

Mentorship for Canadian Deaf Artists: Fostering Deaf Performance Arts Excellence



Research Report

DEAF CULTURE CENTRE
Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf

**Mentorship for Canadian Deaf Artists:
Fostering Deaf Performance Arts Excellence**

Research Report

Any individual or organization wishing this report should contact the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf or the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE at info@deafculturecentre.ca.

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**MENTORSHIP FOR CANADIAN DEAF ARTISTS:
FOSTERING DEAF PERFORMANCE ARTS EXCELLENCE**

introduction

Mentorship for Canadian Deaf Artists: Fostering Deaf Performance Arts Excellence was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, Sector Innovation and Development Grant. This research report and recommendations summarizes the shared learning, collaboration and networking opportunities that took place for Deaf theatre professionals pairing experienced Deaf and hearing theatre professionals as mentors within the rare context of Deaf led theatre production, *The Black Drum*, 2019. It highlights the learnings of both mentees and mentors. These included: Deaf producer, Deaf artistic director, playwright, actors, ASL coaches, designers and public relations specialist in the first phase for Deaf theatre professionals' capacity building.

This document provides a mentorship framework for a national *Deaf Arts Institute without Boundaries* developed based on the learnings from this mentorship experience and research.

The report to the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA), "Focus on Disability and Deaf Arts in Canada" (Jacobson and McMurchy, 2010) highlights ASL interpretation of mainstream hearing Canadian theatre performances. Interpreted performances have steadily increased since that report. The Deaf Artists and Theatres Toolkit (DATT), cahoots.ca/datt (2016), provided a guide for engaging Deaf performing artists in mainstream theatre. **Of note, however is a dearth of Canadian Deaf led theatre.**

Two guidebooks on Deaf led performing arts have recently been published:

*Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol. 2. Signed Music Rhythm of the Heart (2015)*¹ explains the inter-performance art, signed music, its history and activities and *Vol.3. Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada (2020)*² summarizes Canadian Deaf led theatre genres, history and activities of Deaf led theatre.

A guidebook was also produced, *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol.1. Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits (2020)*³ that explains Deaf View Image Art (De'VIA) which is the Deaf visual art genre that served as the basis for costume, lighting and set design in *THE BLACK DRUM*.

An educational package, *THE BLACK DRUM Signed Musical: Behind the Scenes Youth Activities*

1 Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Series author) (2015). *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol.2. Signed Music: Rhythm of the Heart*. [Cripps, J. Project Manager; Small, A. Content Manager.] Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. <https://slicanada.ca/deaf-arts-series/>

2 Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. (Series author) (2020). *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol.3. Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada*. [Cripps, J. Project Manager; Small, A. Content Manager.] Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. <https://slicanada.ca/deaf-arts-series/>

3 Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Series Author) (2020). *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol.1. Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits*. [Cripps, J. Project Manager; Small, A. Content Manager], Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.

Guide (2021)⁴ has been developed through this mentorship program to explain the process of Deaf theatre development and activities for Deaf theatre creation in the variety of professional theatre specialties required to create a full feature signed musical production. This package along with the other educational Deaf Arts Handbook Series serve as resources for capacity building among Deaf youth, the Deaf community and professional Deaf artists who have not been fully enculturated in their own Deaf art forms. There are few Canadian Deaf led initiatives for Deaf performing arts leaders, to raise their level of professional artistry and to lead other Deaf professionals to do the same, particularly in engaging in their own Deaf heritage performing arts on the highest level of excellence.

This report shares new learnings from the first Deaf led, full feature Deaf musical integrating signed music with theatre and sharing the experience of expert professional mentors and Deaf professional mentees in the process of production.

The Black Drum mentorship program

Production of *The Black Drum* by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) in 2019 supported by CCA's, Canada 150 grant provided the ideal catalyst for mentorship, moving from a closed to an open model with true sharing among Deaf and hearing professional artists of the highest calibre. It was an historic investment in the arts and provided a rare mentorship opportunity.

In, *The Black Drum* signed musical, written by Deaf playwright, Adam Pottle, and signed music pieces composed by the Deaf actors/ signed musicians, they tell their story of a search for authentic Deaf identity and signed music through tattoo art, physical theatre, signed music composition and dance while projection and base rhythms enhanced their performance. *The Black Drum* tells the story of a young woman (Joan), whose life is upturned when she is propelled on a fantastical journey in search of her own inner music and strength. Her Butterfly and Bulldog tatoos [Deaf animals] come alive in her dream world as she mourns the death of her wife (Karen) and grapples with her own sense of self and identity to find her own peace in the land of the living. A production of the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE presented by Soulpepper Theatre, Toronto, Canada (June 15 - 29, 2019), *The Black Drum* led to further learnings and international performances were featured at Clin D'Oeil Deaf Arts Festival in Reims, France (July 6 – 7, 2019) and an on-line North American virtual tour of the performance during COVID-19 (March 25 - 27, 2021).

The Black Drum mentors were paired as follows:

- Artistic Director, Mira Zuckermann mentoring beneficiary Jack Volpe Artistic Director *Seeing Voices*, Deaf and hearing theatre troupe, Montreal, is credited with bringing the theatre company to the fore.

4 Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. (2021). *THE BLACK DRUM Signed Musical: Behind the Scenes Youth Activities Guide*. [Cripps, J. Project Manager; Small, A. Content Manager], Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.

- Resident Dramaturge, Teater Manu, Norway, Tine Thomasson mentoring beneficiary Adam Pottle, talented Deaf playwright from Saskatoon. He is *The Black Drum* playwright and award-winning author focusing on the social and philosophical aspects of deafness and disability. Adam required direction to incorporate Deaf Culture into his script.
- Choreographer, Patricia Allison (dancer/ choreographer) mentoring beneficiary Dawn Jani Birley (internationally recognized professional physical theatre Deaf actor in Finland originally from Saskatchewan and award-winning actor in Canada's *Prince Hamlet*) as *Joan*, Yan Liu (world renowned dancer) as *Bree/ Butterfly*, Bob Hiltermann (drummer for all-Deaf rock band, *Beethoven's Nightmare*) as the *Minister*, Daniel Durant, (actor with lead role in Broadway's *Spring Awakening* and TV series *Switched at Birth*) as *Oscar/ Bulldog*, Corinna Den Dekker (actor known for her sign language broadcast of *Is Somebody Singing* with astronaut Chris Hadfield on the International Space Station as *Ava*, Agata Wisny (Deaf Norwegian actor) as *Karen* (Joan's deceased wife) and Natasha Bacchus, (award-winning athlete and actor) as *Squib* (Minister's reluctant lieutenant). Mentorship focused on physical theatre and choreography.
- ASL Linguist and Coach Director, Ron Hall mentoring actors and Pamela Witcher (Signed Music Specialist), mentoring signed music composers. There are no certified ASL coaches or other recognized signed music composers in Canada.
- Set and Costume Designer, Ken MacKenzie mentoring beneficiary Maryam Hafizirad, a high quality visual Deaf artist and Ruth Albertyn, costume designer. Maryam, new to theatre, designed the tattoos in the play and served as Assistant costume designer and makeup artist. Ruth, costume designer for *The Black Drum* received an MFA in Theatre design, University of Alberta and diploma in Costume Studies, Dalhousie University and studied ASL.
- Marketing and Communications Consultant, Katie O'Connor, mentoring beneficiary Catherine MacKinnon, Deaf co-founder of Toronto International Deaf Film and Arts Festival. Catherine was Deaf publicist for *The Black Drum*.
- Soulpepper General Manager, Tania Senewiratne and Producer, Chris Scholey mentoring beneficiary Joanne Cripps, Executive Director, DEAF CULTURE CENTRE. Joanne produced *The Black Drum*. She has experience as co-producer on numerous performance projects but required guidance for major theatre production.

