



PROJECT MUSE®

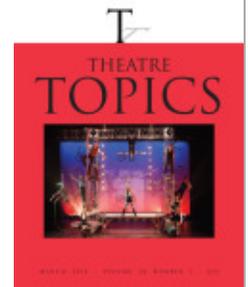
The Sign Language Interpreted Performance: A Failure of
Access Provision for Deaf Spectators

Michael Richardson

Theatre Topics, Volume 28, Number 1, March 2018, pp. 63-74 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2018.0009>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/690012>

The Sign Language Interpreted Performance: A Failure of Access Provision for Deaf Spectators

Michael Richardson

Introduction

Sign language interpreted performances (SLIPs) are performances of spoken-language theatre rendered simultaneously to Deaf spectators through a single interpreter using sign language (Gebron; Rocks 2015) rather than other access tools, such as supertitles or captions. Initially requested from within the Deaf community, nowadays the demand for SLIPs is driven more by audience-development goals and access requirements (Simpson), and significant time and money are invested in their provision in the UK by both producing and receiving theatres. Despite this, the number of Deaf people attending is lower than expected (Lee), and Deaf theatre-makers suggest that SLIPs do not offer genuine accessibility (Bangs; Conley).

My fieldwork, undertaken with audiences and theatre managers at SLIPs, as well as my interview with a practicing interpreter, joins a growing body of research that strongly suggests that SLIPs are not effective for Deaf spectators, demonstrably failing on three levels: failure to appropriately capitalize the theatrical space; failure to conceptualize the interpreter as performer; and failure to create a meaningful translation. “I feel I picked up half the performance and half the interpreter, but I had to take that and create something myself. It’s not good. It wasn’t clear.” This assessment, echoed in some form by all of the Deaf respondents, suggests that their ability to understand the play is compromised by the way the performance is delivered. If we consider theatre not as “stage art” but “communicative event” (Sauter), it becomes clear how and to what degree SLIPs by their very nature impede the participation of Deaf spectators.

The data are not, however, all negative; opportunities to consolidate existing provision, improve it, or replace it with something better are also identified. Hence this essay argues that SLIPs as currently delivered are not effective in providing accessibility for Deaf spectators; instead, they represent a failed technique of theatre-making that has been largely abandoned by the Deaf community. However, if theatre-makers who are currently committed to maintaining the status quo are willing and able to recognize that SLIPs are a failed technique and to consider more creative uses of the financial investment in them, then it may be possible to develop genuinely accessible ways of engaging Deaf spectators.

Researcher Positionality

I am a hearing theatre director who has worked in opera, musical theatre, and most significantly, youth theatre (Richardson 2015). I began my engagement with the Deaf community over ten years ago while running a youth arts organization: a residential Deaf school relocated to the area in which my organization worked, bringing Deaf young people to rehearsals and Deaf adults to performances. Following convention, I initially used SLIPs in an attempt to provide accessibility, but

my instincts were that, in the standard model, these were ineffective. In response to those instincts I undertook several practice-based projects with the aim of improving accessibility, experimenting with the placement of the interpreter onstage, and (in a production of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*) having lead roles simultaneously characterized by two actors, one signing and one singing, and using sign language in place of choreography for the chorus. This recent study follows in part from my realization that, during these projects, my exploration of the participation of Deaf people in theatre was conducted entirely from my perspective as a hearing person.

Despite not working directly with Deaf people in theatre, I have made other efforts to engage with the Deaf community. I have learned British Sign Language (BSL) and subsequently developed friendships within my local Deaf community, and have worked with Deaf people in other capacities. These competences supported my efforts to recruit Deaf participants for this study, to generate data with them in their own language without relying upon an interpreter, and to translate that data into written English. All the quotes given in this essay, unless stated otherwise, are my own English translations of data generated in BSL from Deaf respondents.

The Meaning of Deaf

The term *deaf* means different things to different people. It signifies both audiological deficiency and a sense of cultural identity, the latter usually referenced in academic practice by the capitalized form *Deaf* (Ladd). The cultural model is a complex construct derived originally from the experience of Americans who were profoundly and pre-lingually Deaf; but it also has a fluid relationship with the hard of hearing, the late deafened, and the hearing children of Deaf adults who are brought up within Deaf culture (Brueggemann; Davis; Hoffmeister). It is beyond the scope of this essay, however, to describe this cultural model of Deafness in detail; rather, I refer readers to the seminal early work of Padden and Humphries, and *Deaf Gain*, a more recent volume edited by Bauman and Murray, both of which serve as useful starting points. Here, I introduce only two relevant features: the use of a signed language as a first language, and the significance of storytelling and performance. When I use the term *Deaf* in this essay I am referring specifically to those people who choose to participate in theatre through the medium of BSL, irrespective of other cultural markers.

