The Song That Goes Like This:
The Art of Theatrical Sign Language Interpreting and Translating

A PROJECT

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BY

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To theatre sign language interpreters everywhere –

break a finger!

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

The View from the Front Row

> "There's a kid in the middle of nowhere sitting there, living for Tony performances singin' and flippin' along with the *Pippin*s and *Wicked*s and *Kinky*s, *Matilda*s and *Mormon*ses. So we might reassure that kid and do something to spur that kid. 'Cause I promise you all of us up here tonight. We were that kid."
>
> – Neil Patrick Harris at the 2013 Tony Awards

Watching Harris host the 2013 Tony Awards compelled me to recall my own theatergoing experiences. As a Deaf person using American Sign Language (ASL) in addition to bilateral cochlear implants, I developed a passion for the theater after seeing Julie Andrews sing in *The Sound of Music*. That interest pushed my mother to take me to see Donny Osmond in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at the Chicago Theater in 1992. Back then, the theater did not provide interpreters. I made do with a borrowed script and a rough recording on a cassette tape loaned from a family friend. Even with the obstacles presented, the performance left a lasting mark on me.

It wasn't until I saw the touring production of *The Lion King* at the Orpheum Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2007 that I finally saw my first interpreted Broadway touring show. In between, I saw over 60 shows aided with little more than a script and flashlight, memorizing the lyrics to the songs, extensive auditory rehabilitation by listening to the cast recordings nonstop, and sometimes nothing.

After seeing the interpreted performance of *The Lion King*, I quickly accumulated more shows to my *Playbill* collection, developing a special love of musicals. Due to my background in theatre as a performer, and as a devoted audience member, the interpreters quickly saw my insight as valuable to the interpreting process. In turn, I became a consultant, oftentimes working with the local interpreters, pouring over script and/or libretto translation, song deconstruction, and making connections between the context of the show, the performance itself, and the reactions of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences in attendance.

While it makes sense for an experienced sign language interpreter in the field of performing arts interpreting to work on a project such as this paper, it also is fitting for a Deaf audience *patron* to be the writer. While the interpreters are there to provide a service by acting as a communication liaison between the action onstage and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Deaf/HOH) audience, they cannot see their own performance. What makes sense to them may not make the same connection with the Deaf/HOH audience present, as they are the ones taking the interpreters' signs and creating their own interpretation of the show.

The performing arts hold a vital spot in our lives and the connection between the stage and the audience must be maintained with not just "good enough" but to make Deaf/HOH patrons feel like they belong there amongst their hearing co-patrons.

Despite its spotlight, the face of access to the theatre for Deaf/HOH audiences hold numerous challenges that have yet to be formally addressed. The lack of a

standardized policy leads to an imbalance in service quality and access options. To ensure the magic occurs equally, we need to establish standards for performing arts access across the nation. Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing audiences should be able to attend any performance at any theatre and be able to experience and embrace the magic of live theater.

After all, the show must go on!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throwing a successful performance requires a solid team, both on the stage and behind the stage. While I worked on this project, I was backed up by a group of people involved in the theatre industry who provided their support and pointed towards materials that would supplement my research. They became the Greek chorus for my masterpiece (this project) and I would like to acknowledge them.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the theatre sign language community of Minneapolis-St. Paul, for without them I would have not experienced a renaissance of theatergoing. Through them, I experienced what a quality interpreted performance looked like starting with the 2007 tour of *The Lion King* to the 2013 tour of *Wicked*, both in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the years following, those interpreters enhanced many performances, oftentimes making up for memorable moments that were both scripted and unscripted.

Thank you, Evonne Bilotta Burke (*The Lion King, The Fantasticks,* and *Rent*), David Evans (*My Fair Lady, The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Book of Mormon*), James Gardner (*Rent, Mary Poppins,* and *Spring Awakening*), Erin Gardner (*Grease, Billy Elliot*, and *Wicked*), Heather Gilbert (*The Lion King*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Beauty and the Beast*), Patty Gordon (*Wicked*, *A Chorus Line*, and *Book of Mormon*), Shelly Lehner (*Spring Awakening, Mary Poppins*, and *Mamma Mia!*), and Stephen Medlicott (*Cabaret, White Christmas,* and *Beauty and the Beast*).

In order to provide interpreted performances, it couldn't have been done without some folks in front who made my theatergoing experiences a pleasant one on multiple occasions. To Jerry Knock, the Event Manager; and Nichole Cassavant, Ticket Manager, at Hennepin Theatre Trust. Through them, I experienced the joy of student rush tickets and attempting the Lottery to score $20 tickets to touring Broadway performances while armed with a script and a flashlight--snagging the best seats in the house for interpreted Broadway tours that come through town, and to resolve any snafus that arose through our many encounters.

I would also like to thank Hunter Gullickson, Accessibility Manager at the Guthrie Theatre. The Guthrie Theatre has always treated me as a VIP guest on multiple occasions, and welcomed my insight and experiences on how to improve theatergoing experiences for Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences.

I would like to recognize Craig Dunn and Jon Skaalen at VSA Minnesota, with whom I interned. The internship was made possible by the Rosemary Kennedy Internship Initiative presented by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Through them, I found out what it was like to work from the 'upstairs' and I much enjoyed the friendly competition with Jon of who could get the most postings done on the Theater Listings calendar.

In order to succeed in the collegiate setting, I turn to the Interpreting and Captioning Unit (ICU), a subsidiary of the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Whether it is providing interpreters for classes, captioning videos that I needed to support my research, or filling in last-minute

requests or cancellations via e-mail, text, or Owl Post, I am indebted to the staff interpreters, captioners, and schedulers for making my journey a smooth one.

Thanks also goes to an old family friend, Wanda Tyndall-White, who introduced me to the world of musical theater at age 5 following a cochlear implant operation. Without her, I would not have embraced my love of musicals, thus leading me to my lifelong advocacy for improved access to the arts and working with sign language interpreters to improve their craft in the theatrical interpreting field. Through that captioned viewing of *The Sound of Music*, the film opened up many doors for me.

Lastly, I would like to thank Julie Andrews and the cast of *The Sound of Music* for introducing me to the world of sound and music -- thus spearheading a love of music that led to the construction of this project.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)

AYA – Access for Young Audiences Program

ASL – American Sign Language

BUCIE – Boston University Center for Interpreter Education

Deaf/HOH – Deaf and Hard of Hearing

IBDB – Internet Broadway Database

LEAD – Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability

NAD – National Association of the Deaf

NTD – National Theatre of the Deaf

RID – Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

SEE – Signing Exact English

TDF – Theatre Development Fund

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

In 1980, two sign language interpreters, Alan Champion and Candace Broecker Penn, stood in front of the stage of the Booth Theatre in New York City and looked out at 800 theatre goers. The audience included a number of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Deaf/HOH) patrons who came to see the Broadway production of *The Elephant Man*, starring Philip Anglim and Kevin Conway.[1]

This would become the first time in the history of Broadway theatre that Deaf/HOH audiences were able to partake in the rich tradition of theatergoing alongside their peers. It was made possible by the provision of interpreters through Theatre Development Fund (TDF). [2] The precedent set by the interpreter duet at that performance would eventually become the benchmark of theatre accessibility at theatre venues in the years to come. From New York to the Midwestern towns, and to the West, demand for interpreted performances rose, and organizations and venues scrambled around to meet the needs of Deaf/HOH audiences.

Before the interpreted performance of *The Elephant Man*, Deaf/HOH individuals turned to their own community to provide artistic experiences for each other in the form of theater presented in their own language, that of American Sign Language (ASL). The National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) was born in Connecticut in 1967,[3] and Deaf West took over the west coast demographics with their first

[1] Internet Broadway Database.
[2] "When Theatre Meets Sign Language." Theatre Development Fund.
[3] National Theatre of the Deaf.

production of *The Gin Game* in 1991[4] with Smaller theaters for the deaf springing across the country.

However, 90% of Deaf/HOH individuals are born to hearing parents that have had little to no exposure to the Deaf community at large.[5] The desire to partake in social events alongside family and friends pushed a small audience of Deaf and Hard of Hearing patrons to request access to the mainstream theater culture, including Broadway musicals.

The social movements of the 1980s, including the 1988 Deaf President Now movement at Gallaudet University, pushed for passage of laws and regulations that promoted social equality.[6] This led to the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 that mandated equal access for persons with disabilities including Deaf/HOH individuals.[7] With the passage of the ADA, theatre venues were now required to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that persons with disabilities would be able to access the venues and partake in events and activities alongside their non-disabled peers. As Candace Broecker Penn puts it, "The idea of interpreting a show is providing this service to the Deaf community so they have access to the show and the experience and thinking about the play and sharing that whole moment in time live together."[8]

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[4] Deaf West Theatre.
[5] Schwartz, Sue. *Choices in Deafness: A Parent's Guide to Communication Options.* Woodbine House, 2007.
[6] *Through Deaf Eyes*. Produced by Lawrence Hott and Diane Garey. 2007. Washington, D.C.: PBS Home Video, 2007. DVD.
[7] Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Public Law 101-336. 108th Congress, 2nd session (July 26, 1990).
[8] "When Theatre Meets Sign Language." Theatre Development Fund.

Interpreter Analogy

Imagine a stage where the spotlight has burned out. Someone needs to replace the light bulb in the spotlight. Now, there are several sign language interpreters standing by. How many interpreter(s) does it require to replace the light bulb so that the show might go on? The most obvious and straightforward answer to this analogy would be a single interpreter, but in this situation the widely accepted answer is five sign language interpreters. Why five? To put it this way, it does indeed require a single interpreter to perform the actual action of replacing the light bulb but with four colleagues looking on in observation of the process and thinking to themselves, *I would have done that differently*.

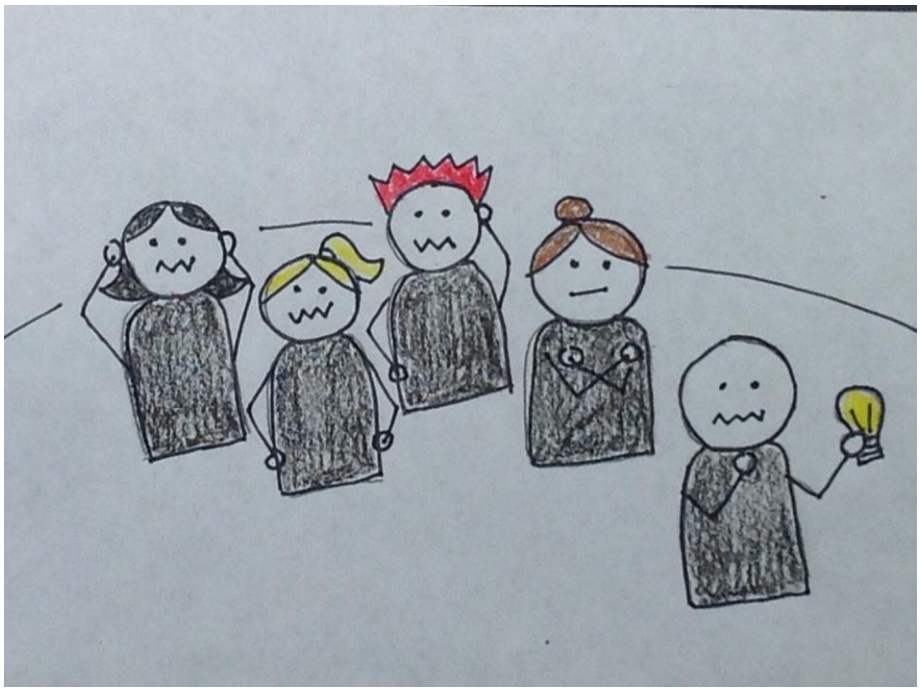

Figure 1: Interpreter Analogy

Using a critical thought process, the answer to this analogy is influenced by multiple factors that should be considered when approaching a task of this kind. The

interpreter partaking in the action of replacing the light bulb takes the context of the task and breaks it down into questions to be answered through action. What type of light bulb is used? What types should not be used? Is this going to be a rush job? Where is the light bulb located, and how do I get to the location in order to perform the request? Is there a handbook I can consult so I may prepare for the task before actually undertaking the task?

