



*THE BLACK DRUM SIGNED MUSICAL*

**BEHIND THE SCENES YOUTH ACTIVITIES GUIDE**

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Any individual or organization wishing this guide should contact the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf or the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE at [info@deafculturecentre.ca](mailto:info@deafculturecentre.ca).

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# *THE BLACK DRUM SIGNED MUSICAL*

## BEHIND THE SCENES YOUTH ACTIVITIES GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION

This youth activities guide is designed to:

- accompany and enrich your experience of THE BLACK DRUM full feature signed musical.
- provide behind the scenes highlights of the process of producing this signed musical.
- inspire your own creative process and production. You are invited to engage in the discussion and activity prompts to make the most of this guidebook.

This guide is a companion to:

- [Attending THE BLACK DRUM performance - live or on-line](#)
- [THE BLACK DRUM: Behind the Scenes \(documentary\) \(03:38\)](#)
- [Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada](#)
- [Signed Music: Rhythm of The Heart](#)
- [Signed Music: Rhythm of The Heart \(Documentary\) \(20:21\)](#)
- [Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits](#)

### BACKGROUND

*THE BLACK DRUM* is the first full feature Deaf driven signed musical. It was produced by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.

Featuring celebrated Deaf artists including Dawn Jani Birley (*Prince Hamlet*), Yan Liu (*Thousand-hand Bodhisattva*), Bob Hiltermann (*Beethoven's Nightmare*), Daniel Durant (*Deaf West's Spring Awakening*), Corinna Den Dekker (*Is Somebody Singing*), Agata Wisny (*Crying Hands*), Natasha C. Bacchus (*Gold & Silver award winning athlete, World Games for the Deaf & Pan Am Games for the Deaf and actor*), Ballet Dancers: Jaelyn Russell Lillie, Sita Weereatne, and Abbey Jackson-Bell, *THE BLACK DRUM* is a rhythmic telling of their story in this first entirely Deaf musical theatre that is not originally a sound based work.

*THE BLACK DRUM* has been presented by Soulepper Theatre Company, Toronto (2019); Canada, Clin d'Oeil International Deaf Festival, Reims, France (2019) and on North American virtual tour presented by Inside Out Theatre Company, Calgary, Alberta, Canada and Alberta Cultural Society of the Deaf, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (2021).

### STORY

Commissioned by the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE and written by Deaf playwright Adam Pottle, the signed musical tells the story of a young woman, whose life is upturned when her tattoos come alive and propel her on a fantastical journey in search of her own inner music. (For details, see "synopsis" below, pages 17 and 18.)



Renowned Norwegian director Mira Zuckermann (*Teater Manu*), weaves together dance, signed music, projection, tattoo art, and physical theatre for a performance of visual rhythms from the heart, with production designs by Maryam Hafizirad (Makeup & Assistant Set & Costume Designer), Ken MacKenzie (Set), Ruth Albertyn (Costume), Chris Malkowski (Lighting), and Adam Harendorf (Sound).

## WHAT IS A DEAF DRIVEN PRODUCTION?

This Deaf driven production was produced by a national Deaf non-profit organization, the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE under the auspices of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (with Deaf producer/ CCSD Executive Director and board of directors). It was written by a Deaf playwright, led by a Deaf artistic director (from *Teater Manu*, Deaf theatre in Norway), Deaf assistant director (from *Seeing Voices*, Canada), performed by an all-Deaf cast and with Deaf assistant set and costume designer.

### About the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf

The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) is a registered non-profit charitable organization. CCSD, incorporated in 1973, preserves, encourages and advances the arts and culture of Canada's Deaf population by featuring performing and visual arts, media arts and literature reflecting Deaf heritage. CCSD also promotes new forms of creativity and better understanding between Deaf and hearing adults, youth and children through the arts.

### About the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE

The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, a project of The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, is a forum to celebrate Deaf life. Set in the Distillery Historic District, Toronto, Canada, it is open to the public and rooted in the Deaf community. It features sign language, Deaf heritage, education, a gallery, Deaf visual arts and sign language performing arts.

Deaf organizations provide opportunities to explore shared experience, learn more about your Deaf heritage, to establish lifelong friendships, leadership skills, and to create and be enriched by Deaf theatre, signed music, ASL poetry, ASL storytelling, Deaf View Image Art and more.



