

PIPPIN

Book by Roger O. Hirson
Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz
Music Direction and Arrangements by Steven Landau
Directed and Choreographed by Jeff Calhoun
Co-produced with Deaf West Theatre
January 15 - March 15, 2009
Mark Taper Forum

DiscoveryGuide



A WILDLY THEATRICAL MUSICAL PERFORMED IN
SPOKEN ENGLISH AND AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE.





L.A.'s Theatre Company

Ahmanson Theatre
Mark Taper Forum
Kirk Douglas Theatre

601 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Welcome to *Pippin*

“I have to start doing something meaningful — but I don’t know what it is.” —Pippin in *Pippin*

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ, the composer of *Wicked*, *Godspell* and Disney’s *Pocahontas* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, created a lively pop-rock score for his 1972 hit Broadway musical *Pippin*, a “coming of age” story concerning a young medieval prince. This sparkling new production marks the first major revival of *Pippin* since its Broadway premiere. In this unique revival, *Pippin* has been re-imagined by Deaf West Theatre and Center Theatre Group to tap the vibrant performance energy of the Deaf world. The talented cast combines deaf and hard of hearing actors with hearing actors, creating a musical that is entirely bilingual, performed in spoken English and American Sign Language (ASL).

Pippin has been “double-cast” so that his role is performed by two men, one deaf and one hearing. In the artistic vision of director Jeff Calhoun, the roles of Pippin and King Charles have been conceived as deaf characters, as well as the role of Theo, a young boy. All the other principal characters are hearing. Since half the performers are deaf and half are hearing, the various nobles, soldiers, peasants and infidels might be deaf or hearing depending on who happens to be portraying them.

How can deaf people perform a musical? The surprising answer is what makes this particular *Pippin* so exciting. Deaf performers sing songs in sign language as the melodies are voiced by hearing performers onstage. Deaf dancers follow music by keeping count and sensing the sound vibrations through the floor. A performance by a mixed company of deaf and hearing performers allows an audience to experience a story with an ear — and an eye — to things they never noticed before.

“The challenges I have in performing *Pippin* are nowhere near as important as the challenges I hope the audience will have. I am very excited as to the questions this show will spark in the minds of the people who see it.”

—Tyrone Giordano, the deaf actor who plays the role of Pippin

DiscoveryGuide

Doug Cooney
Writer

Rachel Fain
Managing Editor

Jean Kling
Proofreader

Haruka Hayakawa
Graphic Designer

Doug Cooney, Discovery Guide writer, is a playwright and novelist for young people. His youth musical *Nobody’s Perfect*, adapted from his novel co-written with actress Marlee Matlin, premiered at the Kennedy Center and will embark on a national tour in 2010. *Imagine*, a new youth musical, premiered at South Coast Rep in Costa Mesa, CA, in June 2008.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS DISCOVERY GUIDE

- Explore the world of Deaf culture and American Sign Language
- Reflect on the theme of self-discovery
- Appreciate the function of “coming of age” in storytelling
- Examine the ways in which American Sign Language adds meaning to a theatrical performance
- Experiment with the process of translation and interpreting a story in another language



“Gotta find
my corner
of the sky.”

—Pippin in *Pippin*

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Troy Kotsur and Michael Arden in rehearsal for the Center Theatre Group/Deaf West Theatre production of *Pippin*. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

Intrigue, Plots to Bring Disaster

Pippin is set in France during the reign of King Charlemagne (747-814 A.D.) — but don't worry, you don't need to know the history to understand or appreciate the musical. The production is not concerned with an accurate depiction of the medieval era, nor is the story historically accurate. Despite its medieval characters, *Pippin* is meant to feel timeless. The costumes, sets, songs and dialogue suggest modern times much more than the past.

