on his own - he did a remarkable job as a solo act, as much as we missed Della's presence.

Great appreciation must be extended to Christy and Brooke from ASLIA (WA) for their support of the workshop on a number of levels. A huge shout out to Linni for her fabulous catering all weekend, it was enjoyed by all! Finally, endless gratitude to the team at Auslan Stage Left for making such an exemplary workshop of international standing available to Perthites in our hometown. It is not often that practitioners in Perth have the opportunity to access world class professional learning without travelling considerable distances.

Thank you to Auslan Stage Left and to Alex and Della for creating such a superb training event.

Dr Karen Bontempo (interpreter)

What a brilliant fun filled weekend, I attended very engaging workshop with Auslan Stage Left. At first I was dreading that I had to go the workshop on my weekend even when it's almost school holiday. However I was so glad I attended their workshops as I learnt so many interesting information and how to work with Auslan Interpreters. When Saturday session ended, I was eager to go back the next day to do some more fun activities as well as gaining more information.

I thought the workshops were fantastic which I couldn't ask for more from Alex, he was a remarkable facilitator during our workshops on his own. I could tell everyone enjoyed themselves.

During the workshops, we learnt what deaf consultant do, how do they work with the interpreters, learning how to give the appropriate feedbacks and collaborating with the interpreters as a team. We participated in various activities where we worked together as a team. We practiced on a scene learning how to translate which I found challenging.

I look forward to more workshops in the near future and I am keen to

work further with the Auslan Left Stage one day.

Overall thank you Auslan Left Stage for organising this wonderful opportunity in Perth!

Natasha Ravlich

(Language / Cultural Consultant)

Thanks for visiting us at Deaf Expo 2016

We had a great time at the recent Vicdeaf Expo. We enjoyed meeting more and more new faces in our community. We hope you got a chance to meet us and if you didn't, please look out for some community events in 2017.

Of course, if you want to know more about what we do, then get in touch via our social pages or on email: info@auslanstageleft.com.au

Thanks again Vicdeaf for a great event showcasing all that our amazing community offers.

The Great Auslan Debate

An Auslan Only Community Event

Recap by Anna Seymour

I injured my face recently. How you ask? By laughing and smiling so hard, I sprained my cheeks! The injury began by smiling non-stop at the Auslan Summer Break Party organised by Ramas McRae an Alex McDonald at a funky venue in the city that is accessed by walking around a back lane. A night of music and signed song not to be forgotten. Then Saturday night really brought the facial pain with the Auslan Debate which had me laughing so hard I thought my jaw would fall clean off! Nursing a "slight" hangover from the night before the thought of a stay home had crossed my mind but I decided to soldier on and was rewarded with a hugely fun night, with spectacular stories, humour and camaraderie like only our community can provide!

This was thanks to Facebook kindly informing me that the Great Auslan Debate was on! (Thank you social media for supporting the Deaf community!)

It was hilarious and I loved it for these reasons:

1. It was all and purely in Auslan. No English interpretation...Perfect. That's so rare for Deaf people to enjoy an event in our language only. Everyone is involved and equal.
2. It was the most un-PC event I have been to for a long time. While that can be "offensive" it was also refreshing. Not to take things so seriously and to watch people say things we are not supposed to say anymore because it's not PC.
3. It wasn't a serious debate. Although, I think it'd be good to have a 'serious debate' about issues facing the Deaf community too.
4. I liked the variety of the debate team - a mix of Deaf people, interpreters and CODAs.
5. I was impressed that each person could debate the integrity of burps and farts for 3mins each.
6. Most of all - I loved the strong community feeling there. We don't get that a lot these days. I grew up in the 90s and in a small country town so I wasn't part of the infamous 'Deaf Club on Friday nights' generation but many people said that it reminded them of the Deaf Club days.
7. I learnt new things about our community. Like how Auslan has evolved (due to travel, some would argue) and that men are actually quite high maintenance (See: James Blyth's beard.).

THANK YOU to Auslan Stage Left, Deaf Victoria and Turquoise iAuslan for organising a great night. Also to the debate teams for their amazing entertainment, varied perspectives and the gut wrenching laughs.