Why a light bulb analogy? Utilizing real-world connections, an interpreter is given a task – that of interpreting a touring Broadway performance in a given city. Before accepting the gig, they might consider the factors that would be involved. What type of light bulb is used might parallel that of what type of show is it? (A musical production, maybe a Rodgers and Hammerstein or an Andrew Lloyd Webber production). What types of interpreting approaches should not be used? (In this case, the gig calls for a team interpreter and avoid the academic interpreting style of taking turns being on the hot seat to interpret for fifteen to twenty minutes stretches, and so on).

As for asking if this is a rush job, the current practice in the field is to request for interpreters with at least two weeks' notice. With more time allocated to preparing for the performance, the interpreter will be well prepared. Less, and the interpreter faces issues with quality of the interpretation provided. Where the light bulb; (or in this case, the gig) is located is also another factor to consider. Is it worth it to drive three hours for a theater interpreting gig, or should one consider gigs within one's hometown?

The last factor – whether or not there is material for the interpreter to prepare – is the largest impact on the quality of the interpreter's performance. While replacing a light bulb might seem straightforward, preparing to interpret for a musical is not always so straightforward. In terms of material, the interpreter might have access to a script or a libretto, and audio and/or video recordings of the production. In an ideal world, the interpreter would have access to all and could thus pull off the entire task at hand. Without preparation to form the foundation of the process, the interpreter in question might not be able to screw in the light bulb.

Now, let's not forget the four colleagues in the room watching the singular interpreter replace the light bulb in the spotlight. Why are there four, one might ask? While the action of screwing in the light bulb requires a single person, the other four are there observing the task and providing their own thoughts and insight. If the light bulb were to be removed and given to another colleague, they might have approached the process differently from the first interpreter.

There is no right or wrong answer to this task as presented by the light bulb analogy within the sign language interpreting community. Give five interpreters the same task, and five different results will be procured. How those five products differ is left up to the individual interpreter's background, training, education, biases, just to name a few factors that might influence their performance.

Drawing a parallel between the light bulb analogy and the real world, consider the role and responsibilities of the theatre sign language interpreter. As venues and theaters try to cater to the requests of interpreted performances, one might consider the discrepancies in quality of the interpreted services rendered. This varies from

location to location, from venue to venue, even from interpreter to interpreter. A team of three interpreters interpreting a performance of *Wicked* on Broadway might approach the show from an angle while teams of two interpreters each for each of the two national tours might take a difference stance to the same show. All seven interpreters are drawing their own interpretation of the musical using the same script, the same music, and the same lyrics. The same light bulb.

Research Questions

In continuing with the topic of interpreting as presented in the light bulb analogy, there are three questions that appeared through observation, historical practices, and applications in theatre accessibility as well as 'best practices' presented in documents and publications created by sign language interpreters and arts administrators in the field of music and performing arts. This thesis will address the discrepancies in standards and support the thesis by responding to the following three questions:

1. What is the role of the theatrical sign language interpreter?
2. What does theatrical sign language interpreting and translation entail; and why is it necessary to understand the factors that impact the interpreting and translating process when preparing to interpret a Broadway musical?
3. Does delivery (how the message is signed) supersede context (what the message consists of), or vice versa?

This paper will address the questions presented, starting with an overview of theater accessibility and what reasonable accommodations entails. After a solid foundation of access, the paper will turn to an overview of the interpreting field.

Once those two are down, the paper will explore the different models, both traditional, and proposed. Finally, the art of theatrical interpreting will be explored with examples from various musicals. As a result of my research, several major points surfaced that create the basis of this paper. Stated as premises, they are:

Premise 1: There seems to be no widely accepted standard for theatrical interpreting, thus leaving the role of the interpreter up to the various constituents involved in the performing arts industry.

Premise 2: The traditional model for interpreting does not fit into the field of theatrical interpreting; thus a proposed model is offered.

Premise 3: As per the new model, the role of the theatrical interpreter overlaps with that of the actor; however, there is still a distinctive line between the two roles.

The paper will explore the role of the theater sign language interpreter as compared to other roles in the theatre field and how the relationships are formed. Once the roles and responsibilities are defined and established using the models covered, the paper will then go into further depth of the process of interpreting for the Broadway musical. While the paper focuses on the Broadway musical, the rationale, research and questions brought up in this discussion can be applied to other aspects of the theatre genre including Shakespeare and the traditional play.

Chapter 2

ACCESS TO THE THEATRE FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING AUDIENCES

The Face of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Audience

The changing demographics of the Deaf/HOH population in the United States have influenced the shift in accommodation preferences as well as technological advances in the field of accessibility. The common misconception that all Deaf and Hard of Hearing use ASL as their main mode of communication is misleading because the Deaf/HOH community is diverse, from those who were born deaf to those who became deaf later in life. The communication modes they choose (or were chosen by their parents for those who became deaf at or before language development) range from sign languages including ASL and manually coded English sign systems such as Signing Exact English (SEE), to oral approaches using listening and spoken language in the target language (here, it would be English). To round out the communication options, there is the Rochester method where the person fingerspells everything that is said except for the word 'and.'[9] Phonetic English is presented through Cued Speech, a system of hand cues accompanying mouth movements to aid lip-reading and make English visible on the face. [10]

Another common misconception with the Deaf/HOH community is their ability to hear. Far from the truth, deafness can range from slight hearing loss (defined as Hard of Hearing) to those who have lost all hearing completely

[9] Paul, Peter V.. *Language and Deafness*. Fourth Edition. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Sudbury, MA: 2009. Page 185.
[10] Ibid.

(profoundly deaf).[11] For those who are identified as deaf or Deaf, there are two camps of individuals who label themselves according to the medical perspective and those who label themselves as culturally Deaf. The lowercase 'd' in 'deaf' defines as the medical condition of deafness, and is used to describe individuals who are deaf but not part of the culturally and linguistic rich Deaf community at large. With those who identify themselves as culturally Deaf, the capital 'D' is used.[12]

For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen to use the more ambiguous catch-all term of Deaf and Hard of Hearing to include d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals from all brackets of the Deaf community, both medically and culturally. The rationale of this is not to shun anyone, but to include all who use auxiliary aids at the theatre, including sign language interpreters and captioning.

With technology such as the cochlear implant, fewer Deaf/HOH patrons rely on sign language as their preferred mode of communication. Deaf/HOH people may utilize hearing aids (which amplify sound to accompany residual hearing),[13] or undergo a surgical procedure for a cochlear implant. A cochlear implant is a medical device that is implanted into the ear to bypass the damaged areas directly to simulate the auditory nerve. An external sound processor is worn outside the body on the ear in a similar manner to a conventional hearing aid),[14] or they may sport nothing. Those who use hearing devices are able to pick up some sound while attending

[11] Paul, Peter V.. *Language and Deafness*. Fourth Edition. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Sudbury, MA: 2009.
[12] *Through Deaf Eyes*. Produced by Lawrence Hott and Diane Garey. 2007. Washington, D.C.: PBS Home Video, 2007. DVD.

[13] Paul, Peter V.. *Language and Deafness*. Fourth Edition. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Sudbury, MA: 2009.
[14] Cochlear Americas. http://www.cochlear.com/wps/wcm/connect/us/home

musicals. Those who do not benefit or use hearing aids or cochlear implants, get a sense of sound through the interpreters themselves.

Access: A Historical Overview

Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)[15] in July of 1990. The intent was to establish expectations and guidelines that enabled persons with disabilities to lead a life equal to their non-disabled peers in the form of accessibility and accommodations. As stated in the law, the purpose of the ADA was "to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities . . . the Nation's proper goals regarding individuals with disabilities are to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for such individuals."[16]

What this meant for the arts field was that theaters and other public venues were now required to make their buildings and organizations accessible by providing reasonable accommodations so that individuals with disabilities could attend arts events and performances alongside their family, friends, and peers. For too long, the Broadway theatre industry and other venues on a national scope were inaccessible to potential audiences, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing patrons.

The legal doctrine is written in such a way that the definition of reasonable accommodation is left up to the individual venue, even down to the individual, to determine the best fit for both individual and organization. Reasonable

[15] Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Public Law 101-336. 108th Congress, 2nd session (July 26, 1990).
[16] Ibid.

accommodation, as defined by the ADA, states that "reasonable accommodation includes adjustments that assure that a qualified individual with a disability has rights and privileges… equal to those of [individuals] without disabilities."[17]

While the ADA mandates that reasonable accommodations be provided upon request, it leaves interpretation of what reasonable accommodations entails up to the individual in charge of accessibility requests (if there is a specified person). Thus, interpretation of what "access" entails varies from one venue to another. One venue might address reasonable accommodation by providing an assisted listening system; another one might offer both sign language interpreters and/or captioning. A third might see a script and flashlight as the best accommodation available, as the ADA does not require "the provision of any auxiliary aid that would result in an undue burden or in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the goods or services provided by a public accommodation."[18]

This is not to say that the theater and/or venue can deny reasonable requests for reasonable accommodations. The ADA states that "the public accommodation is not relieved from the duty to furnish an alternative auxiliary aid, if available, that would not result in a fundamental alteration or undue burden." [19]

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Deaf/HOH) audience patrons have several options that fit the range of reasonable accommodations when attending a live performance at a theatre. These may include sign language interpretation; off-stage captioning via

[17] United States Department of Justice
[18] Americans with Disabilities Act
[19] Ibid.

a LED screen display mounted on a freestanding tripod[20]; handheld captioning systems[21]; preferential seating for optimal sightlines of both the stage and the interpreter and/or caption display; and the venerable method of reading along to a script by flashlight.

