



*showtime!*

## Deaf Theatre in Canada

DEAF ARTS HANDBOOK SERIES  
Volume 3

**showtime! : DEAF THEATRE IN CANADA**

Any individual or organization wishing this handbook should contact the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf or the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE at [info@deafculturecentre.ca](mailto:info@deafculturecentre.ca)

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DEAF ARTS HANDBOOK SERIES

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Volume 1 - Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits  
Volume 2 - Signed Music: Rhythm Of The Heart  
Volume 3 - Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada  
Volume 4 - Deaf Filmmaking: Take Two!

DEAF ARTS HANDBOOK SERIES

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# introduction

This handbook provides a forum for Deaf students, educators, Deaf performing artists, members of the Deaf community and the community at large to gain a sense of the history of Deaf theatre in Canada, the variety of genres that have evolved from within the Deaf community, tips and activities as well as emerging Deaf community opportunities and resources.

There is a rich history of Deaf theatre in Canada that has peaked, waxed and waned over the last half century and is rising once again.<sup>1</sup> Deaf performing artists have created their own forums for exploration, creation and performance and have also been part of the theatrical community as a whole. Deaf performing artists have often felt pressure to make their performance accessible to hearing audiences or expressed through interpreted American Sign Language (ASL)/language des signes québécoise (LSQ). There are also numerous examples of creativity and community artistic breakthroughs to be featured for posterity and the lessons we learn from them.

This handbook aims to:

- feature the literature genres developed from within the Deaf community as it relates to Deaf theatre
- provide an historic perspective on Canadian Deaf theatre
- offer activities and resources for those wishing to explore Deaf theatre for themselves and their community in greater depth.
- offer tips from professional artists involved in Deaf theatre.
- feature the Defty Awards of Excellence in the Arts: Theatre Youth Awards and other recent professional theatre projects and capacity building opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more complete history of Deaf theatre in Canada, refer to Tracie, R. (1998). *Deaf Theatre in Canada: Signposts to an Other Land*. (Unpublished Masters Thesis). University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB. and Carbin, C. (1996). *Deaf Heritage in Canada: A Distinctive, Diverse and Enduring Culture*. Whitby, ON: McGraw Hill Ryerson Limited, Chapter 14, pp. 314-356.

## There is a rich history of Deaf theatre in Canada that has peaked, waxed and waned over the last half century and is rising once again.

This handbook is produced by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf and is supported by TD Bank Group and a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts. The handbook compliments and is derivative of the Special Exhibition, *It's Showtime: A Legacy of Deaf Theatre in Canada* featured at the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE (2014-2015).<sup>2</sup> It also follows the Defty Awards of *Excellence in the Arts: Deaf Theatre Youth Awards* (2013 and 2018). *The Deaf Youth Awards Program* is also a project of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. The TD Bank Group has been the presenting sponsor of the Defty Awards of Excellence in the Arts (2013-2019) to encourage new Deaf arts, theatrical and literary performance across Canada. This handbook is available to Deaf students, educators, ASL performing artists and community through the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE website (<https://slicanada.ca/deaf-arts-series/>).

Our intent is to enhance the quality and variety of Deaf artistic performance by providing a forum for exploring Deaf theatre, generating discussion points for risk-taking in creating theatrical performance and for sharing Deaf theatre with Deaf and hearing audiences.

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2 J. Cripps, Director; A. Small, Exhibit Planner

# ASL literature genres

Deaf theatre is generated from within the Deaf community from the body of ASL literature. It is therefore important to begin with a clear notion of ASL literature. This is true for LSQ literature developed in Canada and Deaf literature based on other signed languages around the world. Andrew Byrne (2017)<sup>3</sup> offers a definition of ASL Literature.

*ASL literature is defined as a body of published American and Canadian works in video format that are both folkloristic and single-authored. It has literary elements and functions that can be found in literatures of different languages both unwritten and written. The genres include poetry, drama, and prose including humour, riddles, and allegories. ASL literature comprises original compositions that have arisen from the thoughts, emotions and experiences of native signers using the linguistic structures and features of ASL. It includes the ability to decipher, organize, construct, and present literary works effectively, imaginatively and eloquently.*

Byrne (2017)<sup>4</sup>

Byrne (2017)<sup>5</sup> provides a new taxonomy for what constitutes ASL literature genres or as he describes it – original literary works captured in VHS, DVD and online publications.

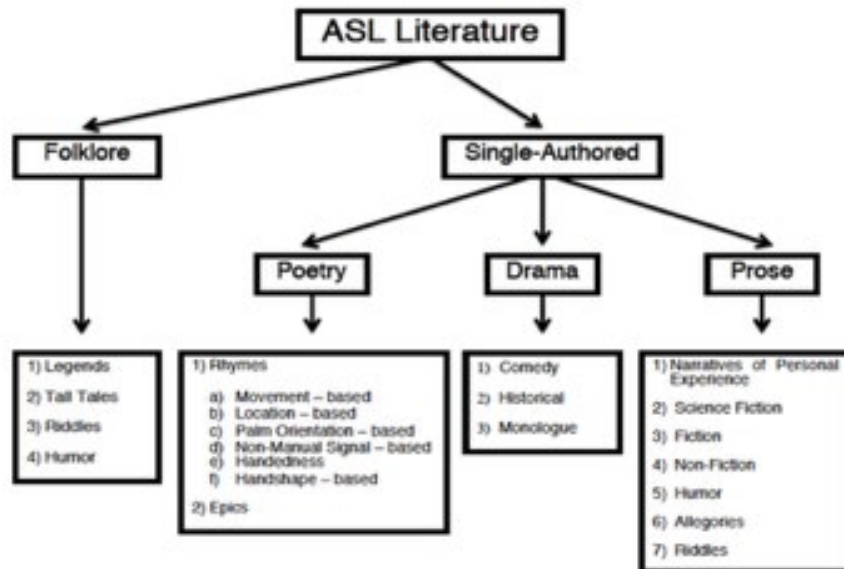


Figure 1. New Taxonomy: Original Literary Works Captured in VHS, DVD and Online Publications (Byrne, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

3 Byrne, A.P.J. (2017). American Sign Language literature: Some considerations for legitimacy and quality Issues. *SASLJ*, 1 (1), 56-77.  
 4 Ibid  
 5 Ibid  
 6 Ibid

# what is Deaf theatre?

What is Deaf theatre? How is it unique? Just like with other forms of Deaf arts, Deaf theatre is rooted in the Deaf community. Its linguistic and cultural roots are found in shared Deaf experience. It is important to clarify the distinction of Deaf theatre that originates from Deaf linguistic and cultural roots versus theatre that is either an interpretation of hearing-based mainstream theatre or an adaptation of mainstream hearing-based theatre. Interpreted and adapted theatrical experiences can of course also be enjoyed by all but should not be confused with Deaf theatre which has its own unique artistic origins and expression derivative of ASL literature.

