

The Performing Arts



A performance by their friends was always an enjoyable experience for members of the Toronto Deaf community (circa 1924)

Courtesy of the Ontario Mission of the Deaf (Toronto, Ont.)

Deaf Canadians have enjoyed performing for each other from the time Deaf communities began to be established. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, schools for deaf children produced plays, and some deaf adults banded together in literary societies and clubs to spend pleasant hours engaged in debates and sign language recitations of literary works. Other groups engaged in talent nights, to the great enjoyment of their audiences (usually members of their associations and other local deaf people). These early performances were the work of enthusiastic (and often talented) amateurs, some of whom even took their show on the road. But it was not until later in

the 20th century that professional theatrical companies of deaf performers began to be established.

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The Stage

Examples of Local Amateur Theatre

On Saturday evening, February 11, 1922, the Winnipeg Association of the Deaf presented a melodrama called *My Son*

Arthur. The audience (a large number of local deaf people and some out-of-town guests) gathered in Columbus Hall on Smith Street, where the association regularly met every second and fourth Saturday. The deaf performers were directed by Arthur T. Bailey, and the performance was such a success that it was repeated several times during that spring by popular demand.



A 1922 play presented by the Winnipeg Association of the Deaf

The Silent Worker/Gallaudet University Archives

Standing (left to right): Archibald H. McDonald as Marie Ogden, stage-struck young person; Richelda de Rosenroll as Jennie, the unexpected guest; Arthur T. Bailey as Arthur, the son; Annie L. Cook as the doting mother; Gertrude McConnell as Jane Perry, an athletic girl; Richard Pugh as Evelyn Harp, a dance devotee; Ethelwynne Nicholson as Elise Jenkins, a girl with a susceptible heart.

Seated (left to right): Muriel McShane as Sally Lewis, student and carnival queen; and Bertrand Partridge, playing a clerk and hotel gossip.

The Red Lamp

On February 28, 1953, an amateur theatrical troupe of deaf people from Toronto, Ont. staged *The Red Lamp* at Taft Auditorium in Cincinnati, Ohio. This presentation marked the first known time Cincinnati theatre patrons (both deaf and hearing) had been offered such a production by deaf performers. Sponsored by Cincinnati's Cameron Methodist Church of



The 1953 *Red Lamp* "Canadian" Troupe

The Silent Worker/Gallaudet University Archives

Seated (left to right): Elsie Shanks, Maud Buchan, and Vera Small.

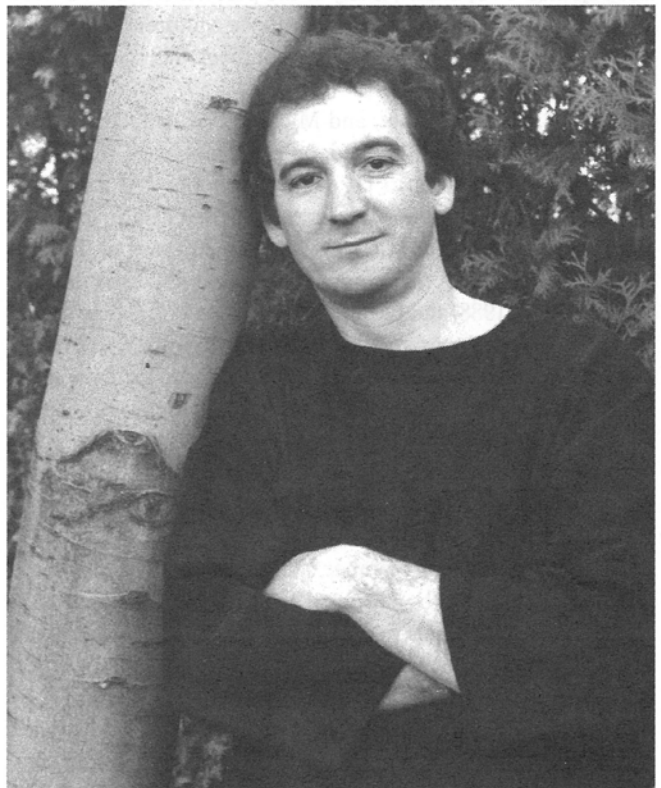
Standing (left to right): Donald Simonds, George Forfar, Abie Leibovitch, Bernard Johnston, and David Peikoff

the Deaf with the help of the Methodist Church Women's Christian Service Council, this two-act comedy in sign language and pantomime was directed by David Peikoff. His hearing daughter, Myrna Lou — then a sophomore at the University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College — narrated the performance. The play's story revolved around a red lamp that the characters placed in a window of the house to signal different messages to friends and lovers. Comedic complications arose when the spinster aunt did not leave the house as early as the other characters expected.

The Canadian actors included Maude Buchan as Aunt Matilda; Elsie Shanks as Annie O'Hara, the maid; Bernard Johnston as Archie Clarke, the young lawyer in love with Aunt Matilda's niece, Alice Deering (played by Vera Small); Abie Leibovitch as nephew Harold Deering; and George Forfar as Bill Worth, a wandering man-of-all-trades. Proceeds from the play were divided between the Cameron Methodist Church and the United States' National Association of the Deaf. Donald Simonds was the stage manager and carpenter for the troupe. *The Red Lamp* Canadian Troupe also performed in the lyceum at Toronto's Evangelical Church of the Deaf on Wellesley Street.

Théâtre Visuel des Sourds — Professional Theatre Company

Many countries have their own deaf theatre companies, including England, France, Sweden, and the United States, but perhaps the only company composed of deaf French Canadians is Le Théâtre Visuel des Sourds de Québec, which began in



Serge Brière, co-founder of Théâtre Visuel des Sourds de Québec

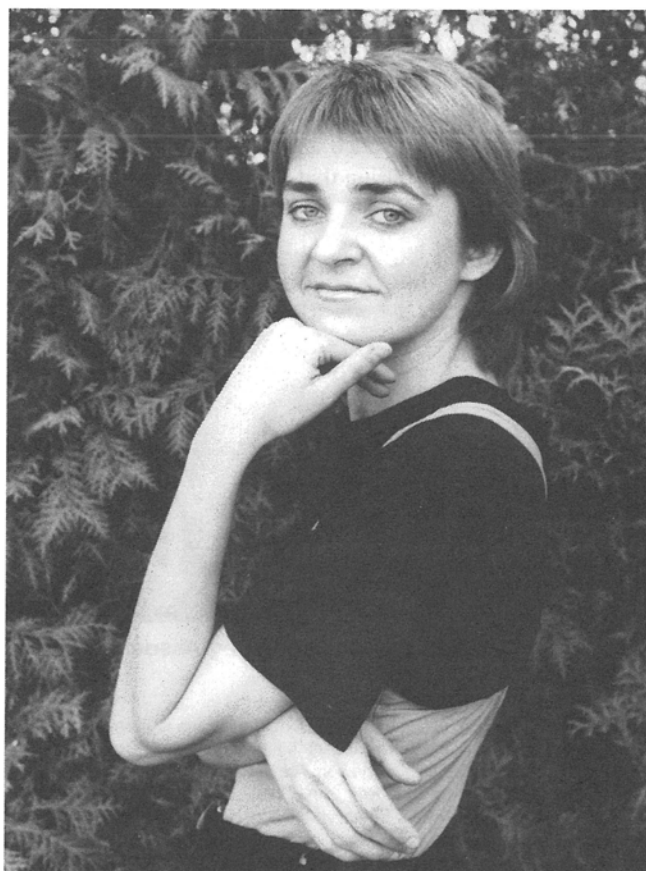
Courtesy of TVS (Montréal, Québec)