Phase two is recommended to take the learnings from this mentorship report to expand current professional curricula (through a digital platform grant) and training (through a capacity building grant) for professional Deaf theatre artists nationally.

methodology

Ethnographic Approach

Ethnographic research methodology was used to study *The Black Drum* production process and mentorship program. Ethnography synthesizes data from a variety of qualitative methods in order to better understand the theatre production development and gain insight into the enculturation that infuses the production (Spindler, 1982).⁵ Ethnographic methodology describes and examines cultural scenes (e.g. educational interactions) as they evolve naturally

⁵ Spindler, G. (1982). *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling: Educational Anthropology in Action*. New York: CBS College Publishing.

in the environment within key institutional settings (e.g. educational environments, theatres, etc.) (Erickson, 1986).⁶ It paints “a portrait of a school or classroom [or educational exchange] in as thorough, accurate and vivid a manner as possible so that others can truly ‘see’ that school or classroom and its participants and what they do [in their communication exchange]” (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p. 393).⁷ Participant observation applied with rigour is key in ethnography. It emphasizes documenting and portraying everyday experiences of individuals by observing and /or interviewing them and relevant others, by taking field notes and/or by videotaping and audiotaping interactions. These tools, which are ongoing in nature capture the processes as well as identify the products of mentorship. It has the ability to describe “nuances of behavior that might escape researchers using other methodologies . . . [and in so doing] ‘see things that otherwise might not even be anticipated. (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, pp. 393-394). Ethnographic methodology is well suited to the questions that arise in an innovative program that is evolving (such as Deaf theatre mentorship) and holds the promise of revealing critical information that might otherwise be missed by other research and evaluation methods.

Anita Small, EdD, cross-cultural consultant and ethnographic researcher with the Deaf community conducted the research. Dr. Small was content manager for *Signed Music: Rhythm of the Heart* (2015) handbook describing Deaf community signed music evolution and activities to foster its development; project manager and author, *Deaf Artists and Theatres Toolkit*, (DATT), cahoots.ca/datt (2016), an on-line guide for engaging Deaf performing artists in mainstream theatre; content manager for *Unlocking Culture* (2018) an on-line guide for ASL/LSQ Instructors & Evaluation for Theatre Interpreters; and content manager for *Showtime: Deaf Theatre in Canada* (2020) handbook tracing the history and genres of Deaf theatre in Canada. She also served as content manager for *Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits* (2020) handbook describing this visual art genre. Deaf View Image Art (De’VIA) served as the artistic inspiration for the Deaf theatre costumes, lighting and set design. Dr. Small was also content manager of *The Black Drum Signed Musical: Behind the Scenes Youth Activities Guide* (2021).

This mentor report identifies how *The Black Drum* created Deaf “cultural space” through mentorship to explore and advance professionally as Deaf theatre artists with Deaf and hearing mentors and Deaf mentees. This mentor report describes the “cultural space” that served as the foundation and was infused throughout *The Black Drum* development, production, mentorship approaches, networks and relationships. **This mentorship report is intended to develop a training mentorship model that serves as the foundation for a Deaf Arts Institute Without Boundaries.**

This mentorship, partnering Deaf artists with established artist individuals and institutes to build capacity can serve as a template for future development within the Deaf artist community beyond those involved in *The Black Drum*.

Data Collection

Ethnographic methodology incorporated ongoing observation, field notes, informal interviews,

6 Erikson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C. Wittrock (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (third edition). New York: MacMillan.

7 Fraenkel, J. and Wallen, N. (1993). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

formal video interviews of cast, creative and production team, photographs, videos of design and production team workshops and cast workshops, signed music composition in progress, performance videos, questionnaires and exit interviews conducted during pre-production, production and post-production.

Video interviews of cast and creative team took place at:

- the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Banff, Alberta
- Soulpepper Theatre, Toronto, Ontario
- Clin D’Oeil Festival, Reims, France
- Deaf Culture Centre

Analysis of findings were anticipated to help move this beyond a singular production experience so that the learnings from mentorship can reach a broader national professional Deaf artist community. We expected cross-cultural learnings in both directions to help develop effective strategies paving the way for greater Deaf theatre professional capacity and impact beyond *The Black Drum*. Research data was collected from April 1, 2018 to December 3, 2019.

Participants

Total 24 interviews were conducted - 20 video interviews and four interviews with field notes.
4 video interviews, production & creative teams, workshops, Banff Centre, March 12, 2019
2 video interviews, production & creative teams, workshops, Soulpepper, TO, March 22, 2019
7 video interviews, cast & playwright, One day pre-production, Soulpepper, TO, June 19, 2019
7 video interviews, production, creative & interpreter teams, Clin d’Oeil, Reims, France, July 4 and 5, 2019
4 interviews, post-production, production & creative teams, Deaf Culture Centre, TO, Aug 5, Aug 20, Nov 26 & Dec 3, 2019

All participants signed a consent form (refer to appendix) following explanation of the study and response to any questions in either sign language or spoken language as requested by the participant. Permission was granted by participants to reveal names/roles/images for this mentorship report document to record and demonstrate their learning, insights and tips for best practices, capacity building through mentorship and a training mentorship model to serve as the foundation for a *Deaf Arts Institute Without Boundaries*.

Video Interviews Questions

Formal interview questions included questions on the production process for a broader context as well as on the mentorship experience.

1. What are your top learnings from working with your mentor/ mentee or others on the team?
2. Please describe your process and thinking in developing (signed music, choreography, set design, motion capture, the artistic vision, production) for *The Black Drum*. How has Deaf culture or hearing influenced your design / choreography, etc.? (for hearing team members)

3. What have you personally learned up to now in the process of developing *The Black Drum*? Has your thinking or approach changed in the process? How?
4. What is your biggest challenge working on *The Black Drum* to this point in its development? or What would you do differently?
5. Are there any important questions you want to address that we have not asked? Other comments? Insights?

Results related to the production process are described in *The Black Drum Signed Musical: Behind the Scenes Youth Activities Guide* (2021). The production process will be analyzed further in a separate document for curriculum development expansion. Data analysis and findings reported below include pre-production tips and reflections from mentors and mentees involved and then examines mentorship themes revealed in the research.

Data Analysis

Observations and field notes on the mentorship process and process of production were triangulated with formal and informal interviews and written email reflections during pre-production, production and post-production, videos and photographs of workshops, rehearsals and final production in both Canada and France.

findings

Pre-Production Tips

(written emails, May 2019)

Learn to share roles which is hard for me. Learn to trust those who know their role. Do not be afraid to share your authentic vision and passion, not to give up on what is important to you. Need to identify if it is authentic thinking.

Joanne Cripps, Producer

Spend some time learning about Deaf culture, and the way that language impacts experience. Focus on good communication and be open to learning new ways of communicating your message.

Mira Zuckermann, Artistic Director

What looks good on the page won't necessarily look good on stage. When writing Deaf characters, give the words space. Surround your words with air, and trust the actors to give them life. Don't get discouraged if the first few drafts don't work. If the story's good, it's worth rewriting, even if it means starting from scratch. Good lines are a dime a dozen.

Adam Pottle, Playwright

Being a Deaf actor means double work due to translation (from written language to sign language and this takes extra time). Translating from written language to sign language especially for stage theatre is a completely different ballgame.

Dawn J. Birley, Actor

Interact with others and overcome your challenges with different characters in Deaf theatre productions.

Natasha C. Bacchus, Actor

Deaf experience is complicated and deep in its own way. That puts us on unique ground where we can share our authentic experience from the stage. In the face of oppression towards our music, it can be painful to find the core of our spiritual, scientific and biological authenticity. To be true to ourselves and our arts, we need to acknowledge the beauty of our complexity and depth. Otherwise, we remain a puppet to gladden the ears.

