



Creative Licht: Deaf Audiences
Full Film transcript

00.08 Title
Creative Licht
Interpreting Performances

00.17 Sub Title
Theatre Audience

00.23 Image from the final Creative Licht event held on Sat 18th May 2019 at National Theatre Scotland, Rockvilla, Glasgow
Image shows a group of six workshop participants, seated and standing, around a table discussing staging a performance with embedded interpretation.

00.24 Speaker: Yvonne Strain, SignArts
Image cross fades to Yvonne seated in a wing backed chair in the library at the National Theatre Scotland, Rockvilla Glasgow. Yvonne wears a blue flora print top with a blue scarf, she has mid length dark hair with gold highlights, pinned back with clips on either side of the top of her head.

“I’ve worked with Interpreting within Performance for a long, long time and for the vast majority of years, those years, it wasn’t good. Deaf Audience were coming along and not getting a service that they deserved basically.

They were sitting in audiences making a decision on whether to watch an interpreter at the side of the stage or the performance and they could never come with their family, they could never come with their workmates, from work for a Panto night out or something like that and we were the ones who got told about it a lot of the time.

You would come off stage and as interpreters you were the one who was told what was wrong and what they hadn’t liked and they would spend so much time telling you what they didn’t like that they had no time to even think about what they did like...and that frustration grew over the years.

Once Catherine & I started considering costume, this was aside from theatres supporting this process, we were considering costume, we were considering how we could do something just that little bit more interesting, when we were still side of the stage. When we started doing that we got Deaf people coming up and starting to talk more about what they were seeing on the stage, they were starting to identify the characters, the simple things that we expect when we go to theatre, to understand who is saying what in any production, you know that’s a basic before you even explore the emotions that go with it...but that’s what we started to see more, is folk commenting on the emotional connection that they found with a production...and that drove us to develop our work.

We just slowly but surely started coming together, trying to have a more cohesive approach to the whole process. So that it became more of a dramaturgical consideration and not an access consideration.”

02.20 Image cuts to BSL Signer: David Thompson Deaf Audience member

Image recorded at Jan 2019 Creative Licht event at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

Image shows David in an office space surrounded by desks and filing cabinets with a bright yellow girder running across the background. David wears a blue crew neck jumper; he has dark hair, a short beard and is wearing dark semi framed glasses.

Translation of BSL signing: I'm lucky I have a hearing family and grew up going to see a lot of theatre, mostly in the summer going to the Fringe and the International Festival, and they could tell me which shows would be more suitable, because they were visual, mimed or maybe followed a circus style. Then 28 years ago I started going to see some interpreted performances and some were good but others not so good, so I've always reserved judgement of that area, and wasn't convinced that it's where my passion lay.

02.50 Image cuts to BSL Signer: Stuart Imrie Deaf Audience member

Image recorded at Jan 2019 Creative Licht event at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

Image shows Stuart in an office space surrounded by desks and filing cabinets with a bright yellow girder running across the background. Stuart wears a navy and white hooped Scottish Rugby shirt; he has short dark hair and is clean shaven.

Translation of BSL signing: I really like theatre and the storytelling, but while you can get good interpreters their position can often be too far to either side of the stage and I don't see the sense in that. I like it better when they're amidst the action, I agree with the other person's opinion.

03.05 Image cross fades to archive footage from the stage performance of Falling in Love with Frida by Caroline Bowditch. Clip shows Yvonne Strain as BSL interpreter embedded into the performance, centrally seated in the space, in full costume engaging with the cast during a song.

03.30 Image cuts to BSL Signer: David Thompson Deaf Audience member

(Visual description as before 02.20)

Translation of BSL signing: Well, unfortunately sometimes you can get a really great performance production within a theatre, but sadly the interpreter is poorly lit or positioned wrongly, too far away to actually see easily or are maybe at an angle from where am sitting so I can only see half of their face. We...I have no control over any of that and so they have actually then let me down and most of the time I've had to give the theatre feedback or raise a complaint, get my money back or get a free ticket for another show, but really they should be sorting that out.

04.12 Image cuts to BSL Signer: Stuart Imrie Deaf Audience member

(Visual description as before 02.50)

Translation of BSL signing: : I feel disappointed and saddened when I've not understood or I've been confused. It feels like a waste of time. Yeah.

