

Deafway Theatre pre-production workshops Evaluation Report

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CONTENTS

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | Introduction | 3 |
| 2 | Aims of the Evaluation | 3 |
| 3 | Methodology | 3 |
| 4 | Process for delivering 'Burning Bright' Workshops a. Background to Burning Bright [synopsis] b. Reasoning behind translating Burning Bright script to BSL c. Active Analysis (Konstantin Stanislavsky) | 4 4 5 6 |
| 5 | Methodology: Translation of 'Burning Bright' Script from English - BSL | 7 |
| 6 | Translation of Script: The Process | 9 |
| 7 | Observations: Translation of 'Burning Bright' from English script to BSL film translation | 9 |
| 8 | Methodology: Week To Rehearsals | 12 |
| 9 | Rehearsal week two - The Process a. Relationship and Dialogue - a Silent Etude b. Active Analysis Process c. Outcome d. Mask Exercise e. Outcome f. Exercise - 'Who am I?' g. Outcome h. Providing a true voice over interpretation of a Deaf actor i. Methods of presenting productions to hearing and D/deaf audiences involving Deaf/deaf actors j. Seamless presentation of a Deaf actors voice by BSL interpreter's k. Outcome | 13 13 14 14 15 16 16 16 17 17 18 19 |
| 10 | Conclusion | 20 |
| 11 | Future Developments [Recommendations] | 21 |
| | Appendix 1: Deaf Theatre in context to mainstream provision | 22-24 |
| | Appendix 2: British Sign Language as a language | 25 |
| | Appendix 3: Theatre Companies operating in the UK with Deaf Culture Remit | 26 |

1. Introduction

Alison Smith of Pesky People was commissioned to independently evaluate Deafway's Translation (week one) and Rehearsal (week two) pre-production workshops of '**Burning Bright**'¹ a 1950's novella by John Steinbeck.

2. Aims of the Evaluation

This report was commissioned to evaluate the translation and rehearsal process resulting in a report that could be used by Deafway to potential funders, and other interested parties.

Alison Smith is a freelance arts consultant with over twenty years of delivering high quality cultural events, outreach and engagement of Deaf and Disabled audiences. Alison is also herself Deaf and uses BSL (British Sign Language) as her second language.

It was important for Deafway to appoint an Evaluator with understanding of both arts and creative processes in context as well as being fluent in understanding and communicating in BSL.

3. Methodology

Alison observed both stages (translation and rehearsal) over three days documenting through video, photography and note-taking.

Aims of Deafway Theatre Company

- a) to produce high quality live theatre, that is not based on 'Deaf issues', where the only language used on stage is BSL, but where this is made accessible to non-signing members of the audience through live voice-overs;
- b) to become a UK wide touring company;
- c) to ensure every BSL user living in the UK will be able to attend a minimum of one live sign language theatre production each year, within reasonable travelling distance from their home (of an hour);

Deafway Theatre is based in Preston in the North West of England and operates under Deafway a registered charity. Deafway services include residential and youth services, premises for Deaf Clubs, BSL training, international projects with Deaf organisations in Nepal and Uganda, and Deafway Theatre and projects in relation to other Deaf/sign language arts, culture and heritage.

Website: <http://www.deafway.org.uk/>

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burning_Bright

4. Process for delivering 'Burning Bright' workshops:

David Hynes is the Chief Executive of Deafway and also the Artistic Director of Deafway Theatre.

David's first degree is a BA(hons) in Theatre Language from Dartington College of Arts. More recently, David has undertaken Director training with Living Pictures, attending workshops run by Bella Merlin (Active Analysis), Shinaed Rushe (Michael Chekhov) and Elen Bowman (The Science of Acting). He has also attended a wide variety of playwriting workshops at Liverpool Everyman Theatre's 'Everyword' festivals.

In April 2009 David produced, workshopped and directed 'Shadow' a new play written by Mandy Precious and performed in BSL by Deaf actors in the North West of England.

In December 2009 and January 2010 David worked with 9 young Deaf people from the UK and 9 from Nepal to write, workshop and perform two new plays - 'The Traveller' and 'Kamala's Baby'. These were performed in the North West of England and in Kathmandu.

In November/December 2010 David led the Translation workshop and the Rehearsal workshop in preparation for Deafway Theatre's proposed BSL production of John Steinbeck's 'Burning Bright' which are the subject of this evaluation report.

The translation and rehearsal workshops in preparation for the proposed BSL production of 'Burning Bright' took place at Deafway premises in Preston and consisted of two parts:

- Week One: Translation of a section of the script from English to BSL (British Sign Language), and filming of BSL translator Philippa Merricks signing each unit to camera (to be later burned onto DVD for use during rehearsals);
- Week Two: Rehearsal workshops testing out the appropriateness and developing ways of using 'Active Analysis' as a rehearsal technique to be used with Deaf actors (and one BSL using hearing actor).

Both workshop weeks were led by Artistic Director David Hynes.

a. Background to Burning Bright [synopsis]:

The story centres around four characters and is deemed a play with a moral stand

It focuses on Joe Saul, an ageing trapeze artist who desperate to be a father. His young wife, Mordeen, who loves him, suspects that he is sterile, and in order to please him by bearing him a child, she becomes pregnant by Saul's cocky young assistant, Victor.

A long time friend of Saul and Mordeen, Friend Ed (a clown) who helps the couple through the ordeal after Joe discovers that he is indeed infertile and the child can not be his.

The setting for each of the three acts recasts the four characters in different situations,

- Act One: a circus;
- Act Two: a farm - Soul and Ed are neighbouring farmers (Victor appears as Soul's farmhand);
- Act Three (final): a ship - Saul is a Captain on a ship, Mr Victor his mate and Friend Ed is a seaman about to be relocated on to a different ship;

The final act is divided into two with the final scene set in the hospital when the baby is born (however, it makes no reference to any of the three settings). This becomes the conclusion of all three acts.

Burning Bright was written as an experiment of producing the play in novel format. In the book Steinbeck fleshes out the scenes with details of the characters and the environment rather than providing the dialogue and brief stage directions as expected of a script.