1968 under the name Théâtre Visuel des Sourds (TVS). The original company was founded by three deaf francophone comedians from Québec — Serge Brière, Jean Goulet, and André Maltais. After eight years with the troupe, Brière (who served as artistic director and guiding force behind the company) left to study and work with other theatre groups. The other members of the cast carried on in his absence until he returned in 1980. Born in Mont-Laurier, Québec, Brière (b. Mar. 21, 1951) became deaf at the age of three after contracting the mumps. He attended the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets in Montréal (1960-1971). It was there (in 1968) that he began studying mime under Gilles Lefebvre, who was responsible for introducing mime classes to the Institution. Brière learned his clowning and juggling techniques from Paul Wildbaum in Toronto, Ont. He also enrolled in a Synergy Movement workshop (dance) with Lynda Rubin and attended a workshop in Vancouver, B.C. with Elizabeth Faja on commedia dell'arte and masks. His theatrical experience increased further after he studied at the 20th annual professional school for deaf actors at the National Theatre of the Deaf in Connecticut.

In 1976, Brière joined the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf in Vancouver, B.C. While a member of that troupe, he participated in the First Mime Festival of Canada, held in Toronto in 1978. He also performed at the first North American Mime Festival in Syracuse, N.Y. in 1979, and the Second Canadian Mime Festival in Vancouver in 1980. When he returned to Montréal in 1980, Brière — together with Jacques Hamon, Jean Goulet, and Gérard Courchesne — formed a second theatrical troupe, known as the Théâtre des Sourds de Montréal. Brière also rejoined TVS; in fact, many of the performers in TVS were also performing in Théâtre des Sourds de Montréal, a situation that sometimes led to scheduling conflicts. The two troupes merged in 1984.

In 1983, Brière, Goulet, and Michel Brière applied for and received a subsidy from the federal government. Through this funding, TVS was able to perform at schools, hospitals, and similar sites. It was about this time that they also made their debut in several video productions. After 20 years as Théâtre Visuel des Sourds, the company became incorporated on November 24, 1988, and became the Théâtre Visuel des Sourds de Québec. The incorporation gave the organization greater independence and control over funding. Prior to incorporation, for example, TVS had to ask other organizations to sponsor their projects in order for them to obtain subsidies. After becoming incorporated, however, TVS gained the legal status required to sign agreements and contracts, and to plan projects themselves.

Another prominent member, and vice-president of TVS, is Johanne Boulanger (b. Aug. 4, 1961). She was born deaf in Laval, Québec and has six siblings (two of whom are also deaf). She was a student at the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes in Montréal (1966-1970) and the Lucien Pagé Polyvalent [high] School (1970-1975). Like Brière, she studied mime with Gilles Lefebvre. She also attended a signed song workshop taught by Paul Bourcier and participated as a signer of songs with Michel Louvain and Anne Renée, two other well-



Johanne Boulanger of Théâtre Visuel des Sourds de Québec

Courtesy of TVS (Montréal, Québec)

known francophone signers in Québec. Boulanger was the first (and so far only) deaf person to pursue a bachelor's degree in dramatic arts at the Université du Québec à Montréal (1986-1990). Her goal is to teach drama to deaf children. As a comedian, she has participated in such plays as *Les Fourbières de Scapin*, by Molière, directed by Pierre Beaudry; *Red Rider*, written by Mark Medoff and directed by Bernard Lavoie; and *Antigone* directed by Larry Tremblay.

Both Brière and Boulanger teach as well as perform. He has taught Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) to both children and adults, and assisted Dr. Laura Petitto of McGill University in her research on sign language. He is also gathering information on the history of the Québec Deaf community and hopes to write a book on the subject. Boulanger also teaches LSQ and assists in linguistic research projects at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She is especially interested in the development of theatre and signed poetry. In September of 1986, Brière and Boulanger worked together on a 10-week mime workshop for children at the Roland Major Centre in Montréal.

Théâtre Visuel des Sourds de Québec also provides theatre workshops for the Deaf community, as well as courses in pantomime and gestural expression for both deaf and hearing performers. The company also performs an average of four plays per year for children and adults. The troupe is considered avant-garde in their performance techniques. They have made

two videotaped productions in LSQ (one on unemployment insurance), have produced several videotapes used to teach primary-level French, and have been involved in several television broadcasts for children. They also participated in such community events as l'Année mondiale des communications, the Telethon of Smiles, and the Summit on Hearing Loss (in January 1986).

The composition of the troupe has changed slightly over the years as veteran players move on and new performers replace them, but — as Brière explains — the basic beliefs have remained the same: Deaf culture “is a visual culture. After a great deal of research, we realized that we had our own culture — a deaf culture with its own language, special grammar, and poetry, whose expression is no less valid than anybody else’s.”¹

Canadian Theatre of the Deaf

The establishment of a theatre to showcase the talents of deaf Canadian performers was one of the goals of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) when it established a division called the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf in 1973. The first managing director was a hearing man, Carl A. Simonson. A year later, he resigned and was replaced by Angela Jean Petrone (later Stratiy), a deaf woman from Winnipeg, Man. At the time of its creation, the theatrical division within the CCSD stated that the “prime aim of the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf

is to coordinate and plan programs that will encourage theatrical development of the deaf in centres across Canada.”²

The performing group that was later called The Canadian Theatre of the Deaf came into existence in 1975. At that time, it was known as the British Columbia Deaf Mime Troupe. This troupe of four deaf performers was founded by Michael John Thomas Hanrahan (b. Jan. 27, 1954), who also served as the troupe’s artistic director. By 1976, the group had changed its name to the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf (CTD), a professional touring company affiliated with the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. With CCSD sponsorship, the four-member troupe toured Canada for two months in 1976, performing in schools and local auditoriums and giving workshops to both deaf and hearing children and adults.