04.26 Image cuts to BSL Signer: Robert Malone Deaf Audience member
Image recorded at Jan 2019 Creative Licht event at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

Image shows Robert in an office space surrounded by desks and filing cabinets with a bright yellow girder running across the background. Robert wears a round necked jumper with grey, white and black horizontal sections; he has short brown hair and is clean shaven.

Translation of BSL signing: To date with the plays I've been to I've mostly been lucky to have good experiences with the interpreters, haven't had a poor one yet, touch wood. So far! I do always check information in advance though.

04.43 Cut to image from the final Creative Licht event held on Sat 18th May 2019 at National Theatre Scotland, Rockvilla, Glasgow

Image shows a second group of six workshop participants, all standing around a table discussing staging a performance with embedded interpretation.

04.44 Speaker: Yvonne Strain, SignArts

“Over the years I think the amount of occasions we've had to speak to Deaf audiences,...”

04.50 Image cross fades to Yvonne seated in a wing backed chair in the library at the National Theatre Scotland (visual description as before 00.24)

“...so you know Deaf Theatre Clubs of course have been organised, but also just Deaf people being more welcome in venues, when Front of House Staff have been trained in Deaf Awareness and BSL etc it's meant that Deaf people have been more present within a building and are then able to hang about afterwards and chat to you about that. And I think those conversations overall have happened with us as interpreters but the conversation has become wider, it's not been just with us, it's been with box office in a venue, it's been with various theatre companies and so I think their voice is being heard a lot more than what it used to be.”

05.27 Image cuts to BSL Signer: David Thompson Deaf Audience member
(Visual description as before 02.20)

Translation of BSL signing: The best one was last year, First Snow...

05.30 Image changes to split screen showing David on the left and on the right, archive footage of the stage performance of First Snow produced by National Theatre Scotland and Théâtre PÀP, Quebec, with Yvonne Strain as BSL interpreter costumed and embedded into the performance.

Translation cont'd: ...because there were 7 actors speaking French or English and they used 2 BSL interpreters placed, not static on the outside of the performance but instead moving among the actors and working in sync with them, acknowledging one another onstage and it flowed really well, the performance was fantastic. We need something like that, with the interpreters not being placed away to the side of the stage.

06.00 Image cuts to BSL Signer: Stuart Imrie Deaf Audience member
(Visual description as before 02.50)

Translation of BSL signing: I think it's good when you get interpreters that are expressive, have a good standard of BSL and are integrated into the space. I much prefer that because you can see everything clearly, understand the language being used and of course follow the story. If instead their use of BSL is inhibited or they are placed at the side of the stage then you can't identify which actor is speaking and therefore understand. It gets very confusing especially if there are a number of performers and they're moving around, even if the interpretation is clear and they're trying to describe who is saying what, I'm still left not understanding. If I get too confused, I end up switching off, falling asleep or even leaving the theatre.

06.43: Image cuts to Speaker: Yvonne Strain, SignArts
(visual description as before 00.24)

"We want to make sure we're doing this appropriately alongside Deaf performers, we need to find where those balances are. Where does that fit, where doesn't it fit? Where...where could you be making choices, more creative choices with Deaf performers alongside what we're doing because the more you upskill interpreters, the more you're going to upskill the Deaf community purely because they have that better communication, better flow of communication and so they will be able to access more about the Arts and therefore become better Arts practitioners in that process. I'm excited about seeing where that goes in the next 5/10 years. There's people coming through the Conservatoire, deaf and hearing, there's people coming through other establishments who are getting the experience of working with interpreters and getting experience of working with Deaf performers and so their creativity and their expectation of what should happen within a performance is just going to grow."

07.45 Image cuts to BSL Signer: David Thompson Deaf Audience member
(Visual description as before 02.20)

Translation of BSL signing: I think at the moment there's one theatre company Birds of Paradise...

07.50 Image changes to split screen showing David on the left and on the right, archive footage of the stage performance of My Left Right Foot produced by Birds of Paradise theatre Company, with Natalie Macdonald billed as the character Nat/Performing BSL Director.