Melbourne Fringe Festival

A recap of the 2016 Festival

Mai Bryant Kelly

Mikey Webb interpreting "Immaculate"

The Festival continues to provide excellent access and had 10 Auslan interpreted events this year!

The Moth Story Slam

The Melbourne Fringe Festival exploded onto the scene and came off a raging success!

Where else could one find a multitude of art forms and artists, performing at over 400 events in over 160 metro and regional venues to an audience in excess of 300,000 people with most venues providing accessibility? Why the Fringe, of course! As The Fringe states, its aim is to "challenge perceptions and shake up the hierarchy, to be brave and unafraid, to explore the boundaries of what art is and can be. And what's more, everyone's invited."

Auslan Stage was proud to have provided Auslan interpreters at 10 events throughout the 2-week Fringe schedule. From comedy, to cabaret, to children's theater, Auslan Stage Left was there! One of the highlights of the season was *The Moth StorySlam* with our very own Edan Chapman representing the Deaf community. Audience members were mesmerised by Edan signing a story about how his mum came to acknowledge his Deafness. It was the first time a story was told in Auslan at a Moth StorySlam. Cheering him on were over 40 members of the Deaf community.

Another audience favourite was the show, *Immaculate* with Auslan interpreter Mikey Webb. This was a show revolving entirely around Madonna songs. Mikey had the Deaf crowd on their feet, clapping and dancing along with his fantastic interpretations of Madonna songs! Not only were shows accessible, but many events were free as well.

Auslan Stage Left applauds The Melbourne Fringe Festival 2106 for making a commitment to making sure as many of their offerings were accessible to all. We had a ball and look forward to amazing line-up for the 2017 season.

A cabaret? Yes, please!

By Linda Beales (WA)

16 different 80's songs, but I had my rainbow socks and cowboy boots on.. So what could go wrong?

Linda with the audience at Gloria's Glorious Gloryhole - Rigby's Bar and Bistro, Perth WA.

My initial thoughts? A cabaret gig? Yes please! Then I thought about the days closing in and that I had to learn 16 different 80's songs plus dialogue…I then thought, what have I got myself into?!?

But I do love a good challenge, so with many hours prepping with materials provided (the majority of the performers previous show captured on audio and a full script - thank goodness!) I was ready.
And who doesn't love 80's music?

In preparation, I actually studied and rehearsed all the sings in their entirety from their original tracks.
For me, I found this to be an excellent move on my behalf as the performer "Gloria" ad-libbed into different parts of songs throughout the whole show.

"Gloria", was such a strong and talented performer however she was very accommodating behind the scenes and made me feel very comfortable. (I could sense that he has worked with interpreters before). We did have to negotiate a little on positioning on the night, as the stage was tiny, so I made sure I stood in front of the stage at exactly the right place to ensure maximum visibility for the Deaf patrons

I really enjoyed this experience and as with all jobs, I feel that while rehearsing and negotiating is part and parcel of what we do with performers and venues, the most important part of the process is the LOVE of the process! From the elation of being booked, to the hours of song prep (in itself such an amazing and authentic experience), to the pre show nerves, then delivery, watching the clients faces light up at the performers antics, to the conclusion of the evening reflecting on the range of feedback and self evaluation.

I love interpreting music/songs/concerts/cabaret and it pleases me immensely to see the amount of relevant professional development opportunities increase. Auslan Stage Left should be commended for the amazing professional learning opportunities they continue to provide.

The cabaret turned out to be a great, and a lot of fun, and all the hours of prep paid off. I can remember thinking just before I walked in, "I've got my rainbow socks and cowboy boots on, what could go wrong?"

My dream-interpreting job…

Anyone who knows me knows I would be most honoured to interpret Kasey Chambers (or any other Australian country music artist – Lee Kernaghan, Becky Cole, Adam Brand etc.). I grew up listening to, and loving, country music. It's an Australia - wide community, and to provide access to Deaf community members, to such rich and real story…would be so rewarding. The music tells tales of real life, real relationships and the real joy and connection of the people of Australia and the land. What an honour to be able to make even one Deaf persons family experience of a night out, include them. Imagine Deaf people in remote stations and outback areas!? They should be able to share in the music from our country boys and girls, in their native language.