Steinbeck's intention was to allow the play to be read by the non-theatrical reader while still allowing the dialogue to be lifted and performed with little adaptation by acting companies.

b. Reasoning behind translating Burning Bright script to BSL:

Deafway Theatre productions are presented in BSL (using Deaf actors) with accompanied voice over in English.

As the performance language used by the actors is to be BSL, it was necessary to translate scripts from written English to BSL before the rehearsal workshops took place. This was crucial for the production process as it:

- a) provided a BSL video script (broken into 'Units') in the preferred language of the actors;
- b) enabled the actors to fully access the script and thus begin to develop an initial live BSL version of each Unit during the Rehearsal workshops (very much as hearing actors would begin to interpret and bring to life a written English script);
- c) ensured the vital starting point that will enabled the creation of a BSL performance that is fully accessible for it's primary audience - Deaf people;

Whereas English is both a spoken and written language and it's meaning can be conveyed via both speech and text, BSL is strikingly different in that it is neither spoken nor written - it is a visual language that uses sign lexicography.

Like many other signed languages it's phonology is defined by elements such as hand shape, orientation, location and motion, and is impossible to convey this in written text. (see Appendix 2).

Therefore, translating a full production script from English to BSL is time consuming and challenging.

Each section of the script required detailed analysis by a BSL translator (Deaf) working with BSL interpreters and the Director. It was important, in the Director's view, to aim, as

far as possible, to produce an emotionally neutral script that did not influence the actors interpretation. This would give Deaf actors the same 'starting point' which hearing actors are faced with when starting rehearsals from a written English script.

Most productions involve a rehearsal process that includes discussion, interpretation and direction of a written script involving actors and a Director whose language is English. In this instance without a BSL script Deaf actors would not have the same level of access to the script as hearing actors. This is due to the fact that many Deaf people (who's first language is BSL) also have poor levels of English (both reading and speech).

At present there are no known BSL video scripts available in the same way we have printed scripts. This leads to each Deaf production company producing their own using their own methods.

Research cites that the average Deaf school-leaver has an average reading age of a nine year old.

This is not to say that Deaf adults do not have intelligence but the fact that the Education system in the UK is failing Deaf children.

Members of the Deaf community, Deaf charities and others have long raised major concerns about levels and standards of education - this includes government policy of emphasis on the oral education of Deaf children to the exclusion of sign language.

c. Active Analysis (Konstantin Stanislavsky)

During the rehearsal workshop week, Artistic Director David Hynes explored the use of **Active Analysis** as a rehearsal process to be used with Deaf actors.

Paraphrasing Bella Merlin from her book 'The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit', Active Analysis is a style of exploring and rehearsing a play script which involves an absolute minimum of 'round the table discussion' - replacing this with exercises which enable the actors to explore the the play, their characters and their interactions in action 'on their feet' using the full range of their 'mental, physical, emotional and experiential' resources.

Active Analysis is not to be confused with 'Affective' or 'Emotional' memory which Stanislavsky explored earlier in his career.

5. Methodology: Translation of 'Burning Bright' Script from BSL - English.

The first week involved translating a section of the written script of 'Burning Bright' from English into BSL, filming this and later burning it to DVD.

The script was broken down by the Artistic Director into a series of 'unit's'. Each division took place at a logical point in the script where a significant change occurs.

The breaking down of the script into units aimed to give both a more manageable script to work on in the process of translation and in rehearsal.

A fully equipped media studio at Deafway Theatre was used to deliver the DVD units supported by a production team consisting of:

| | |
|---|---|
| Artistic Director: David Hynes BSL Translator: Philippa Merricks | BSL/English/Theatre interpreters: Carol Kyle + Catherine Moxon Film, production, editing: Paul Dowdican |
|---|---|

Both BSL interpreters were also present during week two (rehearsal workshops) to maintain continuity.

The aim of the Translation week was to:

- a) Explore the process of translation of Burning Bright from written English into BSL;
- b) Produce a BSL translation of each unit. Each unit was analysed in detail by the BSL translator (Phillipa Merricks) with the Artistic Director and BSL interpreters.
- c) Burn each unit onto DVD;
- d) Provide the Deaf Actors with a BSL script broken down into a series of units for use during the rehearsal process;
- e) Experiment with different 'levels' of BSL translation, producing 'good enough', 'good' and 'in depth' translations as follows:

Units 11-49, Units 51-57, 59-71: 'good enough translation'
Intro and Units 1-10: 'Good' translations of Unit
Unit 10, Unit 50, Unit 58: 'in depth translation'

The reason for producing different levels of BSL translation was based on the understanding that:

- i. There are no suitably experienced translators of theatre scripts (from English to BSL) in the UK.
- ii. Given the above, it is not possible to give the written English script of Burning Bright to one person and ask them to produce a definitive BSL translation.
- iii. It is unlikely that sufficient finances will be available to fund a full, in depth translation of the script by a translation 'team'
- iv. Given the above, it was necessary to explore both what level of authority the BSL script should have in rehearsal and to what extent the actors should/could be allowed to influence the choice of signs used by their characters as informed by the 'Active Analysis' rehearsal process.

There is no known documented methodology to approach and address how Deaf actors can fully access a script in BSL.

Deafways' two stage approach of translation and rehearsal workshop (using Active Analysis) successfully addresses this.

- f) Deliver a neutral BSL script. The reason for this was to ensure that the translator did not influence the script in any way by interpreting and adding expression/emotion or 'tone of voice' which could influence the actors interpretation. The DVD should have the same neutrality as the written English script.

In the same way **a script can be interpreted by hearing actors** through emphasis on (including the use of) speech, pauses, body language and movement that that conveys beyond what is written on a page, so Deaf actors can do the same via signing.

BSL as a language is very visual and relies heavily on expressing it's context and meaning through movement, stance, facial expressions etc. and this had to be stripped down in order to produce each DVD unit.

A particular sign can also have a number of different meanings, usually conveyed through a combination of sign, lip-pattern, syntax and the context of the conversation including what is being signed before and after, as well as the speed of the signing and facial expression.