In *Pippin*, the Leading Player of a troupe of actors, dancers and musicians uses song and dance to invite the audience to attend a performance of *Pippin, His Life and Times*, a play about a young prince who is searching for his purpose in life. In the play, Pippin, heir to the French king, Charlemagne (King Charles), boldly asserts that he is on a quest for an extraordinary life. Pippin and his father are on awkward terms, complicated by Fastrada, Pippin's over-reaching step-mother, and her son Lewis. King Charles and Lewis are waging war against the Visigoths. Pippin begs his father to let him tag along. Reluctantly, Charles agrees but, once in battle, Pippin is disturbed by the bloodshed and runs off into the countryside. Pippin seeks shelter with Berthe, his exiled grandmother, at her country estate. Berthe tells Pippin that he is taking things too seriously and counsels him to dive into the pleasures of life. Taking her advice, Pippin flings himself into wine and women, but he soon tires of this hollow lifestyle.

The Leading Player convinces Pippin that his father is a tyrant and that Pippin should lead a revolt against him. Fastrada is delighted by the intrigue because she secretly hopes that both Pippin and King Charles will die, leaving her son Lewis to take over the throne. Pippin kills his own father and survives to become the new king. The responsibility of being king, however, soon overwhelms Pippin and he begs the Leading Player to bring his father back to life — which the Leading Player does.

Banished, Pippin meets a beautiful and kind widow named Catherine who lives on a simple farm with her son, Theo. Pippin soon falls in love and settles with Catherine and her son until the boredom of farm life sends him running off once again. The Leading Player and his troupe advise Pippin to embrace a glorious destiny by making himself “one with the flame” by setting himself on fire.

Broken and distraught, Pippin is actually tempted by the idea of suicide but finds himself second-guessing his own decision. The Leading Player grows increasingly frustrated as he loses control of the production and threatens Pippin to finish the finale — or else.

Cast of Characters

- Leading Player The leader of a band of players
- Pippin The young prince on a search for his true identity
- Charlemagne A medieval French king and conqueror, father to Pippin
- Fastrada Pippin's step-mother
- Lewis Pippin's step-brother
- Berthe Pippin's grandmother
- Catherine A single mother with a farm
- Theo Catherine's young son
- An ensemble of peasants, farmers, soldiers and infidels

Exercise

Pop Quiz: The Deaf World

1. The deaf world is full of sound. T F
2. All deaf people use sign language. T F
3. Sign language is the same all over the world. T F
4. It must be sad to be a deaf child. T F
5. All deaf people would rather be able to hear. T F



Tyrone Giordano in rehearsal for the Center Theatre Group/Deaf West Theatre production of *Pippin*. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

Meet Pippin

Tyrone Giordano plays Pippin. He also played Huck Finn in Deaf West Theatre's Broadway production of *Big River*, based on Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. "I was born into a Deaf family," says Tyrone. "As a Deaf kid, I could hear really well and at that time, any deaf kid with some hearing was encouraged to develop his speech. Fortunately, I learned to both speak and sign fluently, which often doesn't happen in cases like mine."

Need help on that pop quiz?
Tyrone has all the answers.

1. The deaf world is full of sound.

TRUE. "You can measure deafness like sight. Sometimes things in the distance are blurry, other times you can't see in front of your nose. Hearing is the same way. Deaf people don't live 'in silence' even though it sounds catchy to say so. We live in a world full of visual noise, and plenty of deaf people hear to some extent, sometimes enough to enjoy music!"

2. All deaf people use sign language.

FALSE. "It depends. Some deaf people grow up learning how to speak only; some grow up only signing. I grew up with both speech and sign."

3. Sign language is the same all over the world.

FALSE. "Many countries have their own national sign language, for example, French Sign Language and Japanese Sign Language. Interestingly, American and British Sign Languages are different, even though English is spoken in both countries. Why are all sign languages different? Because they all developed separately from one another."

4. It must be sad to be a deaf child.

FALSE. "It might be sad for someone who could hear and then suddenly finds himself completely deaf and unable to cope. But even then, you have a choice to make the best of your life. Many deaf people have never heard sound, so it's difficult to feel sad for or miss something you've never experienced."

5. All deaf people would rather be able to hear.

FALSE. "Many people are proud to be Deaf. You may notice the capital 'D' in that word. This is very similar to spelling Jewish with a capital 'J.' It has to do with cultural pride, and many people center that pride not just on the fact that they are deaf, but because they use ASL."