In recent years mainstream hearing-based theatre has become more accessible and more open to the Deaf community via an increase in interpreted performances (e.g. *Medee*, 2017, Opera Atelier, TO; *Idomeneus*, 2017, *Innocence Lost* 2018, *The Royale*, 2018 *August Osage County*, 2019, Soulpepper, TO) and more hiring of Deaf actors in stories that have Deaf characters and storylines (e.g. *Ultrasound*, 2016, Cahoots/ Theatre Passe Muraille; *Tribes*, 2014 Canadian Stage; *Silence and Beethoven Lives Upstairs*, 2018, Grand Theatre, London, ON) or have been adapted with Deaf characters and actors (e.g. *Prince Hamlet*, 2017 and 2019 *Why Not Theatre/ Canadian Stage*; *Tempest*, Citadel Theatre, Edmonton/ Banff Centre 2019). For more information on engaging Deaf actors and Deaf audiences in theatre, see the *Deaf Artists and Theatres Toolkit* (DATT) [www.cahoots.ca/datt](http://www.cahoots.ca/datt).

In contrast to these productions, Deaf theatre is Deaf lead and emerges from within the Deaf community.

## history of Deaf theatre in Canada

Deaf Theatre in Canada has its roots in the provincial schools for Deaf students and in the Deaf community. Students in the schools for the Deaf perform major theatrical productions annually to this day. Performances range from original productions to adapted plays as well as classic English plays performed in sign language. You will note that historically many of the school productions are adapted plays and some plays by Deaf Theatre companies today do performances of adapted plays (e.g. *Deaf Snow White* (2014); *Little Mermaid* (2015) Seeing Voices, Montreal). Deaf theatre history includes these performances. Deaf theatre activities in this handbook focus on Deaf theatre that is based on original ASL literature genres.

# *Deaf theatre in schools for Deaf students*

Photographs from the provincial schools for Deaf students in Ontario<sup>7</sup> exemplify Deaf theatre that was in abundance across the country encouraged at the schools for Deaf students from the 1930s until today.



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<sup>7</sup> Photographs of theatrical performances at the Ontario Provincial Schools for the Deaf 1930-2008: Courtesy of OSD-SJW archives, Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, Belleville, Ontario. Photography: Judy Weiser, B.J. Claydon, L.J. Bowes, Mark Woodman, Donna Fano, Hao Wen Kong





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1. Dancing the Stately Minuet (Winter, 1930)
2. The Prince Who Never Smiled (Winter, 1931)
3. The Prince Who Never Smiled (Winter, 1931)
4. The Toy Shop - School Concert (Spring, 1938)
5. The Blue Danube Dancers - School Concert (Spring, 1938)
6. Christmas Nativity (Winter, 1939)
7. Snow White (Spring, 1951)
8. Aladdin and his Magic Lamp (Spring, 1952)
9. Alice in Wonderland (Spring, 1955)
14. Gift of the Magi (2004)
15. How the Grinch Stole Christmas (Winter, 2005)
16. Fourteenth Annual Unique Christmas Celebration (2008)

# Deaf community professional theatre

From the late 1800s Deaf adults have gathered in literary societies and clubs to share literary works in sign language and to enjoy talent nights, some taking the show on the road. Professional Deaf theatre companies began to be established in the mid 1900s.

**Forrest Nickerson co-founded the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) with Angela Stratiy in 1970 (incorporated in 1973).**



Stratiy and Nickerson, 1973

**A signing puppeteer, visual artist and illustrator, Forrest performed at the National Festival of the Arts established by CCSD in 1973.**



Forrest Nickerson illustrated self-portrait (top) (credit: *Cultural Horizons*, courtesy Helen Pizzacalla) and photograph with Peter Pride, his signing puppet (bottom).

That year, CCSD formed a division called Canadian Theatre of the Deaf, headed by Angela Stratiy in 1974. In 1974, CCSD established the Defty Awards to promote excellence in the arts including Deaf theatre. Forrest, an illustrator, created the logo for the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf sponsored by CCSD in 1976 to tour across Canada. The Defty Awards were re-established in 2013 along with workshops to re-ignite Deaf performance arts across Canada. The Defty Awards for Excellence in the Arts: Theatre and Deaf Youth (ages 16-34) was held in 2014 and in 2019.

# Timeline<sup>8 9</sup>

*Late 1800s - early 1900s*

Local amateur theatre



1922

Winnipeg Association of the Deaf performs *My Son Arthur*



1953

Canadian amateur theatre troupe performs *Red Lamp* in Cincinnati, Ohio

1968

*Théâtre Visuel des Sourdes* - Professional Theatre Company founded by Serge Brière, Jean Goulet and André Maltais

1973

*National Festival of the Arts* established by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD)

1973

CCSD forms a division called *Canadian Theatre of the Deaf* headed by Angela Stratiy in 1974

8 Timeline adapted from the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE Special Exhibit, *It's Showtime: A Legacy of Deaf Theatre in Canada* (2014-2015). It is a summary based on the history of Deaf theatre in Canada from Carbin, C. (1996). *Deaf Heritage in Canada: A Distinctive, Diverse and Enduring Culture. Chapter Fourteen. The Performing Arts.* Whitby, ON: McGraw Hill-Ryerson Ltd. p. 342-346.

9 Photographs of Canadian Deaf Theatre Companies: Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf Archives; Canadian Theatre of the Deaf Fonds and Deaf Heritage in Canada Collection; Canadian Theatre of the Deaf Archives: Courtesy of Maryann Chmiel.



*1974 Defty Awards established by CCSD*

*1975 British Columbia Deaf Mime Troupe is established by Mike Hanrahan. Hanrahan had studied with Laurence Olivier, Marcel Marceau and Pat Kwysall, director of the National Theatre of the Deaf.*

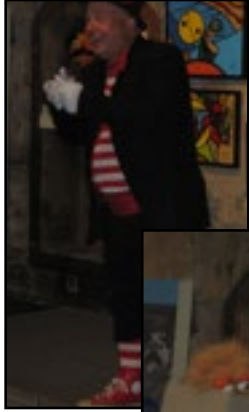


*1976 Canadian Theatre of the Deaf, a professional touring company under the auspices of CCSD evolves from the Deaf Mime Troupe.*

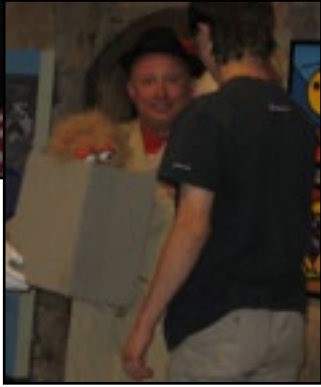
*1976 Canadian Theatre of the Deaf, (CTD), a four-member troupe (Mike Hanrahan, Maryann Chmiel, Marsha Simon and Lewis Hartland) tours Canada with sponsorship from CCSD. CTD received rave reviews but gradually disbanded due to financial hardship.*

*1977 Deaf Mime Company of Toronto founded by Lewis Hartland who had studied at the Canadian Mime Theatre School.*

*1982 Ontario Theatre of the Deaf founded by Lewis Hartland*



*1988* Christopher Welsh forms Vibrisign and Wavehands, performing a one man show of mime, improvisation and using puppets on YTV's Treehouse program, TV Ontario and comedy at Yuk Yuks and also performing Shakespeare in ASL with actress Elizabeth Morris.