The CTD was directed by Hanrahan, who was born deaf and grew up in his native England (born in London). His first public appearance occurred at the age of eight when he performed on a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) television program. In 1965, he joined the National Theatre of the Deaf in London, where he studied for four years. He also toured with this company throughout Europe and Great Britain. Hanrahan was fortunate to have the guidance of such greats as Sir Laurence Olivier, Marcel Marceau, and Pat Kwysall, director of the National Theatre of the Deaf. He also studied at the well-known Mumenshanz Mime Mask Theatre.

Hanrahan came to Canada in 1974 and one year later formed the British Columbia Deaf Mime Troupe, the forerunner of the CTD. Joining Hanrahan in the CTD were Maryann Patricia Chmiel (b. Mar. 31, 1953), an alumna of the Ontario Schools for the Deaf in Belleville (1959-1966) and Milton (1966-1972). She also attended Gallaudet College (1972-1976). In addition to performing, Chmiel served as the troupe’s road manager. Another member of the troupe was Marsha Lynn Simon (b. Oct. 25, 1955) from Brampton, Ont. She taught mime and acting to deaf and hearing children in camps and in the evenings. Because she had received training as a hairdresser from the Vancouver Vocational Institute, she assisted with makeup and costumes in addition to her acting responsibilities. (Simon is now married and lives in Washington state.) Another member of the CTD was Patricia Susan (née Nowosad) Hanrahan (b. Oct. 22, 1949; d. July 30, 1992), a native of Vancouver, B.C. who had become deaf at the age of two years. She attended the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf (1954-1957) and then transferred to Ladner, B.C., where she completed her elementary and secondary education in the public school system. After being inspired by the performances of Marcel Marceau, she studied with Mike Hanrahan and joined the British Columbia Deaf Mime Troupe when it was established in 1975.

The other male performing with the company when it first started, Lewis Charles Hartland (b. June 16, 1955), began his acting career while attending the Jericho Hill Provincial School (1960-1972). Hartland assisted the CTD with design and graphics, in addition to taking his turn on the stage. Serving as stage manager and lighting director was Gordon Phillip Hoepfner (b. Feb. 22, 1954), another Jericho Hill Provincial School stu-



Mike Hanrahan, director of the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf

Photo credit: Judy Weiser (Vancouver, B.C.)

dent (1960-1972). He was also a talented mime, but contributed mainly through his backstage activities when the company first started. (In 1992, Hoepfner became the founding director of Finger Happy Productions in Toronto.)

Other individuals became involved in various roles during the CTD's touring days, among them Serge Brière, who later founded the Théâtre Visuel des Sourds de Québec in that province, and John David Sigurdson (b. Sept. 26, 1950), a native of Gimli, Man. who attended residential schools for deaf students in Saskatoon, Sask. (1956-1965) and Winnipeg, Man. (1965-1969) before completing his studies at Gallaudet College (B.A., 1969-1974). Sigurdson also worked at the Jericho Hill Provincial School as a child care counsellor (1974-1988). (He is now a businessman and owns a tile store in Ladner, B.C.) The CTD's general manager, booking agent, photographer, and interpreter was Judy Weiser of Vancouver, B.C.

Financial support for the CTD came from the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf and box office receipts. In 1976, Hanrahan explained that "the CTD is really multi-purposed.... We're trying to prove there are no communication limitations in drama and to show there is a new kind of theatre.... the troupe tries to make the hearing world aware of the deaf world. We want to share what we know, what we have."³ The CTD received some rave reviews, such as this one following its May 1977 performance in Nelson, B.C.: "In sum, the CTD showed awesome talent and a willingness to enter thresholds mimists don't usually enter ... If there is a kink in their artistic armour, I could not see it ... brilliant is an apt word to describe them."⁴ However, later that summer, an issue of the CCSD's magazine, *Cultural Horizons of the Deaf in Canada*, included these dire words: "Dark clouds are beginning to hover over the CTD, casting dark shadows on its future prospects. We believe the CTD is a *must* for our country. We *must* guard it carefully by continually doing things for it, or we will lose the greatness we have for the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf in the international theatre world of the Deaf."⁵ As the troupe's financial future became more uncertain, individual members began to pursue other interests. The CTD gradually dissolved in the late 1970s.

Canadian Deaf Theatre

Founded in 1989 by Lewis Charles Hartland, a former member of the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf, the Canadian Deaf Theatre (CDT) is currently based in Cranbrook, B.C. (but plans are in the works to relocate the company to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, where Hartland now lives). Opening night for *Varieties*, the company's first production, was January 10, 1990. The first performances starred Hartland and hearing actress, Toni Miller, a native of Prince George, B.C., who was later replaced by Hartland's deaf wife, Constance Alice (née Harrison). CDT is currently Canada's only anglophone deaf professional theatre company. The basic philosophy behind Canadian Deaf Theatre was the same as that behind the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf: "a belief in the interest and inherent natural ability of deaf people to act and entertain on a serious professional level and to offer something different from that of the hearing/speaking theatrical medium."⁶ Presented in

mime, sign mime, American Sign Language, pantomime, and mime with masks, CDT's performances are designed to delight both deaf and hearing audiences. The company also offers workshops for children and adults on such topics as visual theatre techniques, storytelling, creative drama, and mime. The workshops for deaf children are designed to "enhance the students' power of perception, encourage their talents and skills in expressing themselves creatively, and increase their appreciation of the theatre."⁷

Founder and artistic director, Hartland was born in Nelson, B.C. and became deaf at the age of eight months from spinal meningitis. While a student at the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver, B.C. (1960-1972), he also took special instruction from a professional mime professor at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C. (1970). He trained at the Canadian Mime Theatre School in 1977, took an actor's lab with Polish actor Ryszard Cieslak (1977), and presented solo mime performances in Canada and the U.S. He was one of the founding members of the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf and performed with that company in 1976 and 1977. In 1977, Hartland founded the Deaf Mime Company of Toronto, and in 1982, he established the Theatre of the Deaf of Toronto; both companies later disbanded. In 1988 and 1989, he toured in the United States with the National Theatre of the Deaf. In the summer of 1989, he was one of the invited performers at The Deaf Way Conference and Festival in Washington, D.C. While there, he was approached by a representative of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, who encouraged him to form what became the Canadian Deaf Theatre. First sponsored by the CCSD as an affiliate organization, CDT later received provincial and federal grants as well as private donations.

Connie Hartland (b. Mar. 23, 1955) is a consummate performer in her own right. She was born hard of hearing in Burnaby, B.C. as a result of maternal rubella (she is now profoundly deaf), and attended several schools, including Jericho Hill Provincial School (1960-1965), the Herbert Symonds Public School in Montréal, Québec (1965-1966), the Ontario School for the Deaf, Milton (1966-1971 and 1973-1974), and the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1971-1973). Prior to



Connie and Lewis Hartland of Canadian Deaf Theatre
Courtesy of Lewis C. Hartland (Whitehorse, Yukon Territory)

joining her husband on the stage, she travelled through Alaska presenting workshops in mime, and appeared on television in Toronto, Ont. with her puppets. At the beginning of each show, the couple's hearing son, Samson, serves as interpreter while his father introduces the concept behind the Canadian Deaf Theatre and explains something about their innovative and entertaining techniques.