Translation cont'd: ...who integrate and that makes it much easier to engage with their performances so we need more like that rather than a production placing interpreters at the side, separate from the performance space. We already have plenty of examples of side of stage interpreting but nowhere near enough work being integrated, bringing your interpreter into the space and engaging them in the movement of the production. I hope to see much more development of integrated work in future.

08.16 Image cuts to BSL Signer: Stuart Imrie Deaf Audience member
(Visual description as before 02.50)

Translation of BSL signing: I think the most important thing for Deaf people is that we try to improve things for the future, for them to be made aware that they are welcome in theatres and to encourage greater numbers of Deaf people to come along. It would be great if they felt welcomed. And obviously in the future Deaf people should be part of making that happen.

08.36 Image cuts to BSL Signer: Robert Malone Deaf Audience member
(Visual description as before 02.46)

Translation of BSL signing: It seems to me that there's a diminishing number of Deaf audience attending signed theatre. I think part of the problem is that marketing isn't good enough and also reaching Deaf audiences seems to be difficult, with theatres experiencing barriers when reaching out to Deaf audiences. I don't know what the solution to that is, or how to improve it, but performances need to be marketed well, maybe using word of mouth, Facebook or Twitter, basically doing everything you can to get your information out there! Maybe also having BSL noted on all your posters is a good idea, I never see dates and times of interpreted performances on posters.

09.13 Image cuts to BSL Signer: David Thompson Deaf Audience member
(Visual description as before 02.20)

Translation of BSL signing: You need to follow the example set by Deaf Theatre Clubs. They set up a pre-show session where you would provide an interpreter and have maybe the director or the writer along to meet with the Deaf audience to give some information relating to the background of the production. Having that allows Deaf audience to begin to build an understanding of the production, including photographs of the cast/characters and having the interpreter share sign names of characters too. Being able to access characters sign names and maybe even place names which will come up will help prepare Deaf audiences and mean they can then get into the performance and have a more effortless experience. Try not to place interpreters too far to the side of the stage, like at the curtain, bring them into the stage space. Also, it's not just their heads and upper bodies we focus on, we need to be able to see them clearly from head to toe and for them to be moving with the production...

10.27 Image changes to split screen showing David on the left and on the right, archive footage of the stage performance of My Left Right Foot produced by Birds of Paradise theatre Company, with Natalie Macdonald performing an embedded interpretation of a song from the production.

Translation cont'd: ...Some interpreters can be quite static, providing translations only from their upper body and facial expressions but I prefer when they move with the production, respond physically to the music for example. If interpreters aren't as expressive they don't connect with songs. A lot more training will make things better for interpreters and of course the shows.

10.50 Image cuts to BSL Signer: Stuart Imrie Deaf Audience member
(Visual description as before 02.50)

Translation of BSL signing: I think the best types of interpreters, I don't know, it can depend, a good interpreter for me is someone who is expressive, that's all it needs, that and good BSL. If they are not clear when signing, use a small signing space or aren't expressive then you just don't understand them and get nothing from the production. Being expressive is so important.

11.15 Title Screen
Creative Licht
Interpreting Performances

11.30 Title Screen
Creative Licht is a training programme for Sign Language Interpreters working in Scotland, to develop and improve approaches to BSL interpretation in theatre.

11.38 Title Screen
Creative Licht is worked on jointly by

Company logos: Solar Bear, National Theatre Scotland, Birds of Paradise Theatre Company, SignArts

12.00 Title Screen
Funded by

Organisation logo: Creative Scotland

12.05 Title Screen
Many thanks to

David Thompson, Stuart Imrie, Robert Malone,
Yvonne Strain – SignArts
Catherine King – SignArts

12.25 Title Screen
Featured performances
In order of appearance

Falling in Love with Frida created by Caroline Bowditch

National Theatre Scotland, Théâtre PÀP and HÔTEL-MOTEL present First Snow/Premier Neige
Directed by Patrice Dubois, Written by Davey Anderson, Philippe Ducros and Linda McLean

My Left/Right Foot -The Musical
Written and directed by Robert Softly Gale
Music and lyrics by Scott Gilmour and Claire McKenzie
With additional songs by Richard Thomas
A co-production from Birds of Paradise and National Theatre Scotland

12.38 Title Screen
Film by

Francisco M. Mallo