### Activities:

- Are you a member of a Deaf organization, Deaf Club, Deaf Drama Club, Deaf literary society, Deaf camp or Deaf school? Find out about Deaf organizations in your area or start one!
- Find the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf on YouTube. For more information about the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf and the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, please visit [deafculturecentre.ca](http://deafculturecentre.ca). Find Deaf Culture Centre on Facebook and follow @deafculturecentre and on Twitter @DeafCulture.
- Read, *Showtime, Deaf Theatre in Canada*<sup>1</sup> (provided in your package) to learn about the history and genres of Deaf theatre in Canada. Experiment with the Deaf theatre warm up, mime, improvisation and forum theatre activities suggested in that handbook.

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<sup>1</sup>Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. (Series author) (2020). *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol.3. Showtime! Deaf Theatre in Canada*. (Rev. ed.). [Cripps, J. Project Manager; Small, A. Content Manager.] Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. <https://slicanada.ca/deaf-arts-series/>

## PRODUCTION FINANCES

Any production is dependent on raising funds. This can be accomplished through grants, sponsorships, donations and in-kind support.

**Grants** – funding given to a non-profit arts organization, educational institution, business or individual based on a competitive application process. Applications are judged by assessors. In general, these funds do not have to be repaid but must be used for the activity specified in the grant application that was accepted. (e.g. Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Council for the Arts, Toronto Council for the Arts)

**Sponsorships** - funding, products and services given to support events, productions, teams, non-profits, or organizations. In exchange, the sponsor gets business exposure and a chance to connect with new customers (e.g. Communication Service for the Deaf)

**Donations** - individuals, organizations or government provide financial support voluntarily (e.g. Calgary Association of the Deaf)

**In-Kind Support** - resources, or non-cash contributions, things you'd otherwise pay for, or they might be things that money can't buy. When someone volunteers to give you a service, supplies, or free help, you're receiving in-kind support. (eg. Why Not Theatre and Citadel Theatre Partnership supported *THE BLACK DRUM* creation development residency/workshops at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity)

CCSD was first able to commission a Deaf playwright and plan *THE BLACK DRUM* production when they received a *New Chapter 2017* and *Beyond* grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to mark the 150th Anniversary of Confederation (\$395,000.00). This was augmented by an Ontario Arts Council grant received by Jeffrey Baker (dance instructor and Baker Light Integrated System inventor) to teach Deaf children ballet with *Dancing Lights and Dancing Deaf Children, Artists in Communities and Schools, 2017* (\$10,000.00), a *Mentorship for Canadian Deaf Artists* grant pairing the creative team for *THE BLACK DRUM* with mentors, 2018 (\$70,000 + \$42,000 access support = \$112,000.00), an *Arts Abroad: Circulation and Touring* grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, 2019 (\$30,000) to feature *THE BLACK DRUM* at Clin d'Oeil International Deaf Festival in Reims, France, and an *Arts Abroad: Circulation and Touring* grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, 2020 (\$55,00) to tour it in western Canada and the US.

These grants were supplemented by vital support from presenting hosts and sponsors, donors and in-kind supporters (eg. Clin d'Oeil Festival [\$29,000 EU], in-kind presenting sponsor Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD), Cultivating Opportunities for Success [\$10,000], Omers Foundation [\$7,500], Alberta Cultural Society of the Deaf [\$5,000], Calgary Association of the Deaf [\$2,500] and in-kind supporters, Why Not Theatre and Citadel Theatre partnership support for *THE BLACK DRUM* creation development residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity, The Chimera Project, Ballet Jörgen, GBC School of Dance, presenting hosts for virtual tour, Alberta Cultural Society of the Deaf and Inside Out Theatre, and in-kind support from Deaf West Theatre for post-show virtual talk back interview and outreach).



### Activities:

- If you wanted to produce a play, how much financial support do you think you would need? Develop a budget.

- Brainstorm who you would ask to support your production (grantors, sponsors, donors, in-kind supporters). Who might be interested to support your production and why?