Supporting Auslan in the Arts for all ages

Jo Dunbar, Access and Inclusion Officer

St Martins Youth Arts Centre runs theatre workshops for young People between the ages of 5-18 years and we've long since been passionate about being able include young people of all abilities in our classes and performances. We make performances by young people for adult audiences that address issues in today's world and provide Auslan interpreters for our shows.

Since 2011 we have had a strong focus on making our classes, workshops and performances accessible for the Deaf community. 'A Dance called Tom' was a performance we did in 2013, it was made into a fully accessible show with captioning embedded in the performance and supported by Auslan stage left interpreters. Since then we have run a workshops for Deaf and hard of hearing young people and in 2017 there will be upcoming holiday programs and classes which will be accessible by providing an Auslan interpreter or teachers who know Auslan.

Last year Auslan Stage Left joined forces with Jo Dunbar, who is a profoundly deaf performance maker and an Access and inclusion officer working for St Martins, to design an Auslan course which is specific for the Arts community; 'Auslan for the Arts'. There are many arts workers who want to learn the basics of Auslan so they can begin to communicate with deaf participants or customers in their work places and classes, but have little access to the right language relevant to their work. Teachers Rachelle Stevens, Ramas McRae, and Medina Sumovic provided a stimulating, challenging and fun environment to learn about Deaf culture, how to communicate effectively and teaching language, which the participants can now apply to their classes and workplaces. It was a hugely popular course, loved by all who took part and Jo and Susan are looking forward to designing and continuing the course at St Martins into 2017. Keep an eye out for dates if you want to join!

If you would like to contact St Martins Youth Arts Centre for any information on upcoming classes, workshops or performances, please contact Jo Dunbar at jo@stmartinsyouth.com.au.

Rachelle teaching Auslan for the Arts

Medina assisting the students in the workshop

Spontaneity, swearing, and lots of biscuits! Working with "Backstage in Biscuitland with Touretteshero, Jess Thom" in QLD

By Melinda Busch (QLD)

Thanks to Melinda for working with Jess Thom in QLD at QPAC.

I was stoked about being booked for "Backstage in Biscuitland – Tourette's Hero", as it looked very interesting and it was in my hometown of Brisbane. It was also a real bonus that Jess Thom had completed a world tour so the prep materials were thorough – including a script and a video of the show. This was a great help in establishing name signs and familiarizing myself with the set and British Lingo.

Jess had worked with interpreters across the world throughout her tour, so it made my job a lot easier as show and the other members of the cast and crew were quite familiar with the interpreting profession.
Jess and her team were really excited to have interpreters on stage as it sets the bar for the rest of the world. To see interpreters on stage should be standard, I think!

Her Tourette's made the show funny and unpredictable and a little difficult at times as some of her tics were absolutely out of this world and put me on the spot.

Patience and the ability to improvise, is important as not all scripts are set in stone and Jess's show was particularly fluid.

This is something I have learned when working with performers who have a syndrome or a disability like Jess and her Tourette's.

But, Jess's disability gave others the ability to see the world in a different light.
Jess' closing statement was perfect: "one by one, all of us working together to make this world a more inclusive place"

I found it tricky when Jess veered off the script and started asking the interpreter to touch her boobs!
And the inconsistency throughout the shows was a challenge I had to work through. They were all fantastic but each show had its star. Interpreting certain X-rated tics (phrases), which would just randomly pop up, was a challenge on another scale! I'm not too sure how to put this in writing…but…their phrases included some F words and a sheep and a horse and a camera! Use your imagination. Or don't!

The first show I was pumped with energy and thoroughly enjoyed it. I had never laughed so hard. Jess encouraged me to laugh! Everyone laughed.
The rest of the shows were just as awesome, different audiences each time. And the performances were relaxed, so people could come and go as they please, wriggle around in their seats, whatever they like.

I really enjoyed working with an artist who is so passionate about making our world a more inclusive place by embracing her disability and raising the worldwide awareness.