For example the sign 'angry' in a number of contexts could be interpreted as meaning 'annoyed', 'great to wind up' (it was funny), 'mad', 'fuming', 'furious', 'livid', 'off the wall', 'bottling anger' etc. it has a different meaning according to the stance, movement and visual expression of the person signing.

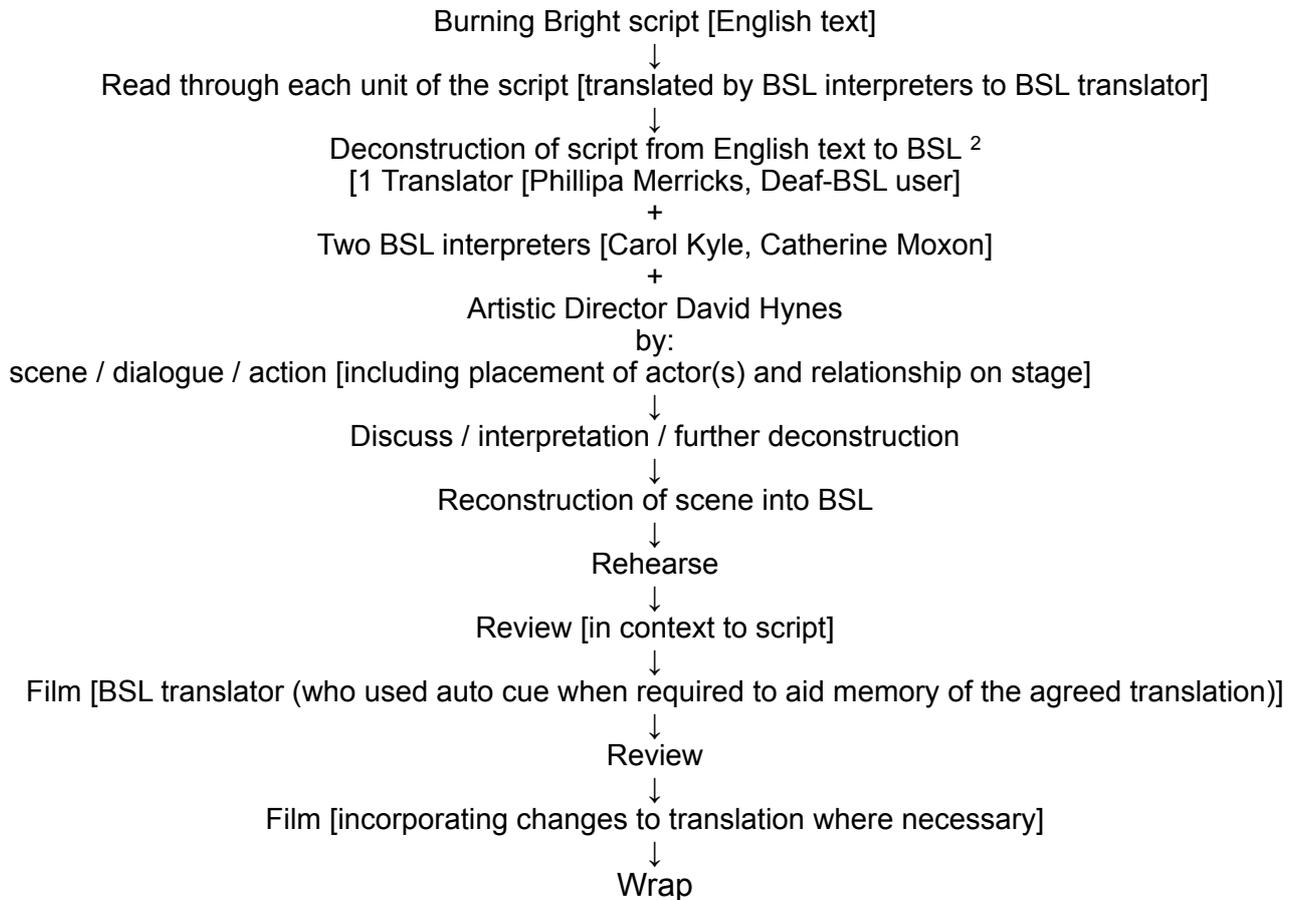
Thus there was a danger that the BSL translator interpreting the script could influence the actors response to the script during rehearsals. A hearing person reading a written English script would not be faced with the same issue.

The director was anxious to avoid this and ensure each BSL unit presented as little emotion as possible.

- g) Find an appropriate way of making it clear to the actors which character was signing on the BSL script at any one time (as only one person was signing the whole script to camera).
- h) Explore the use of an auto cue during filming of the BSL translation. In particular to look at whether the BSL translator would prefer to be read from the original English script on the auto cue, or whether she would prefer to write English words in BSL word order or some other form of notes to enable her to remember the agreed translation.

Emphasis cannot be placed enough on the need for Deaf actors to have the same level of access to scripts as hearing actors during the rehearsal process. In this instance the DVD videos provided a solution.

6. Translation workshop week - The Process:



7. Observations Translation of Burning Bright from English script to BSL film translation:

- This process is lengthy, detailed - and necessary. From the Evaluator's own experience of translating scripts and performing in BSL (for herself and others) it is impossible to do a 'straight' translation in any other way.
- Scripts have to be deconstructed and constructed back together again as both English and BSL are such significantly different languages. English is also written and spoken whilst BSL is not a written language.
- It is important to remember that BSL as a language uses a signed lexicon. Like many other signed languages its phonology is defined by elements such as hand shape,

² Involves

- 'neutral BSL interpretation' which involves not placing emphasis in emotions of signs to convey characteristics of the role speaking as would normally take place in such interpretation
- detailed discussion and translation as many words in English do not exist as equivalent BSL e.g. sayings, phrases and underlining meanings.



orientation, location and motion. It took the British Deaf Association 20 years to research, document and produce the first ever BSL dictionary. This places BSL in context as a complex visual expressive language.

