

# The Performing Arts Access Program Handbook – Part II



*Erin Shields and Maev Beaty are joined onstage by ASL interpreter Joanna Bennett for two performances of Montparnasse. Photo by Aviva Armour Ostroff.*

## **A Practical Toolkit For Producers and Presenters of American Sign Language Interpreted Theatrical Performances**

By Picasso PRO & Creative Trust - 2012

[www.picassopro.org](http://www.picassopro.org) | [www.creativetrust.ca](http://www.creativetrust.ca)

# Handbook Part II - ASL and Theatrical Interpretation

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## **Introduction**

In 2009 Picasso PRO and Creative Trust collaborated to implement an innovative communications access program for blind and Deaf performing arts patrons with the sponsorship of Sun Life Financial. The project took place within the context of our larger three-year partnership (2009-2012) supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Province-wide Program.

More specifically, the program launched communications access through Audio Description (AD) for Blind/Low-Vision Audiences and Theatrical Interpretation, using American Sign Language (ASL), for Deaf/Hard of Hearing audiences. The process was meant to encourage performing arts companies to integrate these services properly into their organizational cultures and programming. To date it has been the only such program in Ontario.

The overarching imperative has been to serve and nurture Toronto's Deaf and disability communities, which are large, diverse, active and growing as our aging population grows. Access is essential for these communities to participate fully in Toronto's cultural life. In turn, access enables theatres to develop new audiences and allow Toronto to rightfully retain its place on a world stage which increasingly reflects the values of diversity and inclusion.

This Guide shares our project with performing and media arts colleagues who may want to include communication access services within their own programs and require more information about the practical process. While funding remains an ongoing challenge for companies, we learned firsthand what creative partnerships can yield through joint fundraising and personnel. Furthermore, Picasso PRO maintains a core of trained Audio Describers and solid working relationships with a network of ASL Interpreters to assist companies that want to take the next step.

In keeping with the project's two streams this handbook deals with: **Audio Description (AD)**. A second handbook covers **American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation**.

## Handbook Part II - ASL and Theatrical Interpretation

### Terms of Reference

**Sign Language Interpretation for the Theatre:** Depending on the degree to which access is part of the creative content, a theatrical production has several options for working with interpreters. The director plays a big role and will decide where to place interpreters and how to light them. The director can choose from two different interpreting locations:

**Zoned:** Interpreters are located within the acting space but perhaps behind the action, up higher on a bench or a balcony. They usually move only during a change of scene or act.

**Shadowed:** Interpreters are located in the acting space but move around freely, shadowing the movement of the actors for whom they are interpreting. They may develop characters to explain their presence in a scene and can interact with the other performers on stage.

**Pre-mounted Shows:** Some theatres host productions that are touring. Therefore, it is not possible to block the interpreters because the show format is already determined and running. A traditional position will have to suffice. Interpreters stand on the house floor, in direct eye line between the Deaf patrons and the actors and they communicate from there. However, the stage manager will know if any extreme left or right positions on stage may be available and the interpreters can work in that limited position.

## **Expertise: Joanna Bennett and excerpts from article “Interpreting Evolution in Theatre”**

Picasso PRO commissioned Joanna Bennett as our key Advisor to lead the Interpreting stream of Creative Trust/Picasso PRO’s Access project. Joanna is Canada’s pre-eminent theatrical interpreter, a professional actor, and has collaborated with Rose Jacobson since 1993. Early on we agreed that Integrated Theatrical Interpretation – zoned, shadowed or a hybrid of both, was our preferred approach for this process although we are amenable to considering more traditional solutions when necessary. In this Handbook we link readers directly to Joanna’s website for much of the information and tools in this section.

Below are excerpts from Joanna’s personal account of the evolution of her own craft; it can be read in full at: <http://signjotheatre.wordpress.com/category/about-theatre-interpreting/>

**“Interpreting evolution in theatre – my learning curve:** Text in theatre can be beautiful but it is the actors who brings it alive with their vitality. When providing access to patrons who are D/deaf and HOH (hard-of-hearing) the goal is to welcome them to see the actor’s energy. As a theatrical interpreter, my goal is to be seamlessly integrated into each scene so that the audience doesn’t miss any of the actor’s presentation.