In the summer of 1992, the Hartlands moved to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, where they own and operate a store called Last Frontier Sportscard and Comics. Hartland hopes to move the CDT from Cranbrook, B.C. to Whitehorse and establish it in the Yukon with a new board of directors. He currently coaches acting on the side, and both he and his wife are active in the local Whitehorse Deaf community, advocating for such things as TTY access and special long distance rates (50 percent discount) for deaf telephone users in both the Yukon and Northwest Territories (a struggle in which they were assisted by federal New Democratic Party leader Audrey McLaughlin [Member of Parliament for Yukon Territory] and were recently successful in achieving).

The Deaf Mime Company of Toronto and the Ontario Theatre of the Deaf, Toronto

The Deaf Mime Company of Toronto (founded in 1977) and the Ontario Theatre of the Deaf in Toronto (founded in 1982) were two other ventures by Lewis Charles Hartland, who also founded Canadian Deaf Theatre in 1989. Hartland served as artistic director and as an actor with both Toronto companies, performing in mime and sign mime, and entertaining the audiences with his juggling. He also offered classes in mime at local schools and colleges. In addition to his performing skills, Hartland also expresses his creativity through scriptwriting, choreography, graphic design, and poetry. Both the Deaf Mime Company of Toronto and the Ontario Theatre of the Deaf later disbanded.

The Screen

"Children of a Lesser God" Filmed in Canada

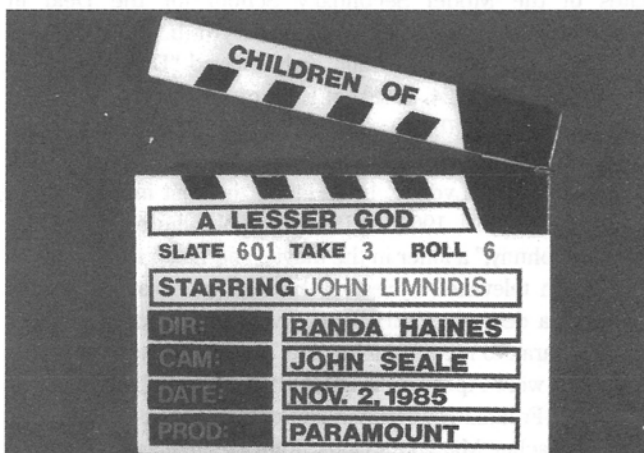
Paramount Pictures' screen adaptation of Mark Medoff's 1980 play, *Children of a Lesser God*, was filmed in New Brunswick. Although the story is set on an island off the coast of Maine, accessible only by ferry, the actual site of filming was the Rothesay College School-Netherwood campus, a private school for girls and boys in Rothesay, N.B.⁸ The film, which began production in August 1985, was produced by Burt Sugarman and Patrick Palmer, directed by Randa Haines, and starred William Hurt and Marlee Matlin. (Palmer had previously used Canadian sites for his productions of *Agnes of God* and *Iceman*.) The world premiere of *Children of a Lesser God* was held on September 13, 1986.

The story focuses on the character of James Leeds (played by Hurt), a new hearing teacher at the Governor Kittridge School for the Deaf, who brings innovative ideas about teaching deaf students to the school. He falls in love with Sarah Norman (played by Matlin, who won an Oscar in 1987 for the role), a former honours student at the school who now works there as a cleaning woman. Also central to the story are several deaf and hard of hearing students, two of whom were played by Canadians.

Canadian Actors in "Children of a Lesser God"

Three Canadians acted in major roles in the movie; two played students and the third was cast as a deaf teacher who had attended the school himself as a child. The role of punk-rocker "Glen" was played by Philip Holmes (b. Mar. 31, 1967) of Nova Scotia, in his acting debut. Holmes was born profoundly deaf in Toronto, Ont., the only child of Martin and Grace Holmes. He first attended an oral program in Toronto and completed his schooling at the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped (APRCHH) in Amherst, N.S. (1977-1985). In 1986, he graduated from the Atlantic Technological Vocational School and entered a computer repair training program after the film was completed. He is presently working in Halifax. After being selected for his part, Holmes had to dye his hair blond on top, orange in the front, brown on the sides, and blond for the "rat tail." In contrast to the clean-cut, neatly dressed Holmes, his character (a stubborn boy who at first refuses to co-operate or speak with the teacher) wore a leather jacket, tight jeans, two black belts with large silver buckles, and untied high-top basketball sneakers throughout the movie.

John Manuel Limnidis (b. Apr. 9, 1966), who portrayed the character of "William" in the movie, was born in Mississauga, Ont. to John and Anne Limnidis. He became deaf at two years of



"Take 3, Roll 6" for John Limnidis in the movie, *Children of a Lesser God*

Courtesy of John M. Limnidis (Mississauga, Ont.)/Photo credit: Chun Louie and Joan K. Schlub, Gallaudet University Photo Services

age and attended hearing schools until the age of 13, when he transferred to the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton, Ont. (1979-1985). Following graduation, he joined the cast of *Children of a Lesser God* to play the part of a foul-mouthed, mean-tempered basketball player. He attended Gallaudet University (1986-1994) and received a B.A. degree with a double major in Sign Communication/American Sign Language and Communication Arts in August 1994. He then taught sign language and interpreter training courses at St. Paul Technical College in Minnesota until his return to Canada in early 1995.

Another Canadian actor, Robert Joseph Hiltermann (b. Aug. 1, 1952), played the role of "Orin," a deaf teacher and former student at the Governor Kittridge School. Hiltermann was born in Wiesbaden, West Germany and moved to Calgary, Alta. in the fall of 1957 with his parents. He has 10 siblings, three of whom are also deaf or hard of hearing. After attending Gallaudet College (June 1971-December 1972) to pursue a theatre degree, Hiltermann then enrolled in Alberta College in Edmonton from January 1973 to June 1973. He has worked as a model and as an actor both on television and in films. He was co-director of and performer in MUSIGN, an entertainment troupe based in California that presented dance, ASL, mime, and theatre performances set to music, and also appeared with the Canadian Theatre of the Deaf and the British Columbia Mime Troupe.