Pamela Witcher, Signed Music Consultant and Choreographer

Unlike choreographing to auditory music, the rhythm of the dance needs to come from the Deaf actor. Once it is set it can be practised over and over. When demonstrating a movement, using a mirror can help so that the actor can visually see better. I tend not to work with mirrors in my rehearsals, but when working with Deaf actors I consider it to be an important tool for visual feedback.

Patricia Allison, Dance Choreographer

Allow lots of time for everything. Budget about twice as much time for most things as hearing theatre. Discussing the set or costumes without pictures and models is counterproductive. Be as concretely visual as you can.

Sandi Becker, Stage Manager

Communicating visually as a scenic designer in this medium is maybe a bit closer to being a sound designer on other shows, which is to say that there's a great deal you can do to help tell the story - but that you need to be sure that you aren't drowning out the actors. Visual 'noise' is a lot like literal noise that can drown out the performers. ASL is not English. The script is not as literal as it looks on the page. It's more like a dance piece that can only take its shape in the performance.

Ken MacKenzie, Set Designer

Clothing is an intimate expression of who we are as people and can be deeply symbolic.

- Be genuine in your appreciation of other cultures and in your desire to learn more about them.
- Show your collaborators who are part of this culture that you trust them to let you know if you are on the wrong track, or if there is something you have missed.
- Serve the truth of the characters and trust the audience to get it. There is no need to "perform" something which is "true".

Ruth Albertyn, Costume Designer

Consider how multimedia can cultivate a creative and collaborative space for artists to communicate and develop their practice. During *The Black Drum*, video was used for reflection by the artists as they created new performance pieces and was critiqued by their peers. When documenting the artistic process, you cannot capture *everything*! However, you can and should engage *all* collaborators in a discussion on what they want represented from the artistic process and be open to their feedback.

Ely Lyonblum, Team Lead, Media

When doing a lighting design for a Deaf production it is always important to consider the importance of the audience's visibility of the Deaf performer. Sign Language is their voice and

way of communicating to the audience, so it is always crucial to maintain a clear focus of each performer as much as possible when they are signing to an audience. Be aware of any lighting special effects (strobe lighting, harsh low front angles directly in the eye line) as these can be extra sensitive to Deaf performers. Always make sure to discuss, practice or work through any lighting sequences that may affect a Deaf performer's visibility.

Chris Malkowski, Lighting Designer



Joan with projection and lighting; photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

Questions to Ask Yourself in Deaf Theatre Production

(written emails, Pre-Production, May 2019)

Is the work I am doing worth it? Will it create change?

Joanne Cripps, Producer

How can I learn about the differences of hearing culture and Deaf culture, and how can the strengths of both be combined to create a powerful performance?

Mira Zuckermann, Artistic Director

What can you learn from the people you're working with?

Adam Pottle, Playwright

For me, it doesn't matter whether it is Deaf theatre or not, my question as an actor is always this: why are we telling this story and for whom.

Dawn J. Birley, Actor

How can I overcome working in a new Deaf Theatre Production environment that I have never experienced before as an individual person of color?

Natasha C. Bacchus, Actor

“What would music look like if there wasn’t any hearing person on the Earth...?”
Keeping this in mind helps me deconstruct, reconstruct and authenticate my creative process.
Pamela Witcher, Signed Music Consultant and Choreographer

Does this choreography not only support the story but also visually support a Deaf audience?
Can they see the sign clearly, can they see all the actors clearly?
Patricia Allison, Dance Choreographer

Question to be asked over and over: Am I assuming that my Deaf colleagues and I share a
common experience when it may actually be different?
Sandi Becker, Stage Manager

(For a hearing designer) - Are you open to what this show might become?
Ken Mackenzie, Set Designer

How do I best serve this production?
Every production has its own specific needs and restrictions, and I have frequently found myself
in the position of designing costumes for a culture that is not my own, and one that has been
under-represented in the broader society. Where is the line between cultural appropriation and
serving the story of a culture that I can appreciate but not be a part of?
Ruth Albertyn, Costume Designer

I think from a hearing perspective I have been privileged to work in a particular work style, so I
think it’s important to ask, “how can I design and create a space that enables accessibility and
collaboration with a non-hearing ensemble”.
Chris Malkowski, Lighting Designer

When working on a Deaf theatre production, I think the important question to ask myself is
this...Is the work I am doing worth it? Will it create change?
Joanne S. Cripps, Producer

What can I offer my collaborators and how does that contribute to the Deaf artistic process?
Ely Lyonblum, Team Lead, Media

Mentorship Themes

Described below are major patterns or themes found in the mentorship program. For each
theme, evidence from interview quotes, observations and/ or field notes are provided. There
are many more such instances but examples here are cited to demonstrate the pattern.

1. *Deaf Group Connection & Learning Versus Individual Mentorship*

The most prominent pattern found was the emphasis by cast and crew on the value of the
group for personal learning rather than specific assigned mentors. When interviewed, the value
of the group was emphasized by respondents even when the question did not specifically ask
about group collaboration or learning.

Jody: *What inspired you through the process?*

Yan: **The team.** *I don't think, to me at least, I feel like it would not have been possible to find that inner Signed Music without them. We did that together. I am sure we've all had different experiences, and our creative processes are different, our skillset and interpretations are different but by working and sharing together I was inspired. They gave me the ability to open my heart and ideas to show what I had. Without them I would have been more reserved, either not able to recognize or release my creativity and ideas. Working collaboratively was the key, it helped me to let that creativity flow and made me discover my own music, my own dance and made my story more real.*

Interview, June 19, 2019

Jody: *What would you say was your top learning from the Black Drum?*

Bob: *Learning **with this cast taking ideas from one another** - that was number one and new to me.*

Interview, June 19, 2019

Daniel: **I quite liked working with Deaf producers and directors.** *It made everything so much clearer. Until now I've always dealt with hearing leadership and sometimes that causes friction. When a hearing director (or management) is working with a Deaf actor they struggle to understand the actor and the Deaf actor is constantly trying to explain the reason why they are doing something or how they feel it should be portrayed. It is a constant struggle. But with Deaf management they understand all of that, and they are fine with it and we are able to move along. I quite liked that experience.*

Interview, June 19, 2019

Natasha/ Courage: **Being part of an all-Deaf cast** was an inspiration. *We all had experience, a passion, motivation and the skills, the diversity. But as the one Black Deaf woman I felt quite honoured to be a part of this team. It means there is representation for any Deaf youth in the audience who are POCs who will see themselves represented and possibly explore a similar journey. That makes a difference.*

Interview, June 19, 2019



Actors/ Signed Music Composers - Natasha C. Bacchus (left), Dawn J. Birley (right).
Rehearsal, Soulepper Theatre; photograph courtesy of Anita Small



Squib with Joan in *What is Music (reprise)*; photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

Dawn: *What inspires me? I have seen, as a small child growing up in Saskatchewan, one of the largest and vibrant Deaf communities. Saskatchewan had one of the most thriving Deaf communities back then. Many would attest to that. My parents and other family members have said it and I recall it too. I remember we had Deaf shows and socials. I remember being taken upon my grandparents' knee and seeing all these other Deaf people signing. This was my community, my vibrant Deaf signing community with such diversity. A range of men, women, an assortment of every possibility was there, and I witnessed that until it faded/disappeared. So now, with Signed Music, that interaction with other Deaf people, what do we want to show to world? And How do we show that? That leads back to the question about what inspires me. **Those memories, I want the world to see our vibrant community.** Not to look at us and feel pity, but rather to be celebrated. This is who I am, this is MY world, my people. I think that inspires me the most.*

Interview, June 19, 2019

Jody: *What is the number one top learning experience that you have had working on The Black Drum?*

Adam: *Writers have big egos and one of the things, the number one thing that I have learned - through the process of working on The Black Drum is setting my own ego aside because The Black Drum was a **true collaborative process** . . . because often, when playwrights create scripts, they expect that their words are going to be performed on stage . . . The Black Drum is not like that. The script of The Black Drum is a kind of a blueprint to give the characters and give the actors motive and substance that they can then transfer them into their own creative experience in their own creative music so for me setting my own ego aside and letting the actors and the director take the ball and run with it, that was the number one thing.*

Jody: *After your experience with The Black Drum what would you do differently?*

Adam: *I would try to make it **EVEN** more collaborative . . . I would like to come to a workshop with just kind of a basic skeleton of a story and then **build the story with the cast and with the director working out the dialogue working out the scenes working out every little single bit and making it into a true collaboration** because I'm not fluent in sign*

language, but I would want the cast, but obviously the cast and the director would be, so I would want that to be built into the play from the ground up.