- d) Each scene, dialogue had to be deconstructed in order to find the right signs that conveyed the full meaning of that part of the script.
- e) Much discussion was observed between David the Artistic Director and Phillippa (BSL translator) to ensure continued quality and accuracy of translation of each unit. The BSL interpreters were crucial not only to facilitate the process between Phillippa and David but to also act as BSL interpreters for Phillippa. The interpreters also provided the fully meaning of phases, words and context (present in English but not in BSL) and conveyed them into BSL.
- f) On many occasions a section of prose had to be discussed and explained in great detail. As phrases, words do not exist in BSL and alternative signs had to be found.
- g) For a previous Deafway Theatre production (Shadow) in 2009, a playwright was commissioned to produce a written English play script. However the commission instructed the playwright to create a script which included stage directions, character descriptions, scenes, actions within scenes and indications where each character had monologue/dialogue (plus the 'journey' of that dialogue) - but not the dialogue itself.

The dialogue was deliberately omitted to enable the actors themselves to create the scene and produce the BSL dialogue through improvisations during rehearsals. Whilst this was successful to an extent, the Artistic Director felt that the dialogue produced was of a poorer quality than that which could be written by a playwright - hence the decision to explore the possibility of translating a written English play script into BSL and using the BSL script as the starting point for rehearsals.

- h) The method of using one person (non actor) to translate the play into BSL DVD units was used for the first time by Deafway during the translation workshop that is the subject of this evaluation. The aim was both to ensure a proper translation for use in the rehearsals and to explore the issues and options it would present in the translation process including:

- What are the key criteria to make this process work?
- How will the DVD script support the actors during rehearsals?
- Can the DVD script replace the written script?

Prior to the translation workshop, the Artistic Director investigated using different individuals to sign each character's dialogue on the DVD script, but concluded that this could detract from the delivery of each unit and influence the actors as they might identify with the person translating. It would also more costly to deliver.

- i) It became apparent during week two (the rehearsal workshop) that the aim of producing an 'emotionally neutral' BSL translation had been successful.

8. Methodology: Week Two Rehearsals

The translation week was immediately followed by a full week of rehearsal and script development involving a production team consisting of:

| | |
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| Artistic Director: David Hynes Film, production, editing: Paul Dowdican BSL/English/Theatre interpreters: Carol Kyle + Catherine Moxon | <u>Actors [characters]:</u> Diana Martin [Maureen wife of Joe Saul] Ilan Dwek [Friend Ed] Mike Hawthorne [Joe Saul] Daniel Hanscombe [Victor] - hearing, fluent in BSL [Level 3] |
|--|--|

The actors were also chosen to have some level of 'fit' (personal attributes) with the characters they were to play and to be open to the approaches used by the Artistic Director leading the rehearsals.

The '**Active Analysis**' method (see next page) was central to the series of exercises produced by the Artistic Director during each day's rehearsals.

- Selection of a hearing (rather than Deaf) actor [Daniel] to play Victor had a particular reasoning. The character 'Victor' in the play is an outsider. David Hynes therefore chose a hearing actor in the knowledge that, to a certain extent, he would be an outsider as a hearing actor in a group of Deaf actors.

The rehearsal workshops explored:

- The level of success of working with a BSL script for the first time [and its use from a Deaf actor's point of view in terms of access];
- The use of Active Analysis as a main rehearsal method with Deaf actors, focussing particularly on each actor's development of the character they were playing and on the relationships between the characters.
- The use of mask work as an additional stimulus to character development.
- Exploration of the use of Active Analysis techniques to develop relationships between the BSL interpreters and the characters that the actors were playing in order to improve the quality of the interpreters' voice-over of the characters which will be used in live performance. David Hynes stated that his aim was for the interpreters to 'channel' the actors voices.

This rehearsal week proved intensive for all as the use of Active Analysis demanded a high level of engagement, intensity and trust.

9. Rehearsal workshop week - The Process

For the purpose of this Evaluation four exercises using Active Analysis are highlighted as part of the evaluation.



a) Relationship and Dialogue - a Silent Etude

A series of exercises gave the actors the opportunity to explore their individual characters, their character's relationship with the other characters and their dialogue (using the BSL script).

One of the main exercises used repeatedly involved a '*Silent Etude*'. - this enabled the actors to start developing their characters and relationships with each other.

A *Silent Etude* involves, initially, two actors standing some distance apart, facing each other. They are instructed to maintain eye contact with each other throughout the exercise, but not to communicate by speech, sign or gesture.