Several other deaf Canadians had minor roles in *Children of a Lesser God*, including Chris and Marlene Shay of Saint John, N.B. Nova Scotian Neil Joseph Doucette of Amherst, a 1959 graduate of Gallaudet College and teacher at the APRCHH (1974-1994), had a small role in the party scene. Dr. Peter John Owsley, then director of the APRCHH (1976-1988), provided more than 100 students between the ages of five and 18 as extras for the movie. Twenty staff members from the school accompanied the students to Saint John, N.B. for the filming. The Nova Scotia students were in scenes occurring in the cafeteria, during a school dance, and at parents' day activities.

Among the other deaf actors in the movie were several graduates of the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C., including William D. Byrd (b. May 3, 1966; d. July 1993) of Inglewood, Calif., (who played "Danny"); Frank Carter, Jr. (b. Feb. 24, 1968), of King of Prussia, Pa. ("Tony"); Georgia Ann Cline (b. Dec. 11, 1965) from Hapeville, Ga. (who played "Cheryl"); and Allison Gompf (b. Feb. 25, 1966) of Pikesville, Md. ("Lydia"). In addition, the cast included John Cleary (b. Dec. 10, 1969) of Peekskill, N.Y., who portrayed the student "Johnny," a loner in the movie; and Linda Bove, a familiar face on television's "Sesame Street," who played "Marian Loesser," a deaf economist whose visit to her former school inspires Sarah to reconsider her life. Among the hearing actors in the cast were Piper Laurie as Sarah's mother; Philip Bosco as Dr. Curtis Franklin, superintendent of the school; E. Katherine Kerr as teacher Mary Lee Ochs; John Basinger, who played a hearing speech teacher; and Barry Magnani as another teacher and football coach.

Vanessa Rea Vaughan, Actress

A talented Canadian actress, Vanessa Rea Vaughan (b. Nov. 6, 1969) was born in Toronto, Ont. and diagnosed profoundly deaf at the age of 17 months. From that time on, she underwent extensive auditory-verbal therapy at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children (1971-1979) and spent countless hours at home working with her mother on word exercises. Through these efforts, Vaughan learned to lipread and speak intelligibly. She received further training at North York General Hospital in Toronto (1985-1987). Her elementary and secondary education was received in the following Metro Toronto schools: the Brown Public School (1974-1981), Deer Park Junior High School (1981-1983), North Toronto Collegiate Institute (1983-1985), and Northern Secondary School (1985-1989).

Vaughan's acting career began in 1979 with her role as "Rachel" in the television movie, *Clown White*. This movie, a Martin/Paul Production produced by Martin Harbury, was made as a contribution to the International Year of Disabled Persons. It was also the first Canadian television drama to be closed captioned. Vaughan was one of six deaf children employed for the movie. She made her film debut on the "big screen" in the summer of 1985 in Montréal, Québec as "Anne," the female lead in *Crazy Moon*. Originally titled *Huggers*, this Canadian movie was directed by Winnipeg-born Allan Eastman, produced by Allegro Films of Montréal, and co-produced by Canada's National Film Board. Vaughan played a deaf teenager opposite Kiefer Sutherland, the 19-year-old son of Canadian-born Hollywood actor Donald Sutherland, and was



Vanessa Vaughan in *Crazy Moon*

Photo Credit: Piroška Mihalka. Courtesy of Cinegem Canada Inc.

described as having “incredible knock-em dead charm.”⁹ She had to take a crash course in American Sign Language and learn to slur her words for her role.

Making *Crazy Moon* inspired Vaughan to search for her “roots” in the Deaf community. After the movie, she continued to learn American Sign Language, completing a level five course in April 1988 at the Canadian Hearing Society in Toronto. In her own words, Vaughan said, “I am glad that I learned how to speak first, before learning sign language ... But now I wish I had started learning sign language earlier.”¹⁰

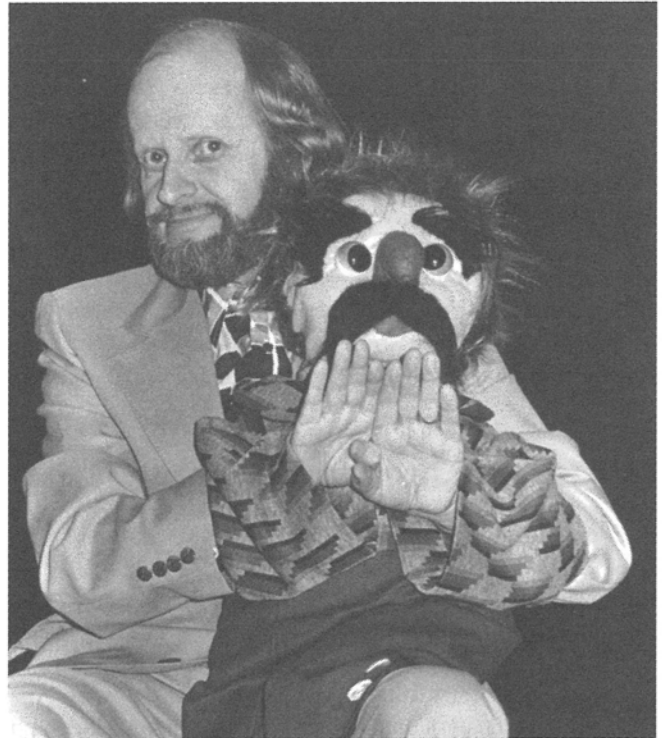
In 1987, Vaughan was profiled in an episode of David Suzuki’s Canadian television documentary, *The Nature of Things*. The show, titled “The Children Who Learned to Listen,” consisted of a return visit to a group of deaf teenagers 12 years after they were originally taped undergoing auditory-verbal therapy. In 1988, she played the role of Nell in *Bridge to Silence*, a television movie-of-the-week. The movie, filmed in Toronto, was produced by Far North Productions, directed by Karen Arthur, and starred Lee Remick and Marlee Matlin. During the summer of 1988, Vaughan was one of several deaf actors employed with A Show of Hands Theatre Company, a theatrical troupe that toured Toronto under the artistic direction of Michele Pinel. And in 1993, she played the role of Mabel Bell in the mini-series *The Sound and The Silence*, which aired in two installments on CTV Television. In addition to acting, Vaughan enjoys painting. She began attending York University in North York, a suburb of Toronto, on scholarship in 1989 — working toward a degree in fine arts — while continuing to pursue her film career.