*1989* *Canadian Deaf Theatre* (CDT) - founded by Lewis Hartland with encouragement from CCSD and joined by his wife Connie Hartland (née Harrison) who had previously performed through Alaska, presented mime workshops and appeared on TV with her puppets

*1992* CDT moves to Whitehorse, Yukon

*1994* CDT's last performance at the Yukon Arts Centre

*1995* Angela Stratiy performs One Woman Comedy Shows across Canada and the United States through *Deaf Utopia* and Duo Comedy Shows with Bob Whitford

*2009* *SPiLL PROpagation* is founded

*2012* *Seeing Voices Montréal (SVM)* – established by a Deaf and hearing team – perform *Deaf Snow White* (2014); *Little Mermaid* (2015)



*2013* *Defty Awards*, Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf re-established

*2012* *Seeing Voices Montréal (SVM)* – established – perform *Deaf Snow White* (2014); *Little Mermaid* (2015)

*2013* *100 Decibels Mime Troupe*, established in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Deaf performing artists, hearing director

*2016* *Sound Off Deaf Theatre Festival, Edmonton* – established

*2018* *Stories from a Suitcase* – First ASL Forum Theatre model production

*2018* *Awakening Deaf Theatre in Canada*, Conference, November 2018, Montreal.

*2019 The Black Drum – First full feature Signed Musical production, Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf; supported by Canada Council for the Arts, New Chapter Program to mark the 150th anniversary of Canada and Soulpepper Theatre Company; Toronto, Canada and Clin D’Oeil, International Festival of the Arts, Reims, France.*



**SPiLL PROpagation** (“spread”, in French), was inspired by Sweden’s National Deaf Touring theater, Teater Tyst (Silent Theater). Spill was co-founded in 2009 by Yannick Gareau, Tiphaine Girault and Paula Bath, as a collective of French, English, Deaf and allied Deaf artists working together to ignite an explosion of Deaf cultural presence in the Canadian arts and culture landscape. Spill explores Deaf-led creation and performance in theater, multi-media, and circus arts to promote new and audacious forms

of integrated art. Based in Ottawa, Spill is currently the only Deaf theater group in Canada that performs and operates in French, English, American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ).



**100 Decibels** founded in 2013 is a high-energy Physical Comedy troupe comprised of a diverse group of Deaf artists. Hailing originally from The Philippines, Northern Manitoba (Fairford Reserve) and Ukraine, these performers have been professionally trained in mime, physical comedy and storytelling by award-winning Hot Thespian Action’s Shannon Guile. Their aim is not only to entertain audiences with their incredibly crisp and clean physical illusions but to reach-out with the beauty of Deaf culture and build bridges between the hearing

and Deaf worlds. Based in Winnipeg, 100 Decibels has brought audiences to their feet – making them laugh, cry, and say - ‘I never thought of it that way’.

# warm up activities

Warm-up exercises done at the beginning of Deaf theatre workshops and rehearsals relax and prepare participants individually and as a group for theatre work – the “journey” that day. The warm-up exercises create an environment of communal play, comfort and are intended to create a safe environment for exploration.

The following activities are based on warm-ups conducted by Luciano Iogna, Forum Theatre/Theatre of the Oppressed Specialist, *Stories from a Suitcase*<sup>10</sup>; Jack Volpe, Assistant Director, *The Black Drum*<sup>11</sup> and Patricia Allison, Dance Choreographer, *The Black Drum*<sup>12</sup> - Deaf productions by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.

1. **Name Game** – a closed circle but enough space to sign comfortably. Each person introduces themselves with their name, adjective and adds a gesture.

2. **Pass the Energy** – to make the energy ball, everyone raises their arms alternately round and round in front for them (like swimming the crawl) until the leader scoops up the “energy ball” created in the centre of the group. The leader looks someone in the eye and passes the energy ball, with one clap-out, maintaining eye contact; clap-in to catch it. Add a 2nd energy ball, passing and receiving it at the same time that the other energy ball is being passed around.

3. **Energy Ball** – this is the same game as pass the energy but more complex. “Pass” by throwing the energy ball, “block” by raising your forearms (the energy ball goes the other way), “zap” (point your finger to pass to anyone except those adjacent to you), sign “I love you” (to switch places with someone else in the circle).

4. Place your hand on the shoulder of someone you know the least/ pair with the person you know the least. Face each other, sitting in chairs; knees just touching. Decide who will tell the story and who will listen. Tell your story - 1st person in the pair goes through the events of what they did yesterday – 60 seconds. The 2nd person in the pair tells the story of their day. Now the 1st person tells the 2nd person what the 2nd person shared with them. How accurate was the

10 *Stories from a Suitcase* Forum Theatre Workshops, April, 18 2015, Ottawa, Ontario, April 25, 2015, Milton, Ontario, and August 17, 2015, Milton, Ontario.

11 *The Black Drum* Workshop, March 10-13, 2019, Banff Centre for the Performing Arts, Banff, Alberta.

12 *The Black Drum* Workshop, March 18-22, 2019, Young Centre for the Performing Arts, Toronto, Ontario.



recounting? Now reverse it. The 2nd person recounts the 1st person's day. Were any details forgotten? What makes something memorable? What makes it interesting? Does sharing the experience of the same event help?

5. **Person to Person** – Switch partners for a new activity. This game is like the commercial game, “Twister”. The Leader calls out two body parts – e.g. knee to knee, shoulder to shoulder, hand to shoulder, hip to hip, thumb to thumb, thumb to ear, hand to toe. Partners touch those body parts. When the leader calls out “person to person” – switch partners and leader calls out two new parts to connect e.g. back to back, ankle to knee, elbow to shoulder, thumb to nose, thumb to shoulder, pinky to knee.

6. **Pilot and Co-Pilot** - 1 leader and 1 follower. With contact through fingertips, the leader walks the follower around the room. If they break contact, they must stop. The fingertips are like gas for a car. Start slow and then gradually speed up, use much space. Now the follower does it with their eyes closed. Keep the same role of follower and leader. The leader is responsible for the safety of the follower. If the leader wants the follower (the “car”) to stop then they must break contact with their fingertips (stop the “fuel flow”). The follower must always keep their eyes closed (AFTER all explanations are given in ASL). Breath pause, then followers close their eyes to begin. Switch who is the leader and who is the follower. First do it with eyes open, then breath pause before closing eyes to begin.

7. **Hypnosis - Lead and Follow** – leader places their palm face out; follower places their head 8 inches away from the leader's palm at all times as the leader explores the space with the follower/s. This is like Pilot and Co-Pilot but with palm and head. This can be done with one, two or three followers.