## DEAF CULTURE EMBEDDED

The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE commissioned a Deaf playwright to develop the story and clearly set guidelines to incorporate a Deaf identity theme in the story with Deaf characters and Deaf cultural elements throughout. The playwright worked initially with the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE Executive Director, and the Director, Cross -Cultural Development. He further revised the script with the dramaturge at *Teater Manu* (Deaf theatre in Norway) and then made final revisions collaboratively with the Deaf Director of *THE BLACK DRUM* until it embedded Deaf cultural elements, structure, sensibilities and design throughout the story while maintaining the initial intents of the playwright.

The main character has tattoos which come alive. The playwright had hoped to incorporate tattoos in his story not knowing their cultural significance. As it happened, the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE Executive Director and the Director, Cross-Cultural Development had attended a special exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum at the outset of play development where they learned that the famous Deaf inventor of the light bulb, phonograph and motion picture camera, Thomas Edison, whose father was Canadian, had patented the electric stencil pen (1877) the precursor to tattoo machines still used today!



<https://electricpen.org>

**Electric Stencil Pen (case left)**  
Thomas Edison (1847 -1931)

In 1877, Thomas Edison filed a patent for this electric pen. The needle produced 3,000 punctures per minute on paper, creating a perforated stencil that could be used to make copies. A precursor to the tattoo machine, this device marks the true beginning of the machines used today.

United States // 1877 // Variable media  
Schiffmacher Collection, Amsterdam Tattoo Museum

Signage from the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), Special Exhibit, *Tattoos: Ritual, Identity, Obsession, Art 2016*



Joan with her butterfly and bulldog tattoos; photo courtesy of Dahlia Katz



Joan with the bulldog after her tattoo has come alive; photo courtesy of Dahlia Katz





### Activities:

- What Deaf cultural symbols would you want to build into a play that you create?

## THEMES

In *THE BLACK DRUM*, finding your own music, your own sense of self and your own identity are central themes. This is when you feel “at home” - at peace with yourself and in the land of living not the dead.



### Activities:

- When do you most feel “at home” at peace with yourself?
- What themes do you want to explore?
- What feels like an authentic theme or story plot to you?

## INSPIRING ENVIRONMENT

When planning ahead and writing grants, the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE Executive Director and Producer, and Director, Cross-Cultural Development sought an inspiring environment for the production and creative team to collaborate. With in-kind support from Why Not Theatre and Citadel Theatre and with grant support from the Canada Council for the Arts, their creative workshops were hosted at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity, Banff, Alberta – a national centre for artistic exploration with breathtaking views.



*View of the mountains from the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity; photo courtesy of Anita Small*



### Activities:

- What place gives you the most energy to create?
- Where do you feel contemplative or free to think, feel inspired, replenished, creative, productive?
- Spend some time in that inspiring physical space to create whatever you wish

## COSTUMES

Costume were intended to provide a strong contrast to the dark set and designed not to restrict or obstruct movement. The costume designs on *THE BLACK DRUM* were inspired by Deaf View Image Art (De’VIA).<sup>2</sup>

De’VIA is created when artists explore Deaf experience on a personal, cultural or physical level, using formal art elements.

<sup>2</sup> 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

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.

## Joan

Joan's vest was inspired by De'VIA. The initial plan was to have a "De'VIA" pattern on the collar but you couldn't see the bright pins against the background and so the vest colour was more toned down and the lining was a different colour with only a subtle pattern that did not overtake the pins. The brightly coloured pins represented De'VIA. Joan gives a pin with strong contrasting colour to Ava at a crucial point in the play.



Illustration courtesy of Ruth Albertyn



Joan's vest with pins inspired by De'VIA; photo courtesy of Dahlia Katz



## Bree/Butterfly



Illustration courtesy of Ruth Albertyn

*"I didn't want to give her 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."*

Ruth Albertyn  
Costume Designer

*"I wanted the butterfly to be De'VIA so she [Maryam Hafizirad], 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 . . ."*

Ruth Albertyn  
Costume Designer

*"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."*

Maryam Hafizirad  
Makeup & Assistant  
Set & Costume Designer



Photo courtesy Dahlia Katz



## Oscar/Bulldog



## Minister



Illustrations courtesy of Ruth Albertyn

## Squib



## Ballet Dancers



Illustrations courtesy of Ruth Albertyn





Photo courtesy Dahlia Katz



### Activities:

- Read: Deaf View Image Art: Canadian Exhibits<sup>3</sup>
- Design your own wardrobe collection for THE BLACK DRUM characters. What would you do? Why?