The National Festival of the Arts

Since 1973, the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf has sponsored a National Festival of the Arts (NFA) every two years. This event is usually scheduled to coincide with a national convention sponsored by one of Canada’s deaf organizations. Participants at the NFA compete in such categories as home arts (crafts), visual arts (photography, painting, sculpture), literary performances (dramatic readings in sign, one-act plays, etc.), physical performances (dancing, magic, pantomime, and so on), and recreational events (board games such as chess, for example). The NFA was established for several reasons:

(a) to provide an insight into the rich culture of the deaf and the work of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, Inc. and its affiliates; (b) to provide a focus for the social, educational, cultural, and recreational activities of the multi-sign language groups in Canada; (c) to continue its projects as programs of discovering new forms of expression and public anticipation in the arts, humanities, and social sciences; (d) to encourage instruction, development and participation in performing arts, visual arts, literature, heritage resources, knowledge and information resources, and cultural industries; (e) to create and broaden a better public awareness of the deaf culture; (f) to promote a better understanding and to bridge the gap between the deaf and hear-

*ing worlds; (g) to benefit those who wish to improve their visual communication skills and perception of greater strengths through these skills.*¹¹



A signing puppet (with “straight-man,” Forrest Nickerson) performs at the 1976 National Festival of The Arts

Photo credit: Judy Weiser (Vancouver, B.C.)

For almost 20 years, the NFA also included the Miss Deaf Canada pageant, an event similar to the Miss Deaf America competitions held in the United States. Following the 1992 competition, however, the CCSD board decided to discontinue the pageant at future festivals because candidates were finding it difficult to enter pageants on the provincial level, and because there were now more opportunities for both men and women to participate in cultural events so a special pageant no longer seemed necessary. Instead of the Miss Deaf Canada performances at future NFA events, CCSD now urges its members to write one-act plays that a group of individuals could perform in dramatic competitions at the festivals. Such plays are considered to be a more effective way of preserving Deaf culture and sharing deaf thoughts and experiences with the public than were the Miss Deaf Canada competitions.

The Miss Deaf Canada Pageant

The first Miss Deaf Canada was crowned on July 20, 1973, during the first National Festival of the Arts held in Calgary, Alta. Judged on such criteria as performing skills, poise, intelligence, communication ability, and beauty, these young deaf women represented both the CCSD and all deaf Canadians during their two-year reign. The last Miss Deaf Canada event

sponsored by the CCSD occurred in Richmond, B.C. in 1992. The pageant gave young deaf women “a chance to develop their personalities, self-confidence, and poise, as well as display their talents.”¹²

The crown worn by the first Miss Deaf Canada was designed especially for the pageant. Ten maple leaves, representing the Canadian provinces, encircled the band. At the centre of the band were two hands, symbolizing American Sign Language, the language of the Deaf community. The hands held five overlapping moons decorated with rhinestones. The moons represented the five different categories of culture — physical, literary, performance, recreational, and home arts — which the NFA exemplifies. This crown was presented to each winner from 1973 until it mysteriously disappeared prior to the 1988 pageant. The replacement crown worn by the three most recent Miss Deaf Canada winners is also covered with rhinestones, but contains only three maple leaves on the front headpiece.

Miss Deaf Canada Winners

Eleven young women have proudly worn the crown of Miss Deaf Canada since the pageant began in 1973. From the first to be crowned — Christine Clare Spink (now Spink-Mitchell) on July 20, 1973 — to the most recent — Rosanne Lily Mary Skinkle, on July 10, 1992 — these young women have proudly represented the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf and the Deaf communities of Canada through their personal lives and professional endeavours. Since the pageant’s beginning, the following women have carried the title of Miss Deaf Canada:

1973-1974 — Christine Clare Spink (now Spink-Mitchell), Miss Deaf Edmonton: Spink (b. Dec. 26, 1949), an Edmonton, Alta. native, became deaf at the age of three years and nine months as a result of influenza meningitis. After attending the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal (1955-1956), she transferred to the Alberta School for the Deaf (1956-1966) and then enrolled in the Marvel Beauty School for an eight-month training program in hairdressing. Spink worked as a hairdresser for the next 10 years and competed in several hairshow competitions, placing fourth for festival competition and third for master competition in Calgary in 1974. She had the dual honour of being crowned the first Miss Deaf Canada and of being the only winner to receive the crown from Forrest C. Nickerson, the founder and first executive director of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (the other Miss Deaf Canada winners have been crowned by the previous winner). At the age of 26, after her reign as Miss Deaf Canada was completed, Spink decided to return to school. She enrolled in Gallaudet College, where she received a bachelor’s degree in sociology in 1981 and a master’s in rehabilitation counselling in 1983. She then began working as a guidance counsellor at the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg, where she is currently employed. She has also taught ASL to teachers and staff at the school. Spink became a co-founder of the Alberta Cultural Society of the Deaf after she was crowned Miss Deaf Canada. She has been involved in the Manitoba Cultural Society of the Deaf, taught ASL to hearing parents of deaf chil-



Christine Spink (1973)

Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Edmonton, Alta.)

dren, served as literary director of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, and was an evaluator of the Sign Language Instructors of Canada. On July 6, 1984, she married Leonard Arthur Mitchell (b. Jan. 11, 1953), a graduate of the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver, B.C. (1957-1971) and Gallaudet College (B.A., 1978). Her husband was later president of the Canadian Association of the Deaf (1989-1992).

1974-1976: Susan Marie Pospishell (now Zimmer), Miss Deaf Winnipeg: Born profoundly deaf in Winnipeg, Pospishell (b. Dec. 14, 1955) was 18 years old when she won the Miss Deaf Canada title. She first attended the Manitoba Day School for the Deaf on Wellington Avenue in Winnipeg (1961-1965) and then transferred to the Manitoba School for the Deaf (1965-1973). Following graduation, she enrolled in Red River Community College in Winnipeg, where she studied clerical bookkeeping and accounting for two years (1974-1976). She received her Miss Deaf Canada crown at the pageant held in Belleville, Ont. in July, 1974. Pospishell is married to Robert Charles Zimmer, who received his education at the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Saskatoon (1956-1964), the Laura Secord School in Winnipeg (1964-1965), and the Manitoba School for the Deaf (1965-1969). They have two deaf daughters, Laurie and Dana. Her varied work experience has included teaching ASL to deaf Polish immigrants, serving as a member of the Deaf Literacy Steering Committee under the auspices of the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf, and



Susan Pospishell (1974)

Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Edmonton, Alta.)



Gail Penner (1976)

Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Edmonton, Alta.)

volunteering at the Sign Talk Children's Centre. She is also a member of the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf, the Winnipeg Church of the Deaf, and the Deaf Resources Center. In 1984, she was the first Manitoban to get a hearing ear dog, which she named "Gus."

1976-1978: Gail Patricia Penner (now Zimmer), Miss Deaf British Columbia: Penner (b. Mar. 18, 1949) became deaf at the age of 18 months following an operation for adenoids. She attended the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf (1954-1967), and then enrolled at the Vancouver Community College for a short time. On July 16, 1976, she was crowned Miss Deaf Canada at the competition held in Vancouver, B.C. Penner has been very active in the Deaf community, holding several positions in the Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf (GVAD), the Western Canada Association of the Deaf (WCAD), and the British Columbia Deaf Sports Federation. Her involvement in the British Columbia Cultural Society of the Deaf began in 1983. She is married to Gerald Charles John Zimmer, a former Winnipegger and deaf teacher at her alma mater since 1973. The couple has three children.

