

# The War of The Buttons

A tale of squabbles, scuffles...and buttons!



# Compagnie Animotion

Creating an international, visual, language of theatre, French based company Cie Animotion has been making physical theatre for Deaf and hearing audiences since 2004, and encourages social change and inclusivity through our work.

We create inclusive and exciting theatre for all audiences.

Created in 2004 by artistic director Hayli Clifton, the company moved to France in 2009 where it was awarded a six year residence with the town of Livron. We have 5 children and family shows, and two street shows and run workshops for professionals and non-professionals.

We create international exchanges between Deaf and hearing artists and run projects supporting young artists to develop their pedagogy and artistic style with us.

We continue to help our public be aware of sign language and Deaf culture through our work, but we also now aim to touch any person or communities at risk of social exclusion.

# our shows

## currently on tour...

The War of The Buttons

Portmanteau

JoJo & Billie's Tour de France

Silver Moon

Diaspora

## In creation...

Je m'appuie sur toi

# The War of The Buttons

“thanks to the non-verbal language and strong visuals, Compagnie Animotion are perfect for any hearing impaired audience members and have worked hard to make theatre suitable for the Deaf”

Harrogate advertiser, March 28, 2013

## Key selling points :

Promotes the use of sign language, Deaf awareness and accessibility by integrating sign language into the performance

Promotes developing good relationships and the acceptance of differences between people, as well as resolving conflict, friendship and sharing.

Non verbal and highly visual so accessible to Deaf audiences as well as audiences whose first language isn't English.

## Target audiences :

The Deaf community : contact local Deaf associations and schools.

Advertise your event on the NDCs website, and through Remark! News and in British Deaf News.

Children whose first language isn't English; contact associations which work with local families, as well as schools.

Encourage children to bring mum and dad as well as grandma and grandad for an intergenerational experience - after all theatre is for everyone!

# Synopsis

It is George's 50th birthday. After organising the audience into two groups, Grapes and Cabbages, Bessie prepares him a cake, a present, and surprises. George wakes up and finds his old sash, that Bessie has hidden, a sash covered with buttons. Using mime, he shows the audience how he won these buttons : fighting a giant, juggling with rocks.



The smell of something delicious takes him out of this reverie : he goes to the kitchen where Bessie has prepared him a delicious cake - over excited by all the preparation, she shares the cake with the audience - only to forget to leave a piece for George! Good-natured, George doesn't mind and soon

busies himself with his presents - a jumper, a beret and a photo album of their life.

In looking at the photo album and trying on the jumper of his youth they are transported back in time to their childhood, where, as friends, they played tricks on each other with the aim to steal each other's buttons.

Starting with a trip in a boat, Bessie is upset that she isn't allowed on, but soon steals the limelight as she imitates a shark and throws stones (with the help of a few children) at the boat in order to capsize it. She steals a button.

They explain to the audience that Bessie grows cabbages. She plants her seeds and waits for the cabbages to grow. George comes with his peashooter and destroys them. He steals a button.

Bessie's dismay is interrupted by the rain - they show the audience what fun they can have in the rain, together, splashing in puddles, turning their umbrellas, sheltering themselves and audience members...when the rain stops and Bessie leaves with her umbrellas George plays pentaque, mocking Bessie and the fact that she plays like a girl.



Bessie comes back and challenges George to a game, with the chance of winning a super shiny button and with the help of the audience she wins, although George cheats and takes not only the super shiny button, but also the button from her dress.

Upset, Bessie explains that George grows Grapes. George grows his grapes, miming to us the heat, the hard and dusty soil.

With the help of her catapult, Bessie explodes his grapes, and steals a button.

With this win the sun comes out and the two make a beautiful sun dance together, turning in circles, and mixing sign language, dance and mime to show the rising of the sun, the lightness we feel in the summer, the heat and the lethargy. At the end of this Bessie plays hopscotch with a stolen button, a game which George doesn't understand but wants to play. On playing he steals his button back and also one of the boxes.