8. **The Wind Blows** – Say “The wind blows for . . .” and then something about yourself. E.g. – “The wind blows for someone with a daughter”. Then anyone with a daughter gets up and goes to another chair. Remove one chair each time. You can't go back to your old chair. Leader encourages people to say something about an experience or about themselves (not a physical characteristic like colour of hair but rather something about themselves like their hobby or what makes them laugh).

9. One person makes a statement at one end of the room - Individuals who agree stand with that person and the others who don't agree stand opposite. Another person then stands on the diagonal of the square and makes their own statement. All who agree, move to where that person is standing and those who don't agree stand opposite them. Do it quickly.

10. Group forms a circle. One person stands in the middle, selects a person on the circle periphery whom they know the least and finds something in common with them. When they find that commonality, the person on the outside takes their place in the centre of the circle.

11. Everyone stands in the centre of the room walking randomly as a group. With no assigned leader, one person begins a motion, others who see it copy that motion until another person in the group begins a different motion. All then follow that motion. It happens by osmosis -no one appoints a leader but the group picks up on who is leading at any given moment, creating a synergy.

12. **Race to the Wall** - All participants stand in a row facing the wall. Race to the wall as slowly as possible. Leader stands facing the wall. When he/ she turns around, you must freeze. The first person arriving at the wall wins. If you move when she turns around she will tap you and you must go back to the beginning. Develop a quality of tension when freezing.

13. **Mirrors** – In pairs, first person faces their partner and follows all of the movements of the second person. Start slowly and increase speed when comfortable. Switch roles.

## mime

Mime was a popular Deaf performance art form in the Canadian Deaf community in the 1970s through to the 21st century with Deaf and hearing audiences as well. Mime uses movements and gestures to express something or to tell a story without using language. Mime is therefore not part of ASL literature genres. It is an enjoyable art form that crosses language barriers and provides preliminary foundation for aspects of ASL theatre such as use of body classifiers and personification. The following activities are fun mime exercises. These mime activities are adaptations from *From Mime to Sign* (Eastman, 1989). There are a plethora of such samples in his book, to develop mime activities.<sup>13</sup>

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13 Eastman, G. (1989). *From Mime to Sign*. Silver Spring Maryland: T.J. Publishers, Inc.

*mime activities*

# read my face!!!

You can say a lot with facial expressions.  
Match each photograph with a statement below.\*



1. I can't move another muscle
2. That's the best cheesecake I've ever tasted!
3. Sometimes you do the strangest things.
4. Stop before I burst out laughing.
5. That's disgusting!
6. I have no idea where they are.

*Check your impressions against the following:  
E2; F5; G4; H1; I3; J6*

## **NOW YOU TRY IT!**

Watch yourself in the mirror to see how well you can copy  
these facial expressions!

\* Exercise from Eastman, G. (1989) From Mime to Sign. Silver Spring, MD: T.J. Publishers Inc.

*mime activities***come Play..**

Think in pictures.

Start with what you know!

Match each photograph with an activity below!\*



1. Basketball
2. Boxing
3. Fishing
4. Swimming

*Check your impressions against the following:  
A2; B1; C4; D3*

**NOW YOU TRY IT!**

Watch yourself in the mirror to see how well you can copy these activities! What other actions can you mime?

See if your friend can guess your actions.

\* Exercise from Eastman, G. (1989) From Mime to Sign. Silverspring, MD: T.J. Publishers Inc.

# the lost art of Deaf improvisation

Improvisation is a classic Deaf theatrical style that flourished in the Deaf community in Deaf clubs and at social events across Canada, the US and Europe for generations. The Deaf community has passed on stories and a rich humour particular to the community through this sharing. As schools for the Deaf have decreased in number and size and Deaf clubs have almost disappeared, so too, Deaf improvisation has decreased as an art form. Deafils improvisation group with five performers in the Netherlands has revived this old theatrical style. Said Jamal, founder of Deafils (established in 2011), describes excellence in improvisation as “a performance that is outside of the box, has a good sense of humour and creates one-time, single, large laughter moments, is very visual and has a surprise element”. (Jamal, 2015)<sup>14</sup>. Deafils has developed numerous improvisation interactive activities that they do with the Deaf community across the Netherlands using Nederlandse Gebarentaal (NGT) - Dutch Sign Language of the Netherlands. Jamal explains:

*In the Deaf community historically, improvisation had more preparation and less was done on the spot. Now it is more creative with more improvisation done spontaneously. Today people think theatre is easy but when they are involved in improvisation as the audience they see that it is difficult. When doing improvisation sometimes ideas coalesce – they match and come together and you laugh or sometimes they don't come together and you laugh even more.*

*When theatre is “prepared” people only laugh when everything flows well from each actor and the performance seems without flaws. With improvisation, people laugh both when it flows and when it doesn't flow.*

Said Jamal, 2015 <sup>15</sup>  
Utrecht, Netherlands

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Said Jamal conducted by Anita Small for research on Deaf performing arts in the Netherlands, January 28, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

# *improvisation activities*

Said Jamal shares the following improvisation activities from Deafils with you:

1. Call up two participants –both individuals face towards the audience with one standing behind the other. The person in front places their arms as far behind them as possible; the person behind signs for the person in front (with arms poking through to sign in front of the person so that it looks like one person signing).

2. “Murder Chain” – call up four people from the audience. Don’t use sign – use body movement but not mime to tell who, what, when, where – tell the 1st person the crime, who acts it out for the next and so on.

3. “Interview: Non-existing Sport” – ask audience to name a fictitious sport. In other words, it is made-up. It does not exist. Two people conduct an interview and describe and demonstrate this new sport.

4. Audience makes up a story and tells the actors what emotion to insert when acting out the story. Then the audience changes the emotion and the actors must follow that emotion for the next part of the story. It can be 2-5 actors. When using five actors they may not tell the full story but some part repeated with the different emotions.

5. “Chain Story” – 1st person makes up the first part of a story, 2nd person adds to it and the 1st person either accepts this 2nd part that was added or not. If not, then the 2nd person must make up another version until one is finally accepted and then the story goes on to the next person to make up the next part of the story, etc. You can do this with five people.

6. Performers act out a story. It is serious. If one actor laughs, he is replaced.

7. Assign an animal and a problem to actor #1. The other actor doesn’t know the problem and has to guess what the animal and problem is.

8. Double Action Role Play Game (DRPG) – why use this name? It is based on the name for a video game RPG. If two people play this game it is called double RPG –or DRPG [e.g. Breaking the Ice - play out two characters first three dates – will they stay together?].

You can also find a series of improvisation theatre games at: <http://improvencyclopedia.org/games/><sup>16</sup>

# forum theatre - theatre for social change

## *forum theatre goals*

Forum theatre uses theatre to connect, analyze and discuss the issues of a community to create a story that reflects the collective experience of the community. Developed by the community with the support of a professional forum theatre expert to create the play, it is then performed for the community to deal with the social/ political issues that are relevant to that community. The story development and theatrical performance provides a structured theatrical forum for the community to engage in problem solving to shift the social dynamics and power relations in their society and to address the specific dilemmas of their community.