1978-1980: Marie Reine Linda France Boulanger, Miss Deaf Québec: Boulanger (b. Feb. 20, 1959) was born deaf in Laval, Québec. She has three hearing brothers and three sisters, two of whom are also deaf. She attended the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes in Montréal for nine years (1965-1974), spent one year (1974-1975) at the Annexe Lucien Pagé, and then became part of a mainstreamed deaf program at the Polyvalente Lucien Pagé (1975-1977). In

June 1978, she won the title of Miss Deaf Québec and one month later was crowned Miss Deaf Canada (on July 21, 1978) in Montréal. After receiving her title, she attended the Canadian Deaf Youth Leadership Camp in Vaudreuil for two weeks. In 1986, she returned to school to complete her D.E.S. (Diplôme Etude Secondaire [high school diploma]), and five years later, in the fall of 1991, she enrolled in CEGEP (college). An active performer, Boulanger has been involved with signing songs for elderly nursing home residents and has appeared on television with French television stars Anne Renée and Michel Louvain. She had a leading role in the play, *Children of a Lesser God*, when it was staged in Québec, and worked as a comedian and researcher for Théâtre Visuel des Sourds de Montréal. She has also been active as vice-president of Association des Personnes Sourds du Richelieu (APSR), worked for a time for the Association Québécoise pour Enfants avec Problèmes Auditifs, and has served on several school boards as a teacher and sign language consultant. In addition, she has served on the boards of La Société Culturelle Québécoise des Sourds, the Richelieu-Yamaska Association for the Deaf, and the Centre des Loisirs des Sourds de Montréal.

1980-1982: Arlene Ellen Brenner, Miss Deaf Alberta: Brenner (b. Dec. 27, 1961), a native of Oakville, Ont., was born deaf due to an Rh blood factor. Her twin brother is hearing, as is another older brother. She attended public schools in Ontario and later in Calgary and Banff, Alta., before graduating from the Alberta School for the Deaf (1977-1981). The year after being crowned Miss Deaf Canada in Winnipeg on July 24, 1980, Brenner became president of the junior



France Boulanger (1978)

Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Edmonton, Alta.)

branch of the Alberta Cultural Society of the Deaf and travelled throughout Alberta giving performances and lectures. She was a member of the Sign Language Dance Troupe, "Sign Unlimited," and also participated in the 1981 World Summer Games for the Deaf in Cologne, West Germany in the javelin, shotput, and discus competitions (and again in the 1985 games in Los Angeles, Calif., on the Canadian women's basketball team). In 1981, Brenner enrolled in Alberta College in Edmonton, where she also taught American Sign Language. In 1982, she moved to Grand Prairie, Alta., where she was actively involved in the Deaf community. She served as first president of the Grand Prairie Association of the Deaf and lobbied extensively for sign language interpreters and TTYs. She was also involved in a women's charity group called "Royal Purple." Interested in business, she became co-owner and manager of a very successful business in Grand Prairie ("The Teddy Bear Store") that specialized in toys and baby furniture. In 1986, Brenner enrolled at Gallaudet University to pursue a degree in communication arts (B.A., 1993). At Gallaudet, she also served as a part-time interpreter for deaf/blind students. Following graduation, she joined Quorum International Ltd. as a distributor (in January 1995, she had the highest business volume of all Quorum distributors in North America). She plans to return to Canada in the near future, where she will continue with the



Arlene Brenner (1980)

Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Edmonton, Alta.)

same company, focusing on home and automobile security systems.

1982-1984: Patricia Anne Shores (now Hermann), Miss Deaf Alberta: Shores (b. June 21, 1960) received her Miss Deaf Canada crown on July 30, 1982 in Toronto, Ont. Born deaf in Boksburg, Transvaal, Republic of South Africa, she attended St. Vincent School for the Deaf in Johannesburg (1963-1975). Following her family's move to Canada, she finished her high school education at the Alberta School for the Deaf (1976-1979). At Gallaudet College, Shores had a dual major (B.A., 1979-1985) in secondary education and international studies with focus on western Europe. After being crowned Miss Deaf Canada, she embarked on a two-month Canadian tour, the first winner to do so. In commenting on her tour, she emphasized that deaf people were "trying to show that we have a culture of our own ... a culture where we practice more visual things."¹³ Her goal with the tours was "opening people's minds that deaf people are people, too."¹⁴ She then became involved in the teaching, management, and public relations fields. On October 12, 1985, Shores married a deaf Swiss citizen, Roland Hermann. The couple has been living in Switzerland since 1991, where she works with the Swiss National Association of the Deaf in promoting higher standards of living for the deaf population of that country. In commenting



Patti Shores (1982)

Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Edmonton, Alta.)

on her reign as Miss Deaf Canada, she states: "I believe that the Miss Deaf Canada experiences contributed a significant mark in my life — being Deaf is okay — and the pageant promoted the idea that 'we can compete and cooperate!'"¹⁵ Shores credits her success to the continuing support of her two brothers, John Branton Shores (a Gallaudetian, Class of 1981), and William Wallis Shores (hearing, now a corporate lawyer).

1984-1986: Crystal Anna Humeston (now Salgado), Miss Deaf Manitoba: Humeston (b. Aug. 22, 1965) was born deaf in Beausejour, Man. She also has a deaf brother. She attended the Manitoba School for the Deaf (1971-1984) and Gallaudet University (1984-1987). Active in the Winnipeg Deaf community, she was a researcher at the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf and youth counsellor at the Calvary Temple of the Deaf. She has also worked as an interpreter for deaf-blind people and has served as a missionary. Her goal is to continue in the mission field after her children are grown. Humeston was crowned the seventh Miss Deaf Canada on August 3, 1984 in Edmonton, Alta. She later married a deaf man named Wilfredo Salgado Manso, and lived in Puerto Rico. Her deaf son, Leonardo, was born there in 1992; daughter Anna was born in Canada in 1994. The former Miss Deaf Canada now works in Winnipeg, teaching immigrant adults and serving as a relief worker in a group home for deaf adults.



Crystal Humeston (1984)

Courtesy of Crystal Humeston Salgado (Winnipeg, Man.)