Sign languages are visual spatial languages expressed on the face, hands, and body. Syntactically distinct from spoken languages, they use three-dimensional space both to map out the physical relationships among objects in the real world and to create grammatical building blocks for communication (Sutton-Spence and Woll). Rather than being made-up languages (Calton) or merely gestural representations of the local spoken language, they are now widely recognized as real languages with the same properties as spoken languages, but expressed in a different modality (Meier et al.).

Sign languages cannot be rendered in any practicable written form. Accordingly, Deaf culture is an “oral” (traditional) culture (Peters), transmitted through storytelling, typically the peer-to-peer telling in sign language of personal-experience stories (Avon). In all cultures there is a progression along the performance continuum from conversation to platform storytelling and eventually theatre (Wilson). In the Deaf community, storytelling, performed regularly in Deaf schools and Deaf clubs, forms the basis of “indigenous Deaf theatre” (Peters), typically a montage of stories, sign language poetry, Deaf comedy, and short sketches (Padden and Humphries).

Following the establishment of the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) in the United States in 1967, Dorothy Miles and Lou Fant defined *Deaf theatre* as Deaf actors performing in sign language and presenting material onstage that reflects the life experiences of Deaf audiences; their intention was to reinforce the significance of indigenous Deaf performance and separate it from what they called the “sign language theatre” of the NTD.¹ The latter model had Deaf actors performing classics of spoken language theatre, translated into American Sign Language, while being simultaneously

voiced by hearing actors (Baldwin; Kochhar-Lindgren). Within this context sign language was used by hearing directors as an art form, to visually present spoken language theatre. Whether this is accessible to Deaf people is questionable. Certainly, the NTD's founding artistic director described it as a theatre *of* the Deaf, for the benefit of hearing audiences, but not necessarily a theatre *for* the Deaf (Bragg and Bergman). Despite this, as a model of practice, sign language theatre was widely copied in the late twentieth century—for example, at the British Theatre of the Deaf (Stewart) and the Moscow Theatre Studio of Mimicry and Gesture (Kayiatos).

SLIPs in the UK

The rich history of amateur and professional performance in the Deaf community is largely ignored by mainstream theatres trying to encourage the participation of Deaf people. Instead, they program SLIPs, a technique developed in the UK as part of the rising awareness of BSL in the 1980s (BSL was first identified as a real language only in 1975).² There had previously been sporadic SLIPs in the southeast of England, but it was the year 1981 that saw the paradigm shift, beginning with a single interpreted performance of Christie's *The Mousetrap* in London's West End. Later in the same year, following its widespread success in the United States, Mark Medoff's *Children of a Lesser God* toured the UK. The play features a Deaf character who uses sign language and the production attracted large numbers of Deaf spectators. Sign language interpreters were used to simultaneously translate the dialogue of the speaking characters into BSL (Depledge). The Royal National Theatre in London produced its first SLIP in 1990, as did the English National Opera (Touche Ross). London's West End and the regional repertory companies followed in quick succession.

The theatre-interpreting model typical in the UK takes place in a receiving theatre, in which a touring theatre company is resident for only a week. A local interpreter is employed to interpret a show that she³ sees for the first time only a few days before. There is little or no rehearsal; the interpreter is not considered by theatre-makers to be part of the performance and is added by theatre administrative staff only after the production is fixed (Turner and Pollitt). During the performance she is positioned on the auditorium floor or in the downstage corner of the stage. Julie Gebron, in her 1996 handbook on theatrical interpreting, refers to this as “platform interpreting.”