The New Me

Stories that concern a person’s transition from adolescence toward adulthood are commonly referred to as “coming of age” stories. The age doesn’t really matter. The main character could be eight turning nine, 15 headed for 16 or 13 going on 30. It’s all about growing up. Typically, the young hero or heroine tackles a new task or responsibility, is forced to see the world differently as a result and learns a lesson about life. The switch might be from a simple geeky cluelessness to worldly-wise — or from a child’s innocence to a more sophisticated appreciation of “the way things work.” Along the way, of course, the hero or heroine is likely to suffer disappointment in the new discovery or shattered ideal. This disillusionment is often called a “loss of innocence,” referring to childhood, rather than guilt. In all coming of age stories, the young person leaves childhood behind as s/he advances through the trials and tribulations of growing up. *Pippin* is one of these stories.

Exercise

Step It Up

Everyone faces challenges. Think of an event that happened in kindergarten, third grade or fifth grade — or maybe this year — in which you had to tackle something you’d never done before. It might have been in the classroom, on the playground or in a sporting event. Maybe it didn’t happen at school at all. Maybe you were at home or at the beach or at an amusement park. Describe a “coming of age” moment that happened to you.

➤ Where were you? What was going on?

➤ What was the challenge? What were you expected to do?

➤ What were the stakes? What were the consequences if you had failed?

➤ And then what happened? What went according to plan? What happened that you didn’t expect to happen?

➤ How did you “step up”? What obstacles did you overcome? Who helped you? If you managed on your own, how did you prepare? How much did luck factor into your success? How does one succeed when “flying by the seat of your pants”?

➤ What did you discover about yourself that you didn’t know before? How do you know when you feel “more grown up” at the end of the experience than at the beginning? Why was it important to tackle the challenge? Do you wish to be the kid you were before, or are you glad to be older and wiser?



An Exchange of Words

As soon as somebody wrote the first book, somebody else started interpreting it. (In a sense, all reading is a form of interpretation, searching for meaning in someone's words and adjusting them to your own understanding.) As soon as somebody shared that first book with someone from another culture, it had to be translated.

Interpretation and translation often go hand in hand. Literary translation is an art form unto itself — mining the meaning and dynamics of the original author and attempting to convey that same experience using the vocabulary, grammar, syntax and slang of another language. Students whose parents or family members don't speak English are already well acquainted with the juggling act that happens in converting the meaning and context of spoken English into Spanish, Chinese, Japanese or Korean — or vice versa.

The task gets a little more complicated when spoken English is converted into American Sign Language: On top of the vocabulary, sign interpreters must add in all the attitude and intention that tone of voice conveys — like happiness, humor, sarcasm, deception, compassion or sadness. Much of this is achieved with facial expression and posture. The matter gets even trickier with song lyrics because translators not only have to master the rhythm but also the heightened emotions that are conveyed when people burst into song.

The exciting aspect of sign translation is that two languages can be spoken at the same time. Director Jeff Calhoun says sign language “permeates” the performance in profound ways. Sign language, he asserts, impacts an audience whether they technically understand the language or not. “The sheer beauty and sense of dance in it,” observes Calhoun, “add a fluidity and lyricism that heightens both the acting and the musical numbers.” For audiences, the experience can be deeply moving. In his book, *Seeing Voices*, noted neurologist Oliver Sacks asserts that sign language is a superior form of communication, full of intricacies and wonder. Those of us who can hear and speak, he suggests, take language for granted. The sophistication of ASL packs layers of information, insight and emotion into a wordless, physical exchange. “The effect,” says Calhoun, “is more profound than words can describe. Perhaps, like most special moments in life, this is one of those things that need to be experienced rather than discussed.”

(L to R) John McGinty, Michael Arden, Rebecca Ann Johnson, Victoria Platt in rehearsal for the Center Theatre Group/Deaf West Theatre production of *Pippin*. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

Exercise

Now I Get It

Director Jeff Calhoun claims that words cannot describe the beauty, the humor and the visual poetry that happens when sign

language meshes with the spoken word. Prove him wrong! As you watch the performance of *Pippin*, try to think of words that describe your experience of watching the spoken word and American Sign Language blend together. Write those words in the space provided below. How would you describe that moment to your parents? Your friends? Your siblings?

