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'See What I Say'

Film tells story of concert interpreted for the deaf

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

"See What I Say," a film about a concert that was interpreted for the deaf, will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 8 in Room 208, J Building, on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College.

The showing will be followed by a lecture-discussion led by Linda Chapman, one of three Michigan teachers who produced the film on a tight budget and has since gathered a string of awards for the effort.

In 1981 "See What I Say" won awards from the American Film Festival, the Athens International Festival and the Sinking Creek Film Celebration.

"All that was topped when it was nominated for best documentary short by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences early this year," Chapman said.

The film stars Holly Near, a leader in feminist music and Susan Freundlich, a sign-language interpreter. The two combine sign language, dance and mime to bring the music alive for the hearing impaired.

Interspersed among the concert scenes are interviews with four women who talk about the isolation of the deaf.

IT WAS A LONG road for Chapman and her co-producers, Pam LeBanc and Fred Stevens, from the time the three saw their first 'signed' concert to learning that their film had been nominated for an Oscar.

Almost as soon as the film got under way, they hit the first bump in that road.

"We were very immediately aware that we had taken sides in a running dispute between educators and medical professionals that has gone on for

years," Chapman said.

One faction advocates teaching lip reading and the spoken language to better integrate the deaf into society and not isolate the deaf only with the deaf.

The other faction encourages sign language because 40 percent of all sounds are not 'visible' as most people do not enunciate clearly. If one whose hearing is impaired can't master oral communication, sign language is the only alternative.

When the three filmmakers took lessons in sign language to "get a better feel for the movie," Chapman said, "We were amazed to find it had its own grammar, its own syntax, even a dialect."

Now a staunch advocate of sign language, Chapman said, "What many don't realize is that there are 14 million deaf or hard of hearing persons in America and that sign language is the third most used language, after English and Spanish."

All of the women interviewed in the film tell of the time when the deaf were forced to use only lip-reading and the frustrations they felt with the enforcement.

"SEE WHAT I SAY" was funded in part by Michigan Council for the Arts and Polaris Foundation, but it took three years of fund-raising for the producers to get the necessary \$24,000 when the first funds ran out.

"I figure we sold \$4,000 worth of light bulbs alone to get this film produced," Chapman said.

Chapman's students in Wayne Memorial High School helped in the light bulb sales. So did LeBanc's students in Woodhaven High School. When Stevens left Michigan to take a job in Wisconsin, her students joined in the sale, selling light bulbs to the resi-

dents of Kenosha.

The central theme of the film is that deaf people have a right to access and ideas.

"Being deaf is an invisible handicap

so we don't tend to make things accessible to them," Chapman said. "We promote sign language in the film as a way two cultures can be brought together."

The film closes on an emotional note, as Holly Near, the interpreter and the audience join in singing a ballad about women supporting one another. But the share communication between the

hearing and the deaf is emotionally portrayed throughout the entire work.

Admission to the film and lecture is \$3 at the door.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer



Elves deck the halls for lunch with Santa

Santa's elves spent the week running in and out of Farmington Community Center decking the halls and getting things ready for "Luncheons with Santa" Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 3-5. Elves who will be serving the 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. lunches each day, help the photographer get pictures of the young guests with Santa and help with the entertainment are Renee Thibodeau (at left in forefront) with Christine Donlon, and (above) Caryn Whitehouse. Friday luncheons are reserved for school groups only. Advanced registrations for all three days are \$3.50 each, taken in the center at 24705 Farmington Road. Special entertainment this season will come from Superman.



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