Confused Bessie follows him and a game of hide and seek starts which finishes in their schoolroom.

Scared of their teacher, but still wanting to be the best, George cheats and copies Bessie's work and Bessie hits him when the teacher isn't looking. George puts a spider down her back, and finally, gets sent to the corner. Bessie, waiting for the teacher to leave, makes herself a fortress and starts the final war...of the buttons.

Pinging and zapping with energy, George and Bessie make a tractor, which of course, they both want to get into.

Having unleashed the tractor, they realise that it has squished all of their cabbages and squashed all of their grapes.

The rain starts...hiding under the boxes they do a mix of the rain and the sun dance to come back to the kitchen of old George and old Bessie.

We see what a beautiful day it was for them, full of memories.

Bessie looks at the audience and makes one final decision.

She says, "Happy Birthday George" and with a kiss she gives him her last button.

They walk to leave and then, as a final surprise reveal a rainbow made of buttons : the sun and the rain together leave us a beautiful present.



# Press and reviews

## **The Public Reviews \*\*\*\*\***

**Rosie Revell, April 14th 2013**

Harrogate Studio Theatre has rounded off the last week of the Easter holidays with some real treats for the little people (and their parents!) as provided by French Theatre Company, Compagnie Animation.

The company aims to promote inclusion and access to the arts by creating shows that are accessible to deaf, hearing and international audiences by using a mix of physical and visual theatre with little or no verbal vocabulary. Earlier in the week the delightful Portmanteau engaged audiences with its immersive mix of mime, movement and sign language.

The War of the Buttons (based upon Louis Pergaud's 1912 children's book) continued in this vein, spellbinding the children and enchanting the inner child in all of us. George grows grapes and Bessie grows cabbages. One loves the sun. One loves the rain. One day their petty squabbling grows into something more.... The war of the buttons!

Everything about this show helps to draw the child in as it is their world we inhabit. The stage is very simple, with backdrops and scenery seemingly drawn by a child. The scenery changes, performed by the cast, are simple but effective as we move through the "battlefield". The scenery is drawn on box sides moved and put together depicting the different places, a boat, a kitchen, and home.

The cast; Hayli Clifton (Bessie) and Samuel Exley (George) tell the story with minimal props but so much energy and fun that it is hard not to get carried away by the spirit of the piece where the audience can fully participate, and are encouraged to do so, share in birthday cake, take sides. In this world a button can be anything; a kiss, a present or a trophy.

A wonderful hour with which to indulge and enjoy theatre that truly promotes inclusion and breaks down barriers.

**Dig Review**  
**Claire Burkhill-Howarth**  
**23 April 2013**

Compagnie Animotion's current show is inspired by *La Guerre des Boutons*, a 1912 children's book by French author Louis Pergaud. The book is a tale of an escalating 'mini-war' between boys in neighbouring villages.

Those who were 'killed' in battle had their buttons removed as trophies. In bringing the show to the stage, Compagnie Animotion sought to create an inclusive performance, accessible to both deaf and hearing audiences, using movement, song and sign language.

Indeed, at the time of their formation, the company was only the second in the country to create work with and for the Deaf community.

The audience of mainly under 7s at our show were engrossed in the onstage adventures of George and Bessie.

The stage was decorated in a sparse fashion, with designs on the sides of wooden boxes providing the backdrop. As the boxes were moved - and later passed exuberantly - around the stage, they became a kitchen, a ship and even a moving car.

Having divided the audience into 'cabbages' and 'grapes', the children became vocal supporters of their 'team', cheering for their respective 'leaders' as George and Bessie's skirmishes became more elaborate and involved.

To punish George for sneakily eating the birthday cake she had made for him, Bessie invited the audience to finish it off and the children loved helping themselves to imaginary slices of cake. Throughout the show, buttons were torn off clothes and victoriously displayed. Even as the 'war' developed, the underlying sense was of the enduring friendship of George and Bessie.

