

Amsterdam, February 17, 2006

Dear Mark Medoff,

On behalf of my colleagues and myself I want to thank you for your quick answer. We feel very much supported by your opinion.

The problem is that maybe Stage Entertainment will swear that there are no deaf actresses in the Netherlands who can perform on a professional level. In fact they never did any research beforehand. They simply contracted a hearing actress without researching the Internet first. If they had used a searching machine and typed in the words 'deaf' and 'theatre', they would have found Handtheater. But they did not do that at all.

The hearing actress they have contracted has a lot of experience in acting in film and on stage, but compared with a deaf actress, she will always be 'handicapped'. It is – in our opinion - far easier to teach a deaf actress than a hearing actress for this role. The empathy, the deaf identity, the familiarity with sign language of a deaf actress will be far more convincing, even to a hearing audience.

In a way this event is a stimulation for the deaf community in the Netherlands to think about what it has accomplished the last years. We see that the young deaf people do not count their blessings. They are used to subtitling services, interpreters, and digital communication like SMS, MSN, Internet and e-mail. They have little historical awareness and think that they can manage to have a fulfilling life in the hearing society and do not need the deaf community anymore. In fact, they do.

Tomorrow evening we have Eyewitness, it is a dramatized court session with a deaf judge, lawyer and district attorney. The audience is eyewitness and jury. The theme of this Eyewitness is: can a hearing actress perform in the role of the deaf Sarah? Do we have to accept or protest?

I am very curious what the results of this discussion will be. I notice that a lot of elderly, but also a lot of young deaf people are involved. They will come tomorrow from all over the Netherlands to attend this court session.

I really hope this will turn out for the best. Handtheater is a brave little company, but we also feel like David against Goliath. We managed to survive since 1990 with little means.

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I hope we keep in touch. I will keep you informed.

Yours sincerely,

Mieke Julien.