“Finally, a chance to be part of something important.”

—Pippin in *Pippin*

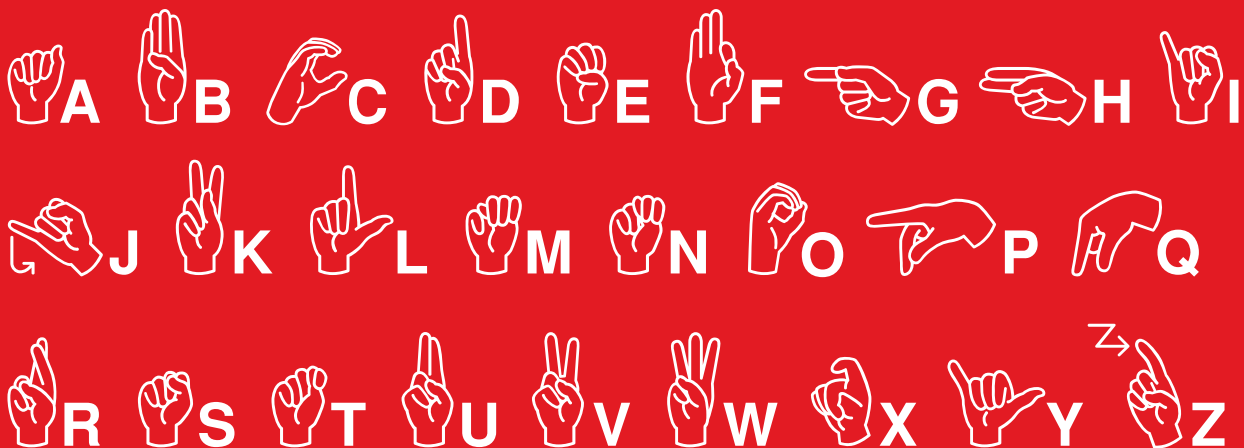
Exercise

Me: My Life and Times

Refer to the exercise “Step It Up” on page 6 to create a simple story of self-discovery loosely based on you. Just as *Pippin* is loosely based on history, feel free to assign a mythical or made-up name to your main character and to introduce fantastical and creative elements.

The Fingerspelling Alphabet

Deaf people also use fingerspelling, a method of indicating letters of the alphabet by the position of the fingers on one hand. Fingerspelling is often used to communicate proper names or to create a short-hand for slang.





See What I Mean

American Sign Language (ASL) is a “language of the eye,” a manual or visual language that conveys information with gesture, movement and facial expression instead of spoken words and sounds. It can be elegant or explosive, depending on the speaker’s individual style and the content of what s/he is expressing. ASL is completely distinct from spoken English, with its own syntax and grammar. Between two and three hundred thousand people in the U.S. and Canada use ASL as their primary language, as well as in Mexico, the Caribbean, Africa, the Philippines and China.

ASL first spread across America in the early 1800s — its signers establishing deaf communities and founding deaf schools. In the late 1800s, however, Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, began a bitter national battle over the use of ASL. Contesting the use of any form of sign language, Bell championed new “oral” techniques of communication for deaf people: lip reading and trained phonetic speech, in which deaf people copied the shape of a hearing person’s mouth in order to mimic speech. Bell’s intention was to “normalize” deaf people so that they could be fully integrated into hearing society by replicating the behavior of hearing people. His campaign was so successful that sign language was widely suppressed as an educational tool. Deaf people who used ASL were sometimes forced to use it only in private clubs where they could sign freely.

Over a century later, William Stokoe, a professor at Gallaudet University, a college founded for deaf students, convinced the scientific mainstream to accept ASL as a natural language. Today, ASL enjoys widespread acceptance and continues to expand and grow, both in vocabulary, usage and popularity. Interestingly, as society creates new words to identify new technologies (ex: Internet, computers, DVDs), ASL also adds new signs to keep up with the times and the evolving vocabulary.