Interview, June 19, 2019

When did you feel you did best in your job?

Jack: **When I connected to the actors. Everything comes from there.**

Field notes, March 2019

2. **Permission to do it the “Deaf Way”**

At the outset of the process of producing *The Black Drum*, Joanne Cripps, producer, stated that Deaf artists feel they need “permission” to do things their own authentic Deaf way. This theme was expressed and repeated throughout the production cycle and during mentorship. It entailed being internally driven rather than externally driven.

The theme permission was particularly emphasized by Deaf Producer, Deaf Director, Deaf cast Deaf signed music specialist and Deaf Assistant Costume and Makeup Designer. Field notes repeatedly state the need to, “*find myself, permission to do my own work, coming up with my own creativity, permission to create my own signed music, finding my own pace, finding my own rhythm, getting rid of oppression and needing the group to do so.*”

Joanne: *Originally, my vision was for the actors to express themselves, and that part was successful. That part worked. At the time, the actors were really unsure because they didn’t have experience with what we were asking of them. They found it a real challenge for themselves but in the end it worked.*

Jody: *What do you mean they were unsure?*

Joanne: *Because historically in theatre, the actors typically translate the script. The script is translated into the performance language, the lines are memorized and those script lines are rehearsed and then signed during the performance. But we were asking them to not do that. The story was there for them, but **they needed to figure out for themselves how to represent the story.** With Signed Music we presented the story and they had to make it their own.*

Interview, July 4, 2019

Mira: Music is therapy for hearing people - for Deaf, therapy is communicating together. When we’re alone, what is our therapy? like sitting in a bath but when we’re alone at home, how do we feel relaxed? In nature? In the woods? . . . Observant to the trees’ movement, to rivers, how the water moves - that is like music for us. It can make us feel calm . . . see the water we need to find it for *The Black Drum* so the audience feels this sense of calm . . . **not THEIR way but find our way.**

Field Notes, March 10, 2019



What is Music (reprise) performed by Joan and company; photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

Mira: **We want OUR WAY!** That's what we have to search for. Many Deaf people have rhythm. We can use it but we have to look for our own.

Field Notes, March 10, 2019

Mira: *Well, I never quite found my heart, never really. But I created my own, each person has their own unique way independently. Individually. We never came together to express it. This would be the first ever, this play. All Deaf people have the music within and a burning desire to show others who they are at their core. To express that inner Signed Music. Even myself, we all share that desire.*

Jody: . . . *Why is it that there hasn't been a collective approach to this?*

Mira: *I don't know either. It just never happened. **Perhaps because we have been so strongly influenced by the majority our whole lives. You and me both.** Think about when we were young, we watch the television and saw people singing and we would try to sing the same way as them. We just mindlessly followed their way, mimicking the behaviour we saw. **We never explored our own, we never tried to separate our identities from that. We each had our own inner music but we had not yet discovered ours, until now. As we start to explore this, it is reverberating out within our community. We are beginning to discover our own rhythms, the rhythms in our language, the tempo. Just like hearing people have their own sound-based way of expressing three beats, we have our own parallel visual way** to express three beats -it's intrinsic to us. So those who can hear have their music which is important to them, and we have ours and they are not identical. We are still exploring ours but now we are doing it as a community.*

Interview, March 12, 2019

Daniel: *I've taken scripts before and I understood what this meant but **making it my own** inside music, that was so different for me and that's such a learning and giving me - **being given permission to create my own music** - that was huge for me very new for me you know like I've never had that. It was challenging to think about how to make this signed music - how to create and interpret this script so yeah, for the audience to understand working with other actors in the same process, my music is so new to me, really new.*

Interview, June 19, 2019

Natasha/ Courage: *I am able to express myself through my signs, through dance, it is exposing my identity as a Deaf person, the whole me. This Signed Music is still a new concept for me, honestly, it is still so new to me. I am still figuring it out, trying to represent who I am, as a Deaf woman, as a Black woman. Signed Music allows me to genuinely represent myself through sign language, you know, what is the core of my essence of my being. **Because I grew up in a hearing world and I just absorbed what was around me, accepted their ways. I needed to break free from that and express who I actually am without anyone imposing their ways on me.***

Interview, June 19, 2019

Bob: . . . *But this show was completely different. I didn't feel any part of it was hearing-centric. **I could just be myself.***

Interview, June 19, 2019

Doing it the “Deaf way” emerged in conversation with Maryam, Assistant Costume and Makeup Designer, around the relationship of signed music and Deaf View Image Art (De’VIA) as well. Her search for her own music influenced Maryam’s costume design work and the mutual learning between her and her mentor as can be seen in the theme “mutual learning” later in this report.

Maryam: Colours are movement. Maybe this is my perspective but when I am painting I want to show how the colours are moving like the waves, I can do that through the colours. Again for me, when I look at the painting I feel a sense of music, so it doesn’t have to be auditory. Do you know what I mean?

Jody: well no, I don’t/ no I wouldn’t

Maryam: ha right, it is different, it is different for each person. For some actors, they do it through their movements, their signs, their rhythms. For me that expression is through colour too.

Interview, July 5, 2019



Butterfly with Joan and Bulldog; photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

The issue of doing it the “Deaf way” arose in conversations amongst mentors. One example is illustrated in a conversation during the creative team workshop between Patricia, hearing choreographer and Pamela Deaf signed music specialist. The issue of internally driven signed music composition (the Deaf way) versus externally driven rhythms was discussed.

*Patricia had asked, “should we have a rhythm established that the signed musicians work with?” Pamela replied by stating that it was a chicken or egg issue and that **“maybe we should start with the signed music composition and then find the rhythm.”***

Field notes, March 10, 2019

The issue of having permission to be oneself and do things the “Deaf way”, came out in early discussion of script interpretation as well.

In discussing the setting in the script, Pamela stated, *“the trees are representative of our roots our language.”*

Joanne replied, *“the script focus represents that we don’t have permission but expresses our rights as Deaf people.”*

Mira stated that she, *“wants the audience to have the feeling we are born not to be perfect but to be real but the world doesn’t see us as normal. **We need to be real - give the audience something to think about but don’t feed it to them.**”*

Field notes, March 10, 2019

3. **Mentor Mix and Match**

While specific mentors were assigned to be available for members of cast and crew, many found mentors in cast and crew that were not initially intended as mentors. Cast found mentors among other cast, the producer found a mentor in the Production Manager, and cast commented on the important role of having a specifically Deaf director who became a mentor.