In this model, theatrical interpreters typically draw on the “conference” model of interpreting (Pöchhacker) to inform their practice. Superficially, there are similarities to the conference setting: the interpreter is placed to the side of the stage; linguistic communication is unidirectional; and the performance of the source text by the actors and the interpreter's rendition of the target text are approximately simultaneous. A deeper analysis, however, reveals significant differences. The aim of a conference interpreter is to create a word-for-word translation that reproduces the meaning of the source text as accurately as possible. In theatre, however, “good dialogue multitasks” (Edgar 156). A simple word-for-word translation thus risks losing layers of subtext. Furthermore, codes of ethics encourage interpreters to practice as neutral conduits for the transmission of meaning between source and target audience (Tate and Turner), an idea that has been variously expressed as “extreme personal non-involvement by the interpreter” (Roy 348) or interpreter “invisibility” (Angelelli). This is far removed from the practice of actors, for whom corporeal visibility while delivering a multilayered dramatic text is considered fundamental to establishing a meaningful interaction with spectators (Fischer-Lichte).

SLIPs and Access

The notion of *access* embraces different efforts to engage those who do not fit normative models of spectatorship. In addition to SLIPs, access provisions may include captions, relaxed performances, touch tours, and audio description⁴ (Fletcher-Watson). Its origins, however, are rooted in attempts

to remove *physical* barriers that prevent or inhibit entrance into the performance's architectural space. Yet, because the conditions of audience reception are integral to the theatrical event (Bennett), SLIPs can be assumed to be effective in providing access only if Deaf spectators are given the opportunity to participate in meaningful actor–spectator interactions. Furthermore, given Deaf people's visual orientation to the world (Bahan), such interactions will necessarily be consequent on the construction of meaning from a dramatic text (Elam) fully rendered through the visual channel in sign language. Within this context, then, effectiveness can be considered both as a subjective feeling of full (or at least adequate) understanding and participation, and as a comparatively objective assessment of Deaf spectators' participation when compared to hearing audience members. By either measure, this study suggests that SLIPs have failed to provide access, because such effective participation is rarely achieved.

In my research I used a visit to a single SLIP as a trigger for discussion of SLIPs across several theatres in different cities across Scotland. Data were generated with two audience focus groups (one Deaf and one hearing), as well as interviews with the theatre interpreter who delivered the SLIP and two members of the theatre management responsible for access and diversity. In my analysis I prioritize data from the Deaf focus group, with the aim of being methodologically and epistemologically as “Deaf friendly” as possible (Young and Hunt), as well as to complement previous studies of SLIPs that have focused predominantly on the experience of interpreters, rather than on that of Deaf spectators.⁵

Capitalizing the Theatrical Space

The stage is a multilayered sign system constituted not only of the actors, but also of costume, scenery, props, lighting, and so on (Elam). When combined with spoken text, this “informational polyphony” (Purcell 28) allows the hearing audience members to construct meaning and create the performance through their interaction with the actors. For Deaf spectators, however, the spoken text is only available as a sign language translation in a separate and visually neutral space (with black drapes behind and a single, open white light on the interpreter); Deaf spectators are therefore forced to choose between watching the actors onstage or the interpreter in her space (Rocks 2011). Concentrating on one means sacrificing the communication offered by the other, and the ability to construct meaning from either is compromised. One respondent summed up the problem succinctly: “It’s because the translation is so far off to the right that I missed so much.”

The purported aim of separating the interpreter from the stage is to minimize her impact on actors and the hearing audience, although whether this is achieved is questionable. Some writers (Conley; Stewart et al.) suggest that in the platform position the interpreter is distracting for audiences, but on this question my hearing respondents had mixed views: some felt that they had “to deliberately not look, otherwise my eyes go to it—it’s the movement,” but others claimed that “it didn’t bother me at all.” For actors, the data (from venue staff) suggest that placing interpreters in a separate performance space *is* distracting. Certainly, the actor’s own performance is complicated by the presence of the interpreter, who may compete for the spectator’s attention even when she is set off in her own space.

Conceptualizing the Interpreter as Performer

Deaf respondents want the interpreter at an SLIP to “match the theatre” with “more body language” and “more facial expression, movement and mime.” They want her to be an actor, a position that has been supported for twenty-five years in interpreting circles (Cho and Roger; Frishberg; Gebron). Ideally, she serves as the originator of a performance that creates a strong interpreter–spectator interaction. Instead, however, spectators are accustomed to renditions in which the

potential bodily communication inherent in sign language is diminished. Rather than presenting a syntactically rich rendition, enhanced by heightened body language and facial expression, interpreters resort to the neutral conference style of interpreting already described. This further compromises communication to Deaf spectators.

