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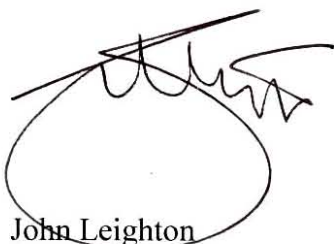
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To whom it may concern

I write in support of the work of Handtheater, the bilingual theatre group. I have experienced the work of Handtheater on several occasions at performances in the Van Gogh Museum. I also worked alongside Handtheater to prepare a special performance in front of HRH Queen Beatrice in Rotterdam.

In my view it would be entirely misleading to regard the Handtheater as being introspective aiming primarily at deaf audiences. Using the language of signing they have developed an extremely powerful, dramatic form which has a very broad appeal, an appeal that extends far beyond the deaf community. It could be said that Handtheater combines elements of traditional theatre with contemporary performance art. The performance Theo & Vincent is an excellent example of the dramatic tension that the team is able to invoke.

I understand that the Art Council Theatre Committee has turned down a grant application for the period 2009-2012. Inevitably, because Handtheater originated in the deaf community, their work will be seen in the context of assistance for the disabled. It is clear, however, that their work combines a concern for exclusion with a powerful form of visual expression that is worthy of support for its own intrinsic merits. It would be a great shame if Handtheater was not allowed to survive let alone thrive. I would urge you to reconsider this decision in order to allow their excellent work to continue.



John Leighton
Director-General