Joanne: *I was working in a mentorship program with two people from Soulpepper, and I would say that wasn’t a huge [mentorship]⁸ relationship. . . . Sally Roberts was our production manager for *The Black Drum*, and **I learned more from her than from the official mentorship program - the people named in that and so I realized that Sally took on lots of responsibilities in terms of the budget. . .***

Interview, July 4, 2019

Yan: *When Dawn was rehearsing her signed music piece, “What is Music”, I envisioned that she would be practicing her lines, but she wasn’t. She was using more “visual vernacular”, physical, creative ways of expressing her lines. That made me realize I had to pay attention to what I saw in my mind’s eye, in order to express my lines. That was an inspiration. I wasn’t tied to the lines as written; I didn’t have to translate the words into signs or even follow a particular rhythm. Rather I could let the creativity out in my own way, I could express what I saw in my mind’s eye. **Modelling that for us helped me to realize that as a Deaf person, the visual is what’s important.** Take the story of the caterpillar coming into being and show/represent that. Not just recite the lines that describe how I transformed. You don’t have to say it.*

Interview, June 19, 2019



Butterfly and Joan; photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

8 Joanne added: *My relationship with Soulpepper and with Sally were different. My Soulpepper mentors were vital in supporting me to make this happen with Soulpepper’s support. Sally’s mentorship was related to production details such as budget, unions and contract agreements | June 15, 2021.*

Daniel: **Mira definitely - and Bob. Bob has been a great mentor to me in terms of music because he has a lot of musical experience. He has been in theater a long time as well and as well as Dawn. Dawn has been fantastic, she is such a skilled actor. I've learned so much from her. I've learned also from Dawn how to support each other as a company. Mira, Dawn and Bob have been amazing.**

Jody: . . . so not one mentor in specific, you would say there were three.

Daniel: Yes definitely, **there were different skills that they would bring to the table, different things that I've learned like Mira - to me I've worked with hearing directors until now, but this is the first Deaf director that I've worked with, so it is different such a different experience. She has that facial grammar. She has that strength of body language in communication. We can communicate directly. We don't have to have those huge gaps and she would see things like visual expression on my face that hearing directors wouldn't see so she pulled different things out of me because she's Deaf. I could say that Bob was more of a mentor in the music department like he helped me to learn rhythm and about you know working with a drum. With Dawn I mean she's just had so much training and passion for theater and strength as an actor and as a Deaf woman that it's just been amazing. Each one brings something different.**

Interview June 19, 2019



Minister ruling over the dark dream world; photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz



Joan with Bulldog after her tattoo has come alive; photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

4. Mutual Learning

Mutual learning between Deaf and hearing colleagues emerged amongst numerous production pairs. A few clear examples can be seen below.

This first example, taken from field notes is between the hearing choreographer and Deaf signed music specialist.

Patricia to Pamela – **I work waist down -you work waist up.** I found this in the time that I worked with Dawn. **I work on narrative based storytelling. In dance terms, I work on very gestural movements and character driven movements** which lend themselves nicely to this process and have done musicals before but this is new and smashing together all the other experiences. How will we anchor the actors and get them on the same page if they are internally driven which changes each time?

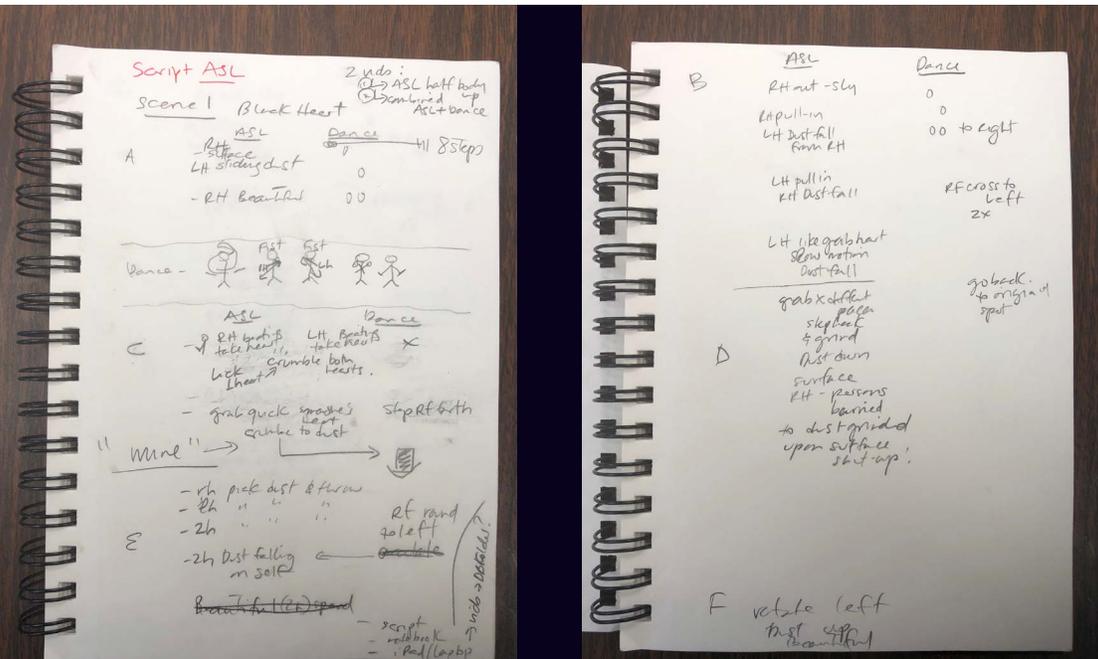
Pamela replied, **I worked 3 years with drum and developed performance. Using a lot of numbers everyone had to do a lot of counting. Also, we have to establish what movement will lead to another one -much working off each other -** a lot of visual aspect and the kids have to rehearse and practice too. At what point are the kids coming into rehearsal with something created already.

Field notes, March 10, 2019

Pamela showed her signed music process on video and shared her notebook, recording signed music composition. She suggested that the actors have a notebook, a script and laptop to record themselves and a link for them to throw their work onto.

Patricia wants Pamela to have practice teaching Jack her approach. Pamela wants the artists to feel free to develop their own composition. We will do both.

Field notes, March 11, 2019



Signed Music Notation by Pamela Witcher. Photographs courtesy of Anita Small

The next example demonstrates the shared learning between the hearing costume designer and Deaf assistant costume/set designer. Both wanted to create costumes with a Deaf sensibility. Together they resolved not to make the costumes constricting or to have too much fabric around the lower arms or to be too busy that would detract from the signing and to incorporate Deaf View Image Art (De'VIA)⁹. De'VIA is created when artists explore Deaf experience on a personal, cultural or physical level, using formal art elements. De'VIA elements include:

- Intense and contrasting colours
- Contrasting textures and values that highlight Deaf experience.
- Emphasis on eyes, mouths, ears and hands.
- Motifs and metaphors, insights and perspectives that reflect Deaf experience.

Ruth: *I didn't want to give her [Butterfly] wings. I wanted to have this big full skirt that would BE the wings and could sort of open up when she moved . . . I also wanted to go with a choice that was hopefully a bit less obvious." . . . I wanted the butterfly to be De'VIA so she [Maryam Hafzirad], Deaf visual artist] ended up hand-painting the skirt and hand-painting the leotard . . . one of the things I tried to say to her was 'don't let people try to tell you what to do – even me'. I wanted to be sure she was having as much input . . .*

Interview, July 4, 2019



Illustration courtesy of Ruth Albertyn

9 For more information on De'VIA, refer to, Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Series Author) (2020). Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol.1. Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf



No Cocoon Can Hold Me performed by Butterfly; Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

Maryam: One suggestion I made was that the clothing cannot be too busy. . . .we did the butterfly's costume so it would have De'VIA - De'VIA is bold . . . it was still De'VIA."

Interview, July 5, 2019

Ruth: I had to learn to work at a much slower pace, not only waiting for interpretation between Deaf and hearing artists, but I usually multi-task - carrying on a conversation while doing any one of the hundreds things that need to be dealt with while working on a show - and I had to learn to be fully present when speaking with someone. I think the key to success is if everyone involved has a bit of patience and goodwill towards the "other", knowing there will be frustrations and gaps in communication, but that everyone wants to create something wonderful and is working in good faith.