The problem is compounded by other factors that mark the interpreter as something different from the actors in the production. Deaf respondents prefer interpreters who demonstrate good acting skills and are physically matched to the action onstage. Their experience, however, drawn from several theatres, is that “one or two are very good character interpreters . . . but on balance it’s hit or miss.” In practice, rarely is there any kind of casting process; one interpreter is typically expected to represent the multiple characters onstage, and the determination of who will work on a particular show is often made only on the basis of interpreter availability. Additionally, if interpreters are acting, it makes sense that they be costumed to match the actors, to support the creation of meaning. While there is some “good interpreting where the outfits match the performance,” interpreters most often “wear black, like a normal job.” One theatre administrator I interviewed reported that interpreter casting is impossible in her venue, because of the small pool of appropriately skilled interpreters available. According to the same administrator, costuming is only occasionally provided for the interpreter; this is sometimes requested by the visiting company, and less often suggested by the interpreter herself.

Creating a Successful Translation

Unlike the actors, the interpreter is required to create her own text, a sign language rendition of the spoken source text. This is a complex operation (Richardson 2017b), in part a work of literary translation (Turner and Pollitt), complicated by such features as rhyming poetry, humor (especially wordplay), and songs (Ganz Horwitz). My hearing respondents also highlighted the importance of other layers of auditory information that contribute to Elam’s theatrical sign system, but are virtually impossible to render in sign language: “I thought the music was a huge part of the show . . . I think it was telling the story”; “all the different accents”; “the sound effects aided that as well.” Given the requirement to create a target text not only in a different language but also a different modality, it is unsurprising that so-called translation equivalence is difficult to achieve (Llewellyn Jones); it would entail rendering all the auditory components of the theatrical text in the visual mode. This suggests that communication to Deaf spectators at a SLIP is further compromised by the act of translation.⁶

A Failed Technique

It seems clear that communication to Deaf spectators during SLIPs is compromised. They are required to construct meaning both from visual information presented in the aesthetic space of the actor and from source auditory information translated into a visual target language and presented in a second, separate interpreter’s space. All respondents agreed that this is not possible: “I kept missing it . . . the story, what they said, I missed it over and over again.” More specifically, “I feel I picked up half the performance and half the interpreter, but I had to take that and create something myself. It’s not good. It wasn’t clear.” This corresponds with a 1995 report for the organization Signed Performances in Theatre, where only 35 percent of Deaf audience members at a SLIP claimed to fully understand the performance (Depledge), as well as with more recent data collected separately by performance interpreter Jo Ross and Deaf academic Max Barber (unpublished workshop presentations).

Given how Deaf spectators struggle to construct meaning and create meaningful interactions with actors and interpreter, it is difficult to conclude anything other than that SLIPs are not effective in providing access for Deaf theatre-goers. Sadly, Deaf spectators seem to be aware of this. Attendance is infrequent, and the data reveal that Deaf people prefer to attend the theatre only

when they already know the story or are able to undertake a high degree of preparation. In contrast, my hearing respondents prefer to be relatively unprepared, confident that they can construct all the meaning they need from the theatrical event.

Working toward Success

Solving the problem of low attendance by Deaf spectators has been assumed to be something that can be resolved by more effectively engaging with the Deaf community. While it is possible that low attendance is an expression of the Deaf community's historical separation from the hearing community (Padden and Humphries), including from mainstream (hearing) theatre buildings (Rocks 2011), most stakeholders do not openly consider that it might be the SLIP itself that is at fault. Furthermore, there is a common-sense assumption that effective access through an interpreter can be achieved as an administrative process rather than a creative process. A combination of strategic and budgetary considerations underpins the casual maintenance of the status quo: a relatively small financial commitment is required to regularly deliver something that feels like access, at least to hearing theatre professionals.

That SLIPs are not evaluated more rigorously by their providers is not surprising, given the inherent communication problems. Monolingual theatre staff do not possess the skills to effectively assess the translation rendered by the interpreter; similarly, they are limited in their ability to consult with their Deaf clients without additional interpreter support (and the expense thereof). Furthermore, the process of setting up a SLIP typically positions venue staff as intermediaries between interpreter and theatre company, thus preventing any meaningful exchange between those tasked with delivering an accessible performance.

