

14 January 2009

Question and Answer session with *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* cast members:
Daniel Broadhurst (DB) – Ash & Donna Mullings (DM) – Play

1. What first interested you both in the Half Moon Young People's Theatre production *Baa Moo Yellow Dog*?

DM: Half Moon is one of a very few companies that provide integrated theatre. I feel privileged to work with this company because Deaf actors like my self don't have many opportunities to work in the mainstream. Jobs like this give us the opportunity to develop and showcase our skills.

DB: I have worked with Half Moon before, on the 2007 teenage play *We Are Shadows* and I enjoyed that experience so knew that this would be just as good, if not better. Also learning British Sign Language for the play is an interesting and good skill to gain, if I can accomplish this I can accomplish anything!

2. What were your initial thoughts when you read the *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* script?

DM: I thought that it was very cute play, it was like going through a jungle, exploring another world, meeting strange animals that speak differently. Also it would be a challenge working with a cast of just two and playing an invisible person with creativity.

DB: How the hell am I going to play a 4 year old boy without looking like an OAP with long hair! But also that it will be interesting to create something with someone who would bring such strong imagery- as an actor using sign language.

3. *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* is Half Moon's play for 2-5 year olds. How will you tackle that this is a play for such young children, do you have any other experiences of working with young age groups?

DM: I worked with another theatre company that caters for a young audience. You have to think how to act to reach young people. Signing is much harder; you have to think of simpler hand shapes that they will understand.

DB: I try to enter with no presumptions of how a 2-5 year old audience will react. I also do teach kids so I have an idea of their energy and playfulness.

4. Baa Moo Yellow Dog is a bilingual play, written and performed in British Sign Language and English. How do you find working in 2 languages?

DM: Although I am Profoundly Deaf and will be using British Sign Language mainly for this production, I may use my voice occasionally to express certain reactions.

DB: Well I found it rewarding straight away! And developing another skill is pretty cool.

5. Daniel, your character is a 4 year old boy, and how do you ensure that you don't just become a parody of a child?

DB: I listen to the Director (Chris Elwell) who is really experienced at working with and for the age group. Also I try and enter the child's inner world, remember what it was like to be a child myself, the emotions and the journey that I went on.

6. Donna, you will be playing various animals in the production, do you have any experiences of puppetry/ object manipulation, how does this aspect of the production work with sign language?

DM: Puppetry is an additional challenge when I am signing, I have to make sure that the signs are clear. I have used puppetry a few times in previous productions. Once I was an eagle with a head. My hands went through its wings, obviously it is important that my hands are visible, The eagle was brown and my skin is also the same colour. I had to ensure my hands weren't too close to the chest of the eagle, if they were, the signing would be difficult to see. It was also integral to use slow and simple signs. Complex signs would have made it difficult for the audience to understand as the eagle had no lip pattern. I have also worked with shadow puppetry, using a prince silhouette and turning from a bird to a ghost. The 'puppets in Baa Moo Yellow Dog are bigger and need carrying. This will be a challenge to do whilst signing at the same time.

7. What do you hope to take away from your experience of working on Baa Moo Yellow Dog.

DM: I am hoping to walk away with more movement experience, visual creativity interests me as an actor, it's something both Deaf and Hearing people can appreciate. I am also hoping to give and acquire some new tools for Deaf actors, such as sign techniques.

DB: A new skill, working with sign, I am hoping to get really good at it and be able to hold conversations. I also get to be a child again, make some new friends and see some of the UK that I have not seen before.