Interview, July 4, 2019

Maryam, who also served as assistant makeup artist was asked informally how she learned from her hearing makeup artist mentor when her mentor knew no sign language. Maryam replied that it was not an issue since her learning was by visually observing and doing. Maryam went on to be the lead makeup artist when THE BLACK DRUM performed in Reims, France that same summer.

Field Notes, July 2019

When asked what is needed for successful Deaf and hearing collaboration, participants stated the following:

You need more Deaf than hearing [participants] involved.

Mira, Director
Field Notes, July, 2019

You need a Deaf director who knows how to handle Deaf cast and creative team as a team, and you need interpreters present. You need all to be open.

Pamela, Signed Music Specialist
Field Notes, July 2019

Mutual learning is evident from workshops and rehearsals through the discussions related to how to create an authentic Deaf theatre production that simultaneously can be attended by both Deaf and hearing audiences.

Deaf theatre cast and crew largely wanted an open model such that hearing audiences could attend and appreciate the richness of the theatrical experience. The crew wanted to prioritize giving respect to the Deaf way, not wishing the Deaf cast and crew to feel that they must accommodate the hearing audience. Mira (Director) stated she wanted hearing individuals to have exposure to and to understand fully what they were being exposed to.

Ken MacKenzie, Set and Props Designer
Field Notes, Interview, November 26, 2019

Options considered by the team during their mutual grappling with this issue together were summarized as follows:

- No accommodation
- Live voice interpretation, performed on stage
- Live voice interpretation, performed offstage and fed through either the main speakers in the theatre, or a hearing assist system
- Prerecorded synopsis, played through either the main speakers in the theatre or a hearing assist system
- Prerecorded line-by-line interpretation, played through either the main speakers in the theatre or a hearing assist system
- Surtitles
- Written synopses in the program

Ultimately, we decided to provide the following accommodations:

- Written synopses in the program
- Prerecorded brief synopsis, played through the main speakers in the theatre and a hearing assist system

Adam Harendorf, Sound Designer
Written Communication, July 22, 2019

Plot information was provided to Deaf and hearing audience members at the same time in the program book (much like a synopsis provided of a Shakespearian play). The voice synopses were abbreviated further and became an artistic element in the performance, hiring professional voice actors who read the synopsis in two voices (“male” and “female” voice blended). Their voices were synchronized with visual images of projected “talking heads” on either side of the stage. The “talking heads” were authentic artistic expressions of Deaf experience – as Mira (Director) described it from a Deaf perspective, *they were moving mouths that are not understood*.



Talking head; Photograph courtesy Dahlia Katz *Talking heads stage left*; Photograph courtesy Dahlia Katz

Hearing individuals on the team commented much on their learnings from Deaf team members and points of mutual “aha” moments. One striking example follows:

*The most important moment for me was the day we first tried to incorporate live drumming into the show. Up to that point, something had been missing from the signed music pieces. We tried a few different pieces with Dimitri Kanaris accompanying the performers. Every person in the room, performer or spectator, deaf or hearing, instantly had a visceral and emotional reaction to the collaboration. We then tried the same thing with sequenced drum recordings. The effect was very different, most notably in how deaf and hearing individuals experienced this approach. When everyone realized that the live drumming was inspiring the same reaction from everyone in the room, it felt as though we had connected in a new way. This shared experience between deaf and hearing made it clear that this was the right approach for *The Black Drum*.*

Adam Harendorf
Sound Designer

Written Communication, July 22, 2019



Drummer off stage

Photos courtesy Dahlia Katz

Deaf and hearing mentors learned from each other as exemplified in the following field note:

Working with Mira was wonderful, I learned a lot about “Deaf rules”. She explained the importance of a not ‘too busy’ back stage background, avoiding too much visual noise. But that really limits creativity.

We can focus more on lighting – if more time.

It feels like it is a new medium, having Mira there. I would challenge her on how we can focus attention with lighting – focus attention as opposed to decreasing a busy background.

Deaf performance . . . feels like a hybrid between my experience with theatre and my experience with dance. I always think – DANCE – “*What cannot be spoken, it must be danced*”

Ken MacKenzie, November 26, 2019
Interview Field Notes

Mutual learning was emphasized as well related to costume design as can be seen in the following interview field notes:

A person like Maryam who is so talented as an artist could use mentorship e.g. how to design a costumes chart, navigate theatre experience, Deaf community – mentor “GAIN” vs Mentee “GAIN”- actually they mentor each other, learn from each other. Often each offers something.

Ken MacKenzie, November 26, 2019
Interview Field Notes

5. ***Value of the Collective***

In addition to the theme of group connection versus individual mentorship, the theme of the collective, not to single out individuals for recognition was an important cultural value respected throughout the mentorship and production process. Two examples follow:

During pre-production, following fight training for all of the cast, one cast member was asked to become “fight captain” to oversee cast fight training follow through during fight scenes. They preferred not to have that role as they did not want to appear “above the others”.

Field notes, June 2019

In informal conversation, cast and crew requested that when developing the abbreviated program book for Clin d’Oeil Festival in Reims, France that photographs for ALL cast and crew involved be included rather than selecting photos for some and not others. This is very much in keeping with the value of the collective in Deaf culture.

Field notes, June 2019

6. **Barriers**

One barrier to mentorship and cast and crew mutual learning were rules set by the union as is demonstrated in the following three examples:

The Artistic Director (professional acclaimed Deaf director from Norway,) was not permitted to sit with the Stage Manager during rehearsals because the artistic director was not part of the union.

It is important that the stage manager CAN sign. With union/equity issues, it is very easy to discuss with them. It should not be an issue if a stage manager or artistic director who uses sign language is not a union/equity member.

Ken MacKenzie Interview
Field Notes, November 26, 2019

A Deaf student wanted mentorship regarding lighting during pre-production tech week but was not allowed to sit in the box due to union rules. Lighting was a key visual element on the production of *The Black Drum* and could provide a marvelous learning opportunity for a Deaf lighting designer if it were permitted.

Missed opportunity also occurred due to barriers for potential Deaf costume designers when a team was needed to implement the costume designs planned.

Joanne: It's the theater world the way the business runs and Deaf people have not experienced that . . .we lose opportunities because of the need to do things in rapid succession so that was a challenge. We lose opportunities for mentorship because in terms of makeup I was happy with the mentorship. There was a Deaf artist, Maryam Hafizirad set up with a hearing mentor and the costume designer Ruth Albertyn was named as the costume designer. We needed to add three more people to actually make those costumes . . . I knew a Deaf person who was a seamstress - an excellent seamstress but to get her in and to make that communication happen in the time required, we lost that opportunity so that was frustrating in terms of scheduling and making connections and having things all come together in a really tight time schedule so it is a learning for the future.