Current Model of Accessibility

The current model of accessibility to the theatre for Broadway musicals (both on Broadway and for national touring productions) follows the either/or model of offering either sign language interpreting or captioning, but not both. In the earlier years, starting with *The Elephant Man* in 1980, only sign language interpreting services were offered. Later, to meet the needs of late-deafened adults and Deaf/HOH individuals that do not use American Sign Language (ASL) or another sign system, captioning was introduced to complement interpreting services. Caption Coalition provided captions through the means of a freestanding LED screen streaming the text of the show for its viewers to see.[22] As technology progressed, SoundAssociates joined in by creating handheld captioning in the form of a PDA-sized portable screen. There is still the venerable tried-and-true script and flashlight combination. [23]

[20] "About Us." c 2 Caption Coalition. http://c2net.org/?page_id=2
[21] "I-Caption." SoundAssociates. http://www.soundassociates.com/products/icaption/
[22] "About Us." c 2 Caption Coalition. http://c2net.org/?page_id=2
[23] "I-Caption." SoundAssociates. http://www.soundassociates.com/products/icaption/

One exception is made through Theater Development Fund (TDF)'s Access for Young Audiences program (AYA)[24]. With the AYA program, Deaf/HOH youth from middle schools and high schools in the tri-state area attend a Broadway production where a team of three sign language interpreters is provided in conjunction to live on-stage captioning provided by Caption Coalition (c2). Outside the special performances for young audiences, the current mode of accessibility is to provide a single day for sign language interpreted performance; and a single day for a captioned performance.

To round out the interpreting and/or captioning debate, six Broadway productions utilize the I-Caption handheld captioning system provided by SoundAssociates. Those six Broadway productions include *The Lion King, Newsies, Book of Mormon, Jersey Boys, Wicked*, and *Mamma Mia!*. With those selections, it seems that productions that have opened recently, such as *Newsies* which opened at the Nederlander Theatre as well as those that have been running steadily for years like *The Lion King* at the Minskoff Theatre (16 years), *Mamma Mia!* at the Cadillac Winter Garden Theatre (12 years) and *Wicked* at the Gershwin Theatre, recently celebrating 10 years on Broadway, are the ones to receive this system in lieu of interpreters and/or traditional captioning.[25]

In addition to those auxiliary aids, there is also the assistive listening device. Most venues and theaters have this option as the sole offering. However, there is a

[24] "Access for Young Audiences." Theatre Development Fund. https://www.tdf.org/TDF_ServicePage.aspx?Id=101&do=v
[25] "I-Caption." SoundAssociates. http://www.soundassociates.com/products/icaption/

greater push for alternative options such as interpreters and captions to cover the different brackets of the Deaf/HOH audiences. In my experiences as a theatergoer, I have seen the Deaf/HOH audiences include cultural and linguistic differences. The majority of the audience using ASL interpreting services are Deaf/HOH theatergoers that use ASL as their preferred mode of communication; family and friends of those Deaf/HOH patrons; ASL interpreting students and practioners. Deaf/HOH audiences (including late-deafened individuals) that use spoken language and listening usually flock to the captioned performances because a number of them do not use ASL, thus rendering interpreting services useless for them.

Of those, the majority are either *newbies* or *dabblers* – terms I use to describe patrons that have never been to the theater (*newbie*), or those who occasionally dabble in the arts (*dabbler*). Few of those reach my level of experience – that of a *theater aficionado* who has access to the script, cast recordings, research materials, and background information. Those *aficionados* oftentimes know the 'who's who' of the theatre industry and may have lyrics to entire songs memorized. This may place high expectations on the interpreters for the particular show as they have to figure out a balance to appease all brackets – the newbies the dabblers, and the aficionados. How much back story to include? Which lyrics can be cut in order to point the attention towards the actors on the stage? Use a pre-established name sign or fingerspell the name out? To mouth or not to mouth the lyrics? At one performance of a Broadway touring production that visited Minneapolis, one of the interpreter duo told me that it was a challenge trying to assess the Deaf/HOH audiences and that sometimes it felt like they were interpreting for two separate audiences – the

general audience and the aficionado audience including myself – and trying to appease both simultaneously.

Factors that Impact Accessibility

Different types of accommodation requests are influenced by the cost to provide it, the feasibility of providing it, and the impact of having provided it. Theatres and other arts venues vary in the resources offered and use of resources available.

A large theatre organization may have the manpower, resources, and the money to provide interpreters and captioning for at least one performance of every production during a given season, whether or not there is a Deaf/HOH individual in attendance; smaller organizations may accommodate requests made by a Deaf or Hard of hearing individual on a case-by-case basis.

Yet, there are still reports of theaters and venues not accommodating Deaf/HOH patrons at any of their events; or the accommodations provided did not suit the needs of the individual (fake interpreters, malfunctioning captioning equipment, mismatched auxiliary aids including interpreters for a Deaf/HOH person who does not know sign language, for instance).

Confusion and lack of clarity of what the Americans with Disabilities Act can and cannot protect drives arts organizations as well as patrons to interpret the ADA according to their own preferences. What one might consider as reasonable accommodation might not be acceptable to the other. The lack of standards in

performing arts interpreting on the interpreters' part leads to a wide discrepancy in the quality and quantity of services rendered to the Deaf/HOH audiences.

Chapter 3

INTERPRETING FOR THE THEATRE

Interpreting: A Historical Overview

To meet the demands of Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was formed in 1964 at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.[26] Through the formation of the organization, sign language interpreters who are members of the RID developed a set of standards and policies in an attempt to make services rendered more uniform. The sign language interpreting field is broken up into specialties that include health, education, legal, and so on.

The Role of Publications

Printed publications have played an important role in establishing standards for the profession. Experienced interpreters share their newfound information and skills with their colleagues in multiple forms both in print and online. Textbooks required in sign language interpreting training programs offered at two-year and four-year colleges include the quintessential *So You Want to be an Interpreter* by Bob Alcorn and Janice Humphrey, now in its fifth edition. This particular publication skims the surface of the basics required to function as a sign language interpreter in the United States. Each chapter addresses different interpreting situations, including education,

[26] "About RID Overview." Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. http://www.rid.org/aboutRID/overview/index.cfm

medical, and legal interpreting. There is also a chapter devoted to the performing arts.

The few pages devoted to interpreting in theatre and/or performing arts settings focuses mainly on the logistics and the mechanics of the services rendered rather than the artistic endeavor. The authors do make a valid point that it is not merely where to stand and how to interact with the crew of the production to ensure that the interpreter is lighted properly or be slathered in stage make-up: *"Music, after all,"* they say, *"is an art form of hearing cultures, and interpreting art forms across cultures is particularly challenging. An interpreter must analyze the message of each song and rehearse it in order to provide an equivalent rendition of the message in an artistic manner, as defined by the target language/culture."* [27]

Other resources in the field of interpreting include a plethora of publications through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. The RID presents a quarterly magazine, *VIEWS*, distributed to its members. *VIEWS* consists of articles submitted by practitioners in the field, as well as Deaf/HOH clients, that reflect current trends and issues in cultural and linguistic facilitation between hearing and Deaf customers. They also publish a quarterly academic journal. This publication, the *Journal of Interpretation*, includes two articles that pertain to the performing arts interpreting field.

The April 2012 issue of *VIEWS* included an article written jointly by three veteran Broadway interpreters, titled "Spotlight on Skills." The three authors,

[27] Humphrey, Janice H., Bob J. Alcorn. *So You Want to be an Interpreter: An Introduction to Sign Language Interpreting 2nd Edition*. Amarillo, TX: H&M Publishers, 1996.

Candace Broecker-Penn, Lynnette Taylor, and Stephanie Feyne, claim that in order to succeed in specialized areas [such as theater interpreting], an interpreter should have a solid foundation in the basics. *"We believe interpreters in theatrical setting, as in all settings,"* the authors point out, *"should be good practitioners who then augment their skills with specialized training. Cultural competency, social skills and linguistic fluency are the foundational skills that are important for all areas in work. Familiarity with specific content and protocol is what establishes the specialty."*[28] They continue the discussion with the aspect of interpreting that is unique to the theater and performing arts field such as "artistry, presence, metaphoric language, and heightened language."[29]

The job of the interpreters is that they are there to provide a service for the Deaf/HOH community. However, there seems to be a crossing of line between providing a service and providing a performance.

There is a publication by Rev. Raymont L. Anderson, titled "Visual Music: Interpreting Songs in American Sign Language." The slim publication is designed in a way that it leads readers to deconstruct songs through a question-led process. This encourages readers to create their own interpretation of the songs they tackle using song deconstruction to do so. There is mention of several Broadway songs in the later chapters, notably how to address nonsensical words including "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from *Mary Poppins.*[30]

[28]Broecker Penn, Candace, Stephanie Feyne, and Lynnette Taylor. "Spotlight on Skills." Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf *VIEWS* Magazine, April 2012.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Anderson, Raymont L. "Visual Music: Interpreting Songs in American Sign Language".

Identifying Best Practices

Several arts organizations and universities have developed their own guidelines on interpreting for the theatre, including VSA Minnesota[31] in Minneapolis and Boston University's Center for Interpreter Education (BUCIE).[32] These guidelines offer step-by-step suggestions for handling the logistics of interpreted performances, designation of roles and responsibility among the constituents involved in providing access to Deaf/HOH patrons, and a check list to follow for pulling off a successful interpreted performance. Both the VSA Minnesota and the BUCIE publications focus on the mechanics without mention of the theatrics of the process itself. The theatrics of the craft is left up to the individual interpreter.

To meet the growing interest in the field of performing arts interpreting and the need to train the interpreters, Theater Development Fund (TDF) jointly collaborated with Julliard School to create a program, Interpreting for the Theatre Initiative.[33] The week-long summer program presented annually welcomes seasoned interpreters to New York City to train under veteran Broadway interpreters. The program focuses on working and training interpreters who already have a solid foundation and understanding of the mechanics of the interpreting field while enhancing their theatrical interpreting skills.

[31] VSA Minnesota. "Guide for Interpreted Performances."
[32] Boston University Center for Interpreter Education. "Guide for ASL Interpreted Performances at Boston University's School of Theatre."
[33] "Interpreting for the Theatre." Theatre Development Fund. https://www.tdf.org/tdf_servicepage.aspx?id=70

The program trains would-be theatre interpreting using an curriculum that focuses on four special areas of concentration: Theatre Interpreting Techniques, Translation, Alexander Technique, and Contribution of Deaf Professionals. [34] Members of the Deaf community are then invited to observe those budding theatrical interpreters at a special interpreted performance of a Broadway show. The few lucky interpreters chosen for this honor interpret alongside the veterans who taught them. At the culmination of the performance, the interpreters bring home their newfound knowledge and honed theatrical interpreting skills to share with their colleagues at home.