## SIGNED MUSIC

Deaf playwright, Adam Pottle describes his process for referring to the signed music compositions in the script as follows:

*I had to write the script in a way that would make it easier for the performers to springboard off of and again not be performed word for word or verbatim on stage -it was a real challenge but one that was totally worthwhile . . .*

*The biggest challenge was trying to imagine what it would look like on stage because signed music is something that is very new . . . we've all experienced song lyrics from songs that have been performed orally – We've experienced those being taken and then translated them into sign language but . . . many of us haven't seen signed music that arises organically through the body and from Deaf experience and so being able to write a story that would allow those kinds of rhythms, that way of storytelling to flourish on stage was a big challenge but one that I was happy to take on.*

<sup>3</sup> 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.

Note the difference in the signed music piece “*Black Heart*”, in the script prior to and following workshopping of the piece by the actor (Bob Hiltermann) who composed his rendition for his performance as the Minister. This change by the actor/composer, with the director, is reflected in the revised script by Adam Pottle following performance (November 2019).

### MINISTER

Song: “Black Heart” (Draft 6, May 2019)

Quiet beat  
Black heart  
Beautiful death  
Death freedom  
Everyone dies  
Nothing stops it  
Rotted heart  
Crumbles in my hands  
No music  
No colour  
No voice  
Grind it down  
Snuff it out  
Beautiful black  
World is ash  
Body is dust  
Death freedom  
Perfect peace

Song: “Black Heart” (Draft 12 Nov 2019 following performance)

Black heart beautiful  
Death beautiful  
Dark world mine  
You-all, me control control control control  
(Long) Music no  
Laughter no, happiness no  
Colour no, chat sign no  
Freedom no  
(Long) Love no  
Black heart beautiful  
Black heart perfect  
Worthless  
Black heart beautiful  
Sad good, angry good  
Free never (3x)



#### Activities:

- Read, Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. (Series author) (2015). *Deaf Arts Handbook Series: Vol.2. Signed Music Rhythm of the Heart*. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.
- Watch, Cripps, J. S., Small, A., Rosenblum, E., & Cripps, J. H. (2015). *Signed Music: Rhythm of the Heart*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf. Documentary DVD.



- Create your own signed music composition based on the concepts and feelings in, “*Black Heart*”

or

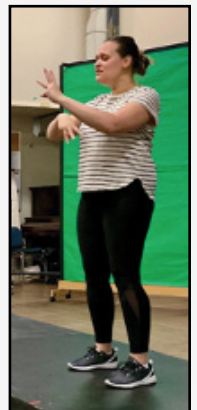
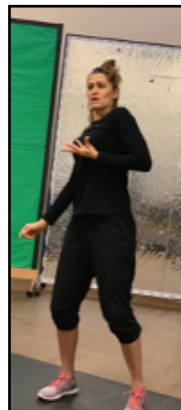
- Create your own signed music composition based on the concepts and feelings in “*No Cocoon Can Hold Me*” below. Do not be afraid to free yourself from the English words. Rely on your own vision and feelings from this piece.