1986-1988: Christine Marie Ehrlich, Miss Deaf Ontario: A Kitchener, Ont. native, Ehrlich (b. Sept. 24, 1964) represented Ontario in the 1986 Miss Deaf Canada pageant held in Montréal, Québec. She became deaf at the age of six months after taking the drug neomycin to cure an ear infection. She attended the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton (1970-1983). Following graduation, she enrolled in Gallaudet University (1983-1989) and received a bachelor of science degree in business administration, with a minor in advertising art. While a student at Gallaudet, Ehrlich was a member of the Phi Kappa Zeta sorority, and was involved in the Student Body Government organization, the drama club, and floor hockey. After graduation, she returned to Canada and worked as a teacher's aide for a while. She then worked with a group called Challenge International, serving needy people, and travelled to Kenya, South Africa for three months. Upon returning from her travels, Ehrlich was offered a job at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ont., where she served as an instructor to help deaf adults build a future in the working world. She also visited schools for deaf students, lecturing on her international travels. In 1987, she attended the 10th Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in Espoo, Finland (July 20-28), and has held the title of director of youth programs for the Ontario Association of the Deaf.



Christine Ehrlich (1986)

Courtesy of Christine Ehrlich (St. Jacobs, Ont.)



Laura Burrows (1988)

Courtesy of Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Edmonton, Alta.)

1988-1990: Laura Mary Burrows, Miss Deaf Ontario: Burrows (b. May 15, 1968), crowned in Saskatoon, Sask. in July 1988, is the ninth Miss Deaf Canada. She was born deaf in Toronto, Ont., and attended the Metro Toronto School for the Deaf, an oral program (1971-1973), before transferring to the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton (1973-1987). In 1987, she enrolled in Gallaudet University, and majored in communication arts. She received her bachelor of arts degree in 1993. While a Gallaudet student, Burrows was involved in the Gallaudet Canadian Club and the Student Body Government (SBG).

1990-1992: Theresa Lynn Fleming (now Hope), Miss Deaf Alberta: Born deaf in Edmonton, Fleming (b. Apr. 13, 1964) became the 10th Miss Deaf Canada at the July 1990 pageant held in Niagara Falls, Ont. Following graduation from the Alberta School for the Deaf (1969-1982), she attended Gallaudet University (B.Sc., 1982-1988), majoring in recreational and leisure studies. She was involved in the Phi Kappa Zeta sorority and was a member of the Gallaudet Canadian

Club. After graduating from the university, Fleming returned to Canada. Since October 1992, she has been employed as executive director of the bilingual/bicultural daycare program at the Sign Talk Children's Centre in Winnipeg, Man. Her wedding to Andrew John Hope (b. Aug. 5, 1964) of Winnipeg took place on August 21, 1993 in Irma, Alta. She and her husband (a former student at the Manitoba School for the Deaf [1970-1985]) currently reside in Winnipeg.

1992-1994: Rosanne Lily Mary Skinkle, Miss Deaf Ontario: The final Miss Deaf Canada to be crowned under the auspices of the CCSD was Rosanne Lily Mary Skinkle (b. Mar. 29, 1966) of Belleville, Ont., Miss Deaf Ontario. She graduated from the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf (1971-1985) — the school is also the alma mater of her grandparents, parents, and several other relatives. Skinkle is currently a teller at the Bank of Montreal on Front Street in Belleville. As of 1994, she mentioned that she would get married soon, and that she hopes to raise another generation of deaf children.



Theresa Lynn Fleming (1990)
 Courtesy of Theresa Fleming Hope (Winnipeg, Man.)



Rosanne Skinkle (1992)
 Courtesy of Rosanne Skinkle (Belleville, Ont.)

Miss Deaf Canada Finalists

1973-1974 (pageant held in Calgary, Alta.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Christine Clare Spink, Miss Deaf Edmonton; *1st Runner-Up*: Shelly Marie Black, Miss Deaf Calgary; *2nd Runner-Up*: Leona Jane Nederhoff, Miss Gallaudet Canadian Club.

1974-1976 (pageant held in Belleville, Ont.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Susan Marie Pospishell, Miss Deaf Winnipeg; *1st Runner-Up*: Marie Louise Clemence Baribeau, Miss Deaf Montréal; *2nd Runner-Up*: Linda Mae Heavenor, Miss Deaf Vancouver.

1976-1978 (pageant held in Vancouver, B.C.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Gail Patricia Penner, Miss Deaf British Columbia; *1st Runner-Up*: Jeannette Laura Champagne, Miss Deaf Alberta; *2nd Runner-Up*: Maryann Patricia Chmiel, Miss Deaf Ontario.

1978-1980 (pageant held in Montréal, Québec): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Marie Reine Linda France Boulanger, Miss Deaf Québec; *1st Runner-Up*: Marie Ghislaine Lise Fiset, Miss Deaf Québec; *2nd Runner-Up*: Paulette Anita Marie Charlebois, Miss Deaf Saskatchewan.

1980-1982 (pageant held in Winnipeg, Man.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Arlene Ellen Brenner, Miss Deaf Alberta; *1st Runner-Up*: Rosalind May Han Wong, Miss Deaf British Columbia; *2nd Runner-Up*: Sally Elizabeth Baskerville, Miss Deaf Ontario.

(Continued)

Miss Deaf Canada Finalists ... cont'd

1982-1984 (pageant held in Toronto, Ont.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Patricia Anne Shores, Miss Deaf Alberta; *1st Runner-Up*: Norma-Jean Taylor, Miss Deaf Saskatchewan; *2nd Runner-Up*: Linda Toews, Miss Deaf Alberta.

1984-1986 (pageant held in Edmonton, Alta.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Crystal Anna Humeston, Miss Deaf Manitoba; *1st Runner-Up*: Julie Ann Martin, Miss Deaf British Columbia; *2nd Runner-Up*: Dellalee Bernadine Piper, Miss Deaf Alberta.

1986-1988 (pageant held in Montréal, Québec): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Christine Marie Ehrlich, Miss Deaf Ontario; *1st Runner-Up*: Lezli-Jo Crawford, Miss Deaf Saskatchewan; *2nd Runner-Up*: Phyllis Beaton, Miss Deaf Ontario.

1988-1990 (pageant held in Saskatoon, Sask.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Laura Mary Burrows, Miss Deaf Ontario; *1st Runner-Up*: Laureen Charada Baskerville, Miss Deaf Ontario; *2nd Runner-Up*: Anna Gabelli, Miss Deaf Québec.

1990-1992 (pageant held in Niagara Falls, Ont.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Theresa Lynn Fleming, Miss Deaf Alberta; *1st Runner-Up*: Arleigh Phyliss Tamlin, Miss Deaf Ontario; *2nd Runner-Up*: Cindy Lou Janes, Miss Deaf Saskatchewan.

1992-1994 (pageant held in Vancouver, B.C.): *Miss Deaf Canada*: Rosanne Lily Mary Skinkle, Miss Deaf Ontario; *1st Runner-Up*: Kim Marlene Misener, Miss Deaf Nova Scotia; *2nd Runner-Up*: Twyla Maria Zarubiak, Miss Deaf Saskatchewan.