Sharing from her own experiences and being so heart felt was incredible and really touched many people in the audience. There were tears of sadness and happiness and laughter!
I found Jess to be a fantastic ambassador for all people who suffer in silence and miss out on experiences in life due to misunderstanding and judgment from society.

Jess will be back in Sydney next year and I encourage everybody to take a walk in biscuit land.

(cont....) Working with the "Touretteshero" (VIC)

"Playfulness was important, but I was also really conscious that I wanted the deaf audience to really see the nature of and intensity of Jess's tics"

By Jasmine Phillips (VIC)

Working with Jess Thom and her gang was a truly inspiring experience. Not only was biscuitland an incredibly sophisticated piece of art work with fabulous moments of tension, wonder and absolute hilarity, it was an absolute roller coaster of fun for me as an interpreter!

Navigating a script made up of stream of consciousness type ramblings followed by careful story telling was a challenging journey. One moment I was interpreting a serious story about exclusion and inequality and the next I was being told to interpret a musical interlude of heads, shoulders, NIPPLES and toes – Just so Jess could laugh at me as I did the actions.

Because Jess has Tourette's no show was ever the same, her cheeky playful nature meant that her tics were often funny, rude and unusually themed. Unexpected cats fell from the sky, lampposts were screamed at and B-grade celebrities magically appeared in stories where before there were none.

To prepare I watched a video recoding of the show, read the script and thought I was reasonable well prepared. Soon after the show began on opening night I realized that things could change at any moment and the script no longer mattered.

Whilst I have interpreted a lot of comedy, music and theatre over the years and see myself as being pretty flexible and able to just go with the flow, there is something slightly challenging when you are interpreting random out bursts of nonsensical phrases mid story or when someone suddenly breaks into song rhyming a peculiar mix of random words. I just had to be ready for anything and not be afraid of being playful with the language.

Whilst playfulness was important I was also really conscious that I wanted the deaf audience to really see the nature of and intensity of Jess's tics. I had to enable my flow to be interrupted when Jess ticked and not hold on to the notion that I had to deliver a concept in the way I had planned. I wanted to capture the emotion and the intent of the story whilst giving the deaf audience access to the lived experience of Jess.

This show had many challenges, but working with Jess and Chopan and the others was truly inspirational, I have never laughed so hard on stage and off and enjoyed the inclusivity and playfulness of the show. I'd like to say thanks to Jess and her crew for having me and thanks to Auslan Stage left for giving me the opportunity to work with such an inspirational and hilariously fun group of people!

Thanks Jasmine for taking on this challenging job. We are glad you enjoyed it!

A Midsummer Nights Dream

Maree Madden (QLD)

Who wants to tackle Shakespeare?
"Our process involved translating from Elizabethan English into modern English, then translating that into Auslan glosses"

On the 20th October, Mike Webb and I had the very great pleasure of interpreting a performance of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, by the Sydney Theatre Company.

Shakespeare's works represent a unique challenge for Auslan/English interpreters because of his glorious and striking use of English. According to bardweb.net, the Shakespeare Resource Centre, "there were no dictionaries [in Shakespeare's time]; the first such lexical work for speakers of English was compiled by schoolmaster Robert Cawdrey as A Table Alphabetical in 1604. Although certain grammatical treatises were published in Shakespeare's day, organized grammar texts would not appear until the 1700s... Shakespeare is credited by the Oxford English Dictionary with the introduction of nearly 3,000 words into the language. His vocabulary, as culled from his works, numbers upward of 17,000 words (quadruple that of an average, well-educated conversationalist in the language)." (Retrieved on 20th November 2016).

The process of interpreting this play started with translation from Elizabethan English into modern English, then translating that into Auslan glosses. Using this process, we were able to preserve the meaning of the text, and some of the more colourful curses were transformed into modern forms of insult, for example "canker blossom" was interpreted as "bitch".

Our Deaf Consultant (Alex Jones) met with us via Skype, (as we live in Brisbane and he in Sydney) and was tremendously helpful in making the interpretation very visual. He also provided valuable advice on the scenes that were already striking in their visual impact and did not need much in the way of interpretation. We had been sent a link to a Vimeo recording of the production, so Alex was able to watch it on his computer while Mike and I interpreted it for his evaluation and feedback.