Forum theatre, when it is produced, engages audience members who wish, to take the place of the actors at a certain point in the drama to find alternative solutions to the challenges being literally “played out” in the performance. The interactive portion of the theatrical performance is guided by a trained “Joker” who is skilled in facilitating the discussion, working with the audience and actors as they shift the scenario to find better, alternate solutions to the drama unfolding. Specific scenes are frozen in order to allow audience members to problem solve the scene and to take the place of individual actors to shift the how the scene unfolds. This becomes a powerful tool to brainstorm alternate solutions and explore their potential consequences for the community.

## *forum theatre process<sup>17</sup>*

The forum theatre approach, or *Theatre of the Oppressed* has been recognized by UNESCO as an effective educational tool for implementing social change.<sup>18</sup> This theatrical approach must be carried out by individuals who have gone through the Joking for Forum Theatre Training together with support from the *Joker Handbook for Forum Theatre* (Iogna and Malbogot, 2001). The handbook is only to be used by individuals who have experienced the Forum Theatre Joker training.

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17 Forum theatre process with exercises described are from research observations by A. Small of the Forum Theatre Workshops organized by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE and led by Luciano Iogna, April, 18, 2015, Ottawa, Ontario; April 25, 2015, Milton, Ontario; and Parent Workshop, August 17, 2015, Milton, Ontario.

18 Iogna, L. and Malbogot, S. (2001). *Joking for Forum Theatre: A Facilitation Handbook*, p.6.

Forum Theatre workshops are intended to be both playful and reflective with opportunities to have fun as well as explore difficult or perhaps emotional issues of the community.

The Forum Theatre workshops begin with three rules:

1. No harm to yourself
2. No harm to others
3. No harm to the environment

After setting these rules, establishing the workshop goals and engaging in warm-ups (such as above), a series of exercises are carried out with members of the community who have signed up for the intensive workshop that will lead to the collection of their stories. It is the collective experience of the community that articulates a story reflecting the key dilemmas facing the community.

## *forum theatre activities*

1. Sociometric exercises determine where someone literally stands on issues of identity and intention. It is a form of mapping experiences, memories, feelings. It leads to open conversation amongst community members to share their overlapping, similar and different experiences and history as a Deaf people.

Sociometry Questions: (Physically move on a point on an imaginary line)

- a. Line up from youngest to oldest. (line)
  - b. How old were you when you learned to sign? (line)
  - c. Where were you born (if the centre was Ottawa)? (circle)
  - d. Your feelings about going to Deaf school? (circle) loved, hated, fearful, other
  - e. Your feelings about leaving Deaf school? (circle) delighted, sad, fearful, other
  - f. Do you miss (long for) a larger Deaf community? (line)
2. Story sharing with mementos of the past in a story sharing circle— souvenirs, drawings, other – go around the left because that is where the heat is.
  3. In the stories you told list the positive and negative characters.
  4. There is no drama without conflict. This game explores the dynamics of power. Two volunteers. Freeze a handshake, assuming a neutral position. Others can now touch the shoulder of one volunteer and step in with a position of higher or lower power. The group gives each image a title and a theme related to the positive and negative situations.



5. Create a tableau or sculpture using these people as clay. Sculpt each person physically or show them how to mold themselves. Create an image based on the stories you shared to re-create positive and negative experiences and to facilitate alternative endings. Assign meanings to the image you have created. Examples:
  - a. Three bored people
    - i. In church with an oral minister
    - ii. In a classroom with an oral teacher
    - iii. Waiting for a nurse
  - b. Two people clapping hands with each other with hands up high and smiling
    - i. School reunion of alumni
    - ii. Teacher they don't like is out sick
    - iii. Captions have been put on the TV

Each workshop ends with a closing circle in which participants can reflect on the day and can openly share any concerns or feelings about what they have shared. This is an important step in ensuring that a play created by the collective experiences of participants highlights what the participants wish to have brought to the fore in the theatre scenarios. This process is in keeping with the value of the collective experience in the Deaf community and a powerful technique for dealing with Deaf community issues.

## *forum theatre case study – Stories from a Suitcase*<sup>19</sup>

### **Storyline - Community Strengths and Challenges**

The play, *Stories from a Suitcase*, is based on a series of forum theatre workshops held by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE with members of the Deaf community in Ottawa and Toronto, led by Forum Theatre expert Luciano Iogna. *Stories from a Suitcase* tells the story of a multi-generational Deaf family attending the provincial schools for Deaf students. As the story unfolds, it articulates the dilemma when the schools shrink and are closed for the next generation. Multiple issues are raised including how to deal with decreased government support, the strength of Deaf heritage passed horizontally across generations through the schools with many Deaf students that cannot be replaced, issues of inequality and aspirations of Deaf individuals in the school system with questions of where and how Deaf educators can make the most impact. It also raises issues of personal decision making and relationships within families with Deaf children. The overarching message is the power of the provincial schools for Deaf children despite their dwindling existence and the huge gap it leaves on the social, educational and political lives of Deaf individuals.

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<sup>19</sup> Appreciation to the Ontario Arts Council for their support for *Stories from a Suitcase*, Artists in the Community, 2015 and *Forum Theatre Deaf Community Engagement for The Script*, “*Stories from a Suitcase*”, Research and Development Project Grant, 2017.



Home-made suitcase from the Zimmer Family used to attend the residential school for Deaf; artifact donated to the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE.

The play was developed and scripted by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE with Forum Theatre expert Luciano logna and cross-cultural consultant Anita Small in collaboration with the Deaf community (2015-16) based on the workshops held. *Stories from a Suitcase* highlights the growth of American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf culture within Ontario residential Deaf schools and the challenges faced by the Deaf community today. *Stories from a Suitcase* using Forum Theatre as an instrument, offers insights and allows for consideration of positive changes for and within the Deaf community.

By the beginning of 2016, after several workshops gathering experiences with Deaf community members, logna drafted scripts of the play. The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE held Research and Development workshops across southern Ontario with dozens of participants.

## Ownership

It is important to note issues of copyright. Since the play was developed specifically based on the collective experiences of members of the Deaf community, facilitated by workshops organized by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD), it was critical that copyright be shared by logna and CCSD. This is not necessarily standard practice of the Playwrights Guild of Canada and must be negotiated with the playwright at the outset.

## Public Reading

The final step was two rehearsed readings of *Stories from a Suitcase* in ASL by Deaf actors with a Deaf director- with an opportunity for the audience to experience Forum Theatre interventions/interactions and to provide script feedback. It was important that this feedback took place in a group context – conducive to the Deaf community.

The public reading by members of the Deaf community of *Stories from a Suitcase* at the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE provided an example of the play's potential and confirmation that it had captured the community's reality as well as where minor revisions were necessary for the final script.