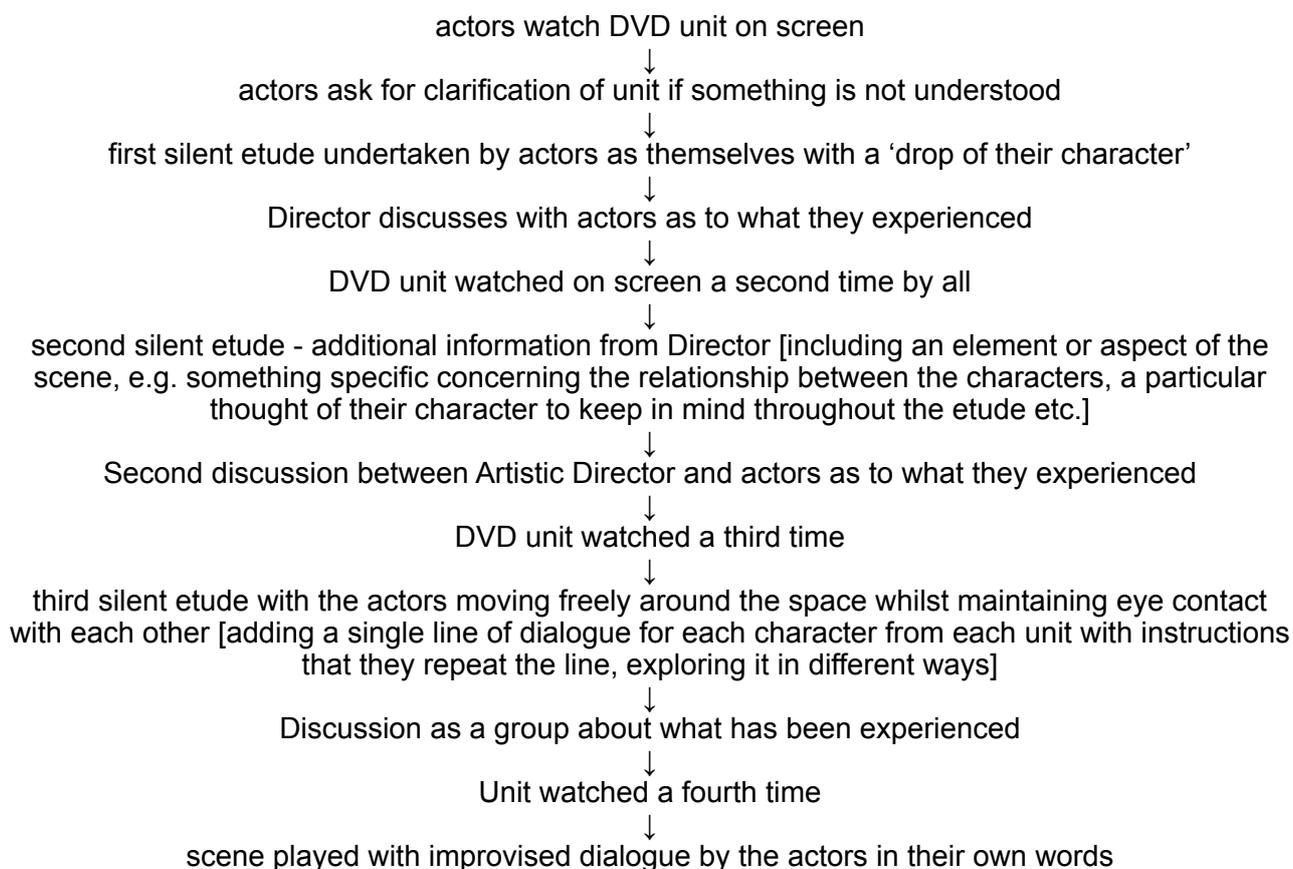
They are asked to 'negotiate' (through eye contact) moving towards each other at a pace and speed which is comfortable and acceptable to both (and which can vary and involve reversals) and then to 'negotiate' (again through eye contact) some form of physical contact with each other which is comfortable and acceptable to both and which feels right. They are then to proceed to that physical contact.

The exercise can either end at this point, or can continue for a while after the physical contact has been made by ending the contact but maintaining/resuming eye contact.

As a series of Silent Etudes are worked through with the same combination of actors/characters, different elements are added to the Etude - e.g. 'do this just as yourselves'; 'do this as yourself, but with a drop of your character in you'; 'do this focussing on e.g. 'the fact that you (the character Mordeen) have just slept with Victor (the other character)' or *focussing on some other specific event or aspect of the character and his/her relationship with the other character(s).*

The *Silent Etude* became the basic framework used during the rehearsals and is a central part of Active Analysis methodology.

b. The Active Analysis process used by the Director during the rehearsal workshop week involved the layering of the character's part (including dialogue) by the actor through a series of etude's for example



Elements of this process were also explored later in the week to develop the relationships between the interpreters and the characters with a aim of making a strong and real connection between the interpreter and the character in order to enable the interpreter to 'channel' the actors voice.

c. Outcome

The BSL script on DVD was crucial for the actors to fully engage with the play. There was no other way this could be done.

All three of the (Deaf) actors confirmed they had major difficulty in delivering acting jobs following written scripts due to English being their second language. The DVD was instrumental in making the script accessible.

The written script was referred to on two occasions during the workshop whilst the evaluator was present - at sticking points in translating and acting the dialogue.

This was to ensure the full meaning of the text was not lost and to explore the differences in BSL for example:

MORDEEN

“It’s a child’s game to make good things better. I remember holding a piece of white cake with black frosting and pretending it was not mine. That was to make it nicer when I tasted it. Now Joe, that’s better. The red is gone out of your eyes - like new split coal - that’s black! But you were angry, or very troubled”

Burning Bright, John Steinbeck pages 13-14 Unit 21 Mordeen remembers the cake

The focus in this extract is the interpretation of the cake and reference to ‘the red is gone out of your eyes - like new split coal - that’s black’. To capture the true meaning in BSL ‘red’ and ‘black’ would be signed as the colours red (index finger touching bottom lip) and black (clenched hand on cheek).

However in context of the script Mordeen is talking about the look and feelings Joe was projecting through his eyes. This could not be signed purely in terms of the colours as there would be insufficient information to portray the true meaning to a Deaf/BSL audience. This section had therefore to be discussed in detail and signed differently.

I also witnessed in a very short timescale, each actor’s character development over the two days of rehearsals as I observed.

As a direct result of using Active Analysis and direction from the Artistic Director the quality of work and acting was extremely high.

d) Mask exercise.



An integral part of Active Analysis is freeing up the actor, removing the blocks and ‘masks’ that are a barrier to him/her fully accessing their mental, physical, emotional and experiential resources and experiences.

The Director wished to experiment with including some mask work in the rehearsal process.

Not with the intention of using masks in performance, but rather as an aid to freeing up the actor and removing some of their ‘blocks’.

Following a number of *Silent Etudes*, the actors were presented with the masks and asked to look at them, to discuss which characters were most represented by each - but not to put on any mask.

After they had completed this, the next set of instructions including the sequence of activities to follow were explained to the actors. Then, in turn, each actor was asked to stand at one end of the room looking away from the other members of the company.

The other members of the company were then asked to select the mask which they felt best represented some aspect(s) of the character the chosen actor was playing.

The Director then collected the chosen mask and, holding it face down, asked the chosen actor to put it on. He then lifted a mirror up to the chosen actor so that he/she saw him/herself wearing that mask.

The mirror was then lowered. The actor was then to allow the mask to take over their body and posture/physicality and then to allow the mask to guide as it wished.

e. Outcome

An intense thought provoking exercise that, to a different extent with each actor, freed them to access their mental, physical, emotional and experiential resources through the 'vehicle' of the mask.

f. Who am I?