I habit I've had since I began performance interpreting in 1990 is to prepare a synopsis of the play, including glosses of the name signs we had agreed upon. I provided an electronic version to an audience member a day or two beforehand, so that several copies could be printed for distribution to the other Deaf audience members to read before the show began. This resource has met with positive feedback, as there is often not sufficient time before a performance begins to explain name signs to the audience. It is also useful for lesser-known plays than Shakespeare, when the audience may not know the story.

The production was visually stunning and the company was extremely welcoming and supportive of having the performance interpreted. The Drama Theatre at the Opera House is a fantastic venue for interpreted theatre, as it is a smaller, more intimate space, that lends itself well to very clear sightlines.

Thanks Auslan Stage Left for organising the interpreted performance.

Deaf Consultant Jen Blyth

On Snugglepot and Cuddlepie

"I had to work with the team to make sure the signs appealed to the kids, while keeping in mind that the majority of deaf people in the audience would actually be the parents"

Consulting for theatre is still new to me, luckily, I knew the process was fairly straightforward: I'd be booked by Auslan Stage Left, be provided the script and then meet with the interpreters to go through any tricky lines/words/signs before previewing the show (which is an odd process in itself as the show is not interpreted, but it does give everyone a chance to get a 'feel' for the show). After the preview, another meeting (or several more meetings) is set to go through the script and to rehearse using recordings/videos. Then comes the big day - the show is officially interpreted!

In this case, I was the Auslan consultant for Snugglepot and Cuddlepie, an Australian favourite by May Gibbs and presented by The Arts Centre. I was very fortunate to work with Daniel Hately and Melissa Martin, two very relaxed interpreters who enjoy theatre interpreting. Upon viewing the script, we realised that we had several challenges in place for this script – there were various Australian flora and fauna words used as insults or compliments, and it was targeted at children. Then when we went to the preview, we learnt that there were only four actors and because most of the characters in the story had brief lines, the interpreters would have to portray the characters by exaggerated body language.

We really had to remember to modify the story to fit children while being aware that it would be more likely that Deaf parents who would have brought their hearing children to the show – I think Melissa and Daniel did a good job in ensuring that this delicate balance was met.

An example was when the background noise was one of a 'busy town' but with nature's version (i.e. buzzing bees, crickets chirping). We had to ensure that the point was that it was 'nature's version of a busy town' without sacrificing any of the finer details to both adults and children. We couldn't just sign 'busy town' or 'lots of animals', because then the intended point was lost. But we also couldn't sign 'lots of animals act like busy town', because then that may have been a concept that children may not understand. So, we signed the sounds themselves: acting like a kangaroo just hopped past and buzzing bees flying past our faces. I think it was a nice compromise because the body language used by the interpreters definitely portrayed that there were a lot of animals and lots of things were happening.

I feel that Daniel, Melissa and I worked well as a team; we all listened to each other in our justifications for the signs/names/words used. We also worked well with the Arts Centre team in our meeting – they were very generous in their spacing for the interpreters. They also wanted us to teach the audience some signs, for example, kangaroo and lizard, two of the characters in the show. Daniel and Melissa did the first show and I did the second show – it was nerve-wracking; I don't know how interpreters can do this on a continual basis!

The Arts Centre were so excited about having this show Auslan interpreted, which made me feel really grateful that the importance of having Auslan interpreted shows was being so strongly promoted by Auslan Stage Left's team.

I loved going backstage, seeing what the public doesn't get to see was exciting. Also, while we were backstage waiting to talk to the Arts Centre team after the preview, a woman ran past us suddenly – a child had gotten stuck in one of the chairs. I found this hilarious – the kid probably didn't.

