

P!CASSO PRO



Performing Arts Access Program



PERFORMING ARTS ACCESS PROGRAM Overview

The Sun Life Performing Arts Access Program is a two-year program to help create ongoing communications access through Audio Description [AD] for Blind/Low-Vision Audiences and ASL Interpretation for Deaf/Hard of Hearing audiences. The process will help performing arts companies to launch and integrate services properly into their organizational cultures and programming.

Toronto's Deaf and disability communities are large, diverse, active and growing as our aging population grows. Access will enable these communities to participate more fully in Toronto's cultural life. Accessible programming in turn enables theatres to develop new audiences, along with their spouses, families and friends. Access will allow Toronto to rightfully retain its place on a world stage which increasingly reflects the values of diversity and inclusion.

About Picasso PRO: Picasso PRO is a long-term project formed to facilitate genuine opportunity and inclusion for Deaf and disabled artists and audiences in the performing & media arts. It springs from the passionate conviction that artists and audiences with disabilities and Deaf artists and audiences, belong on Ontario and Canada's stages and screens, among our patrons, professional staffs, teachers and cultural leaders.

Picasso PRO and Creative Trust: A coming together of leadership, value-based mandates and facilities-linked activities. Access is a key point of collaboration.

THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO

This project is generously funded through
The Ontario Trillium Foundation

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

AUDIO DESCRIPTION (AD):

- Work with renowned Trainer and Audio Description advocate Deborah Lewis to audition, train and certify a core of 6-8 Toronto/Ontario based audio describers for servicing the performing arts [theatre, dance, music and other live performance media]
- Create a mentor/evaluation program of current and future audio describers to establish and continue the program.
- Purchase portable transmitter and 20 receivers required for use with the service, to be made available to participating companies for free during the initial 2 year pilot program
- Offer a demonstration and presentation of the services to CT member companies and conscript participating companies for the pilot phase
- Launch the service with three audio described shows in Yr. 1 and seven in Yr. 2
- Track and evaluate use of the service by participating companies
- Continue to support the cadre of trained audio describers through meetings, networking and professional development as needed
- Provide basic orientation re: accessible promotions to accompany audio described shows

ASL INTERPRETATION:

- Support to CT member companies wishing to offer sign language interpretation for their productions during the 2-year period, with support from Deaf Theatre Advisors, Deaf Masters and Interpreters with whom we have worked
- Host a roundtable to discuss the program with Interpreters interested and/or experienced in interpreting for the theatre and build a core.
- Include a start-up consultation with Specialists to properly prepare each participating company
- Provide subsidy for the Interpreter services engaged, to a maximum of 10 shows during the pilot program
- Track and evaluate use of the service by participating companies
- Provide basic orientation for creating accessible promotions for ASL interpreted shows

BIOGRAPHY

Deborah B. Lewis

Deborah B. Lewis has been an audio describer and trainer since 1987 when she trained with Alan Woods through the Ohio Theatre Alliance at the Department of Theatre at Ohio State University. She brought Audio Description to the state of Georgia through her work as the Executive Director of Special Audiences, whose mission was to make the arts accessible to people with disabilities. She described the premiere season of 16 plays for the Alliance and Academy Theatres including *Steel Magnolias*, *Amadeus*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Peter Pan*. She then went on to train over 40 audio describers in Georgia and enroll 50 theatres, museums and cultural institutions including the Alliance Theatre, Theatre in the Square, Seven Stages, Horizon Theatre, High Museum, Atlanta Ballet and Atlanta History Center. During the Olympics in Atlanta, she provided audio description for all of the Cultural Olympiad events from 1992 through 1996.

Upon moving to Los Angeles in 1997 she established audio description services through Audio Description Los Angeles (ADLA) and the Los Angeles Radio Reading Service. After training describers for the Tournament of Roses Parade, ADLA soon added the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse and Rubicon Theatre to the list of theatres doing audio description in Los Angeles. More theatres have since joined their ranks including the Colony Theatre and Kirk Douglas Theatre as well as cultural organizations including the Aquarium of the Pacific. She continues to train new audio describers in Los Angeles, Florida, Vancouver, Canada and Washington D.C. She is currently a member of the California Audio Describers Alliance and the national Audio Description Coalition.

PICASSO PRO

Workplan & contact

Picasso PRO Workplan 2009-2011

1. Building regional networks through gentle outreach to communities
2. Consolidating best practices and sharing tools outside Toronto
3. Enhancing the careers of artists through collaboration and creation, presentation opportunities and strong artist support
4. Identifying younger artists (18-25) and introducing them to a variety of arts practices
5. Challenging industry standards, non-inclusive practices, negative media depictions of disability and advocating for positive alternatives
6. Researching resources and advocating for funding and other tools that will achieve access in Toronto/Ontario's art venues & practices



More on line:

Picasso PRO Art Blog 2010: www.200portraitsofme.com

Joanna Bennett, Sign Language Interpreter and Deaf Theatre Advisor: www.signjo.wordpress.com