Ironically then, it seems to be inadequate communication offstage that prevents honest discussion of the failure of communication onstage. Without such discussion, however, there will be no acceptance of the failings of SLIPs, and without that, no incentive to explore the possibilities for working toward genuine access. Yet, the respondents in my study suggest at least three such possibilities: consolidating the current model of provision; improving the current model; or replacing the model with something better.

Consolidating the current model demands the creation of a new professional specialty of theatre interpreter (just as there are interpreters with advanced training for working in medical or legal settings). As one respondent put it, "interpreting for theatre is separate. It's not really standard interpreting. There should be a different name for a theatre interpreter." Such highly trained specialists would be skilled at translating the tonality of the performance into a visual language; they would be able to maximize their creative use of the various embodied features of sign language so that they themselves would be considered actors within the performance.

This level of professionalization cannot be achieved by interpreters working in isolation. Unfortunately, there is very little specialist training available to interpreters intending to work in theatre. Moreover, while theatre-makers could usefully support training and the subsequent preparation of interpreters for individual SLIPs by encouraging them to work alongside actors and directors in developing their own performances, most interpreters are not allowed (or paid) to attend rehearsals and typically only meet the company just before the start of the performance (Rocks 2011). Hence the existing process for delivering a SLIP institutionally maintains material separation of the interpreter from the performance of the actors, which as we have seen compromises actor/interpreter-spectator communication.

Second, the current model could be improved by removing the spatial separation between actors and interpreters. Interpreters should be placed within the performance space created by the

actors; techniques like zone and shadow interpreting have already been effectively used to provide accessibility for Deaf and hearing audiences (Rigney), and the more closely the interpreter can follow and match the actor (with movement, mannerisms, and costume), the better it can be (Gebron). Such integrated approaches, which are more challenging and demand more resources, are currently uncommon in the UK. Yet, as we have seen, the simpler, cheaper approach of platform interpreting fails to fully engage Deaf spectators. That said, Deaf respondents were clear that while close integration of interpreters within the action is often desirable, it is not essential: “It’s better that the interpreter is just slightly off center. It means you can deal with the translation and the theatre as it happens.” If the interpreter can move far enough onstage to be just inside the actors’ performance space, this is enough to facilitate actor/interpreter–spectator interaction and an improved understanding of what is being presented onstage.

It is worth noting that positioning the interpreter within the main performance space is likely to be less distracting for audiences than creating a separate interpreting space. Hearing respondents made the comparison with puppeteers: “You forgot there was a puppeteer there. . . . You were just watchful of the puppet, the character of it, so I think it would be exactly the same if somebody was shadowing an actor.” This is “inattentional blindness” (Mack): we see only what we choose to look at; if the onstage interpreter is not useful for us in constructing meaning, we are likely to pay her little attention.

Thus far I have proposed both professionalizing and integrating theatre interpreters, both of which have a budgetary implication. I suggest, however, that this is relatively easy to resolve. As one of my Deaf respondents asked, “Why is nearly every show interpreted? Do you think Deaf people go to them all? In three months in five theatres [in the city] there are nineteen shows interpreted. If I want to buy all the tickets, it’s over £200 each. I think I need to win the lottery to go to them all.” Theatre-makers can be more strategic about which productions are interpreted, focusing on those that are more popular with Deaf spectators. Shows that are more visual are more likely to be accessible: “I like to see mime, movement, only half-talking with some comedy included.” Performances with extensive dialogue are less popular, because communication is perceived as coming only from the interpreter: “I have to look at the interpreter all the time. . . . When it’s over I don’t know what performance I’ve been to see.” Money saved by taking a selective approach could then be redirected to improving quality when SLIPs are offered.

Finally, if we consider replacing the current model, better access for Deaf spectators might be achieved by using more Deaf actors: “Take a normal hearing play. Then add Deaf people and watch it become more visual. Wow!” Currently, however, SLIPs are considered only as the translation of spoken language theatre into sign language. The interpreting of Deaf theatre for hearing audiences in mainstream theatres is rare. This research suggests that Deaf attendance would be higher if aspects of the Deaf experience were represented in mainstream theatre buildings, just as hearing audiences enjoy seeing elements of their own experience reflected back at them (Tulloch). The challenge is to create work that engages Deaf spectators without making it inaccessible to hearing audiences. Since hearing people make up the majority of theatre audiences, a play that is only accessible to Deaf people is unlikely to be economically viable.