**History with interpreting styles:** When I attended the summer intensive program *Interpreting for the Theatre* at Juilliard, (NYC) we focused our training with the end goal of interpreting a Broadway show. The interpreter team would be standing on the house floor, off to centre right, facing the audience.

Because action is going on all over the stage, a certain amount of timing is required to “throw focus” to the action (eye gaze indicates to the audience to view something: eg, an actor USR creeps in menacingly behind an unaware actor downstage) and then return to interpreting any missed text or auditory information. This is often referred to as the “ping pong” effect – deaf have to snap their heads back and forth to get all the information. But it was the classroom experience (taught by talented theatrical interpreters and analyzed by deaf diagnosticians) that makes this program essential for interpreters learning how to deal with dialogue, context, meaning, mood etc. Fantastic!

Upon returning home to Toronto I interpreted a few shows in this **traditional** fashion and discovered that deaf patrons, although pleased to have access, were still missing multiple layers of the performance. Like the Broadway shows, this is the only way to interpret a pre-blocked "road show" (a show that tours and sets up the same lighting, sets and maintains the same blocking from town to town). Ideally a location can be found somewhere on stage in a **placed** (zoned) style of interpreting so at least the deaf can keep their eyes up and gather some of the action in their periphery. But often there isn't enough planning to make this happen and the interpreters are standing somewhere in the house, near a section reserved for deaf.

It was then that I learned about a unique team of interpreters in Michigan lead by Dan McDougall & Shelly Tocco (terptheatre.com) They were hosting a weekend workshop on "**shadowing**" so I drove down. We were invited to step into a scene and without focusing on signing we just explored ways to be in the scene creatively. One character I was shadowing had been struck and fell to the ground. I instinctively fell with him, concerned (like his servant or friend) and attempted to help him. I signed his lines from the ground as he shouted to his attacker. This approach made sense to me.

**It's all in the planning:** The level of interpreting work in theatre has evolved and what is evident is the need for more planning, planning, planning! Often well-meaning companies contact me with a few weeks notice, asking if we could interpret a show and they aren't prepared for the cost or preparation required. In this situation, we arrange a placed approach to this show, usually at a lower cost. Unfortunately, this means little preparation which is where the cost lies – not in how many shows are covered. The interpretation suffers as does the audience appreciation without full integration but it suffices because it is last minute. This is a good opportunity though to start thinking about audience development – offer a low price ticket for this "test" show to let the deaf community get used to attending. If no time for a separate rehearsal, tack on an extra interpreted show but don't advertise that to the deaf – this becomes the rehearsal for the interpreters (the hearing audience will enjoy the integration and most likely won't understand any signing mistakes!) However, care has to be taken not to present a poorly interpreted show – if an interpreter accepts the assignment without care of preparation and

consideration for audiences' needs, then they most likely aren't experienced enough and just want the limelight. Ideally the presentation is good enough to keep deaf interested to come back for another show after lots of planning for next season.

**The ultimate scenario:** All of this can be avoided by just planning in advance. The approach is to incorporate the interpreting process almost as a new department! They are a part of the budget and as shows are brought on, discussions happen regarding which shows will be interpreted. Advertising, FOH (front of house), costumes...all areas are aware of this additional creative layer to the show and are excited to be a part of it."

*—Joanna Bennett September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009*

## **Brothel - Integrated Theatrical Interpretation - Factory Theatre**

---- PR and ticketing information for Deaf/HOH Patrons----

*\*this is a sample document- links are no longer active*



### **ASL Interpreted Performances (integrated) BROTHEL #9**

by award-winning writer Anusree Roy

Presented by FACTORY THEATRE  
in partnership with Picasso PRO / Creative Trust

*Brothel #9* reveals a search for freedom in the face of fear

**Sunday, March 6, 2 pm**  
**Wednesday, March 9, 8pm**

To view **the ASL Trailer**: <http://factorytheatre.ca/brotherasl.htm>  
**\$20\* ASL tickets available for purchase in one of the following ways:**

**ONLINE:** <http://www.factorytheatre.ca/brothelasl.htm>  
and enter the promotional code "ASL" at checkout

**IN PERSON:** at the Factory Theatre Box Office (125 Bathurst Street, at Adelaide) for directions and box office hours: <http://www.factorytheatre.ca/hours.htm> using the special code "ASL" or

**BY PHONE:** (416) 504-9971 (no TTY), mentioning the special code "ASL"

The ASL Interpreted performances are made possible through the Sun Life Financial Performing Arts Access Program & Picasso PRO/Creative Trust.