### BUTTERFLY

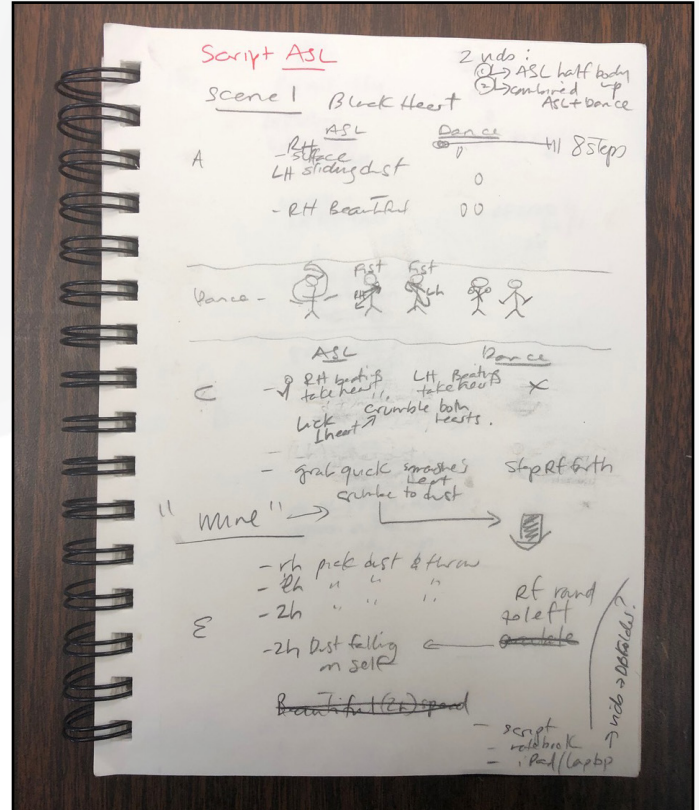
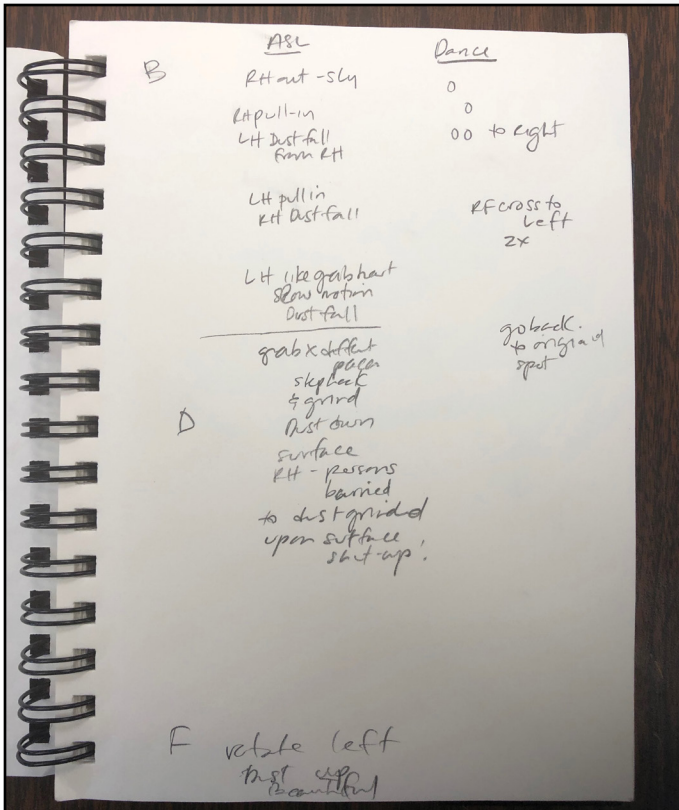
Song: “No Cocoon Can Hold Me” (Draft 6, May 2019 & draft 12 Nov 2019 - no change)

When I baby  
 When I caterpillar  
 Wrapped in silk blanket  
 Wrapped up tight  
 I dream of open air  
 Wind on my face  
 Flying with wind  
 The world below me  
 My cocoon  
 My prison  
 My shackles  
 I dream of hope  
 I grow  
 I change  
 I break free  
 Spread my wings  
 Show the world colour  
 Show the world beauty  
 No cocoon can hold me  
 No prison can hold colour  
 Colour flies  
 Beauty soars  
 Always hope  
 You can escape

Hint: Composers used a mirror for feedback on their signed music compositions while working on their own and workshopped their compositions in front of others in the room for feedback.



Actors/ Signed Music Composers - Natasha C. Bacchus (left), Dawn J. Birley (middle) Corinna Den Dekker (right).  
 Photographs courtesy of Anita Small.



Signed Music Notation by Pamela Witcher.

Photographs courtesy of Anita Small

Signed Music notation methodology developed and recorded by Pamela Witcher, Signed Music Specialist, indicated signed music in the left column of each page focusing on the upper body (ASL signed music composition). The ASL composition came first. The dance moves on the right column of each page focusing on leg movements/lower torso/ dance choreography was added in later to embellish the story of the signed music compositions expressed in ASL.

This signed music chorus, *What is Music* (Reprise) performed by the character, Joan & company, is a “head nod” to Deaf community signed music history, performances by a chorus in ASL in a line.<sup>4</sup> It is not typical of auditory based musical dance choreography which uses choreography on different levels on stage.



*What is Music* (Reprise) performed by Joan & Company. Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

<sup>4</sup> Supalla, T., & Dannis, J. (1994). *Charles Krauel: A profile of a deaf filmmaker* [VHS]. San Diego, CA: DawnSign Pictures.