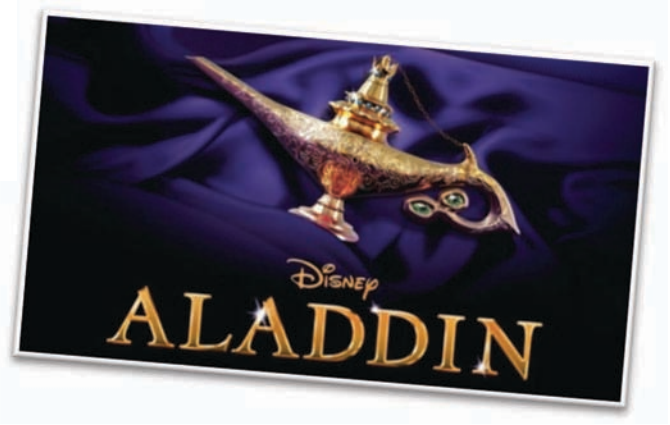
I would recommend that if you want to become a consultant, that you get a mentor or try and work with a lovely, patient team like I did. I enjoyed the process of reading and analysing the script with the interpreters and trying to be creative with how to interpret the line within the short timeframe the interpreters have on stage.

What our audiences thought of Aladdin! (Sydney)

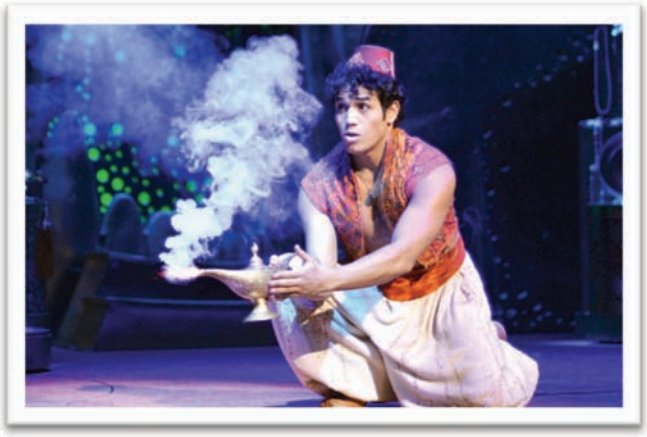
"I'm so glad I went to see Aladdin with my deaf friends. It was so colourful and bright and everything was moving all the time. The story was very interesting and the two interpreters showed great expressions. It was worth it to go!

I look forward to seeing another theatre show now! Thanks Auslan Stage Left".
Nola Lawlor

"So amazing! So immersed into the story with two wonderful interpreters Mikey and Michelle. Mikey's expression was so beautiful when he signs songs. Loving every second of it."
Wendy Lancaster



"Oh gee it was so awesome and the two interpreters were also awesome! The sign singing was so beautiful and easy to follow. The interpreters really took on their characters with great expressions. The play was colourful and I loved the music as even I could feel the vibrations in the theatre. The end of the show was so fabulous when the cast came out to bow, we waved our hands to applaud them, and they returned to wave their hands direct to us. The male lead even gave his blow kiss with his hands to us – It caused my eyes to water. Wouldn't miss a theatre with interpreters again, it is worth to go. Thanks Mike and Michelle for their fabulous interpreting in Aladdin."
Karen Jahn



What our audience thought of "Matilda" (Melbourne)

"I loved watching Matilda, it was funny, clever and the ending was lovely. It is a brilliant play and having Auslan interpreters there made it easier for me to follow and understand the story."
Maya, aged 9

Update from Erin James, Our Patron

A highlight for 2016: "Watching the Auslan stage left team interpret CATS the musical from both onstage and off: Such a magical experience".

What a year it has been! 2016 has certainly taken the cake as the biggest, most exciting year of my life and as I reflect on the past 12 months, I realize how lucky I am to live in such a great, supportive and inclusive community.

Working in the arts, I jump from contract to contract often, and this year has seen me work on stage in the Australian tour of CATS, on screen in the TV series A Place To Call Home and offstage (while pregnant with my first child) for Opera Australia's My Fair Lady.

The biggest highlights within these jobs would have to be as follows:

- Working with Dame Julie Andrews (who sent my now 7 week old son a gift when he was born!!!). She is a delightful lady - everything I hoped she would be and more!
- Knowing I was 20 weeks pregnant while filming a to show and nobody else knew! I also loved meeting and working with the lovely Noni Hazlehurst.
- Watching the Auslan stage left team interpret CATS the musical from both onstage and off: Such a magical experience.