Each actor took time to develop a piece of monologue (not in the script) that came from their character's memory of an event from a time before the play began.

The starting point for this exercise was again a *Silent Etude* (this time working alone), with each actor choosing a scene from the life of their character's past to focus on and explore and 'live through'.

The aim of the Etude was to create a real memory in the actor/character which he/she would then draw on to create the monologue.

g. Outcome

The outcome for each exercise provided a platform on which to build and develop each character and interpretation of the script and directions.

The level of professionalism and quality of acting by each actor during this period of work was extremely high.

Diane [Mordeen] presented an extremely eloquent piece about being invited to a birthday party, not wearing the right dress and remembering her desire to own something that was actually belonged to her - then stealing the birthday cake [reference to Unit 21]:

'I remember holding a piece of white cake with black frosting and pretending it was not mine' that was to make it nicer when I tasted it'

As each actor presented their character's monologue in turn and it was at this point I fully understood the reasoning behind **Active Analysis** methodology and use of the *Silent Etudes*.

It enabled each actor to build their characters and present the story of a catalyst moment in that character's life.

The exercise then led onto the next two sections:

- process for providing a true voice over for a Deaf actor
- seamless presentation of a Deaf actors voice by BSL interpreter's voice over

I observed that each exercise delivered by the Artistic Director was designed to explore the depth required to enable each actor to fully understand and act/live each unit of the script, it was handled with absolute care, sensitivity and it was extremely successful.

h. Providing true voice over interpretation of a Deaf actor

This is an area that is rarely discussed, encountered or addressed in a theatre context where a hearing person interprets or speaks for a Deaf actor.

Deaf people in every day situations - work, meetings and on stage who use British Sign Language Interpreters are reliant on those interpreters to be their 'ears' and 'voice' to a predominately hearing world.

This reliance, at times, can be problematic. The Deaf person is totally dependant on the quality of the BSL interpreters skills *in* both signing the translation [from English to BSL to them] and in *providing their voice over* (from BSL to English) on behalf of the Deaf person.

Both require immense skills and upwards of ten years training to be qualified both in advanced English and British Sign Language Interpretation. Currently BSL theatre interpreters require no additional qualification thank that of a qualified BSL interpreter and learn 'on the job'.

A variety of problems can be encountered in everyday situations including poor level of interpretation. Some Deaf people view BSL interpreters with suspicion and there have been instances of Deaf people being disempowered through poor quality interpreting. This can include an error in booking a trainee interpreter who is not experienced enough to interpret the given situation.

This is not to imply that most BSL interpreters do not work to a high standard or work to promote the empowerment and independence of their Deaf client.

It is considered that approximately 60-80% of English is fully translated and presented in BSL by the interpreter to Deaf client(s) and the meaning and context to a conversation, seminar or event can be missed as a result. The interpreter also has to select what information is important and should be interpreted and translate in a matter of seconds.

i. Methods of presenting productions to hearing and D/deaf audiences involving Deaf/deaf actors:

- BSL interpreter stands at the side of the stage (or in the wings) providing voice-over of the character on stage.

This is problematic as it means the Deaf actor's voice is completely dependant on the translation provided by the interpreter. The quality can vary as does the conveyance of that characters voice. It can include a female interpreter providing voice over for a male character.

- Actors on stage provide voice-over interpretation of a character [as featured in Graeae Theatre Company and Deafinitely Theatre Company productions].

This can work extremely well however it further detracts from the production as the actor signing in BSL has a hearing actor speaking their part standing alongside them.

- Speech to text (or captioning) as provided by companies such as Stagertext [the text transcript of the acting appears in a large box at the side of the stage].

However this is considered distraction for hearing audiences. It also relies on good English and reading ability of audience members.

All three methods fail to provide high quality speech delivery as none convey the 'voice' of the Deaf actor's character.

Following on from the 'Who am I' exercise described above, each interpreter in turn was asked to choose one character for the following exercise, designed to explore how a Deaf actors voice could be found and 'channelled' by the interpreter.

j. Seamless presentation of a Deaf actors voice by BSL interpreter's voice over

Whilst this was carried out by both interpreters (working with two different characters) this report focuses on the exercises involving the relationship between between 'Mordeen' (Deaf actress Diane Martin) and the BSL interpreter (Catherine Moxon) who would be delivering the voice over translation.

Again a *Silent Etude* was used to build the relationship between Mordeen and the interpreter.

- Diane was asked to get into the character of Mordeen and Catherine was asked to be herself (a working interpreter).
- They were then asked to undertake the basic *Silent Etude* (starting at opposite ends of the room to each other, by use only of eye contact, negotiating moving towards each other, negotiating some form of touch etc.).
- In addition, during the *Silent Etude*, Catherine was asked to focus on communicating to Mordeen (again through eye contact only) the fact that she (Mordeen) could trust her to give a true and faithful voice-over.
- Mordeen was asked to focus on asking Catherine (through eye contact only) whether she could trust her to provide her with a true an faithful voice-over.

During the exercise I observed that at times both Diane and Catherine stepped backwards, before walking forward to eventually meeting in the middle.

The outcome was one of building trust and connection to work together as equals with the sole aim that interpreter would 'channel' the character Mordeen's voice.

Immediately following the *Silent Etude*, David asked Mordeen to find a comfortable place in the room, to settle there with Catherine as her interpreter, and to proceed to tell her story, from the memory of the birthday party (i.e. the monologue which Diane had created during the 'Who am I' exercise).

Catherine chose to sit at Mordeen's feet to 'channel' her voice as she told the story - and the voice-over was seamless.

It was a profound and an emotional exercise to witness as an evaluator. In addition, discussion with all the actors was managed by David with immense care and sensitivity.

As Deafway works towards producing a full performance and work by both actors and interpreters such seamless presentation would set an extremely high bar for which other

companies would need to reach and a complete high quality accessible production for Deaf audiences.

