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changing the world for deaf people



SHAPE ARTS

JEFF ROWLINGS, HEAD OF
PROGRAMMING

Shape Arts is a long-standing and successful disability-led arts organisation. It works to improve access to culture for disabled people by providing opportunities for disabled artists, training cultural institutions to be more open to disabled people, and through running participatory arts and development programmes.

Jeff Rowlings, Head of Programming at Shape Arts explains why, although they are already successful at delivering popular world-class events and activities, they realised they needed to engage the services of a BSL interpreter:

“In particular, our goals centre on providing equal access to all our events and activities, regardless of whether participants or audiences are deaf or hearing. We previously organised events that were, without doubt, wide-ranging and diverse.

For example; public events; private viewings, artists talks and panel discussions. However, we realised these were not always suitable or accessible for those within the deaf community.

And as we pride ourselves on being fully inclusive to all, and wish to engage the community as a whole; we recognised that to achieve those goals we needed to take one step further.”





Jeff explains that the priority for the Shape Arts team at the start was to “Find a BSL Interpreting service that was more than the provision of an interpreter”.

He explained, “We wanted not only a reliable service but one that shared the same passion for providing an excellent and inclusive service to the disabled community.”

Finding a BSL Interpreting service that is more than the provision of an interpreter is not always as straightforward as it could be. And peer recommendations are a fantastic way to ensure a company finds what they need precisely – as each will have different requirements and end goals. However, Jeff and the team were able to explore an option provided by a mutual contact.

“We were introduced to terptree by one of our deaf artists. She had previously worked with terptree and could not recommend them highly enough. Therefore when it became clear that our service would be further enhanced by introducing BSL interpreters in specific situations, it was terptree we contacted.”

It was the right decision! Jeff explains that when discussing their particular requirements with terptree, what they found was much more than they could have hoped for.



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Shape Arts had discovered a professional and passionate company which, within a short space of time, clearly ‘got them!’ He says “They recognised our needs immediately, and not only found solutions to them, but they also were able to identify and suggest solutions to others.”

He continues “terptree were able to provide the perfect interpreter for each occasion. In some cases, they achieved this within minimal time frames - when planning ahead, for us, wasn't an option!

Despite pressure and lack of time, they always pulled out all the stops and supplied what we needed exactly. And they did this with professionalism and understanding.”

We asked Jeff what may have happened had they not found a company to work with who understood their dedication to enriching the lives of the disabled community through the arts. He told us **“Had we not addressed our situation we risked alienating our deaf audience and those in our deaf artist community. However, working with terptree has ensured we are providing a service that is all-encompassing with access for all.”**

When asked if he would consider recommending terptree Jeff said:

“We wouldn't hesitate to recommend working with terptree. They have a vast pool of very qualified interpreters and are incredibly reliable and easy to work with. We believe there are far too few companies like terptree out there!”



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