For those outside of New York, there are several online resources available. Both American Theatre Wing (ATW) and TDF host a collection of videos created and posted online to share with potential patrons. Among those video collections are video recorded interviews with Broadway sign language interpreters including Alan Champion and Candace Broecker- Penn. Both videos, "When Theatre Meets Sign Language" (TDF)[35] and "Interpreting for the Theatre" (ATW)[36] provide a brief overview of the theatre interpreting process, the logistics involved, and the individual opinions and insight of the interpreters presented in the interviews. These videos represent Broadway-caliber interpreters talking about their experiences in the theatre interpreting field. However, these perspectives of seasoned Broadway

[34] "Interpreting for the Theatre." Theatre Development Fund. https://www.tdf.org/tdf_servicepage.aspx?id=70

[35]"When Theatre Meets Sign Language." Theatre Development Fund. YouTube: Uploaded Sept. 27, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUK_OUxN-1Q&list=PLk3JU0feN7RkystXokxKon_Sfzpsa-S-O&index=3

[36]Champion, Alan. "In the Wings: Sign Language Interpreter." *In the Wings*. American Theatre Wing, http://americantheatrewing.org/inthewings/detail/sign_language_interpreter

interpreters might not represent the average interpreter that interpret for national tours that visit their own hometowns.

Not only do those videos present the insight offered by experienced practitioners, they have also made headlines in newspaper articles. A number of newspaper articles and snippets of televised news also present the same small pool of interpreters including Mr. Champion and Ms. Broecker-Penn as well as brief glimpses into interpreted performances including *Mary Poppins*, *The Producers*, *The Miracle Worker*, and *Tarzan*.

Unfortunately, there are no known video recordings of interpreters in action during an actual performance in its entirety due to the restrictions established by Actors' Equity Association (AEA), to wit: "There shall be no televising, broadcasting, visual and/or sound recording, motion picture filming, video taping, or other mechanical or electronic reproduction, in whole or in part, of any Code production."[37]

What available video recording footage of interpreters in action is limited to few local TV news clips uploaded to YouTube by amateur. Additionally there are a few educational videos uploaded to YouTube by TDF. There is a snippet of Alan Champion, Candace Broecker-Penn, and Lynnette Taylor interpreting "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from the musical *Mary Poppins* and fingerspelling the atrocious word in its entirety. Another clip showcases Alan Champion, Mary Darragh McLean and Claude Shirts in a performance of *The*

[37] Actors' Equity Association. http://www.actorsequity.org/

Producers as they provide the sign translation to Nathan Lane's and Matthew Broderick's characters.

Recent Developments

According to the business discussion during the 2012 RID conference in Atlanta, Georgia, interpreting for the arts is considered a fringe benefit instead of a necessity as in medical, educational, and legal interpreting. Practitioners in those three fields do not see the arts as a priority over fields that mandate a smooth communication link for Deaf/HOH clients in life-altering situations. Moreover, these three fields hold specialty certificates in addition to regular certification. A performing arts interpreting certificate was in fact offered for a short time in the 1970s but discontinued for unspecified reasons.[38]

A Standard Practice Paper (SPP) is a series of guidelines established by experienced interpreters in the specific field of interpreting being covered. It is not a code of conduct, nor a rule book, but offers recommendations from experienced interpreters working the field. Medical, educational and legal interpreting have SPPs in addition to specialty certificates. There has been interest in bringing back the old specialty certificate for the performing arts; however, the RID has other pressing needs on its agenda and limited resources to pull it off. Thus, there are neither standards in the form of SPPs nor current certification testing for performing arts interpreting as a specialty.[39]

[38] "Standard Practice Papers." Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. http://www.rid.org/interpreting/Standard%20Practice%20Papers/index.cfm

[39] Ibid.

During the discussion, members of the RID and supporting allies brought up three separate items to be addressed that related to interpreting for the arts, which shows there is still interest in it. One of those items was a proposition that a SPP be created for the performing arts. The motion passed.

As of May 2014, the RID set up a taskforce to examine the viability of establishing standards for theater interpreting in the form of a SPP, which in turn might lead to a renewal of the old specialty certificate. The taskforce created a draft of a SPP specializing in performing arts interpreting, which is currently under review by the members of the RID. A creation of a SPP specializing in performing arts interpreting will improve the quality of the theatrical interpreter(s) hired for performing arts and concert interpreting. Alan Champion, a Broadway interpreter, sums it up nicely with "There are interpreters who drop their entire lives to focus on a show. We feel that this work is just as important as the work we do in court, in the hospital, or in the social security office. If you consider the amount of preparation required for these various contexts, it brings perspective to our work as interpreters in the theater."[40]

[40] Champion, Alan. "In the Wings: Sign Language Interpreter." *In the Wings*. American Theatre Wing,

Chapter 4

THE ROLE OF THE THEATRE INTERPRETER

A team of two sign language interpreters and two Deaf graduate students (including myself) at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities developed such a model that was presented at the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf conference in spring 2013. The purpose of creating this model was to find a model that worked with many interpreting situations outside the college classroom. This model represents the brunt of interpreting situations whether it be a one-on-one between a college professor and a Deaf or Hard of Hearing student; a health practitioner and a Deaf/HOH patient; a lawyer and a Deaf/HOH witness; and so on. While this model -- the Roundabout Model -- represents the majority of interpreting situations, it does not fill in the role of a 'catch all' model as it does not follow the requirements needed for theater interpreting.

The Roundabout model is simple to understand. Many people have driven on a roundabout, and so are familiar with the layout of the traffic circle. A traffic circle is analogous to communication when a sign language interpreter is used.

The Traditional Roundabout Model

The Roundabout Model takes its name from the depiction of the traffic layout with four streets meeting up at a circular road. Instead of the common four-street cross intersection with lights, the roundabout intersection suggests a smoother ride with the least interruption to travel time for those within the car (see Figure 2).

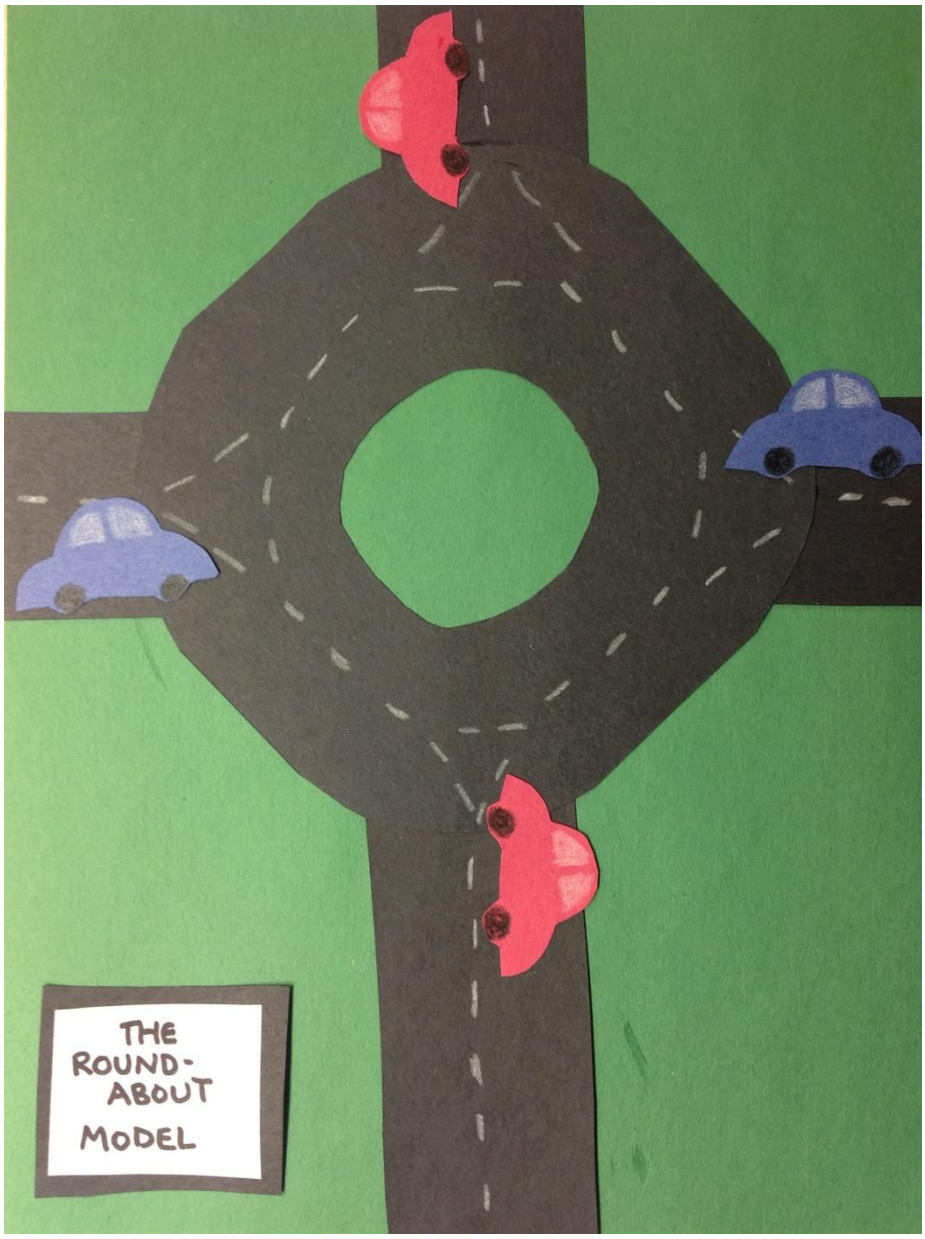

Figure 2: The Roundabout Model

Now, imagine a situation with a college professor, a Deaf /HOH student, and one or two sign language interpreters. Using the Roundabout model, the professor takes the north road; the Deaf/HOH student on the south road; and the sign language interpreters at the east and west roads. The professor starts the conversation exchange by sending the car with the message to the south road in

hopes of connecting with the Deaf/HOH student. In order for the message to carry out effectively, the car must first bypass at the west road to be intercepted by the sign language interpreter before reaching its destination on the south road.

Goal: Professor > message > student

Scenario without interpreter: Professor > message ≠ student; message < professor.

Scenario with interpreter: Professor > message > (intercepted by interpreter) > student.

If for some reason, the Deaf/HOH student does not catch the message or understand the context of the message, the car will loop back to the professor at the north road. The professor in turn should consider how the message is delivered – was it not clear? Was the delivery too rushed or incoherent? How can she/he re-send the car with the message to complete the roundabout travel?

One interpretation of the Roundabout model places the message within the grassy circle in the middle. This is not precisely accurate as it shows that nobody can access the message unless they got out of the vehicle and walked over to the grassy circle. Perhaps the message is actually the car(s) itself?

The interpreters at the east and west roads use the roundabout as a channel of feedback. While the cars zip on past between the north road (the professor) and the south road (the Deaf/HOH student), the interpreters have their own travel agenda as well. To carry out the cultural and language facilitation, they use many different tools

to "ascertain meaning of the source text including their knowledge base, prep work, previous experiences, and biases."[41]

Goal: To facilitate cultural and linguistic exchanges between Hearing and Deaf /HOH clients.

Example of Team Work: Professor > message > (intercepted by interpreter A) > (interpreter B catches wrong information, feeds to interpreter A)> (interpreter A re-sends the message with correct information > Deaf client receives information.