## Activities:

- Check out the examples, “*Boat, Drink, Fun, Enjoy...*” using one-two, one-two-three, one-two, one-two-three rhythm beats with body movements and “*Oh Darn, I Hear Nothing!...*”, signed by a chorus using ASL with lyrics in jest, performed in the 1930s and 1940s on the video documentary, *Charles Krauel: A Profile of a Deaf Filmmaker* (Supalla, T. & Dannis, 1994).<sup>5</sup>
- Create your own ASL chorus with a group using “one-two, one-two-three, one-two, one-two-three” rhythm beats with body movements.

## SET DESIGN

Early set design by Ken Mackenzie, Set & Costume Designer, shows two large doors/scaffolds that open and close allowing for a simple backdrop that is not distracting, projected images and flexibility of actor positions and movement on stage.



## Activities:

- Suggest sets that allow for simple and varied backdrops on stage that are also transportable (for a production that will take place in two countries or more).



Photograph courtesy of Anita Small



Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

<sup>5</sup> Referred to in, Cripps, J.H., Small, A., Lyonblum, E., Supalla, S.J., Whyte, A.K., and Cripps, J.S. (2021). Signed Music and the Deaf Community. In: A. Cruz (Ed.) *Culture, deafness & music: disability studies and a path to social justice*. Rotterdam, NL: Brill-Sense Publishers.



## LIGHTING

“In the darkness, you use light to articulate space.”

Ken Mackenzie, Set & Costume Designer

Chris Malkowski, Lighting Designer, provided this LX design reference below for discussion of the aesthetic and colour range that LED lights bring into a production. This became inspiration for the lighting design in *THE BLACK DRUM*.



### Activities:

- How would you design lighting to emphasize Deaf View Image Art (De'VIA) in a dark world?



Photograph from *Avatar Secret Garden*, Penang, Malaysia



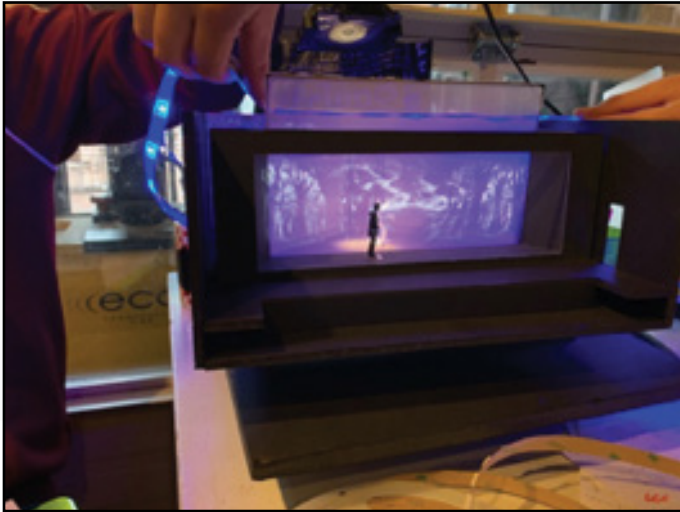
Photograph, *THE BLACK DRUM* courtesy of Dahlia Katz



Photograph, *THE BLACK DRUM* courtesy of Dahlia Katz



## PROJECTIONS



Projections by Laura Warren, Video and Projection Designer

Projections in *THE BLACK DRUM* highlighted the mood and imagery created in the dark world as well as embellishing the vibrant signed music pieces.

Describing what signed music means to her, Dawn Jani Birley, actor in the *THE BLACK DRUM*, states:

*“I see rhythm in water. I see if you throw a stone in water and you watch those ripples, its rhythm, it's music.”*

Dawn Jani Birley, Actor

This became one of the themes expressed in the signed music piece she composed, *“What is Music”* embellished in the projections behind her.



### Activities:

- Think of what projections you would want to create. What would you highlight as backdrop in the story and why?



Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz, projection of water during *What is Music* (Reprise)

## SPECIAL EFFECTS



Photograph, *THE BLACK DRUM* courtesy of Dahlia Katz



Illustration courtesy of Ruth Albertyn

There was much discussion of how to portray the ghost-like figure of Joan's dead wife, Karen, floating across the stage. Early discussions included consideration of a dolly or mechanical piece that could glide across the stage with Joan appearing to "float" on it. In the end, a large hoop skirt was designed by costume designer, Ruth Albertyn. It extended to the floor so that Karen's (played by Agata Wisny) feet were completely hidden, and the director worked with Agata so that Karen appeared to float rather than walk across the stage



### Activities:

- How would you portray a ghost-like figure floating across a stage?