Nowadays, some deaf people use ASL while others prefer to lip read or rely on phonetic speech. With so many options, each individual deaf person can choose how s/he wants to communicate with the world. And modern technology keeps expanding those options. Computers and digital imagery now make it possible for deaf people to communicate by sign language over the Internet. Most televisions come equipped with captioning capabilities to provide subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing. A fairly recent medical procedure known as the cochlear implant replicates the experience of sound for a deaf person. Within the deaf community, this particular device is quite controversial due to concerns that the desire to “fix deafness” could result in social policies that lead to the end of deaf culture.

**“We are first, last and for all time,
the people of the eye.”**

—George Veditz (1861–1937), advocate for deaf rights and culture



Meet Tyrone

Tyrone Giordano was raised in a Deaf family and went to a hearing school, so he has considerable experience with deaf people and hearing people. “I was pretty geeky in the 7th grade,” he proudly admits. “I was into *Star Trek*, video and computer games — and I actually liked math.” After tenth grade, Tyrone transferred to a school of 2,000 students where he was one of only two deaf students. “I had friends but I didn’t realize how lonely I actually was — or how hard I had to work to communicate — until I was in college and surrounded by deaf kids at Gallaudet University where everyone uses sign language.” Finally, Tyrone could relax and be himself — and even get into trouble from time to time. “Not call-the-police kind of trouble,” says Tyrone, “but good trouble, the kind with life lessons that help you grow up.” To get out of trouble, deaf kids can sometimes use being deaf to their advantage — like ignoring a classroom assignment. “But it only really works,” Tyrone asserts, “if people believe the stereotypes about deaf people being helpless and don’t know better to realize that we are just as capable and intelligent as they are.”

Tyrone is well aware that many hearing people don’t understand what it’s like to be deaf. “The funniest reaction I ever received from a hearing person was ‘Oh! I thought you were from another country!’” says Tyrone. As a deaf actor, Tyrone is often asked, “How do you follow the music?” “Do you really need your ears to follow music?” Tyrone responds. “Think about it!” In performance, Tyrone manages his musical cues and choreography by taking visual cues from the rhythm of the performers around him and marking the beat in his head. It’s not easy — but it’s nothing that Tyrone hasn’t tackled in his everyday life as a deaf person. “The challenges I have in performing *Pippin*,” says Tyrone, “are nowhere near as important as the challenges I hope the audience will have. I am very excited as to the questions this show will spark in the minds of the people who see it.”

Tips for Hearing People

Tyrone’s advice on how to act around deaf people:

» Tip 1 **Speak in a Normal Tone of Voice**

Shouting won’t help a deaf person understand you.

» Tip 2 **Make Eye Contact**

Look directly at a deaf person during a conversation. Don’t focus on the person who’s interpreting sign language into spoken English. Look at the face of the deaf person who is speaking in sign language, make eye contact and take in their facial expressions.

» Tip 3 **Tap for Attention**

A deaf person doesn’t mind if you tap his or her shoulder or tap on the table or counter-surface to get his or her attention. But don’t wave your hand in somebody’s face.

» Tip 4 **Walk on By**

When your path is blocked by two people talking in sign language, walk around them if you can. If there is no easy way around, acknowledge the conversation and walk through.

» Tip 5 **Smile and Be Yourself**

When you smile, you’re already speaking in sign language.

Tyrone Giordano, John McGinty, Jonah Blechman, Rebecca Ann Johnson in rehearsal for the Center Theatre Group/Deaf West Theatre production of *Pippin*. ФОТО ВУ Craig Schwartz.

Exercise

The New Kid on the Block

In deaf culture, “sign names” are assigned in sign language by fingerspelling the first letter of

a person’s first name and combining it with a gesture, sign or movement. Sometimes, it conveys some aspect of the person’s looks, behavior or personality. For example, a girl named Betty with beautiful hair might be given a sign name that takes the fingerspelling for “B” and gestures through the hair. Technically, a sign name can only be invented by someone within the deaf community. Many people go for years without receiving their official sign name. But for the sake of an unofficial experiment in deaf culture, why don’t you try it?