The sign language interpreters use the channel to provide feedback to one another such as suggesting a sign for a finger spelled word, fill in misheard or missed portions of the translation, slip in the correct fingerspelling for a word or name, and so on. In order to pull off effective teamwork in facilitating the conversation exchange, it is crucial that the team holds a strong connection. "If a team lacks a strong connection, or the ability to 'read' each other and 'think alike' in some ways, the quality of the team's joint work is compromised, no matter how excellent the skills of the individual interpreters." [42]

While the Roundabout model fits most sign language interpreting situations, it may not be the best fit for theatre and performing arts interpreting situations. Rules and theories that apply to the Roundabout model may in fact be broken by practitioners in the theatrical sign language interpreting field.

In the Roundabout model, context supersedes delivery. Sign language interpreters focus on the mechanics of two-way communication between client A and

[41]Fielitz, Cheryl, and Jules Lehto. "Effective Team Interpreting." PowerPoint Presentation. 28 Oct. 2012.
[42] Hoza, J. *Team Interpreting: As Collaboration and Interdependence*. Alexandria, VA: RID Press, 2010.

client B with the ultimate goal being doing the least harm in facilitating language and culture between the two. The goal is accuracy of message delivery regardless of how it is delivered. In this case, the interpreter would not need to adopt a British accent or sing the words to the message a la opera singing.

Proposed Tetrahedron Model

Noting the flaws in the Roundabout Model that excludes theater and performing arts sign language interpreting situations, I would like to propose an alternate method to fit the field of performing arts interpreting. Trying to fit the Roundabout Model into a situation that calls for theater or performing arts interpreting styles might create a traffic jam with the message car going in loops from the north road (where the cast play on stage) while the two interpreters try to keep up without opportunities to interrupt the cast nor the Deaf/HOH audience on the south road in order to keep up the communication exchange. After all, theatre interpreters can't exactly disrupt a performance by trying to halt the actors mid-song to ask a question regarding the context of the show in order to interpret effectively, can they?

The Tetrahedron model consists of a 3-D triangle with four points and six edges (see Figure 3). In this model, the four points are represented by the four core areas in theater and performing arts scenarios: the Creative team (consisting of the director, composer, lyricist, and book writer); the Cast (the actors onstage); the Crew (stagehands, light designer, sound designer, and so on); and Management (the Box Office folks, the House Manager, and the ushers). The Audience takes up the space

within the 3-D triangle. The tetrahedron itself represents the theater or performing arts event itself.

Figure 3: The Tetrahedron Model

The 3-D structure of the model creates the show or event as a whole with each side representing a relationship between two constituents. These relationships include Creative-Cast; Creative-Management; Creative-Crew; Cast-Management; Cast-Crew; and Management- Crew. The Creative team works with the Actors by providing the foundation of the production through the script, music, lyrics, and stage direction. With the Crew, the Creative team provides them with a support system of how to run the production. The Cast and Crew work together to smooth

out transitions backstage during the production and to reduce possible injuries or accidents. Crew works with Management to ensure the production will run smoothly for the Audience. Creative and Management work together to produce the show, draw the Audience to the show, and manage the finances that accompany each production. But note also the two lone interpreters standing off to the side, wondering where they fit in the model.

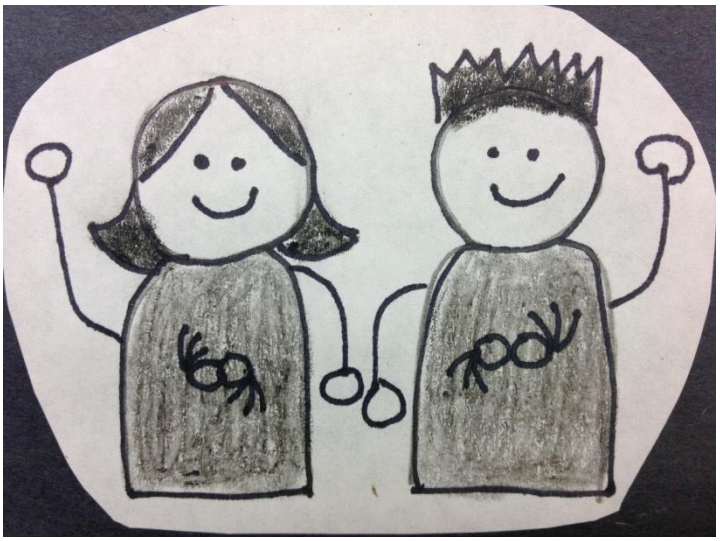

Figure 4: Two Lone Interpreters

The question remains: where do sign language interpreters fit in this set up? Theatres and performing arts venues are bound by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide reasonable accommodations to Audience members who request such. An earlier proposed model suggested a pyramid instead of a tetrahedron with the interpreters occupying a corner of their own. Further examination showed that this approach was not practical as it should be possible to add or remove the interpreters without toppling the structure of the production. In

short, interpreters are there to enhance the performance for a select group of patrons and are not an essential part of the production as a whole.

Traditionally, it is the responsibility of the Management to schedule an interpreter or two depending on the demands of a production. For instance, a one-man show might need a single interpreter while a play or a musical might use two (or even three, as is the norm in New York City). Once, up to 16 interpreters were utilized for a single performance of *Radio City's Christmas Spectacular*. [43]

Figure 5: Interpreters with Management

So do interpreters belong with Management? No. While the interpreters do provide a service, their preparation for the performance differs from simply ensuring they are in the right place at the right time.

It is important to note that the Creative Team is on top of the tetrahedron because the Creative Team is responsible for the backbone of the production with the script, music, and lyrics. Producers also fit in this particular corner. Do the

[43] Theatre Development Fund. www.tdf.org

interpreters fit with the Creative Team? After all, they are the ones translating the musical from one target language to another.

Figure 6: Interpreters with Creative Team

The answer is no. Otherwise the interpreters would be rolling in cash if this were *Wicked* or *The Phantom of the Opera* or any of the Disney musicals. Yes, the interpreters need access to the script and/or libretto, video and/or audio recordings, but they do not belong with the Creative folks. Although interpreters do need to analyze the text from the perspectives of the Creative Team – i.e. what does this specific line mean? Are there double entendres? Implied messages? – interpreters do not fit in this category.

Perhaps with the Crew?

Figure 7: Interpreters with the Crew

No. While interpreters interact with the Crew to make sure there will be a light on them during the performance in addition to auxiliary aids such as an audio feed system that filters out unnecessary sounds and thereby clarifies the voices, the interpreters do not belong on the Crew end.

In the tetrahedron model, delivery of the message is paramount over context of the message. A simple “No” may be meaningless without inflection shown through facial expression and body language. Throw in some music, and the “No” could become a lyrical “No” with a discernable pitch shown by the intensity of the sign being signed. However, the two work together in order to channel message clarity. To do so, sign language interpreters add theatrics to the mechanics of interpreting and translations through nuances in facial expressions, body stances, characterization development, and working with language and sound.

Figure 8: Interpreters with the Cast

Using the process of elimination, it is determined that theatre sign language interpreters best fit with the Cast. Both parties have overlapping preparation and rehearsal. Both the Cast on the stage and the interpreters in their corner are in the limelight. However, sign language interpreters are not part of the cast per se, as they render a service rather than a performance. In short, the Cast puts on the show, the interpreters facilitate access to the show.

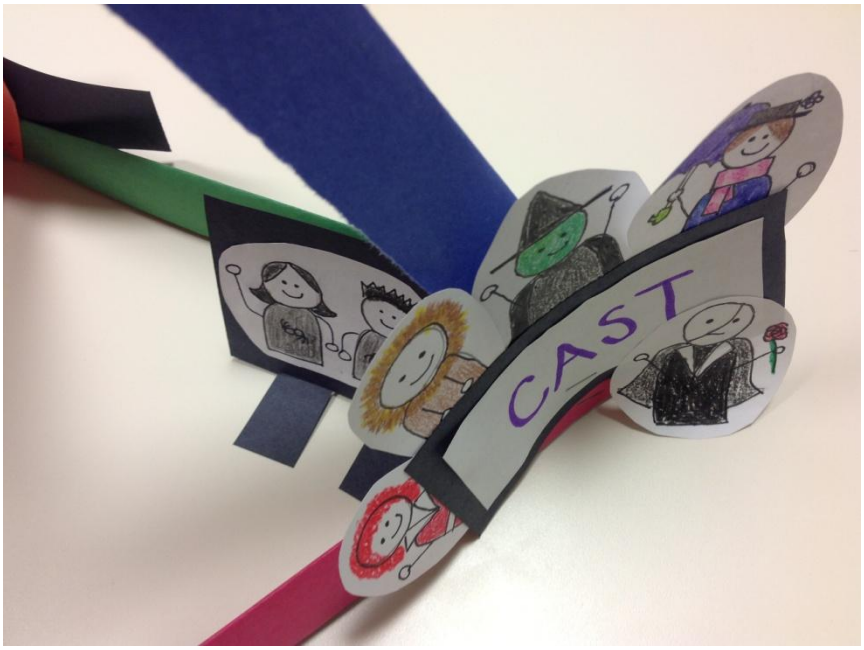

Figure 9: Interpreters in Front of Audience

Thus, the interpreters are put on the Cast end, but within the tetrahedron among the audience members. This shows that the interpreters are between the Cast and the audience in providing a service. If there are no Deaf/HOH patrons in attendance, the interpreters can leave the space within the tetrahedron and cease to be.

In creating the Tetrahedron model, several geometric shapes were considered. At first, a pyramid shape seemed logical with similar results but with the interpreters in their own corner. Should the interpreters be taken out of the equation, the pyramid ceases to be a pyramid. The goal, rather, is to create a model where the interpreters can be added or detracted and still not impact the overall structure of the model. In real life shows go on--with or without interpreters. An unofficial motto of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf is to do the least amount of harm in a given interpreting situation.

Figure 10: Interpreters Outside the Tetrahedron

While theater sign language interpreters still adhere to the basic standards as established by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), the creative environment of theatre, including the gray area where the proverbial fourth wall stands, allow sign language interpreters in theatrical settings to have greater artistic freedom.

Chapter 5
CONTEXT AND DELIVERY
OF THE THEATRE INTERPRETING PROCESS

The Process

X is cast/hired by the theatre for Y show for a number of Z performances. In order to pull off a successful performance, X is given a copy of the script, libretto, and/or sheet music in addition to audio and/or video recordings if available. X then rehearses for the performance, first solo and then with the team. Finally, opening night arrives, and X does the performance, hopefully to a standing ovation.

In this scenario, who is X? In one interpretation, X may be the actor, either a lead player or part of the ensemble. In an alternative interpretation, X may be the sign language interpreter hired to meet the accommodation request of a Deaf patron in attendance. The fine line between 'actor' and 'theatre sign language interpreter' is difficult to discern: the interpreter rehearses along with the actor and should avoid 'stealing the spotlight' at all costs.

How do theatre interpreters balance the fine line between 'acting' and 'interpreting' in a field where the two are merged into the concept of theatrical interpreting? Alan Champion points out the obvious difference between an actor and an interpreter: "There's a difference between a sign language face versus an actor's face. I think that when we do facial expression and facial grammar, it's very much

part of the language and not part of something we're miming out or trying to act."[44] Interpreters do follow a similar preparation and development arc as an actor, but what sets interpreters apart from actors is that unlike actors who perform, interpreters are there to provide a service.