This exercise is in itself inherently provocative as Deaf people have very much been at the 'mercy' of the quality of BSL / voice over translation provided their interpreter. Whilst the majority of interpreters work to a high standard there is no escaping a fact (from a Deaf person's perspective) of their dependency and reliability on that person to interpret for them.

k. Outcome

A flawless connection between both the Deaf actor and BSL interpreter.

The fluidity of translation in 'voice over' presented a scene where both Deaf acting in BSL and speech were in complete tandem.

It is this very aim that David Hynes is trying to create to produce a play that provides high quality Deaf production with a smooth translation in English 'voice over' so that the **BSL interpreter 'channels' the Deaf actor's voice.**

This ensures a production that is both accessible, and can be fully engaged with, by both Deaf and hearing audiences.

10. Conclusion

The overriding observation over the two days of workshops was that of high quality work and acting. It was thought provoking, thorough and intense on all parties.

It is rare to have such opportunity to observe the process and any funder should not underestimate the significance and necessity for this type of pre-production work.

It is extremely important that any evaluation of future work produced by Deafway Theatre be delivered by someone with fluent BSL and understanding of Deaf theatre and methods. Otherwise the Evaluator also has to be accompanied by a BSL interpreter which adds to the cost of the evaluation (at approximately £25-£50 / hour with two interpreters being required for meetings of more than 2 hours due to health and safety issues).

At present there is little evidence documenting the artistic direction and methodology used within Deaf theatre and the process used by Artistic Director David Hynes is to be applauded.

Having watched a number of Deaf led BSL productions in theatre in the last 20 years I was struck by the level of quality that I have rarely witnessed in theatre productions delivered by Deaf Theatre companies.

The quality of work tends to vary from production to production and not to be on a par to mainstream productions.

The UK no longer has a national Deaf Theatre to raise and maintain standards or be at the leading edge of Deaf Theatre delivery and methodology which is missing.

To conclude David Hynes leadership and his approach using Active Analysis fitted extremely well with both the workshop development of 'Burning Bright' and his work with the Deaf and Hearing actors.

11. Future development recommendations:

Deafway Theatre Company should consider:

1. Strengthening it's partnership links with other theatre companies in the North West or beyond. This would provide opportunities for collaborations and exchange of skills including internationally.
2. Produce a flexible Action Plan (up to 3/5 years) and outline Deafway Artistic Policy.

However, given the current economic climate and shortage of potential funding, I recognise that a more pragmatic and flexible approach is necessary in order to take advantage of the limited funding opportunities which may become available. This will carry the company forward in it's artistic vision and continued high quality of work.

3. Develop a media pack for potential funders/partnerships to illustrate (in images and video) the workshop process explored to date. This could be uploaded in a closed invite only section of Deafway's website and be sent as a URL link (this avoids the issue of copying material and sharing video content that is high in GB/MB). Alternative lies in a shared Dropbox/could service.
4. Continue to develop the methodology for producing accessible scripts for productions. The use of Active Analysis has been successful and I appreciate the need to investigate it's potential and other approaches further.

This should be presented to Arts Council England North West to move forward a strategy of funding and supporting for Deaf Theatre.

Whilst Arts Council England produced a Deaf Arts Audit in the late 1990's (of which I was the instigator) no analysis has been done since to address a number of issues including:

- a) The lack of Deaf actors with high level of live theatre training and experience (and lack of opportunities).
 - b) Current provision and opportunities available (including mainstream) for actors, audiences and participants.
 - c) Methodology for addressing 'voice-over' requirements while retaining the role of the BSL interpreter.
 - d) The need (and cost of delivering) a translation process - as illustrated by this two week workshop period.
5. Working towards developing a production programme of works including 'Burning Bright'.

APPENDIX 1:

Deaf Theatre in context to mainstream provision

In a cultural context **Arts Council England's "Achieving Great Art: A Strategic Framework for the Arts"** it highlights theatre provision as :

Meeting the goals of Arts Council England's "Achieving Great Art: A Strategic Framework for the Arts"³ outlines 5 main goals which at present fails to both engage and deliver high quality culture to Deaf audiences.

Deaf audiences and Deaf actors whose first language is BSL are not being given the opportunity of experiencing or developing high quality talent and artistic excellence. They are being denied the enriching and inspiring experiences that high quality, fully accessible scripts, rehearsal processes and performances would provide.

Both Goal 1 and 2 of ACE's Achieving Great Art: A Strategic Framework for the Arts' fail the Deaf community as a result; Deaf audiences are very badly served in how they access cultural events including theatre in contrast to the opportunities offered to hearing audiences in the UK.

This is illustrated by contrasting the number of productions with those that are accessible to Deaf BSL users there were thirty-seven BSL interpreted productions serving 70,000 Deaf BSL users across the whole of England (Jan-March 2011).

³ http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/achieving_great_art_for_everyone.pdf

Achieving and accessing great art - a Deaf perspective:

**England has a network
of**

50 regional theatres

40 West End theatres

In the period 22 January - 30 March 2011 (a total of sixty-nine days)

**3 days of fully accessible productions were available for 70,000 Deaf BSL users
in England**

37 productions were BSL interpreted

These three days of theatre productions were delivered by Deafinitely Theatre who presented four new plays (entitled 4 Plays) by Deaf writers at the Drill Hall in London on 1-12 Feb 2011.

There is a network of approximately **50** regionally producing theatres and **40** theatres in the west end of London yet only **37** BSL interpreted productions served **70,000** Deaf BSL users of all the events programmed across the whole of England.

There are three main theatre companies providing BSL productions for Deaf audiences (not including Chicken Shed and other theatre companies for people with learning disabilities). These are:

* Deafinitely Theatre Company

* Graeae theatre company

* Tin Bath Theatre [use visual text projections in translation]

* Shape London's National Deaf Theatre Academy.

Deaf audiences (particularly those who are BSL users) are being let down with severely limited access to cultural activities that is available in their first language - British Sign Language.

This includes lack of:

- captioned performances
- subtitled film screenings
- poor quality induction loops and infra red systems in cinemas and cultural venues
- lack of number of British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreted events and performances available regionally

Therefore in the context of arts provision currently being delivered for Deaf audiences the wider culture sector is FAILING to deliver high quality culture to Deaf audiences or to engage them in a strategic or meaningful way.