The techniques used at NTD, already described, have since been developed creatively and successfully by, for example, Deaf West in the United States (Weinert-Kendt), and Deafinitely Theatre (Swinbourne) and the Deaf and Hearing Ensemble (Richardson 2017a) in the UK. A number of features mark the approach of these companies: they are at least partially Deaf-led and employ a mix of Deaf and hearing actors; and importantly, decisions about language use are made within the creative process and not by administrators, resulting in the creative use of not only English and sign language, but also captions and visual theatre to ensure accessibility.

However, adopting these developments, be it professionalization and integration of the interpreter or using Deaf actors within productions, while desirable, will unfortunately only be possible following a significant attitudinal shift by theatre-makers. The interpreter in this study explained that “some [directors] don’t want you onstage, you know, want you on a box [on the auditorium floor] because . . . it’ll spoil the performance, the artistic effect.” Other participants describe reports of abusive outbursts directed at interpreters by actors. A member of theatre management noted that “for the majority of the visiting companies, it is fairly low down their list of priorities. [It is a] [f]act . . . it is pretty much the last thing they are thinking about.” Her colleague felt that if she were to ask touring theatre companies to offer more support in the delivery of SLIPs, then “I’d probably have to stop doing signed performances, because the company want nothing, really, some of them don’t want a signer onstage, so if I was to say, ‘I need more,’ they’d go, well, you know, ‘No.’”

Conclusion

SLIPs are an established feature of the theatrical landscape, and yet attendance by Deaf spectators is low. This research suggests that SLIPs as currently delivered, with the interpreter in the platform position, do not establish effective interaction with Deaf spectators and thus fail to provide appropriate access to the performance. Identifiable contributing factors are compromised communication as a result of the spatial separation of the interpreter, a failure to conceptualize the interpreter as an actor within the performance, and the difficulties of creating an effective sign language translation. Regrettably, despite previous examinations of the flaws of the platform model of theatrical interpreting, there continues to be resistance from theatre-makers to the idea of making the interpreting event an integral part of the performance, for reasons unknown. Perhaps SLIPs are so deeply rooted in the inclusion agenda that they have become part of accessibility ideology. Their predominance will not change without first realigning this ideological position. In this environment the interpreting is easily seen as merely a symbolic fulfillment of the access and diversity agenda (Frishberg).

Yet, improvements are possible. Through the professionalization and integration of interpreters, as well as the employment of more Deaf actors using sign language onstage, theatre can take a step away from its current position of a stage art available exclusively to the hearing majority and become a more inclusive communicative act that encourages the participation of all members of society. Such a paradigm might take responsibility for providing accessibility away from administrators. Instead, decisions about the use of sign language could be taken within broader conversations about production design on a production-by-production basis by a creative team that includes Deaf actors and/or interpreters. First, however, there must be a public acknowledgment by funding bodies, theatre-makers, and theatre venues that SLIPs as they are currently delivered are a failure, and that they do not provide meaningful access for Deaf people. Only with such a challenge to current accessibility ideology can a space be created in which to question the widespread acceptance of SLIPs, and to develop other techniques that provide genuine accessibility.

Michael Richardson is a doctoral candidate at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. His research interest is the participation of Deaf people in theatre, as both actors and spectators. He adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on the fields of performance studies, Deaf cultural studies, and translation and interpreting studies. He has previously worked as a theatre director, with a particular focus in youth theatre and other forms of applied drama, and as a communication support worker for Deaf students in further education.

Notes

1. Dorothy Miles is best known as a Deaf poet and activist; Lou Fant was a hearing child of Deaf parents, natively bilingual in American Sign Language and English. Both were founder members of the National Theatre of the Deaf.
2. See Mary Brennan, “Can Deaf Children Acquire Language? An Evaluation of Linguistic Principles in Deaf Education.”
3. I use the feminine pronoun for interpreters throughout, because the interpreter I interviewed was female, and interpreters in the UK are predominantly female.
4. *Relaxed performances* are those that are designed to be sensitive to people who may benefit from a more relaxed environment—for example, those with autistic spectrum conditions or learning disabilities. For visually impaired theatregoers, *touch tours* are an opportunity to become familiar with a production’s set and costumes during a guided tour of the stage before the performance. *Audio description* provides a real-time narration of the action onstage via wireless technology.
5. See, for example, Ganz Horwitz; Rocks 2011; and Turner and Pollitt.
6. My study generated no data on this, because none of the participants were able to access both the spoken text and the signed interpretation.