While concert interpreting is another aspect of the performing arts interpreting field, the interpreters working a Lady Gaga or a Jon Bon Jovi concert run into similar dilemmas – "the line is between being visible and invisible, but it's also about figuring what it truly means to interpret something. It's about human perception and human fallibility, about the difference between aiding someone and patronizing them. It's about the search for a definite truth within an art form that is meant to be ambiguous."[45] In the field of theatre interpreting, this could apply to character development – and where the line stops before the interpreter crosses into the acting zone.

For instance, consider a possible scenario where the interpreter is interpreting for a character with a noticeable flaw. This character has a hunched back, and the interpreter incorporates this into his/her character developing stage to eliminate the need to add "he said, she said" to the interpreting process. But at no point should the interpreter take on the characterization of the hunched back character and become the character as a whole. Remember, the interpreter has

[44] "When Theatre Meets Sign Language." Theatre Development Fund. Youtube: Uploaded Sept. 27, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUK_OUxN-1Q&list=PLk3JU0feN7RkystXokxKon_Sfzpsa-S-O&index=3

[45] Hesse, Monica. "What Sign-Language Interpreters Make of the Likes of Lady Gaga and Bon Jovi". The Washington Post. 2 March 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/01/AR2011030106229.html?sid=ST2010090806702

multiple characters to deal with. Doing so might lead the audience, not just the Deaf/HOH audience but the hearing audience to cross over and watch the interpreters instead of the actors themselves. The audience came to see the show first and foremost, the actors putting on the show. Alan Champion sums it up with "Interpreters work more as an enhancement to the show, almost like a compliment to the show. One of our roles while interpreting in the theater is knowing when to get out of the way of the performance."[46]

The overlap of roles between the two constituents shows that there is a gray area between providing a performance (as in the case of the actors) and/or providing a service (as in the case of the interpreters). This reinforces the idea that cast members and theatre interpreters belong on the same end of the performing arts continuum. "Interpreting is alive – it's always in the moment, so that you allow yourself to respond to a better idea if you have one while you're working," says Penn. "You almost have to find the essence of each character and differentiate between characters. It could be their posture, could be a certain way they emphasize a word."[47]

Both actors and sign language interpreters focus on three distinctive areas of script analysis and interpretation, including character development, lyrical translation, and song delivery. This is especially true for musicals, but those methods may also be applied to other fields of theater as well as concert interpreting.

[46] Thomas, Cameron. "Alan Champion Takes a Bow: Bringing Broadway to the Deaf." Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf *VIEWS* Magazine, 2006.

[47] "In Good Company." Theatre Development Fund. http://www.tdf.org/TDF_Article.aspx?id=72

Character Development

Like actors, theatre interpreters rely on facial expressions and body language to accurately convey the specific character(s) being portrayed. However, unlike actors, sign language interpreters are responsible for more than one character during the majority of the performance.

A team of two or three interpreters will divide the roles of the multiple characters in a given production. A play oftentimes requires a two- person team. Musicals favor a team of three, but may have to make do with two in cases where the venue and/or organization cannot justify the cost for a third interpreter. Sometimes the interpreter team is forced to resort to overlapping roles to account for complicated scenes with multiple characters that require body shifting to indicate which character they are representing at that moment. This is crucial for the Deaf/HOH audience to be able to tell when a specific character is speaking at any given time. This replaces the 'he said, she said' manner in the traditional Roundabout model.

For example, in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*,[48] there are two characters that continually crush the other's logic and action. They are Lumiere, the candelabra, and Cogsworth, the tabletop clock with a pendulum in the center of his body. With these two, the interpreters might adopt characteristics of the duo through object personification; one might depict Lumiere by creating the arms of a candelabrum with his/her arms in between delivering Lumiere's lines, while the other interpreter

[48] *Beauty and the Beast*. Lyrics by Howard Ashman, Tim Rice. Music by Alan Menken. National Tour: Hennepin Theatre Trust Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis, MN, Oct. 2012.

might indicate the body shape of Cogsworth's clock body by holding the arms out and by the sides in addition to a surly attitude to match Cogsworth's sarcasm. This role designation allows the Deaf/HOH audience to tell at quick glance which interpreter is interpreting for which character.

Lyrical Translation: An Overview

While actors onstage take the lyrics on a page and transliterate them into the spoken and/or sung words, sign language interpreters take the same lyrics and translate them into a separate language, that of American Sign Language. In order to do so, they (meaning both actors and interpreters) read between the lines and reflect upon what the playwright, lyricist, or book writer is implying through the written lines of lyric or dialogue. Several areas of consideration include the meaning of the words; subliminal messages that might be implied; metaphors and double entendres that might suggest several potential interpretations of the same phrases; rhyming lines of lyrics; play-on language and so on.

Reflecting back to the light bulb analogy in the introduction, one should consider the potential of a song being interpreted in different ways by different people. With actors, different interpretations of the song might occur, with slight nuances in sound and delivery that make an important difference. It is different for sign language interpreters because the actual context is shifted from a linear language (English) to a spatial language (American Sign Language).

"Defying Gravity"

Give a particularly challenging song such as "Defying Gravity" from the musical *Wicked*[49] to 20 sign language interpreters to translate. In return, 20 different translations of the song will be given. This disparity could be related to several factors: how much of a theatrical background the interpreter possesses; the linguistic and cultural skills of the interpreter; the general take-home message that an interpreter might extract from the song; the multiple meanings of the phrase "Defying Gravity," and so on.

With that last factor, there are several meanings that come from the phrase "Defying Gravity." The musical *Wicked* tells the story of what happens before Dorothy drops in for a visit in Oz as the prequel to L.F. Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. The story is told from the point of view of the two witches – Glinda the Good, and Elphaba, the misunderstood green girl who would eventually become the Wicked Witch of the West.

"Defying Gravity" is the show-stopping song before intermission where the transformation is made, and the Witch defies gravity for the first time. Now, when one considers the subliminal messages of the song and the phrase itself, there are several that come to mind:

1. The character escapes on a magical broomstick that flies and 'defies gravity'

2. The character taps within her special newfound powers and exposes her true self to the townspeople in an act of rebellion.

[49] *Wicked*. Lyrics and Music by Stephen Schwartz. Book by Winnie Holzman. Directed by Joe Mantello. First National Tour: Hennepin Theatre Trust Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis, MN, Sept. 2008.

3. The character defies the rules and expectations set upon her by society at large, i.e. defying their expectations and going against the grain; and any other interpretations that might surface.

The question remains – which phrase does the interpreter use to sign the concept of *defying gravity*; and how to sign it so that the message can be left up to the audience to interpret for themselves? Regarding the light bulb analogy, one interpreter might sign something akin of "*REBEL RULES*" as in boycotting the rules placed by society (in this case, defy shares the same sign as *rebel, revolt, protest, boycott, strike, anarchy*, etc.) while another interpreter might come up with "*REBEL BREAK-FREE*" as in defying to disconnect from the ground, people, and expectations. In this example, the sign used for BREAK-FREE can also be used for *disconnect, detach, let go,* etc. Yet a third interpreter might share "*IMPOSSIBLE INDEPENDENCE CAN-CAN*" as in "it's possible to do the impossible by freeing oneself." With this one, I feel *REBEL BREAK-FREE* seems to fit the message of the song better than the other two possibilities.

But it is not an exact translation of the phrase, and foreign productions of *Wicked* (German: *Wicked: Die Hexen Von Oz*) face a similar dilemma when translating songs from one language to another. In the German production, the phrase is translated to "*frei und schwerelos*" which loosely translates into English to "free and weightless" or "free from gravity", depending on the source. [50] The Japanese production uses "For Freedom" as their translation of the song title, and

[50] "Frei und Schwerelos." Wicked Wikia. http://wicked.wikia.com/wiki/Frei_und_schwerelos

the Dutch came up with "I Laugh at Gravity."[51] With the translations, the central message of the song remains the same despite different approaches and views of the lyrics themselves.

"Do-Re-Mi"

It's not as easy as A-B-C at given times for particular songs. Consider the song "Do-Re-Mi" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*.[52] This song is sung in the scene where Maria meets the seven von Trapp children and tries to build rapport with them. They start at the beginning with learning the basics of music with "Do-Re-Mi". In the song, the lyrics play off the phonemes of the solfege scale with "*Doe-Ray-Me-Far-Sew-La-Tea*" with a line to accompany each note.

First, what is the solfege scale and what does it entail? According to Encyclopedia Britannica, [53] solfege is a series of "vocal exercises sung to the solmization syllables (*do, re, mi,* etc.)," with the seven notes corresponding to the alphabet scale with middle C on a piano representing C (or *Do*). This is an example of a fixed "Do" – there is both a fixed "Do" which corresponds to the key of C, and a moveable "Do" which can be used across different keys. For simplicity, this discussion deals with the lyrics of the Rodgers and Hammerstein song which clearly states that it uses the fixed "Do". The letters are used in the order of C, D, E, F, G, A, B and so on. *Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La-Ti* corresponds to *C-D-E-F-G-A-B*, respectively. They can be used interchangeably. The picture below shows the scale:

[51] "Defying Gravity." Wicked Wikia. http://wicked.wikia.com/wiki/Defying_Gravity
[52] *The Sound of Music.* Music by Richard Rodgers. Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. Book by Russel Crouse, Howard Lindsay. National Tour: Morrison Center for the Performing Arts, Boise, ID, Nov. 2003.
[53] Encyclopedia Britannica

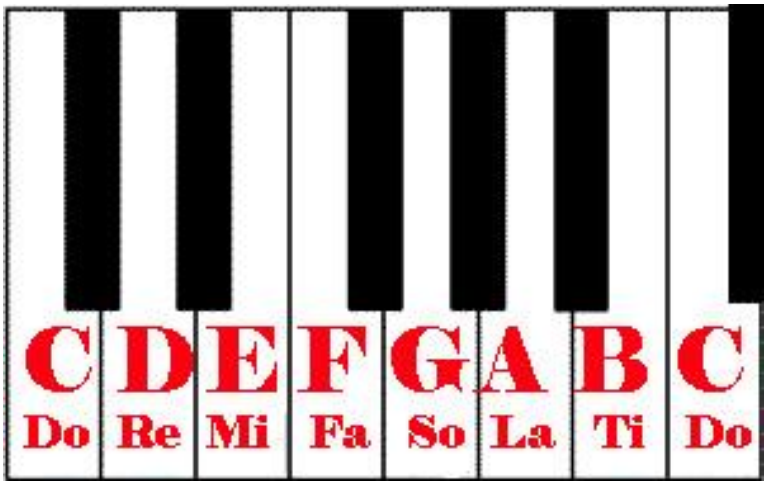

Figure 11: Do-Re-Mi on the C scale[54]

Theatre interpreters run into a linguistic barrier when translating "Do-Re-Mi" in a coherent way in order for Deaf/HOH audiences to understand the meaning behind the simplistic lyrics. There is no linguistic equivalent of the solfege scale in ASL, and the concept of musical notes is lost on the Deaf/HOH audience. A literal word-for-word translation for the first line "*Doe, a deer, a female deer*"[55] might come across as "*DEER – DEER – WOMAN DEER*" and thus lose the play on words with "*Do*" and "*Doe*". In deconstruction dilemmas such as this, the interpreter might consider the musical background and knowledge of the Deaf/HOH patrons in attendance when considering the translation of this particular song.