With approximately 10 million Deaf or hard of hearing people in the UK (800,000 with a severe or profound hearing loss). Of those, around 70,000 Deaf people are BSL users whereby their first language is BSL and English their second language.⁴

Where a Deaf person's first language is BSL and English second commonly poor literacy levels prevent Deaf BSL users from fully accessing written material, subtitles and captioning events.

If BSL interpreted productions are provided, it is common to have only one BSL performance per production run (this is primarily due to the cost involved in preparing and presenting BSL interpreted performances).

This results in Deaf audiences being severely limited access to both:

- the type of performance that are available and are BSL interpreted in a theatre setting
- the date/time that they can attend to chose when they want to visit as opposed to what is offered by the venue/theatre/touring production

Adding to this the ratio of qualified sign language interpreters to number of Deaf people across the UK is 1:275 Deaf people.

Deaf people are sadly being poorly served culturally.

⁴ <http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/your-hearing/about-deafness-and-hearing-loss/statistics/adults-who-are-deaf-or-have-a-hearing-loss-in-the-uk.aspx>

APPENDIX 2:

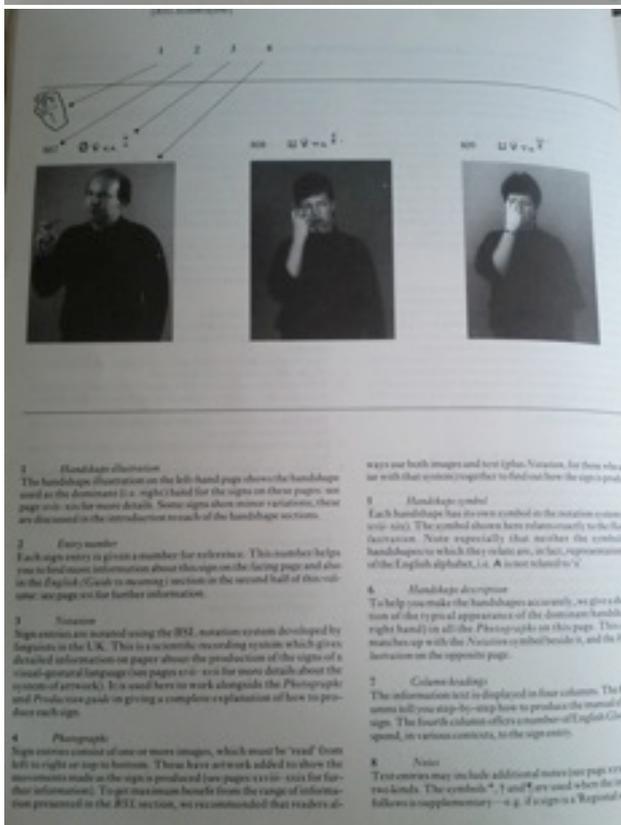
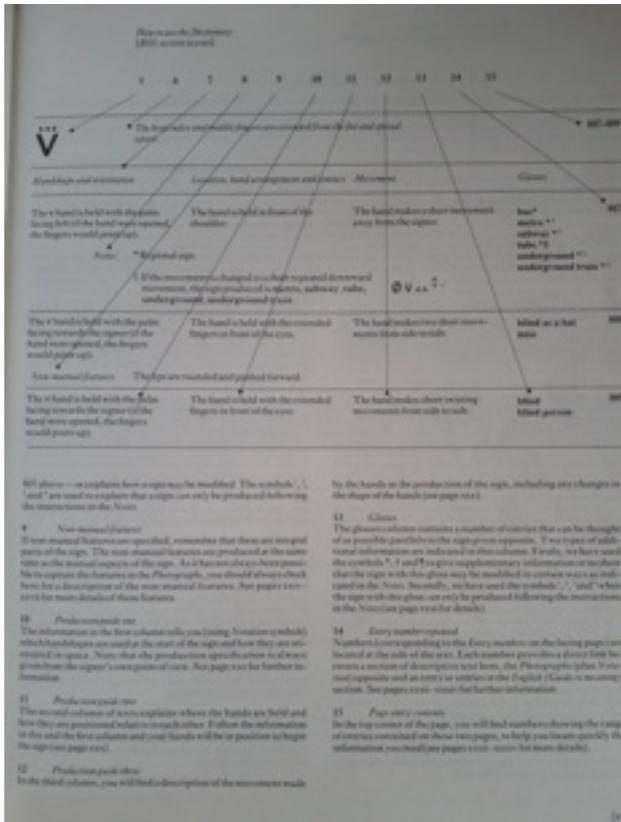
British Sign Language as a language

British Sign Language uses sign lexiconography. Like many other signed languages it's phonology is defined by elements such as hand shape, orientation, location and motion.

It uses a topic-comment structure and canonical word order outside the comments structure is OSV, noun phrases are head-initial.⁵

BSL is a linguistic language in it's own right with The British Government officially recognised BSL as an official language in March 2003.

The Dictionary of British Sign Language/ English produced by The British Deaf Association in 1992 uses notations [Page xiv and [xv] illustrate].



The dictionary outlines the detail of each sign consisting of

- handshape
- notation [developed by linguists in the UK]
- handshape symbol
- notes [including regional variations and how the sign can be modified]

As BSL is a visual language there are 57 handshapes grouped into 22 'families'.

Unlike English BSL does not use the 26 letters of the English alphabet in the A ... B... C order.

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Sign_Language

⁵ http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dictionary-British-Sign-Language-Association/dp/0571143466/ref=pd_sim_b_8

Theatre companies operating in the UK with Deaf culture remit:

Graeae Theatre Company (Disabled and Deaf), Artistic Director Jenny Sealey

<http://www.graeae.org>

Deafinitely Theatre (Artistic Director Paula Garfield)

<http://www.deafinitelytheatre.co.uk/>

Shape London National Deaf Theatre Academy

<http://www.shapearts.org.uk/projects/projectdetail/index.asp?view=20>

Tin Bath Theatre

<http://tinbaththeatre.com/>