

## **The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company**

BSL Christmas Stories report  
As funded by Western Power Distribution  
Dec 2020

The project brief was to create two short stories at a minimum of 10 mins long, both read aloud by two of our actors, and then signed in British Sign Language by another team member, to then be released to local community and family groups, as well as wider afield.

The stories were written in house, and read out by two actors, Rich Sandford and Annie Walker.

The original team member whom we had intended to be the person doing the BSL signing, unfortunately had to leave the company at short notice, and therefore we advertised on Facebook to find a new BSL signer. Olivia Balls-Hymns, a theatre student in Cornwall, answered the advertisement, and took over the signing for the show. With none of the rest of our team being familiar with BSL, we placed our entire trust in Olivia, who created detailed signed interpretations of both stories.

The actors recorded their versions of the stories over Zoom video-conferencing, allowing for clear recording of the stories, safely from everyone's own homes, and therefore in line with social distancing and Covid-safety best practice.

This project has allowed us to explore the creation of BSL signed videos, for the first time, and for the rest of us to learn from Olivia how stories are signed as she led on that aspect of the project. During Covid, creating entertainment online is the only currently viable way of creating performances safely for both audiences and production teams who previously specialised in staged shows. This funding has not only created paid work for three people (two actors and the signer), but created accessible free Christmas entertainment for families with deaf children, primarily in our local area but then (due to the nature of the internet), shared as widely as possible. This has been wonderful to be able to produce.

The videos were completed on December 18<sup>th</sup> 2020 and hosted on our website under the page <https://www.southdevonplayers.com/familystories.html>

We have then shared the resource via email to five local parents groups, four regional disability organisations, the homeschooling organisation Education Otherwise, and to local schools. This project has allowed us to begin to create a new aspect of work, which will be used to create future educational content linked to future shows.