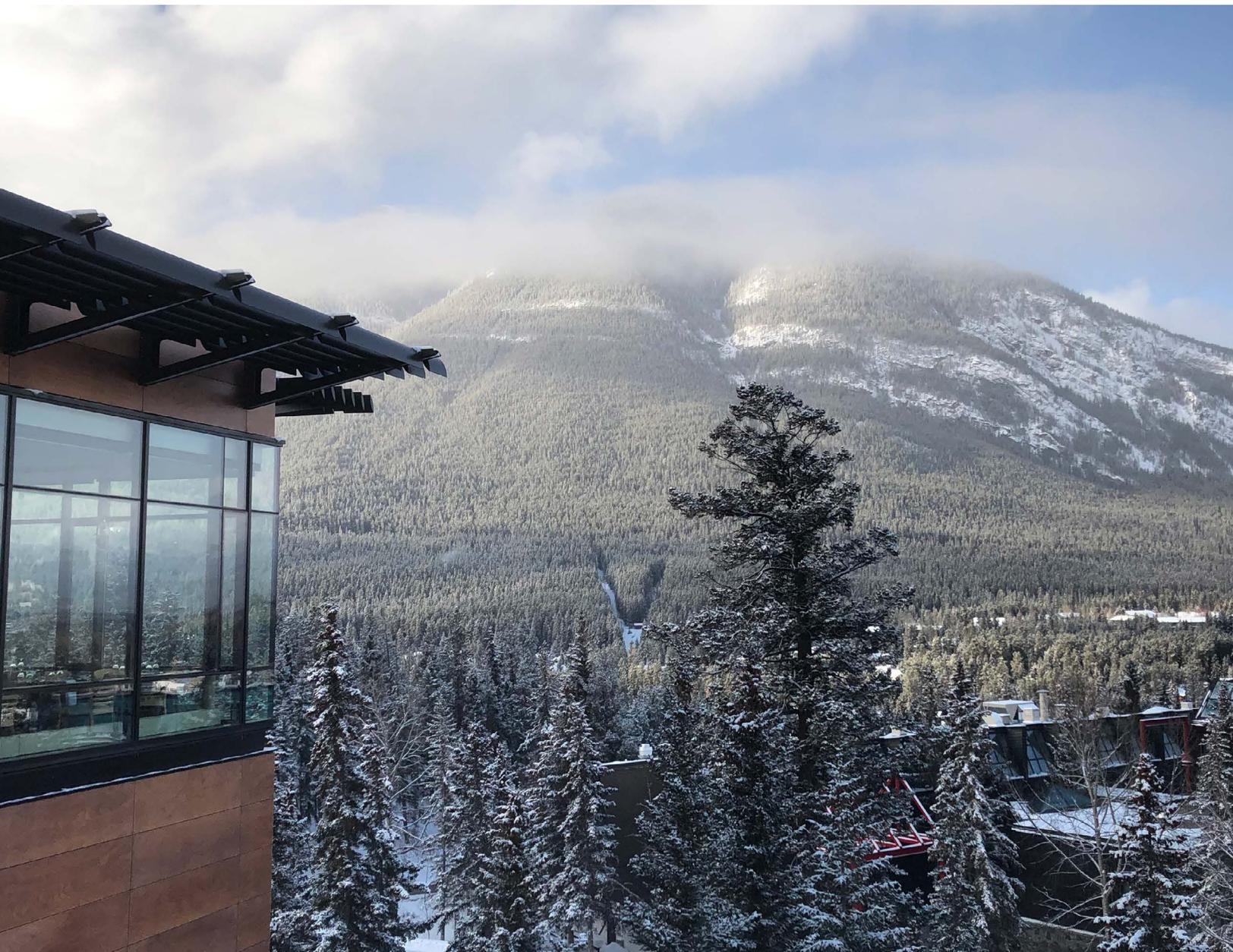
Interview, July 4, 2019

7. **Institutional Collaboration: Networks/ Partnerships Formed**

In addition to the learning that took place through planned individual mentorship pairs, group mentorship and mixed mentorship pairs which developed naturally in the process, important institutional collaborations also were intentionally planned and emerged naturally from the mentorship program and production.

National Partnerships

- Soulepper Theatre Company - Tania Senewiratne, General Manager; Chris Scholey, Producer; Brad Lepp, Director of Communications; Weyni Mengesha, Artistic Director; Daniel Malavasi, Digital
- Content Co-ordinator – rehearsal space, mentorship, promotion, marketing, front of house, tech support, performance hall
- Why Not Theatre - Ravi Jain & Miriam Fernandes, Co-Artistic Directors, *The Black Drum* pre-production strategic planning mentorship
- Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity/ Citadel Theatre - Ravi Jain – creative development residency/ workshops for *The Black Drum* and for future Deaf Arts Institute without Boundaries spring/summer annual institute training



View of mountains from Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Workshop March 2019;
Photograph courtesy of Anita Small

- National Ballet School, Jeff Baker, Inventor, Baker Light Integrated Star System (BLISS) – professional ballet instruction with accessible lighting system



Public Demonstration of Baker Light Integrated Star System (BLISS) for ballet instruction with Deaf students. Photograph courtesy RVP Photography.



Deaf student dance performers in *The Black Drum* who studied ballet with BLISS. Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

- Opera Atelier, Marshall Pynkoski, Co-Artistic Director/ Director; Alexandra Skoczylas, Executive Director, partnership formed with ASL interpreters, cross-cultural consultation, youth workshops for their operas
- Inside Out Theatre - Calgary, Alberta, Landon Krentz, Artistic Associate, Deaf Arts & Creative Integration; Col Kseke, Artistic & Executive Director – *The Black Drum* virtual tour
- Theatre Passe Muraille - Marjorie Chan, Artistic Director – *Northern Lights* international co-production rehearsal space
- Associated Designers of Canada - Ken Mackenzie, President - future designer mentorships

International Partnerships

- Teatre Manu - Oslo, Norway, Mira Zuckermann, Artistic Director and Tine Thomasson, dramaturge for *The Black Drum*
- Clin D’Oeil - Reims, France - presenting host *The Black Drum*
- Deaf West Theatre - Los Angeles, USA – virtual tour, presenting host *The Black Drum*
- Riksteatern Crea/Tyst Teater - Stockholm, Sweden, *Northern Lights*, international co-production cast, creative team, rehearsal space and performances
- Teater Totti - Helsinki, Finland - *Northern Lights* international co-production cast, creative team, performances



Figure 1. National and International Partnerships Formed

8. *Tech and Tools: Tips for Future Deaf Mentorship*

- Use of mirror is necessary for feedback for signed musicians during composition

Patricia Allison



Actors/ Signed Music Composers - Dawn J. Birley (left) Corinna Den Dekker (right); photographs courtesy of Anita Small

- Need Deaf people in the house at rehearsals to see and provide feedback.
Mira Zuckermann
- Video record signed music drafts for signed music composers to view themselves and revise their compositions
Pamela Witcher
- More tech time needed when performance travels.
Ken MacKenzie
- A small flashlight to be worn around the neck is crucial during tech week for signed communication and for backstage to communicate what's happening. Interpreters on stage is vital during tech week.



- An interpreter with the Deaf Director is crucial during tech week when many technicians do not sign.

Field Notes

mentorship model based on findings

Findings reveal patterns demonstrating that learnings from all cast and creative team not just mentor mentee pairs are crucial. The collective and group learning is cherished in the Deaf community and is similarly highly valued by *The Black Drum* cast and creative production team. Deaf culture enculturation through natural modeling of individuals in the group context, group shared learning, idea exchange and connection are all vital as seen in the patterns found.

An effective mentorship model based on the findings must incorporate 1. Deaf group connection & learning versus individual mentorship, 2. contexts which elicit the feeling of permission to explore how to “do it the Deaf way” 3. flexibility for mentor mix and match 4. mutual learning of mentors with mentees, for mentors with each other and for mentees with each other 5. value of the collective 6. working with unions to eliminate barriers to mentorship and 7. learning and institutional partnerships on multiple levels – national and international.

“Master classes” and workshops in groups are recommended given the value found in group learning and workshopping. An annual Spring/Summer Deaf Training Institute (for example as was held in Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Spring/Summer (with support from Ravi Jain Co-Artistic Director and Founder, Why Not Theatre and Miriam Fernandes, Co-Artistic Director, Why Not Theatre and with possible partnership with new Deaf led Theatre company 1S1, founder Dawn Jani Birley) and an Annual Fall/Winter Deaf Training Institute at Theatre Passe Muraille (eg space approved by Marjorie Chan, Artistic Director for fall/winter training 2021/2022) along with Mentorships all year round through Associated Designers of Canada (ADC) mentor program (approved by Ken MacKenzie, President, ADC) and other mentor pairs through productions such as *Northern Lights*, Deaf Legend Scandinavian/Canadian Signed Musical, International Co-Production 2021/2022 (co-production grant approved by Canada Council for the Arts) with Leanne Gallant, new Executive Director, DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, Canada, Mindy Drapsa Artistic Director, Riksteatern Crea, Stockholm, Sweden and Marita S. Barber, Artistic Director, Teatteri Totti, Helsinki, Finland as well as *Stories from a Suitcase* Forum Theatre Production 2022/2023 (grant pending) with mentorship from Luciano Iogna, Forum Theatre/ Theatre of the Oppressed Specialist (approved).

discussion/recommendations

Mentorship program data reveal mixing and matching of individual mentorship, the importance of group experience and the role of institutional collaboration in a successful Deaf mentorship program.