# advancing professional Deaf theatre experimentation

## *signed musical theatre case study – The Black Drum*<sup>20</sup>

*The Black Drum*, is an original signed musical play commissioned by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE and written by Deaf Canadian award-winning poet and playwright Adam Pottle, PhD.<sup>21</sup> Pottle was commissioned by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE to write a play that represents Deaf experience. The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE sought a Deaf Canadian playwright to present a unique signed musical stage play with artistry derived from within the Deaf community and that would appeal to both Deaf and hearing audiences. The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE brought renowned Deaf Founding Artistic Director of Teater Manu, Norway, Mira Zuckermann as Director of *The Black Drum* to weave together dance, signed music, projection, tattoo art, and movement into a performance of visual rhythms from the heart.

### Storyline – Internalized Oppression and Finding Music

*The Black Drum* begins with a single Deaf character covered in tattoos who is grieving the loss of her lover and seeking her own sense of self through her own internal music. Her tattooed characters come to life on stage performing signed music, dance and physical theatre. When her search is over and the narrative is told (through physical theatre, sign language, dance and signed music) the tattoo characters re-assemble on her body as the play closes. Sign language performance is enhanced with projected animation and motion capture.

### Deaf Heritage and Identity Embedded

The drum of *The Black Drum* holds particular significance for Canadian Deaf people as the signing and rhythm of Deaf Rap (1, 2 - 1, 2, 3), popular in schools and Deaf organizations for performances and festivals, were typically accompanied by beats on a large Deaf Rap drum.

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<sup>20</sup> Appreciation to Canada Council for the Arts for their support for *The Black Drum: An Extra-ordinary Deaf Musical!* New Chapter: Arts Program to Mark the 150th Anniversary of Confederation, 2017; *Mentorship for Canadian Deaf Artists*, Supporting Artistic Practice: Sector Innovation and Development Grant, 2018 and Presenting *The Black Drum, Signed Musical to the World!* Arts Abroad: Circulation and Touring, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Adam Pottle's previous drama, *Ultrasound* was co-produced by Toronto's Cahoots Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille.

So too, the tattoo has particular significance for the Canadian Deaf community. The famous Deaf inventor of the light bulb, phonograph and motion picture camera, Thomas Edison, whose father was Canadian (from Nova Scotia and then Southwestern Ontario), filed a patent for the electric stencil pen (1877), the precursor to tattoo machines still used today!

The particular tattoo characters in the play have particular significance in the Deaf community. Butterflies are Deaf and bulldogs with a solid white coat and blue irises tend to be Deaf.

Signed Music, featured in *The Black Drum* is an inter-performance art arising from within the Deaf community. It is distinct from Signed Language Literature such as ASL poetry, and from signed songs which originate from spoken language. Signed Music may incorporate ASL literary poetic features and incorporates elements of non-auditory music expressed as a visual artistic form.<sup>22</sup>

## Evolution and Learning

Much learning was captured in the process of developing *The Black Drum*, as a Deaf led, Deaf commissioned and Deaf authored, Deaf produced, Deaf directed and Deaf acted play.

The dramaturge process was a team effort spanning Norway and Canada. Early versions of the commissioned script evolved through discussion of the playwright with the Director of the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, Director, Cross-Cultural Development, Deaf actor and Dramaturge. Workshopping *The Black Drum* in the summer 2018 and spring 2019 entailed an evolving process experimenting with signed music compositions related to the themes inherent in the play. Choreographed embellishments were overlaid on signed music pieces, appropriate ASL expression of key concepts were discussed as well as continuous reflection on how the play's essence could best come alive on stage without being tied to the English script. Essentially - all artists needed to find their own "voice" through ASL, consistent with the theme of the play. It required an openness of all involved. It was essential that in between workshops, our playwright Adam Pottle spent time working on script revisions in Norway with our Artistic Director and Dramaturge, establishing a trust for collaboration as the play evolved. It is a unique way of working that is in keeping with the high value placed on the collective in the Deaf community. To be a good leader and effective expert in Deaf theatre you need humility to know when support and team work is needed.

## Creative Team Selection

How do you select your team? An issue faced is determining production team, creative team and cast based on life experience in the Deaf community and theatre versus on education. Within the Deaf community we selected based on Deaf theatre experience, recommendation from Deaf theatre, general theatre reputation, attitude and sense of connection through video interviews and in person workshopping of the play. Alliance of Canadian Cinema, television and radio Artists (ACTRA) provides helpful guidelines with tips for auditioning cast and creative team for hearing film production which overlaps with auditioning for hearing theatre.<sup>23</sup> However, for Deaf theatre, different criteria – attitude and openness are primary.

<sup>22</sup> Cripps, J. S., Small, A., Rosenblum, E., & Cripps, J. H. (2015). *Signed Music: Rhythm of the Heart* [Film]. Toronto, ON: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.

<sup>23</sup> See [Guide for Auditioning Deaf Actors](#).

“How we put aside our oppression as the primary force and use the strength of who we are in our artistry, while informed by our oppression, is key.” (Interview with Cripps, J.S. 2019)

For actors wishing to compose signed music, they are helped greatly by studying Deaf history and Deaf art forms and ASL linguistics. In order to be able to play with the language you must know the rules of the language. Conversational language is different from a real understanding of ASL linguistics and how you can play with the linguistic rules effectively and appropriately.

In Deaf theatre, actors are challenged to shift away from a translation mindset from the English and instead, to express their character’s ideas in ASL based on conceptual understanding of the script intent and from the heart. It is not strict interpreting from English and requires a clear mind and brave heart to separate from the script.

The Canada Council for the Arts mentorship program allowed for much interfacing of production team members, creative team and cast with learnings by Deaf and hearing team members - mentors and mentees.

The signed music consultant and choreographer, Pamela Witcher established an approach for providing feedback and revising signed music pieces. This process is well documented on videotape and written documentation. The detailed process and learnings from *The Black Drum* production and mentorship program are forthcoming in *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol II, Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada, Part Two*.

Below are preliminary tips and questions to ask yourself from *The Black Drum* production and creative team.

## Tips

**Learn to share roles**, which is hard for me. Learn to trust those who know their role. Do not be afraid to share your authentic vision and passion, not to give up on what is important to you. You need to identify if it is authentic thinking.

Joanne Cripps, Producer

**Spend some time** learning about Deaf culture, and the way that language impacts experience. Focus on good communication, and be open to learning new ways of communicating your message!

Mira Zuckermann, Artistic Director

**What looks good** on the page won’t necessarily look good on stage. When writing Deaf characters, give the words space. Surround your words with air, and trust the actors to give them life. Don’t get discouraged if the first few drafts don’t work. If the story’s good, it’s worth rewriting, even if it means starting from scratch. Good lines are a dime a dozen.

Adam Pottle, Playwright

**Being a Deaf actor** means double work due to translation (from written language to sign language and this takes extra time). Translating from written language to sign language especially for stage theatre is a completely different ballgame.