Works Cited

- Angelelli, C. V. *Revisiting the Interpreter’s Role: A Study of Conference, Court, and Medical Interpreters in Canada, Mexico, and the United States*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004. Print.
- Avon, A. “Watching Films, Learning Language, Experiencing Culture: An Account of Deaf Culture through History and Popular Films.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 39.2 (2006): 185–204. Print.
- Bahan, Benjamin. “Senses and Culture: Exploring Sensory Orientations.” *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*. Ed. H. D. L. Bauman and J. J. Murray. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014. 233–54. Print.
- Baldwin, S. C. *Pictures in the Air: The Story of the National Theatre of the Deaf*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet UP, 1993. Print.
- Bangs, D. R. “What Is a Deaf Performing Arts Experience?” *The Deaf Way: Perspectives from the International Conference on Deaf Culture*. Ed. C. J. Ertling et al. Washington, DC: Gallaudet UP, 1994. 751–61. Print.
- Bauman, H. D. L., and J. J. Murray, eds. “Deaf Gain: An Introduction.” *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014. xv–xlii. Print.
- Bennett, S. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Bragg, B., and E. Bergman. *Lessons in Laughter*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet UP, 2002. Print.

- Brennan, M. "Can Deaf Children Acquire Language? An Evaluation of Linguistic Principles in Deaf Education." *American Annals of the Deaf* 120.5 (1975): 463–79. Print.
- Brueggemann, B. J. *Deaf Subjects: Between Identities and Places*. New York: New York UP, 2009. Print.
- Calton, C. "What We Learned from Sign Languages When We Stopped Having to Defend Them." *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*. Ed. H. D. L. Bauman and J. J. Murray. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014. 112–29. Print.
- Cho, J., and P. Roger. "Improving Interpreting Performance Throughtheatrical Training." *Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 4.2 (2010): 151–71. Print.
- Conley, W. "Away from Invisibility, toward Invincibility: Issues with Deaf Theatre Artists in America." *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook*. Ed. L. Bragg. New York: New York UP, 2001. 51–67. Print.
- Davis, L. J. "Postdeafness." *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking*. Ed. H. D. L. Bauman. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. 314–25. Print.
- Depledge, I. D. *Access to Theatre: An Investigation into Reactions of Deaf Theatre-Goers to Current Provisions for Access to Mainstream Theatre*. London: Signed Performances in Theatre, 1995. Print.
- Edgar, D. *How Plays Work*. London: Nick Hern, 2009. Print.
- Elam, K. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. 2nd ed. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Fischer-Lichte, E. "The Concept of Performance." Trans. M. Arjomand. *The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies*. Ed. M. Arjomand and R. Masse. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014. 18–45. Print.
- Fletcher-Watson, B. "Relaxed Performance: Audiences with Autism in Mainstream Theatre." *Scottish Journal of Performance* 2.2 (2015): 61–89. Print.
- Frishberg, N. *Interpreting: An Introduction*. Silver Spring, MD: Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Publications, 1990. Print.
- Ganz Horwitz, M. "Demands and Strategies of Interpreting a Theatrical Performance into American Sign Language." *Journal of Interpretation* 23.1 (2014): 1–18. Print.
- Gebron, J. *Sign the Speech: An Introduction to Theatrical Interpreting*. 2nd ed. Hillsboro, OR: Butte Publications, 2000. Print.
- Hoffmeister, R. "Border Crossings by Hearing Children of Deaf Parents: The Lost History of Codas." *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking*. Ed. H. D. L. Bauman. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. 189–215. Print.
- Kayiatos, A. "Sooner Speaking than Silent, Sooner Silent than Mute: Soviet Deaf Theatre and Pantomime after Stalin." *Theatre Survey* 51.1 (2010): 5–31. Print.