Please note, Factory Theatre is not wheelchair accessible.

\*Service Charges apply



# **Sample Deaf Community Consultant (DCC) Contract**

## **Letter of Agreement**

Between

**John Doe**

(hereinafter called the Deaf Community Consultant)  
of Toronto, Ontario,

And

**Picasso PRO/Creative Trust and X Theatre**

(hereinafter called the Company)  
of Toronto, Ontario

WHEREAS the Company wishes to engage the Deaf Community Consultant to provide his services for the ASL interpreted production of

### ***Name of Play***

(hereinafter called the Play)

to be performed at the \_\_\_\_\_ Theatre in Toronto, Ontario in March, 2011

IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

### **1. Representation**

The Deaf Community Consultant agrees that he will:

- a) Assist the Company with advertising, including create an "ASL trailer";
- b) Inform the Company which seating area is best for optimal viewing;
- c) Attend a rehearsal and advise on access;
- d) Assist the Performance Interpreters with sign choices and teach sign to the cast (if requested) ;
- e) Arrange for signing volunteers in the lobby during the interpreted performances and handle the exit ASL video feedback station.

The Company agrees to:

- a) Communicate with the Deaf Community Consultant regarding all of his responsibilities outlined above;
- b) Allow the Deaf Community Consultant access to an interpreted rehearsal run-through to observe placement of the interpreters and to seek his comments regarding access;
- c) Assist with setting up an ASL video feedback station in the lobby during interpreted performances.

**2. Fee Schedule**

(sample fees based on one-time sponsorship CT/PP)

**Picasso PRO/Creative Trust shall make payment on behalf of X Theatre** to the Deaf Community Consultant as follows: First payment of \$--- by date\_\_\_\_\_ and second payment of \$--- on the last interpreted performance date + **HST** (if applicable) for a total amount of \$--- .

It is agreed that the total payment referred to above is not retractable should the Company cancel any or all parts of this contract.

**3. Credit**

The Deaf Community Consultant shall be credited in the house program and house display boards that specifically address the ASL interpreted performances.

**4. Notices**

No clause in this contract may be deleted or altered without the mutual consent of both parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed the present agreement.

xxxxx  
Project Manager  
Picasso PRO/Creative Trust

xxxxx  
Staff Rep  
X Theatre

xxxxx  
DCC  
John Doe

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Company name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Company name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Deaf Community Consultant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

----end----

**Montparnasse - Integrated Theatrical Interpretation; Groundwater Productions, Theatre Passe Muraille**

----- PR and ticketing information for Deaf/HOH Patrons-----

*\*this is a sample document- links are no longer active*



Produced by Groundwater Productions, in association with Theatre Passe Muraille & in partnership with Picasso PRO/ Creative Trust

**ASL Interpreted Performances (integrated)**

***Montparnasse***

Created by The Company

Written and Performed by Maev Beaty and Erin Shields

Directed by Andrea Donaldson

***An erotic submersion into the world of artist models in Paris in the 1920s.***

**Saturday, March 26, 2pm**

**Wednesday, March 30, 7:30pm**

To view **the ASL Trailer**

**<http://passemuraille.on.ca/montparnasseasl>**

**\$15 ASL tickets with the Special Code "ASL", available for purchase in one of the following ways:**

**ONLINE:** For tickets: **<http://passemuraille.on.ca/montparnasseasl>**

**IN PERSON:** at the Theatre Passe Muraille Box Office (16 Ryerson Ave, corner of Wolsley Street, near Queen and Bathurst), **Box Office Hours:** Tuesday to Saturday 12pm to 6pm, using the special code **"ASL"**

**BY PHONE: 416 - 504-7529** (no TTY), mentioning the special code **"ASL"**

The ASL Interpreted performances are made possible through the Sun Life Financial Performing Arts Access Program & Picasso PRO/Creative Trust.

Please note, the Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace is wheelchair accessible.