Divide into pairs and come up with a sign name for each other.

Exercise

Middle School Sign Language

ASL was created by complementing French Sign Language with the “home-grown” sign language

spoken by deaf students in Connecticut. Many people talk with their hands all the time. Baseball players develop secret signals to relay messages between players and coaches. Almost everyone is familiar with hand signals for “Thumbs-up,” “Okay,” “Hello,” “Goodbye,” “Call me” and “P.U.”

Invent your own sign language for the following expressions:

- See you at lunch.
- Text me.
- My iPod died.
- Who was voted off *American Idol* last night?
- Did you study for the test?
- One small step for a man. One giant leap for mankind.

Try your hand at your own sign language. Reference words you already know from American Sign Language, introduce signs from baseball, gestures that mean something in your family or something you make up. Remember to engage your facial expressions and body language in what you are trying to communicate with your signs. Teach each other new words and phrases. Take your new language for a test-ride in a “no talking” zone – like a library, a waiting room or a movie theatre. Relay messages back and forth in your new sign language. (Technically, sign language is still talking so try not to get in trouble.)

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Deafness expresses itself in different ways. People might be born deaf or develop deafness later in life. A loss of hearing can be total or merely partial. Some deaf people utilize hearing aids; others choose not to. Apart from the particular nature of their hearing, deaf people are as diverse as the mainstream population: white, black, brown, yellow, male, female, young, old, rich, poor, gay, straight, of all religious faiths and cultural backgrounds. Anybody can be deaf.

Deaf culture encompasses anyone who identifies as deaf or hard of hearing as well as those hearing individuals with sign language skills and the children of deaf parents. Deaf culture embraces a positive attitude about being deaf. For this reason, many deaf people consider the term “hearing impaired” to be outdated and offensive because they don’t view their deafness as a disability. Instead, they view deafness as a unique attribute that shapes and defines who they are as individuals. Immigrants who want to hold on to their culture are not unlike the deaf community wanting to hold on to deaf culture.

Despite the obvious difference, deaf kids can do everything that hearing kids can do; they just don’t hear as well. They can listen to music because sound creates vibrations that deaf people can still feel. (It helps if the bass speakers are throbbing.) They can dance by sensing vibrations or counting the beats. Deaf kids play sports, read books, watch television, hang out at the mall and spend too much time on the computer. They tell jokes, play tricks, get in trouble and throw tantrums when they’re upset — just like any other kid.

Sometimes, deaf people experience loneliness and isolation when they are surrounded by hearing people who ignore them. Other times, a sign language conversation between two deaf people is mistaken for unruly physical aggression. Deaf people often tolerate unintended rude behavior by hearing people — when someone purposely ignores a deaf person, for example, or stares in an impolite manner.

PHOTO BY Craig Schwartz.

Exercise

Each culture comes with its own heritage — as well as its own traits, quirks, preferences and particularities. Cultures can be defined by race, gender, religion, nationality, neighborhood, ethnicity, special interests like athletics or the performing arts, special needs or disabilities, sexual orientation or socio-economic standing, among many other identifying factors.

✦ Pick a culture that you belong to: _____

✦ How are you part of that culture? _____

✦ Describe some traits of your culture: _____

✦ What do people in your culture like to be called? _____

✦ What do they not like to be called? _____

✦ What makes you proud to belong to your culture? _____

✦ What aspect of your culture is difficult to live with? _____

✦ Name a common misconception about your culture: _____

✦ Name an undeniable fact about your culture: _____

✦ Identify three traditions that your culture holds on to – and refuses to let go:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

✦ Name a notable representative of your culture: _____



Deaf Musicals: So How Does This Work?

Before director Jeff Calhoun adapts a popular musical for a deaf theatre performance, he does “a quick instinctive emotional evaluation of whether a particular story will be enhanced by using the talents of both the deaf and hearing cultures,” he explains. Typically, musicals dealing with heroes who live on the fringe but overcome circumstances to “find themselves” are good for a deaf theatre approach. “I have to believe that Pippin being deaf will enhance and deepen his journey, his finding his ‘inner voice,’ if you will,” Calhoun asserts.