## ACCESS FOR HEARING AUDIENCES

*THE BLACK DRUM* was presented with Voice Interpretation & Audio Assist Devices in theatres and was accessible to non-ASL audiences. There was lengthy discussion amongst the entire team regarding how to be true to our Deaf experience, without compromising Deaf artistic sensibilities while also making the play accessible for hearing audiences.

Adam Harendorf, Sound Designer, summarizes the options considered by the team:

- 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

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 - moving mouths that are not understood.



Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz, “talking heads” stage left



Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz

The synopsis below appears in the program book.

## THE BLACK DRUM SYNOPSIS

### Scene One

The Minister, who exerts control, recites “BLACK HEART” depicting a world with no music, no laughter, no love and no freedom.

### Scene Two

Joan, a performing artist, grieves her dead wife Karen. Her roommates Bree and Oscar, who is also their landlord, stand nearby. Joan speaks to Karen’s ghost, about her Butterfly and Bulldog tattoos - beauty and strength. Bree and Oscar squabble and Oscar recites “MONEY”. Joan shares that her body is her musical instrument. People don’t acknowledge it. She doesn’t know how to move on without Karen.

### Scene Three

Joan is plunged into a sinister world dominated by the minister. She is warned by the decaying tree about the restricting infectious black heart inhabiting this “in-between” world. Squib, the

Minister's reluctant lieutenant, appears.

#### **Scene Four**

Joan encounters Ava, who dances with the children in this strange world. Joan's tattoos, Bulldog and Butterfly have come to life. Bulldog continues the reprise of "MONEY" while Butterfly is anxious to find Joan. Ava explains that the Minister controls them with dark magic, namely his black drum. Butterfly clarifies that this world is neither reality nor death. Bulldog tells Joan that Karen is dead even in this "in-between" world.

#### **Scene Five**

Joan, hiding behind a bush, witnesses the Minister control Karen with his magic and proclaims that no one can escape his world. Joan recovers from what she witnessed, with Ava and Bulldog by her side. Butterfly consoles Joan and recites, "NO COCOON CAN HOLD ME", evoking when she set herself free and emerged as a butterfly.

#### **Scene Six**

Ava explains that they need Joan's music and colour to diminish the black of the drum and free them. Butterfly encourages Joan who then discovers her inner signed music in, "WHAT IS MUSIC". Joan's friends devise a plan to defeat the Minister. Joan will save Karen but cannot stay with her. She will need to let her go. Joan shares her colours with Ava by giving her a yellow pin.

#### **Scene Seven**

Karen asserts that the Minister's vision of no colour, black heart and death is no match to life's greatest force - laughter, tears, compassion and love. Bulldog and Butterfly challenge the Minister. Bulldog recites "BAD DOG, GOOD DOG", contrasting the Minister's evil with his own good inner heart. The Minister subdues and binds them.

#### **Scene Eight**

Ava shows the children her yellow pin and tells them that they have a chance to bring colour to the world if they are brave and find their music. Ava bursts out, reciting "VOICE", moving away from shame and fear to a world of love, laughter and dance. To find themselves they must be brave.

#### **Scene Nine**

Squib patrols the drum, reciting "OPPRESSOR'S LAMENT". The oppressive black heart grows and to survive, Squib distributes it. She tells Joan to retreat from the drum. The Minister is challenged without success. He tells Joan to concede to him, as he is a natural part of life. Ava calls out for colour, power and freedom. Butterfly urges Joan to let go of Karen, to find strength in her music and not give up. Joan recites "LOVE IS FREEDOM" with Butterfly and defeats the Minister.

#### **Scene Ten**

Joan collapses after having defeated the Minister. He retreats saying he will get his power back. Karen states she could only come back once and that Joan must take her music to the world. Each finds their own "place". Joan says her farewells. She and Karen, state their love for one another. They all recite "WHAT IS MUSIC" together one last time.

#### **Scene Eleven**

In the cemetery, Joan feels Karen's presence. The Minister returns, saying he will always be there to prey on others. He will always be a part of life.