\*Service Charges apply

Warning: *Montparnasse* includes a suitable amount of nudity and champagne

## **Orientation for Theatre Companies**

There are two scenarios for theatre companies who wish to provide access for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing patrons by providing ASL interpretation of a show:

**Scenario A** is for companies who have tried interpreting once or twice already, and therefore want to ease into the next step of providing access on a regular basis.

**Scenario B** is for those who have a first time request for access and may not be sure what to do. Here are the basics that are required to pull this off until you can arrange scenario A.

Please click on the link to access First Steps, a Production Summary Page, Production, and Other Needs (budget)

<http://signjotheatre.wordpress.com/category/for-theatre-companies>

For more detailed production questions go to:

<http://signjotheatre.wordpress.com/category/for-theatre-companies/production-questions-in-detail>. Also review Use of Deaf Community Consultant (DCC) at this Link.

## **Orientation for Sign Language Interpreters**

This section assists the service provider (Interpreter) to prepare for an assignment with a theatre company and will alert theatre staff to what they need to consider and provide. Ultimately it itemizes what to include in a contract. Please click on the link:

<http://signjotheatre.wordpress.com/2010/06/21/what-to-include-in-a-contract/>

## Sample Contract

### Letter of Agreement

Between

**Jane Doe**

(hereinafter called the Performance Interpreter)  
of Toronto, Ontario,

And

**Theatre X**

(hereinafter called the Company)  
of Toronto, Ontario

WHEREAS the Company wishes to engage the Performance Interpreter to be integrated into and interpret (into American Sign Language) performances of the play

**Play X**

(hereinafter called the Play)

to be performed at Theatre X in Toronto, Ontario.

AND WHEREAS the Performance Interpreter wishes to publicly perform interpretation of the Play,

IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

#### 1. Representation

The Performance Interpreter agrees that s/he will:

- d) Provide a competent and qualified interpretation, for public performances of the Play on dates and times: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- e) If hired as the Interpreter Director (ID), act as liaison between the performance interpreters and the Company's production team;
- f) Attend all necessary performances and/or rehearsals to learn the material and to be incorporated into the play;
- g) Consult with the ASL/Deaf Community Consultant (hired by the Company) regarding translation of the script into sign language.

The Company agrees:

- f) To allow the Performance Interpreter team (lead by the ID) to make contact with the Director, Stage Manager, Actors and any other key individuals or departments that may affect the interpretation;
- g) To give the Performance Interpreters access to all pertinent rehearsals (when appropriate) and to provide one full studio run-through (date) and one full tech run-through rehearsal (date) with the cast and crew;
- h) To integrate the performance interpreters into the production on stage with the cast;
- i) To hire an ASL/Deaf community consultant for the purpose of assisting the Company with advertising, outreach and access;

- j) To provide the Performers with an appropriate warm-up space and change/makeup/hair facilities on the performance dates.

**2. Fee Schedule (sample is based on one-time sponsorship CT/PP)**

**Picasso PRO/Creative Trust shall make payment on behalf of Theatre X** to the Performance Interpreter as follows: First payment for prep work of \$--- by \_\_\_\_\_ and second payment for performance(s) of \$--- on the last interpreted performance date + **HST** (if applicable) for a total amount of \$---.

It is agreed that the total payment referred to above is not retractable should the Company cancel any or all parts of this contract.

*Note regarding Performance Interpreter's failure to provide service due to last minute serious illness or unavoidable situation: Due to the amount of work and time required to interpret adequately, there likely would not be enough time to prepare a replacement. The Company acknowledges this and accepts responsibility for any consequences. The Performance Interpreter (and the rest of the interpreting team, if applicable) will not receive second payment agreed upon for performance, unless they can find and adequately prepare a replacement and fulfill the performance schedule, which they will endeavor to do. The Interpreters will avoid long distance traveling around show dates and agree to try their best to keep in good health.*

**3. Credit**

Each interpreter shall be credited in the house program and house display boards that specifically address the ASL interpreted performances as "Performance Interpreters".

**4. Notices**

No clause in this contract may be deleted or altered without the mutual consent of both parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed the present agreement.

xxxxx	xxxxx	xxxxx	
<u>Picasso PRO/Creative Trust</u>	<u>Theatre X</u>	<u>Jane Doe</u>	
(Company name)	(Company name)	(name of Interpreter)	

----end----

## **Theatrical Interpretation Workshops for ASL Interpreters**

We offered two workshops to sign language interpreters during the program to bolster understanding and interest in the specialized area of Theatrical Interpretation; in particular Integrated Theatrical Interpretation which maximizes the interplay between performers, staging and interpretation (ITI).