I am so passionate about this organization and I couldn't have been more proud when such talented, expressive and equally passionate people so beautifully interpreted CATS. Bravo!

Next year, my little son Henry, my husband Matt and I will be going on tour so I can get back onstage in the musical My Fair Lady. I can only imagine how that will go with a new baby, but as always, I am up for the challenge! I am also starting to introduce Auslan into our interactions, as I am incredibly determined to have him grow up knowing the language from his early years.

I can't wait to see some other shows interpreted by Auslan stage left in 2017 - it really is one of my favourite theatrical experiences to take part in!

Wishing everyone a wonderful Christmas, festive season and a safe and happy new year!

Upcoming Shows

Sydney

- Briefs: The Second Coming – 8th January
- You and Me and The Space Between – 20th January
- Felicity Ward – 22nd January

Brisbane

- Matilda – 4th February

Perth

- Sunset at Subi – Christmas with Ruby and the Remedy – 18th December
- IGA Carols by Candlelight – 18th December
- Sunset at Subi – Prince Tribute with Royal Badass and DJ Ndorse – 18th January
- Erth's Prehistoric Aquarium – 14th January
- Matilda – 1st April

Adelaide

Is there anything you want to see? Please contact us and we can try to improve access for that event.

Tasmania

- Community Christmas Afternoon Tea and Hobart Carols by Candlelight - 18th December 2016

Melbourne

- Whitehorse Carols – 18th December 2016
- Room on the Broom – 14th January
- Australia Day Festival, Dandenong – 26th January
- Midsumma Event: Park Lounge, Werribee – 4th February
- Mr. Stink – 1st April
- Secret Life of Suitcase – 11th August
- Aladdin – 19th August

Thanks for your support. Stay connected here:

We hope you have a safe and happy holiday season.
We may not have all hands on deck during the Christmas period, however we will be available on email. So please contact us if you have any enquiries: info@auslanstageleft.com.au

Auslan promo with Jane Taylor for Sound of Music Melbourne

Fawlty Towers Live – Cast with Karen Clare & Paul Heuston

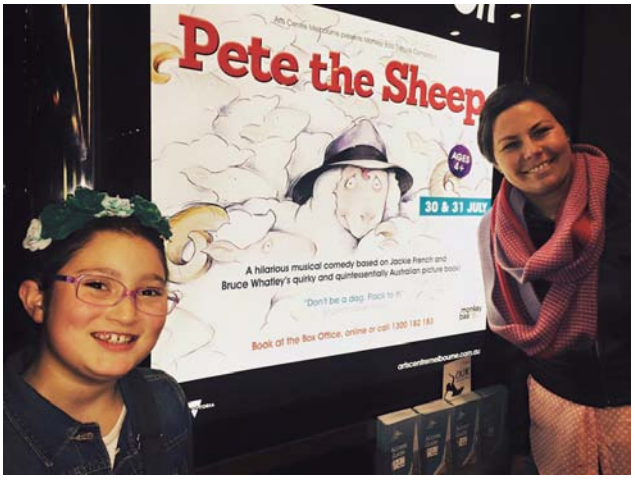
Georgia Knight & Kelly North: Beauty & The Beast Jnr

The Events- Malthouse – Erin Gook and Karen Clare

Audience & interpreters Rose & Dahlia at Cinderella Sydney

Auslan for the Arts workshop at St Martins Melbourne

James Blyth on booth at Deaf Expo 2016



Pete the Sheep kids show, Melbourne

Rosemary and Dahlia at Cinderella, Sydney

Teale Nicholls interpreting at TSOL Urban Wisdom

Griffith Musical Concert – with Mike & Megan

TSOL – Space One with Mark Sandon

Stef Linder and James Blyth – Constructed Action presenters

Julie Judd, TSOL talk with Andrew Denton

The Matilda interpreting team

Dave Childs with Amber Galloway at the Melbourne workshop

Michelle & Daniel and Deaf patrons at SOM Adelaide

Rachelle Stevens – Auslan for the Arts workshop