[54] "Solfege – Sighted Singing". Audrey's Piano Studio. Blog. 14 July 2011. http://audreyspiano.com/blog/piano-guild-auditions/solfege-sight-singing

[55] *The Sound of Music.* Music by Richard Rodgers. Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. Book by Russel Crouse, Howard Lindsay. National Tour: Morrison Center for the Performing Arts, Boise, ID, Nov. 2003.

One way around this cultural clash is to take a look at the 2005 Austrian Volksoper production of the musical where the German language translators ran into similar problems. "*Do*" does not translate into "*Doe*" in the German language and thus, alternatives needed to be found that retained the original intent of the song. They addressed the translation disparity by replacing the solfege scale with the middle C scale, thus replacing "*Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La-Ti*" with "*C-D-E-F-G-A-H*".

With this, the line "*Doe, a deer, a female deer*" was replaced with "*C, as in cellophane*" (translated from the German to English). Do note the comparison between the original lyrics and the rewritten lyrics:

Do (Doe), a deer, a female deer	*C, wie cellophanpapier* (C, as in cellophane)
Re (Ray), a drop of golden sun	*D, bei D-Zug denkt man dran,* (D, a D-train one remembers)
Mi (Me), a name I call myself	*E, ein Elefantentier,* (E, an elephant)
Fa (Far), a long long way to run	*F, wie flatterhafte Fahn',* (F, as a flighty flag)
So (Sew), a needle pulling thread	*G, Gesangsverein vom Land,* (G, a singling group of the land)
La, a note to follow So	*A, vom Alphabet bekannt,* (A, from the alphabet known)
Ti (Tea), a drink with jam and bread	*B/H, wie Hagebuttentee,* (H, such as rose-hip tea)
That will bring us back to Do!	*Das fuhrt uns zuruck zu* C![56]

As one can clearly see, the lyrics from the Volksoper production differ from the original lyrics as written by Rodgers and Hammerstein. With the English version,

[56] "The Sound of Music German Lyrics Trivia: The 2005 Austrian Stage Revival". *German Language and Culture*. 17, Dec. 2013. http://www.aboutgerman.net/AGNlessons/sound-of-music-trivia.htm

the sign language interpreter has to decide between fingerspelling "*D-O, R-E, M-I*" and so on, or use the signs for "DEER-SUNSHINE-ME," or come up with an entirely new idea that can still convey the concept of the song. As another alternative, one may use the choral hand signs established by the music field and explain to the Deaf/HOH audience before the show what the hand signs represent. The image below shows the hand signs used in the music field to represent the solfege scale:

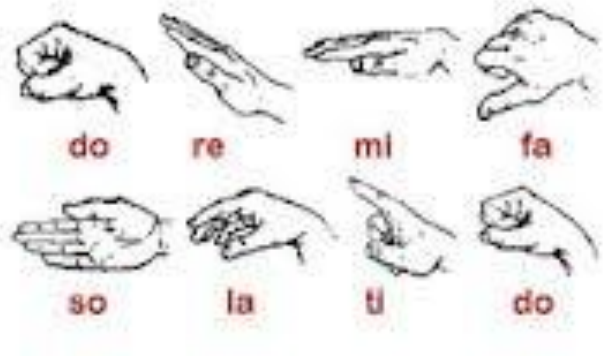

Figure 12: Solfege Hand Signs[57]

With "Do-Re-Mi", the interpreter will find it challenging to create an acceptable translation of this particular song and still make sense with the concept of the solfege scale being sung. Purist Deaf/HOH audiences might want to stick with the word-for-word interpretation regardless of concept accuracy while those not familiar with the musical might find it challenging to grasp the idea of "*Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La-Ti*" corresponding to "*Doe-Ray-Me-Far-Sew-La-Tea*" and its expanded definition of each note.

[57] "Solfege – Sighted Singing". Audrey's Piano Studio. Blog. 14 July 2011. http://audreyspiano.com/blog/piano-guild-auditions/solfege-sight-singing

In an ideal world, the entire song might be rewritten to fit the classifiers (common hand shapes) by following the Volksoper example with "C-D-E". I played around with the possibility and came up with the following:

C, GROUP SING SIGN-SIGN (C, a singing group that signs)
D, KNOW D-TRAIN GONE SORRY (D, Sorry you missed the D-train)
E, LETTER AFTER D (*shrugs*) (E, for the letter following D)
F, TEA WITH JAM + BREAD (F, as in tea with jam and bread)
G, BIRD BIRD FLY-HIGH SCATTER (G, for the birds that fly high above)
A, GAME WE PLAY MINGLE (A, a game that we all play)
B, FLAG PULL-UP FLAGPOLE FLUTTERING-FLAG (For the flighty flag on flagpole)
Which brings us back to C!

In keeping up with rhyming, which is integral part of song, the signs for SIGN, SCATTER, and MINGLE all share the same hand shape while BREAD and FLAG share another hand shape. D stands alone here, but is mentioned twice. The line "E, the letter following D" is a tribute to "*La, a note to follow So*" when Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II used that line as a placeholder and failed to come up with a better line, and thus that line stayed.[58] Another reason is that the letter E in ASL is not a classifier and does not have a group of signs that correspond to this hand shape aside from those borrowed from English. Somehow "*E, as in calling 911 for Emergencies*" does not make for inspiring song lyrics.

Ultimately it is up to the interpreter(s) to decide which route to take, and how they will carry the translation out. "Do-Re-Mi" is a sample of a linguistic conundrum that theatre sign language interpreters face when working on translating a musical

[58] Hirsch, Julia. *The Sound of Music: The Making of America's Favorite Movie*. McGraw Hill, 1 Sept. 1993.

and music. In the following section, I will cover nonsensical words that do not have an equivalent in English.

"Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious"

Nonsensical words and foreign phrases that might not have an equivalent signs are also particular hurdles for interpreters to clear. These words are found in many productions from Dr. Seuss's *Seussical* to Disney's *Mary Poppins* with "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." [59] The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word as an adjective meaning something "extraordinarily good, wonderful."[60] The songwriters of *Mary Poppins*, Richard and Robert Sherman, once explained that the word itself is a string of nonsensical syllables strung together.[61] Therefore, should the ASL translation also consist of nonsensical signs strung together in keeping up with the parallelism?

There are three schools of thought on this linguistic dilemma. One might choose to fingerspell *S-U-P-E-R-C-A-L-I-F-R-A-G-I-L-I-S-T-I-C-E-X-P-I-A-L-I-D-O-C-I-O-U-S* out every single time the word is mentioned and risk carpal tunnel syndrome. In the Broadway production, the word is mentioned 17 times including four lines where the actors spell out the word with their bodies.[62] One time the word is actually spelled backwards by Mary herself. If one were to factor in the reprise, that's another ten times the word is mentioned. One mention comes in the scene

[59] *Mary Poppins*. Lyrics and Music by Richard M. Sherman, Robert B. Sherman. Book by Julian Fellowes. First National Tour: Hennepin Theatre Trust Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis, MN, April 2009.
[6060] Oxford Dictionary
[61] "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious: What Does It Mean?" BBC News Magazine, 7 March 2012. http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-17279039
[62] *Mary Poppins*. Lyrics and Music by Richard M. Sherman, Robert B. Sherman. Book by Julian Fellowes. First National Tour: Hennepin Theatre Trust Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis, MN, April 2009.

where the Banks children sing it to their parents, and yet another mention comes when the father shares this atrocious word with his fellow co-workers at the bank towards the end of the story. That's 29 times total that the word is mentioned, and thus, deserves some time and consideration regarding the expression of this word in context. So the question remains – to fingerspell, or to sign? Or a combination of both?

Depending on whether or not the Deaf and Hard of Hearing audience present is well-versed in how words in the English language sound, and their phonetic knowledge as brought up by the "Do-Re-Mi" discussion, one might use the sounds-like method. With this method, someone might take the atrocious word and break it up into syllables that have a corresponding sign (or the closest match). This might bring out a hilarious translation of the word. With *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, someone might sign "*SUPERMAN – CALIFORNIA – FRAGILE – STICK – EGGS – PEA – ALLEY – DOE –US*".

Lastly, one might take the example from the Sherman brothers and string a series of successive signs that fit the definition of *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*. This becomes "*WONDERFUL – AWE – EYE-POPPING – FAR-OUT – TERFFICIABLE – PERFECT*". The phrase might be signed along to Super-cali-fragil-istic-expiali-docious, thus matching the aural cadence of the word itself. There is a note to point out: the word "*terrificable*" in the phrase is a word I invented to describe a sign in ASL that does not have an equal English counterpart. With "*terrificable*", it can mean disbelievingly and terribly terrific. Again, this is another

example of a tongue twister on the hands that theatrical interpreters face when interpreting for a musical.

Song Delivery

For musicals and concert interpreters everywhere, just interpreting the words is not enough. "People used to say during the jams, 'it's music, look at the stage." Loretta Freeman, an interpreter, says, "but they never tried to communicate what music looks like. Deaf people would see other people respond, and they wanted to know what they were feeling. I believe you can represent music… you try to represent the rhythm and the emotion in your interpretation." [63]

In an interview with Carol De Giere, the author of "Defying Gravity (…)", the composer and lyricist Stephen Schwartz states that "*The important thing is that the lyrics sit on the music. I think the music delivers the emotion… the lyric has to sit on the music in such a way that it rises and falls and flows with it. If the music is going up into an emotional point, the content of the lyric and the words of the lyric need to make that same emotional journey so that it's one contour."* [64] Interpreting a song is not merely translating the lyrics to get the concept across, but somehow reflecting the mood and tone of the music behind the lyrics in the form of sign size, intensity, repetition, movement, and facial expression.

[63] Levitt, Aimee. "Local Sign-Language Interpreters Equalize and Enhance the Experience." River Front Times. 4 Nov. 2010. http://www.riverfronttimes.com/2010-11-04/music/sign-language-interpreters-st-louis-concert-deaf-lo-s-communication-plus/2/

[64] de Giere, Carol. *Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz from* Godspell *to* Wicked. New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2008.