Dawn J. Birley, Actor

**Interact** with others and overcome your challenges with different characters in Deaf theatre productions.

Natasha C. Bacchus, Actor

**Deaf experience** is complicated and deep in its own way. That puts us on unique ground where we can share our authentic experience from the stage. In the face of oppression towards our music, it can be painful to find the core of our spiritual, scientific and biological authenticity. To be true to ourselves and our arts, we need to acknowledge the beauty of our complexity and depth. Otherwise, we remain a puppet to gladden the ears.

Pamela Witcher, Signed Music Specialist

**Unlike choreographing to auditory music**, the rhythm of the dance needs to come from the Deaf actor. Once it is set it can be practised over and over. When demonstrating a movement, using a mirror can help so that the actor can visually see better. I tend not to work with mirrors in my rehearsals, but when working with Deaf actors I consider it to be an important tool for visual feedback.

Patricia Allison, Dance Choreographer

**Allow lots of time** for everything. Budget about twice as much time for most things as hearing theatre. Discussing the set or costumes without pictures and models is counterproductive. Be as concretely visual as you can.

Sandi Becker, Stage Manager

**Communicating visually** as a scenic designer in this medium is maybe a bit closer to being a sound designer on other shows, which is to say that there's a great deal you can do to help tell the story - but that you need to be sure that you aren't drowning out the actors. Visual 'noise' is a lot like literal noise that can drown out the performers. ASL is not English. The script is not as literal as it looks on the page. It's more like a dance piece that can only take its shape in the performance.

Ken Mackenzie, Set Designer

**Clothing is an intimate expression** of who we are as people, and can be deeply symbolic. Be genuine in your appreciation of other cultures and in your desire to learn more about them. Show your collaborators who are part of this culture that you trust them to let you know if you are on the wrong track, or if there is something you have missed. Serve the truth of the characters and trust the audience to get it. There is no need to “perform” something which is “true”.

Ruth Albertyn, Costume Designer

**When doing a lighting design for a Deaf production** it is always important to consider the importance of the audience’s visibility of the Deaf performer. Sign Language is their voice and way of communicating to the audience so it is always crucial to maintain a clear focus of each performer as much as possible when they are signing to an audience. Be aware of any lighting special effects (strobe lighting, harsh low front angles directly in the eye line) as these can be extra sensitive to Deaf performers. Always make sure to discuss, practice or work through any lighting sequences that may affect a Deaf performer’s visibility.

Chris Malkowski, Lighting Designer

**Consider how multimedia can cultivate** a creative and collaborative space for artists to communicate and develop their practice. During The Black Drum, video was used for reflection by the artists as they created new performance pieces and was critiqued by their peers. When documenting the artistic process, you cannot capture everything! However you can and should engage all collaborators in a discussion on what they want represented from the artistic process and be open to their feedback.

Ely Lyonblum, Team Lead, Media

## Questions to Ask Yourself in Deaf Theatre Production

? Is the work I am doing worth it? Will it create change?

Joanne Cripps, Producer

? How can I learn about the differences of hearing culture and Deaf culture, and how can the strengths of both be combined to create a powerful performance?

Mira Zuckermann, Artistic Director

? What can you learn from the people you’re working with?

Adam Pottle, Playwright

? For me, it doesn't matter whether it is Deaf theatre or not, my question as an actor is always this: Why are we telling this story and for whom?

Dawn J. Birley, Actor

? How can I overcome working in a new Deaf Theatre Production environment that I have never experienced before as an individual person of colour?

Natasha C. Bacchus, Actor

? "What would music look like if there wasn't any hearing person on the Earth...?". Keeping this in mind helps me deconstruct, reconstruct and authenticate my creative process.

Pamela Witcher, Signed Music Consultant and Choreographer

? Does this choreography not only support the story but also visually support a Deaf audience? Can they see the sign clearly, can they see all the actors clearly?

Patricia Allison, Dance Choreographer

? Question to be asked over and over: Am I assuming that my Deaf colleagues and I share a common experience when it may actually be different?

Sandi Becker, Stage Manager

? (For a hearing designer) - Are you open to what this show might become?

Ken Mackenzie, Set Designer

? How do I best serve this production? Every production has its own specific needs and restrictions, and I have frequently found myself in the position of designing costumes for a culture that is not my own, and one that has been under-represented in the broader society. Where is the line between cultural appropriation and serving the story of a culture that I can appreciate but not be a part of?

Ruth Albertyn, Costume Designer

? I think from a hearing perspective I have been privileged to work in a particular work style so I think its important to ask how can I design and create a space that enables accessibility and collaboration with a non-hearing ensemble.

Chris Malkowski, Lighting Designer

? What can I offer my collaborators and how does that contribute to the Deaf artistic process?

Ely Lyonblum, Team Lead, Media



*national awards program -  
The Defty Awards of Excellence in the Arts*

The Defty Awards of Excellence in the Arts 2014 featured Theatre Youth Awards to encourage new artistic creations. It promotes and celebrates emerging Deaf performing artists and showcases the works of talented young Canadian Deaf performers. The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) established the Defty Awards in the 1970's to promote and recognize the arts of fellow Canadian Deaf performers. The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE under the auspices of CCSD reinstated the Defty Awards in 2013. The TD Bank Group was the presenting sponsor of the Defty Awards of Excellence in the Arts from 2014 – 2018. For details of the Defty Awards of Excellence in the Arts: Theatre Youth Awards please refer to the sample submission form.

## PERFORMERS CALL FOR ENTRY JURIED THEATRE PERFORMANCES

*Defty Theatre Youth Awards*

*Sponsored by*



The Defty Theatre Award in each category will be announced at the Defty Awards ceremony reception on Friday, September 19, 2014 evening during International Deaf Heritage Month.

Winning Canadian Deaf theatre performances will be exhibited  
at the Canadian Deaf Theatre Exhibit  
at the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE  
from May 2014 to May, 2015

Winning Defty Theatre performances receive a Defty award and cash prize (between \$300 - \$1,000)

### Eligibility Criteria

- Open to all Canadian Deaf performers.
- Applicants must be 16 years of age to 34 years of age (inclusive).
- Theatre performances are eligible in the following five categories: drama, comedy, storytelling, poetry and mime.
- The theme is open.
- Theatre performances can be as follows:
  1. An original performance created in ASL/LSQ
  2. An adaptation performed in ASL/LSQ created from another performance in another language (e.g. *Deaferella* or *Jabberwocky* from *Alice in Wonderland* adapted into ASL/LSQ)

or

  3. A translated performance in ASL/LSQ (e.g. *Man of La Mancha*)
- Entries will be juried on digital media and must be submitted on USB and mailed. **No email submissions** please.
- A maximum of one (1) performance may be submitted by each performer for consideration by the jury. A collection of drama, comedy, stories, poems or mime will be accepted in one performance.
- Performances must be between one minute and no more than ten minutes. Submission can be an excerpt of a longer work.
- Required on your **USB**:
  - ⇒ Performance must be submitted in .MOV or MGEG4 format. File must be labeled: LAST NAME.Name of Performance
  - ⇒ A biography (150 words in word document)
  - ⇒ A short performing artist statement (150 words)  
Performing artist statement includes the title, description of the performance and comments to assist in analysis from the performers' perspective. The artist statement can be bulleted or in narrative form.
  - ⇒ Artist photograph (300dpi)
  - ⇒ One photograph of the performance (300dpi)