Both workshops were designed and led by Joanna Bennett with support and sessional presentations by Rose Jacobson. The first - Building Bridges - took place in April 2010 and was an introductory workshop which immediately yielded more fluid and collaborative working relationships between our project and the interpreting community. (See sample PR below)

The second on Integrated Theatrical Interpretation (ITI) in January 2012 lasting a full two days, was a practical immersion into an approach and onstage ITI techniques developed by Joanna including an afternoon of try-outs on stage with actors performing a scene from *Montparnasse* under the direction of Andrea Donaldson.

For complete Workshop agenda and notes for ITI January 14/15 go to:

<http://signjotheatre.wordpress.com/>

## Sample PR and Workshop Invitation

**P!CASSO  
PRO**

in collaboration with

**CREATiVE TRUST**

is pleased to invite OASLI members to

**Building Bridges:  
Theatre-Makers working with Sign Language Interpreters**

**Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010, 12:00 - 4:00 pm**  
**(‘Meet and Greet’ social for the first hour – lunch provided!)**

**Centre for Social Innovation, 215 Spadina Avenue, Toronto**  
**ALTERNA ROOM, 4<sup>th</sup> floor**

**Directions:** south-east corner of Spadina & Sullivan Streets, 3 blocks north of Queen St. W.; glass doors to foyer right next to Dark Horse Espresso Bar  
TTC transit, street parking and municipal lot 1 and ½ blocks north of Sullivan same side of street

**Co-Facilitators:**

**Joanna Bennett - ASL/English Interpreter, specializing in performance work**  
**Rose Jacobson – Artistic Principal/Project Manager Picasso PRO**

**The Focus:**

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information – Find out about current activity in production and performance interpreting in Toronto and the growing creation of access in theatre.</li><li>2. Discussion – We need your input! Forecasting and preparing for positive change; managing demand for interpreting services in the performance realm.</li></ol> |
|--|

‘Building Bridges’ is an opportunity for emerging and practicing Interpreters to become more involved in the setting of theatre production and performance. This session is free of charge and part of Picasso PRO/Creative Trust’s ongoing initiatives made possible through the generous support of the **Ontario Trillium Foundation Province-wide Program** & our new **Sun Life Financial Arts Access Program**

For more information please log onto [www.picassopro.org](http://www.picassopro.org) and [www.creativetrust.ca](http://www.creativetrust.ca)

**RSVP by April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Joanna Bennett at: [signjo@gmail.com](mailto:signjo@gmail.com), 416-992-4718**

This workshop is presented in spoken English. ASL interpretation will be provided if requested by a Deaf interpreter OASLI member on or before the deadline date April 9th.

## **Joanna Bennett: Biography, Resume and Community Work**

See: <http://signjotheatre.wordpress.com/2011/01/01/biography-personal/>

## **Select Links for ASL and AD related resources**

For comprehensive links to disability and Deaf arts resources and organizations see:

[www.picassopro.org/resources](http://www.picassopro.org/resources)

For Access related media stories see: [www.picassopro.org/media](http://www.picassopro.org/media)

AVLIC: Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada

Directory of AVLIC Members. Please note: some members choose not to share their status publicly. <http://www.avlic.ca/about/members-directory>

OASLI: Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters

Interpreters facilitate communication between parties who do not share the same language or mode of communication. Professional sign language interpreters.

<http://www.oasli.on.ca/>

American Sign Language and Deaf Studies- George Brown College

<http://www.georgebrown.ca/C114-2012-2013/>

Connecting Communities Interpreting Services (CCIS, Ottawa)

Ontario's Organization of Certified Interpreters. [www.atio.on.ca/](http://www.atio.on.ca/)

Audio Description Coalition California

<http://www.audiodescriptioncoalition.org/aboutstandards.htm>.

VocalEyes Vancouver BC; KickstART Audio Description Program

[www.kickstart-arts.ca](http://www.kickstart-arts.ca)

VocalEyes UK: <http://www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk>

AMI: Accessible Media Inc: [www.ami.ca](http://www.ami.ca)