"No Day but Today"

The difference between captioning and interpreting a show, especially a musical, is that the captions cannot convey the aural impact that music showcases through both word and instruments, and sign language interpreters have the ability to convey the essence of the music through body language and delivery of the lyrics by the hands using timing and rhythm. With the Hollywood film of *Rent*, the captions showed the opening to the song "Seasons of Love" as "*525,600 minutes*" instead of the original lyrics of "*Five hundred, twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes*", and thus some of the impact of the song is lost. The Deaf/HOH audience that aren't knowledgeable with the music of *Rent* are thus led to believe the English lyrics were along the lines of "*525,600 minutes*" and appear confused when told that the lyrics were otherwise. I have seen select individuals sign the phrase as "*5-2-5-6-0-0 MINUTES*" and immediately know where they got their source of information from. To preserve this impact, the captioning should have taken a lead from the English subtitles and use "*Five hundred* (break; new line) *twenty-five thousand* (break; new line) *six hundred minutes*". Fortunately, sign language interpreters use the second format with a similar approach with "*5-HUNDRED,"* (pause) *"25-THOUSAND,"* (pause) *"6-HUNDRED MINUTES."*

As another example, consider the catchphrase from the musical *Rent*, "*No day but today*". [65] This particular phrase occurs in multiple songs during the musical as a refrain of the message of the entire show. Loosely interpreted, it means that we

[65] *Rent*. Jonathan Larson. Directed by Michael Grief. National Tour: Hennepin Theatre Trust Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis, MN, March 2009.

should live every day as if it was our last. Live life to the fullest potential it can offer. While singing the phrase, there is an emphasis on specific words and/or syllables that implies the urgency of the message being shared between the actors on stage and the audience.

Add an interpreter or two, and the message could potentially be interpreted according to the interpretation each interpreter uniquely comes up with after analyzing the libretto. So, does the interpreter sign the message word for word for the Deaf/HOH audience member that insists on authenticity? Or does the interpreter translate the phrase to match the concept it carries, rather than the actual words being sung? This is a conundrum because when one literally translates "*No day but today*" from English to sign language, it oftentimes comes across as "*NO DAY BUT DAY*". Of course this translation doesn't convey the message intended. Also, it does not inflict the same emotional impact as the original lyrics do.

If the sign language interpreter(s) were to consider the message as a whole concept rather than a word-for-word literal translation, they should imagine what the take-home message the actors want audiences to leave with. Using this line of thought, one could possibly come up with "*JUST ONE-DAY carpe diem NOW-NOW*." American Sign Language (ASL) is a manual language without a written counterpart, and one uses what is known academically as "glossing" when transcribing ASL signs on paper. While this discussion covers the translation issues that might surface when working with English and ASL, one should keep in mind that it also applies for other languages that face a similar barrier in translating

literature. This is especially true for poetry and songs where the translation often fails to retain the meaning and impact of the original text.

The particular sign for the concept of seizing the opportunity does not have a worthy English equivalent, but the Latin phrase *carpe diem* comes close. The sign is shown by grabbing an invisible opportunity presented on an upturned palm. *Carpe diem*, when translated in English, comes across as 'seize the day'. Expanding upon the ASL gloss, the message of "*no day but today*" is presented as "*JUST ONE-DAY carpe diem NOW-NOW*" and rendered as "you have just one day; seize the day and make the most of it now as in today." This comes closer to the original lyrics than "*NO DAY BUT TODAY*."

The Broadway production of Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boubil's musical *Les Miserables* is a prime example of a production where delivery supersedes context. Someone not familiar with the musical's story of the June uprisings in 19th century Paris might be so overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the music being sung by the ensemble that they get lost among the song lyrics.[66] It sounds great – that chest-jarring crescendo – but what were the words again?

Delivery matters, especially with the Songs of Death, a phrase coined by Felicia Ricci in her memoir *Unnaturally Green*. She defines the Songs of Death as *" songs that made me feel like I might keel over while singing them. The doozies. The destructors. The devils… These explosive, spew-your-guts Songs of Death*

[66] *Les Miserables.* Book by Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boubil. Music by Claude-Michel Schonberg. Lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer. Original French text by Alain Boubil and Jean-Marc Nafel. Additional text by James Fenton. Directed by Trevor Nunn and John Caird. 1987.

demanded that every atom of my body spin around its individual nucleus in a special, anxiety-driven hyper-speed… conquering the Songs of Death would never be quick and painless, but rather slow and agonizing – the difference between ripping off a Band-Aid and plucking every body hair, one at a time." [67]

All theatrical interpreters might have a song or two (or even the entire repertoire of a particular songwriter) that they wouldn't touch or even attempt to sign. It might be Barbra Streisand's "Don't Rain on My Parade" from *Funny Girl* or *Wicked*'s "Defying Gravity". Or even Sondheim's Seriously Syncopated Songs of Supercalifragilistically Sheer geniuS. Hearing people also face Sondheim with a sense of trepidation such as Angela Lansbury in the particular anecdote:[68]

Singer: (looks at sheet music) "Mr. Sondheim, where do I breathe?"

Sondheim: "You don't."

[67] Ricci, Felicia. *Unnaturally Green: One Girl's Journey Along a Yellow Brick Road Less Traveled.* 20 Sept. 2011. eBook.

[68] *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.* Dir. Tim Burton. Perf. Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter. Dreamworks, 2007. DVD.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: THE ELEVENTH HOUR SONG

Foundation of Understanding

For theatre sign language interpreters, a solid foundation in language skills (including both English and ASL) is one thing; however, an understanding of the factors that make up the musical is a separate skill. That skill and aptitude may be acquired through training and experience in the field in order to interpret for the Broadway musical. Despite the focus on the musical, many of these can also be applied to plays with music, concerts and music-centric events including religious events. It does not matter if the interpreter works for a Broadway show in New York, one of the many tours crisscrossing the country, a regional production, or even a high school production – the same level of quality should be consistent across the wide variety of venues and productions. Whether it is a community production of *Annie* or a Broadway tour of *Book of Mormon*, Deaf/HOH audiences should be able to expect quality translation from interpreters who care about their craft in the field of theatrical interpreting.

Accessibility: A Shared Responsibility

Accessibility to the theatre is a shared responsibility. As per the Tetrahedron model covered in Chapter 4, all four aspects of the performing arts field presented in the model plus the sign language interpreter(s) share responsibility for providing access to the theatre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences. These roles and responsibilities can be broken down to the following:

- Sign language interpreters serve as a communication link between the Cast and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing audience.
- Management personnel are responsible for including accessibility in their programming by ensuring the venue itself is accessible for all aspects of disabilities aside from mobility-related disabilities. They also act as a liaison between the sign language interpreters and the other aspects that contribute to the performance including Creative, Cast, and Crew).
- Crew personnel are responsible for negotiating with the sign language interpreter(s) as where they [the interpreter(s)] will stand during the performance, where the light will be focused (and ensuring that the interpreters are sufficiently lighted), and acquiring audio feeds for the interpreter(s) and so on.
- Creative team members are responsible for ensuring that the sign language interpreters have a copy of the most updated version of the script and/or libretto; sheet music; etc., that are necessary to translate the production into the target language (in this case, into American Sign Language).
- The Cast is responsible for seeing the sign language interpreters as an enhancement to the performance, not necessarily to 'steal' their spotlight; the cast should also recognize the sign language interpreters at the end of the show for their contribution to the performance.
- The Deaf and Hard of Hearing audience themselves play a part in this responsibility exchange in order to experience a performance that is accessible and at the same, appreciate the artistic endeavor that theatre interpreters present in order to make the performance accessible.

Impact on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Audiences

Now, I would like to take a moment and make a confession. In my many years of theatergoing as a devoted Deaf theatre patron, I have decided which shows to see and which shows to skip on the basis of quality interpreting services. If there is a particular musical that I love, such as *Rent* or *Mary Poppins*, but upon learning who the interpreters are and feeling that those chosen for this gig are not a good match, I will skip going to that show. I didn't want the experience of inadequately prepared and/or inexperienced interpreters ruining my favorite songs. On the other hand, I have attended performances of a musical that I am not overly fond of but, knowing who the interpreters were and having seen them in action for other musicals, I knew I could trust them to do an excellent job with the performance.

Now, do keep in mind that this is a single perspective from one Deaf theatre patron – I can share my own experiences and they are mine alone. Other Deaf/HOH will have different perspectives and varying experiences. Great interpreters who understand their role as a theatrical interpreter and embrace their craft can oftentimes lead for memorable moments that are cherished by Deaf/HOH audiences including myself.

For example, I saw a touring production of *My Fair Lady* at the Orpheum Theatre in Minneapolis in 2008. During the "Rain in Spain" scene where Henry Higgins struggles to teach Eliza Doolittle how to improve her articulation, there is a particular moment that might have been lost on the ears of Deaf/HOH theatergoers.

During this moment, Higgins gives Eliza several marbles and instructs her to place them in her mouth and attempt to articulate clearly through the obstacles. Hearing theatergoers would then hear her struggles with enunciation while Deaf/HOH audiences would wonder what the marbles had to do with anything and how funny she looked with her cheeks bulging. To remedy this, one of the interpreters (interpreting for Henry Higgins) pulled out a mitten from his pocket and instructed his colleague (who was interpreting for Eliza) to put it on her hand and attempt to fingerspell through the obstacle. This action, otherwise unscripted, helped the Deaf/HOH audiences create the connection between struggling to speak without spitting out the marbles with the obvious attempts to fingerspell coherently through the obstruction on the hands.

Upon sharing my experiences, I have had more than one person ask me on multiple occasions why I have seen many shows in several states but have yet to see a show in New York, and more specifically on Broadway, the supposed center of the theater world. My answer should be simple, but unfortunately the answer is a tad complicated. Growing up, I saw my friends and classmates – hearing friends and classmates, that is – fly out to NYC for the weekend and manage to squeeze five Broadway shows in. I've dreamed of doing the same, yet whenever I consult the show listings for "hearing loss" on Theater Development Fund's (TDF) website, I am met with the grim reality of it all. I'm lucky if I can catch a single interpreted performance on the week I would like to go.

More often than not, the changing demographics of the D/HOH audiences and the economic climate of the theater world reflects the current trend of adding

more captioned performances and reducing the number of sign language interpreted performances.

In my experience, it is not worthwhile to make a weekend trip for just a single show while peers can do five. Instead, I chase the national tours instead – if I miss the interpreted performance in Minneapolis, I can fly out to catch it Chicago, and vice versa. On the rare occasion, I can convince the roadhouse venue to add a second interpreted show to a show's run if I play my cards well.

I would like to emphasize that interpreters on the local level are just as good as these who interpret on Broadway. A number of local interpreters have studied with the Broadway interpreters through the TDF-Julliard Theatre Interpreting Initiative, and many continue to network with other interpreters who have done the productions before.

Opportunities for Further Research

The field of theatrical interpreting is relatively new; aside from the mouths and hands of satisfied Deaf/HOH audiences, little research has been done on the success of accessible performances. In order to improve on the craft, there are several possible leads for further research in this field might include the following:

1. The impact of quality theatrical sign language interpreting on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences that attend accessible performances.
2. The advantages and/or disadvantages of using three sign language interpreters for an interpreted performance instead of the

traditional team of two interpreters to reflect the relationship triangle theory.

3. The possibility of establishing standards in performing arts sign language interpreting in order to lay out the foundation for possible certification in this field of interpreting.

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