- Kochhar-Lindgren, K. "Between Two Worlds: The Emerging Aesthetic of the National Theater of the Deaf." *Peering Behind the Curtain: Disability, Illness, and the Extraordinary Body*. Ed. T. Fahy and K. King. New York: Routledge, 2002. 3–15. Print.
- Ladd, P. *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2003. Print.
- Lee, R. *A Beginner's Introduction to Deaf History*. Feltham, UK: British Deaf History Society, 2004. Print.
- Llewellyn Jones, P. "Interpreting Shakespeare's Plays into British Sign Language." *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation*. Ed. T. Hoenselaars. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004. Print.
- Mack, A. "Inattentive Blindness." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 12.5 (2003): 180–84. Print.
- Meier, R. P., K. Cormier, and D. Quinto-Pozos. *Modality and Structure in Signed and Spoken Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.
- Miles, D., and L. J. Fant. *Sign-Language Theatre and Deaf Theatre: New Definitions and Directions*, vol. 2. Ed. H. J. Murphy. Northridge: California State U, 1976. Print.
- Padden, C., and T. Humphries. *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.
- Peters, C. L. "Rathskellar: Some Oral-Traditional and Not-So-Traditional Characteristics of ASL Literature." *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Source Book*. Ed. L. Bragg. New York: New York UP, 2001. 129–46. Print.
- Pöschhacker, F. *Introducing Interpreting Studies*. 2nd ed. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016. Print.
- Purcell, S. *Shakespeare and Audience in Practice*. Ed. S. Hampton-Reeves and B. Escolme. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.
- Richardson, M. *Youth Theatre: Drama for Life*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015. Print.
- . "An Interview with the Lead Artists of The Deaf and Hearing Ensemble." *Miranda* 14 (2017a). Web.
- . "Sign Language Interpreting in Theatre: Using the Human Body to Create Pictures of the Human Soul." *Transcultural: A Journal of Translation and Cultural Studies* 9.1 (2017b): 45–62. Print.
- Rigney, M. *Deaf Side Story: Deaf Sharks, Hearing Jets, and a Classic American Musical*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet UP, 2003. Print.
- Rocks, S. "The Theatre Sign Language Interpreter and the Competing Visual Narrative: The Translation and Interpretation of Theatrical Texts into British Sign Language." *Staging and Performance Translation: Text and Theatre Practice*. Ed. R. W. Baines, C. Marinetti, and M. Perteghella. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 72–86. Print.
- . "Theatre Interpreting." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*. Ed. F. Pöschhacker. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015. 417–18. Print.

- Roy, C. B. "The Problem with Definitions, Descriptions and the Role Metaphors of Interpreters." *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. Ed. F. Pöchhacker and M. Shlesinger. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2002. 344–53. Print.
- Sauter, W. *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2000. Print.
- Simpson, R. *Sign Language Interpreted Performances: Providing Access to Theatre for the Deaf*. London: Signed Performances in Theatre, 1997. Print.
- Stewart, D., J. Schein, and B. Cartwright. *Sign Language Interpreting: Exploring Its Art and Science*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998. Print.
- Stewart, I. M. *My Years with the British Theatre of the Deaf, 1963–1977*. Brighton: I. M. Stewart, 2015. Print.
- Sutton-Spence, R., and B. Woll. *The Linguistics of British Sign Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.
- Swinbourne, C. "Review: Deafinitely Theatre's 'Grounded,' Starring Nadia Nadarajah." *The Limping Chicken*. 30 Oct. 2015. Web. 4 Nov. 2015.
- Tate, G., and G. H. Turner. "The Code and the Culture: Sign Language Interpreting—in Search of the New Breed's Ethics." *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. Ed. F. Pöchhacker and M. Shlesinger. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2002. 372–83. Print.
- Touche Ross. *Sign Language Interpreted Performances at the Royal National Theatre*. London: Royal National Theatre, 1994. Print.
- Tulloch, J. *Shakespeare and Chekhov in Production and Reception: Theatrical Events and Their Audiences*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2005. Print.
- Turner, G. H., and K. Pollitt. "Community Interpreting Meets Literary Translation." *The Translator* 8.1 (2002): 25–47. Print.
- Weinert-Kendt, R. "If a Deaf Musical Is Possible, There Is Room on Our Stages for Everyone." *American Theatre*. 20 Oct. 2015. Web. 25 Oct. 2015.
- Wilson, M. *Storytelling and Theatre: Contemporary Professional Storytellers and Their Art*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Young, A., and R. Hunt. *Research with D/Deaf People*. London: NIHR School for Social Care Research, 2011. Print.