1. The next phase of Deaf theatre across Canada is to establish a *Deaf Arts Institute without Boundaries*. Conceived by Co-Founders/Co-Directors, Joanne Cripps and Anita Small soon after the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE was founded in 2006, its intent is to partner the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE with arts institutions and individuals to build professional artist capacity within the Deaf community. The Centre has established itself and built these relationships over the past decade and with the partnerships formed is ready to launch this initiative. *Mentorship for Canadian Deaf Artists: Fostering Canadian Deaf Performance Arts Excellence*, provides a training mentorship model that serves as the foundation for the *Deaf Arts Institute Without Boundaries*. This mentorship, partnering Deaf artists with established artist individuals and institutes to build capacity can serve as a template for future development within the Deaf artist community beyond those involved in *The Black Drum*.
2. The annual Spring/Summer Deaf Training Institute will potentially be held at the inspiring Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and the Annual Fall/Winter Deaf Training Institute at Theatre Passe Muraille, Toronto, Ontario (confirmed for fall/winter 2021/2022). These include interactive group master classes and workshops.
3. Mentorships all year round will take place through the Associated Designers of Canada (ADC) mentor program (confirmed).
4. Mentor pairs will take place through productions such as *Northern Lights Deaf Legend Scandinavian/Canadian Signed Musical*, International Co-Production 2021/2022 (confirmed) and *Stories from a Suitcase*, forum theatre/theatre of the oppressed 2022/2023 (pending).
5. It is critical that the Deaf Arts Institute Without Boundaries has BPOC and Indigenous mentors and mentees and languege signes des québécoise (LSQ) mentors and mentees with written documents available in English and French and videos available in ASL and LSQ. Formal curricula will expand upon Deaf arts handbooks¹⁰ produced by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, learnings from the Deaf community Deaf arts productions and curricula already developed and used by mentors (eg. *Joking for Forum Theatre, Handbook*, 2001¹¹).
6. Findings from this report and the Deaf Mentorship Model featured below, serve as a basis for the structure of the *Deaf Arts Institute Without Boundaries* moving forward.

10 See references for *Signed Music: Rhythm of the Heart* (2015), *Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits* (2020), *Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada* (2021), *THE BLACK DRUM Signed Musical: Behind the Scenes Youth Activities Guide* (2021).

11 Iogna, L. & Malbogot, S. (2001). *Joking for Forum Theatre: A Facilitation Handbook*. Toronto: Ontario.

DEAF ARTS INSTITUTE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES
Mentorship and Training

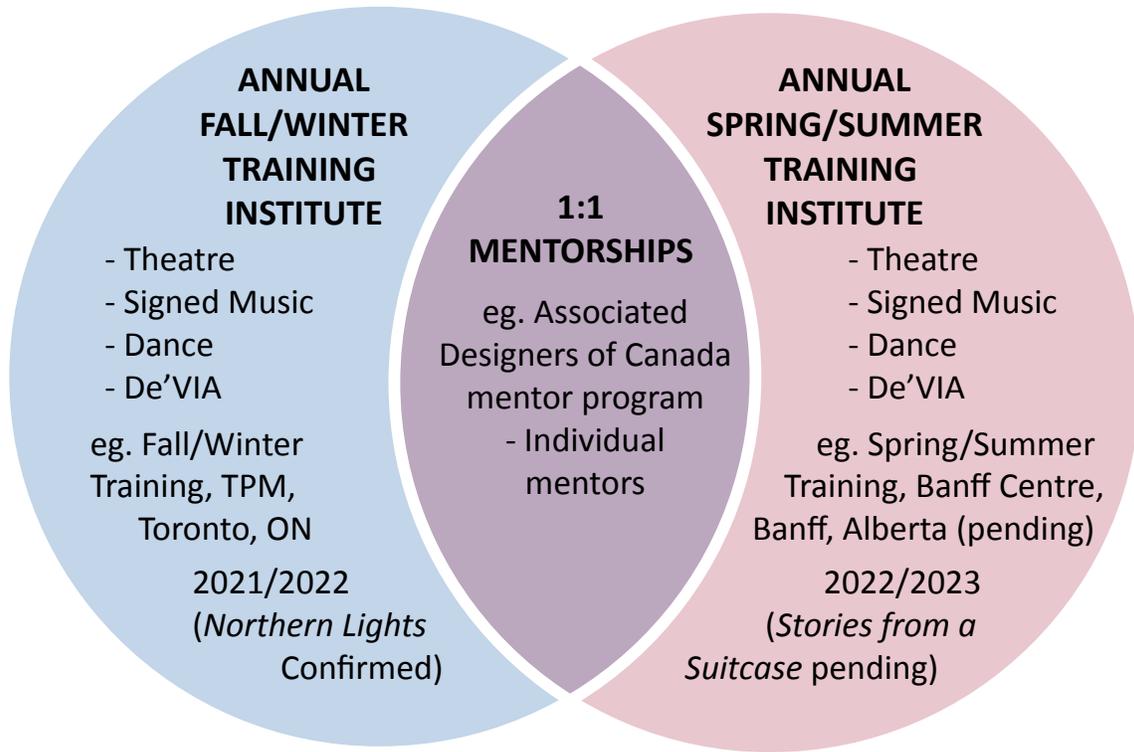


Figure 2. Deaf Mentorship Model

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Canada Council
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Foundation



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appendix

INFORMED CONSENT

I am conducting research for the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, Sector Innovation Grant, Mentorship for Canadian Deaf Artists Fostering Deaf Performance Arts Excellence. The research is based on THE BLACK DRUM Signed Musical Project to execute the following activities:

- Research and record a collaborative approach to capacity building through mentorship
- Observe and record process and learnings of individuals and groups in the production and creative teams throughout the process of development from script writing to pre-production, production and performance of THE BLACK DRUM.
- Interview mentors and mentees in the process to record learnings for best practices.
- Interview mentors and mentees regarding learnings for best practice post BLACK DRUM performance.

The purpose of this research is for:

1. Educational Purposes
 - a. to produce a *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Deaf Theatre in Canada Part II* based on the learnings from the Black Drum Project
 - b. to develop tips and reflections that can be used later to develop a possible digital platform or/and workshops) in the future to reach more Deaf theatre professionals across Canada.
2. Strategic Development
 - a. to develop a training mentorship model that serves as the foundation for a *Deaf Arts Institute Without Boundaries*. This mentorship, partnering Deaf artists with established artist individuals and institutes to build capacity can serve as a template for future development within the Deaf artist community beyond those involved in THE BLACK DRUM.

I am requesting permission to use the information collected from you in my research. You do not have to give me permission to use the raw footage and data (i.e., interviews and fieldnotes) of you in my study. If you allow me to use your raw footage and data, your appearance and name may be revealed in the documents, video or educational presentations. The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) reserves the right to use this data for other promotional and educational purposes. The data from this research could be used for future research that would require the consent of CCSD. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have about this research.

Consent: By signing this consent form, you indicate that all of your questions and concerns about this study have been addressed. You choose, voluntarily, to allow me to use the raw footage and data of you in this research project and certify that you are at least 18 years of age.

Participant Signature

Date

Participant Name (print):

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Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf

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