Calhoun’s work with deaf actors “has simply made me a better director,” he notes. “In the traditional hearing theatre, many different things can happen on stage at once – and often the tension between those simultaneous events is what makes the experience so exciting.” On the other hand, when working with ASL and deaf actors, he continues, “you must not split focus. It is paramount to keep the audience’s attention on the actor who is signing. The task of maintaining this singular focus, while not losing the overall excitement, has forced me to be a better storyteller.”

Deaf theatre also makes for funny surprises. During auditions for *Pippin*, Calhoun recalls, “the script called for Pippin to close his eyes then open them when Catherine says, ‘Okay, you can open your eyes.’” After a while, he admits, “we realized that with his eyes closed, Pippin could not see Catherine sign her line. The scene went on for quite some time with Pippin’s eyes closed.”

“The biggest misconception that some hearing people have of a musical produced with deaf performers,” Calhoun comments, “is that they will somehow have less of a musical experience. The music is still there and every word of dialogue is heard. The truth is that if you like musicals, the experience is actually more satisfying. You actually see the music as well as hear it.” Sometimes audience members have admitted to Calhoun that “they never knew how silence could speak to them.”

PHOTO BY Craig Schwartz.

Exercise

Silent Storytelling

Homer’s *Odyssey*, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. None of

these works would even be known to us if someone hadn’t tackled the translation. Let’s see what happens when your story gets interpreted. To begin, divide into small groups.

➤ Step 1

As a group, read each person’s “Me: My Life and Times” story aloud and choose one to dramatize in tableaux.

➤ Step 2

Take a few minutes for each individual to identify the following four moments in the story:

1. The hero states his/her goal:

2. The hero confronts an obstacle in attempting to reach the goal:

3. The hero devises a strategy to overcome the obstacle:

4. The outcome of the strategy:

➤ Step 3

Discuss your answers. Come to a group decision about each story moment.

➤ Step 4

As a group, create four tableaux for the selected story, one for each of the identified moments. Think back to the sign language exercises. How can you clearly convey the ideas and emotions without words?

After the Play

War, War, War

When *Pippin* opened on Broadway in 1972, two musical numbers — “War is a Science” and “Glory” — offered darkly ironic perspectives on the savagery of war. These anti-war sentiments resonated deeply with audiences because, at the time, the United States was engaged in the hugely unpopular Vietnam War.

The 2009 revival of *Pippin* arrives in the context of two American wars – in Iraq and Afghanistan. While director Jeff Calhoun intends to preserve the dark irony of *Pippin*’s war commentary, he doesn’t see the work as only an anti-war piece. “The war section is important,” Calhoun acknowledges, “but it is only one of many conundrums *Pippin* must confront. The challenges of romance, family, sex and politics are as important to the journey as his scars from battle.”

Exercise

Picking Up Sign

What sign language did you learn from watching the performers in *Pippin*? Were there words that were repeated so often that you caught onto the sign that went with it? Try to recall the signs that went with the following words and phrases:

1. Happy
2. Time
3. Simple
4. King
5. War
6. “Magic to do”
7. “Take it easy”
8. “I’ve got to be where my spirit can run free”

Exercise

➤ How was war presented in *Pippin*? How was it realistic? How was it theatrical?

➤ Why do you think the director and his team chose to present war in this way?

➤ How is the depiction of war in *Pippin* similar to or different from your own understanding of war? How does seeing war presented in this way impact your perceptions?

➤ Why did Pippin want to go to war?

➤ When is war justified?

➤ If your country is at war, do you have to go to war too? Why or why not?

Once Upon A Time

“Dramatic narrative” is the term used to describe the way a story works in a play, a movie or a television program. More commonly, this storyline is referred to as the plot. Typically, the plot involves a hero who asserts a goal or an objective. The hero then encounters a series of obstacles in reaching his or her goal, comes up with a strategy to overcome these conflicts and achieves an outcome. The obstacles that get in the hero’s way can be internal (maybe the hero is shy, afraid, inexperienced or uneducated) or external (maybe the hero encounters a locked door or has no money). Any new character who asserts a goal that the hero does not share creates a new conflict. In the end, a hero might not reach his or her goal but the story can still have a happy ending.

