

### Mission and Purpose

Deaf West Theatre, Inc. (DWT) was founded in 1991 to directly improve and enrich the cultural lives of over 1.2 million deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who live in the Los Angeles area. To date, DWT has produced over 30 plays and 4 musicals, won more than 80 theater awards, performed on Broadway, and has been nominated for one Tony Award. For its unique vision and artistic excellence throughout its eighteen-year history, DWT is recognized as the premier sign language theater in the United States. DWT has consistently strived for the highest artistic quality by bringing together some of the most exciting theater professionals from the hearing world to work with deaf and hard of hearing actors of the highest caliber in ambitious American Sign Language adaptations that range from contemporary masterpieces and original works to the classics. DWT has helped launch and nurture the careers of many of today's most recognizable deaf actors. DWT's productions and internationally acclaimed educational programs have contributed significantly to the vibrancy of deaf culture and American theater.

*“The most exciting legit producers in Los Angeles in recent years!” - Variety*

*Deaf West Theatre was established in 1991 as the first professional resident sign language theater west of the Mississippi. Productions have featured multi-award winning artists and have earned numerous prestigious entertainment industry awards for artistic merit.*

### **SPOTLIGHT ON:**

#### **Big River — The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**

Deaf West’s hit show **BIG RIVER: THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN** debuted in our 65-seat theatre on Lankershim Boulevard in 2001. Then in 2002, it became the first play to transfer from a local, intimate venue to the Center Theatre Group’s revered Mark Taper Forum. Following success there, **BIG RIVER** soared to Broadway in 2003, where the original production had played eighteen years earlier. This time, DWT’s sign language adaptation, appearing at the Roundabout Theatre Company’s American Airlines Theatre, earned two Tony nominations including Best Musical Revival and the cast was bestowed the Tony Honor for Excellence in Theater. In 2004 through 2005, **BIG RIVER** toured nationally, reaching 40 cities, ran at Washington D.C.’s iconic Ford’s Theatre and spent three weeks in Tokyo, Japan. **BIG RIVER** spectacularly concluded in 2005 back in Los Angeles at Center Theatre Group’s Ahmanson Theatre. Overall, the play reached close to half a million deaf and hearing audience members, received nationwide acclaim, and earned over 50 theater awards and nominations.



*“A rare show that can truly be called groundbreaking.” - Time*



(right) The 2003 Broadway cast of Big River © Joan Marcus



## Mainstage Productions ■ Touring/Partnering Ventures ■ Educational Outreach

Ed Waterstreet founded Deaf West Theatre (DWT) in 1991, making it the first resident theater company in the U.S. led by a deaf artistic director. Under his visionary leadership, DWT's award-winning productions and innovative educational programs have helped break down barriers between deaf and hearing communities while bringing people together for unforgettable cultural experiences.

### MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS

In DWT productions, spoken English and American Sign Language (ASL) are interwoven for both hearing and deaf cultures into a 'third language' creating a unique theatrical event. The seamless ballet of signing, movement, and spoken—or sung—English that emerges, makes great works of theater fully accessible for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Behind the scenes, there are professional deaf and hearing actors, directors, designers and technicians. DWT employs extra effort to translate scripts to American Sign Language and to provide continuous interpretation so seamless creative dialogue flows. In this unique approach to creating and presenting theater, visual and verbal languages compliment one another and provide an enhanced theatrical experience for *all*.

### TOURING / PARTNERING VENTURES

Deaf West Theatre has expanded its presence to reach regional and national audiences through partnerships with larger venues and producers. Locally, DWT's long-standing relationship with Los Angeles's prestigious Center Theatre Group has resulted in three major regional productions. **BIG RIVER** ran at both the

Mark Taper Forum and Ahmanson theaters before its Broadway and U.S. run. The first original sign language musical, **SLEEPING BEAUTY WAKES**, debuted at the Kirk Douglas Theatre in 2007. **SLEEPING BEAUTY WAKES** reached over 12,000 diverse audience members and won two L.A. Stage Ovation Awards for Best World Premiere Musical and Best Musical Direction. DWT's current ASL adaptation, the Tony award winning musical, **PIPPIN**, deemed an "enchanted new production" by the Los Angeles Times opened at the newly renovated Mark Taper Forum in January 2009.

### EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

DWT's *Dramatic Gestures* program uniquely addresses the needs of the children in Los Angeles area by providing access to the performing arts with bi-lingual and bi-cultural learning opportunities. Our initiatives serve the particular needs of area youth, providing a model for progressive arts education reform for school children that are hearing, deaf and hard of hearing.

- *Theatre Residency Programs* - a ten-session workshop residency that exposures theater arts, literature, American Sign Language and Deaf culture.
- *In-School Performances* - an original interactive professional school production with post-show discussion and Discovery Guide for K-5th grade audiences.
- *ASL Story Time* provides deaf children the rare opportunity to participate in a shared cultural program at mainstream schools.

*Deaf West Theatre is located in the heart of the NoHo Arts District of Los Angeles, establishing a cultural home for the deaf, hard of hearing and hearing communities.*

### DWT is supported by:

Ahmanson Foundation, Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, Norris Foundation, S. Mark Taper Foundation, Shubert Foundation, WFA Foundation, Theatre Communications Group, Target Foundation, Thelma Pearl Howard Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education.

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*DWT is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation.*