**Submission Deadline**

- Entries including all support material must be submitted in full and mailed (stamped) **no later than ~~Monday, May 19<sup>th</sup>~~ Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup>.**

**Please submit mailed entries to:**

Re: *Defty Youth Theatre Awards*  
DEAF CULTURE CENTRE  
Distillery Historic District  
34 Distillery Lane  
Toronto, Ontario M5A 3C4

**Selected Performances/Awards**

- All decisions made by the jury panel are final.
- The jurors reserve the right to disqualify any work misrepresented by the digital files.
- No entry may be withdrawn from the exhibition until after closing.
- The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE has permission to photograph and/or share images or samples of accepted work for publicity, educational and reference purposes.
- Entries in each category will be judged for best performance.

**Adjudication**

Performance submissions will be juried by a panel of professionals who are engaged in the performing arts.

**Notification**

Artists meeting the submission deadline will be notified of acceptance by Monday, June 16th, 2014.

**Submission Checklist**

- Completed Entry Form (attached)
- USB containing a digital file of the performance labeled with performing artist's name and performance title (no email submissions please)
- Artist Biography as a Word document (150 words) on the USB
- Artist Statement as a Word document (150 words) on the USB
- 1 Artist photograph (300dpi) on the USB
- 1 Photograph of the performance (300dpi) on the USB

**Shipping and handling**

Postage is the responsibility of the artist.

**Insurance**

- Artists are responsible for maintaining a copy of their performance to ensure backup in case of loss during transit. The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE assumes responsibility for insurance of the performance on USB while on display at the Centre.
- Every reasonable precaution will be employed by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE to handle digital material according to standard professional public exhibition practice.

The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE acknowledges the generous support of TD Bank Group for the *Defty Youth Awards for Excellence in Theatre* and for sponsoring the *Canadian Deaf Theatre Exhibit* in 2014. The Defty Youth Awards for Excellence in Theatre promotes and celebrates emerging Deaf performing artists and showcases the works of talented Canadian Deaf performers.

The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) established the *Defty Awards* in the 1980's to promote and recognize the arts of fellow Deaf Canadians. The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, under the auspices of CCSD, is delighted to reinstate the Canadian *Defty Awards*. The TD Bank Group is the proud presenting sponsor of the *Defty Youth Awards for Excellence in the Arts*.



**The Defty Youth Awards for Excellence in Theatre**

ENTRY FORM

~~Submission Deadline: Monday, May 19th, 2014~~

**POSTPONED DEADLINE for submissions: Thursday, August 7, 2014**

Please complete all sections and sign the submission form below. Submit your application along with all the required support materials. Entries must be complete with support materials and must be mailed (date stamped) by the ~~May 19th~~ August 7<sup>th</sup> deadline to be considered.

Performers Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Text \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Are you between the ages 16 - 34?     Yes     No

**Entry**

Title: (If performance is a collection of short dramatic skits, comedy acts, stories, poems or mime skits, list title of each – maximum 5. They must all be in the same category if it is a collection.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Category (select one genre only):

Drama    Comedy     Storytelling     Poetry     Mime

Duration: (Minimum 1 minute; maximum 10 minutes) \_\_\_\_\_ minutes \_\_\_\_\_ seconds

Theme: \_\_\_\_\_

Language:     ASL     LSQ



### **Additional Rules and Regulations**

1. Date(s) of the performance viewing shall be at the discretion of the organizers.
2. USB's will not be returned. After the selection process, USB's of submissions that were not selected will be destroyed, unless the submitter agrees that they may be exhibited as part of the Canadian Deaf Theatre Exhibit.
3. Anti-Piracy Precautions and Releases: The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE will take all reasonable anti-piracy precautions. Access to performances on video is limited to our Defty jury submission reviewers, program promotion, and individuals responsible for featuring your submission for the Defty Theatre Awards program and for the Canadian Deaf Theatre Exhibit. No duplication or loaning is permitted except as necessary to judge and exhibit your performance through the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE or to promote it. By submitting your material to us, you hereby release the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE and its associated program consultant/s from any and all risk and liability in the event of theft, or breach of copyright of your materials. If you wish to discuss any security measures, please advise us separately by e-mail at [info@deafculturecentre.ca](mailto:info@deafculturecentre.ca).
4. Anyone with a video-camera or taking pictures while the performance is being featured will have their equipment confiscated and individuals involved may face legal action.
5. Travel or accommodation expenses for award recipients cannot be provided for performers.

# Deaf arts institute without boundaries

**What comes next?** The next phase of Deaf theatre across Canada is to establish a *Deaf Arts Institute without Boundaries*. Conceived by Co-Founders/Co-Directors, Joanne Cripps and Anita Small soon after the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE was founded in 2006, its intent is to partner the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE with arts institutions and individuals to build professional artist capacity within the Deaf community. The centre has established itself and built these relationships over the past decade and with the partnerships formed is ready to launch this initiative. *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol II, Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada, Part Two* provides a training mentorship model that serves as the foundation for the *Deaf Arts Institute Without Boundaries*. This mentorship, partnering Deaf artists with established artist individuals and institutes to build capacity can serve as a template for future development within the Deaf artist community beyond those involved in *The Black Drum*.

# glossary

- ASL Poetry** A frozen aesthetic literary form. It has the same features as spoken language poetry including rhyme, rhythm and meter.
- Audism** The notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or to behave in a manner of one who hears.<sup>24</sup> It is a set of individual or group practices that elevates English and other spoken languages and devalues ASL and other signed languages.<sup>25 26</sup>
- Handshape** Describes how the fingers are extended or bent in a particular sign. Each sign can be described by the handshape, by the movement and by the location of the sign and repetition of any of these three features creates a rhyme.
- Practice (verb)** To prepare or rehearse to get better at something
- Practice (noun)** Work of a profession or performance of a profession
- Rhyme** In ASL poetry and in signed music, it includes repetition of the same handshape, repetition of the same movement path or repetition of the same location.<sup>27</sup>
- Rhythm** If the beat is the steady pulse, the rhythm is what you do with the pulse by different combinations of durations, sometimes within the beat and sometimes not. In ASL poetry [and in signed music], it is created by movement paths, assimilation, change of a sign, choice of a sign, handedness, alternating movements, movement duration and size.
- Signed Music** An inter-performance art arising from within the Deaf community. It is distinct from Signed Language Literature such as ASL poetry, and from signed songs which originate from spoken language. Signed Music may incorporate ASL literary poetic features and incorporates elements of non-auditory music expressed as a visual artistic form.<sup>28</sup>

24 Humphries, T. (1977). Doctoral dissertation, Cincinnati, Ohio: Union Institute and University, 12.

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