If a hero has no goal – or no conflicts in reaching that goal – or no decisions to make about his or her future, there’s pretty much no story.

Another way to refer to the hero is the “protagonist.” The villain is called the “antagonist.” Protagonists can be active or passive, depending on their character. An active protagonist typically makes a lot of mistakes, but at the decisive moment, s/he rises to the occasion, unexpectedly makes the absolute right choice and secures a happy ending. A passive protagonist might have a good brain but s/he often lacks the guts to act. S/he is more likely to tag along than to seize control – until events line up to offer a happy ending.

Exercise

Interpreting An Interpretation

Return to the four tableaux you created in your group. Let’s see what happens when the visual interpretation of the stories is translated back into written words.

Each group will perform their four-tableau story for the class. As you watch each group, write down your interpretation of the story. Share these interpretations and the original story as a class. What aspects changed most from the original? What gestures or positions were understood most consistently by the viewers?

Exercise

Break It Down

Review the story elements identified above. Try to identify

those elements in the dramatic narrative of *Pippin*.

➤ Who is the hero?

➤ What is his/her stated goal?

➤ Name three obstacles that get in the way, two external and one internal.

External 1:

External 2:

Internal:

➤ How does the hero overcome each of these obstacles?

External 1:

External 2:

Internal:

➤ Does the hero reach his/her goal or not?

➤ Is the ending happy? Why or why not?

➤ Would you describe the hero as “active” or “passive”? Why or why not?

Books:

Signing Illustrated (Revised Edition): The Complete Learning Guide by Mickey Flodin (Perigree Trade, 2004)
A visual learner's manual of American Sign Language with useful common phrases

Of Sound Mind by Jean Farris (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004)
A novel in which Theo, a high school senior, is the only hearing member of his deaf family; frustrated by the demands of his parents and drained by the silence at home, Theo is just about ready to bust.

Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked by Carol de Giere (Applause Books, 2008)
Stephen Schwartz: His Life and Times

Film (Classic coming of age movies):

The Karate Kid directed by John G. Avildsen (Sony, 1984)
Daniel (Ralph Macchio) encounters obstacles in his pursuit of a black belt.

Sixteen Candles by John Hughes (Universal, 1984)
Samantha (Molly Ringwald) encounters obstacles in her pursuit of the cute boy.

October Sky directed by Joe Johnston (Universal, 1999)
Homer (Jake Gyllenhaal) encounters obstacles in his pursuit of a rocket launch.

Websites:

www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi
ASL video dictionary

people.howstuffworks.com/sign-language.htm
Everything you want to know about sign language

www.pbs.org/weta/throughdeafeyes
"Through Deaf Eyes," a PBS documentary exploring 200 years of deaf life in America

www.deafhoosiers.com/ISDMedia/Movie.asp?m=14
Mr. and Miss Deaf Teen America competition; not a single spoken word

www.usatoday.com/educate/college/education/articles/20021215.htm
ASL in high schools: the new foreign language of choice

gallaudet.edu
Gallaudet University: a liberal arts college for deaf and hard of hearing students

For 38 years, Center Theatre Group's P.L.A.Y. (Performing for Los Angeles Youth)

has served 25,000 – 35,000 young people, teachers and families annually through a variety of performances, residencies, discount ticket programs and innovative educational experiences. P.L.A.Y. offers programs that allow young people, teachers and families to attend productions at the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas Theatres for low or no cost. P.L.A.Y. is dedicated to the development of young people's skills and creativity through the exploration of theatre, its literature, art and imagination.

Performing for Los Angeles Youth

Leslie K. Johnson, Director of Education and Outreach
Janine Salinas, Assistant to the Director of Education and Outreach
Debra Piver, Associate Director of Education
Kimiko Broder, Educational Programs Manager
Rachel Fain, Editorial Manager
Patricia Garza, Department Manager
Dan Harper, Educational Programs Associate
Shaunté Caraballo, Educational Services Coordinator

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