### Activities:

- Review the synopsis for scene one (page 17) and scene five (page 18). Now review the script for the signed music piece in scene one (Black Heart) (page 10) and scene five (No Cocoon Can Hold Me) (page 11). How much or little information would you provide in the synopsis? Develop a written synopsis for scene one and scene five. Would you include a summary of the signed music pieces? If yes, what would be your signed music summary?

Develop a written synopsis for scene one and scene five. Would you include a summary of the signed music pieces? If yes, what would be your signed music summary?

Mira Zuckermann, Deaf director, felt something was needed to hold the signed music pieces together and suggested trying a large drum that would follow the rhythms of the signed music compositions that had been created by the actors.

*“When everyone realized that the live drumming was inspiring the same reaction from everyone [Deaf and hearing alike] in the room, it felt as though we had connected in a new way. This shared experience between [D]eaf and hearing made it clear that this was the right approach for THE BLACK DRUM.”*

Adam Harendorf, Sound Designer



### Activities:

- Discuss: Would you include drumming that could be heard by hearing audiences and felt & seen by deaf and hearing audiences, or would you not accompany signed music pieces by any auditory /vibrating instrument? Why?

## EXPERIMENTATION – MOTION CAPTURE



Natasha Bacchus, (left) wearing motion capture markers, with Mira Zuckermann, May 2019. Photograph courtesy of Anita Small



Motion Capture - Mira Zuckermann (left) and Chris Joslin (right). Photograph courtesy of Anita Small

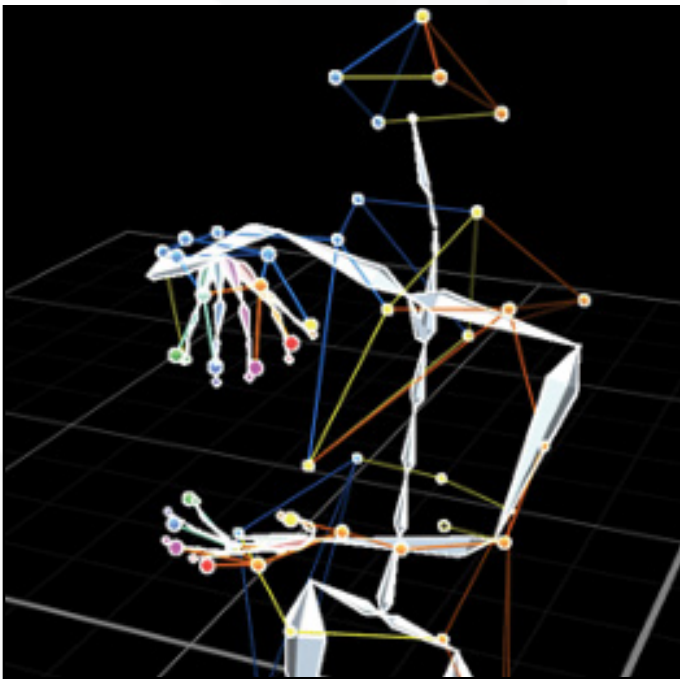
Our original intent was to push the envelope, experimenting with sign language motion capture. The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE collaborated with Chris Joslin, Director, School of Information Technology, Carleton University to create a motion capture signing tree in the sinister world

dominated by the Minister.

*“Recording signs . . . there are subtleties there, that really make a difference and that even with a detailed system such that we have, we still need post-processing . . . meaning someone who can edit the animations after . . . it should be someone who can sign.”*

Chris Joslin, Motion Capture

Despite progress made, due to time limitations and the subtleties not achieved by the motion capture to include refined facial expressions and hand/finger movements, the motion capture was dropped in favour of acting (with elaborate makeup) integrated into the projections. See below for motion capture experimental progress in comparison with the final projections used.



a. Photograph courtesy of Chris Joslin



b. Photograph courtesy of Chris Joslin



c. Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz





d. Photograph courtesy of Dahlia Katz



### Activities:

Discuss: With the level of motion capture in a. & b. above, would you use these motion capture projections or opt for the integrated acting and filming projected in c. and d. above? Why?



The DEAF CULTURE CENTRE logo watermark throughout this guidebook reflects motion capture of the sign “RESONATE”. To resonate is to feel connected, with shared emotions, experience or beliefs. That is what signed music is about.