To see the performance in such an intimate venue definitely added to the sense of the children being part of the show and my daughter loved the fact that when the show finished, George and Bessie stood at the doors, to thank their young theatre-going audience.



## From press and programmers...

**Kaleva, Finland, 22nd February 2011**

" They have emotion and innovation...the piece can be compared to The Little Prince"

**Harrogate Advertiser, March 7th 2013**

"As French as a croissant wearing a beret, Compagnie Animation mix mime, movement and sign language in an inventive show that spellbinds kids and enchants the inner child in all of us..."



**Dauphine, Livron, 7 October, 2012**

" Opening the festival "theatre crossing frontieres" , both young and old laughed at this simple and marvellous tale, played over 100 times in Europe"

**Adrian Berry, Programmer**

"there is no other work like this in the UK"

## From our comments book...

« Fun and accessible »

« Absolutely great ! I'm 19 and wanted to stay ! »

« Loved it ! So fascinating to see the use of sign »

« Je veux travailler avec vous ! »

« Excellent performance - very well done - very visual all of the time.

Loved the umbrellas. I understood 100% of the time ! »

« Thankyou ! it was brilliant with the use of French and English and sign. Really accessible. Loved it ! Thanks »

« Visual and accessible. Great and fun. Thanks »

« Amazing ! Completely accessible, thankyou »

« Visual is amazing » (Emily, 20)

« I liked all of it » (Laeila, 4)

« My best bit was the umbrella dance »

« I liked it when the girl ran after the boy in the car »

« I loved it » (Ella, aged 7)

« I thought it was funny »

« I thought it was great and action packed!»

« We really liked the dancing with the umbrellas »

« Thanks again for a fab show -. Entertaining and thought-provoking »

« Loved the show - such energy.

Thought the imagination with such simplicity was excellent ! Pitched at the right level for the age of the audience and the right length too ! »

# creative team

## Artistic Director

### Hayli Clifton

Hayli Clifton trained at Bretton Hall and with Philippe Gaulier in Paris.

Working as a physical performer for companies such as Horse and Bamboo Theatre of Masks and Wright Stuff Theatre of Puppets she asked herself if the work she was creating with other companies was accessible to Deaf audiences, and the general opportunities for Deaf performers in the arts.

In 2004 she founded Cie Animotion with the aim of creating visual and international theatre and promoting sign language and Deaf culture.

In 2006 she was invited to be artist in residence with dance company Cie Songes in the south of France and spent six months developing projects for them with Deaf and hearing professional and non-professional performers as well as choreographing for the biennale de la danse in Lyon, and again in 2008.

Having started to develop her techniques in choreography and mis-en-scene with mixed ability performers, she started to put into place a series of projects that would continue to develop these techniques.



In 2007 she worked again with Cie Songes, creating a masked and physical theatre piece with Deaf and hearing performers, and again in 2008 with a piece of commedia.

In 2007 she created The War of The Buttons that has since toured in the UK, France, Finland and Ireland.

In 2008 she created L'enfant Lune, based on the children's book, 'Moonbird' by Deaf author Joyce Dunbar, in 2009, the multi-disciplinary and homage to silent cinema, children's show Portmanteau and in 2010 the street show Diaspora.

In 2008 she initiated and directed a knowledge transfer project with Sheffield University and Doncaster Deaf College in relation to theatre spaces and the physical effects of acoustics.

This work led her to work in a more sensorial way in her creations and to favour intimate theatre experiences.

Her latest work as a freelancer is the sensorial journey through the seasons, for one audience member at a time, *Lettre d'amour aux fleurs et au vent*, and she has performed with this piece in Spain, Italy and France.

Working as both street performer and in intimate spaces, as a freelancer she has worked for Tell Tale Hearts (UK), Wright Stuff Theatre of Puppets (UK), DNA (UK), Faceless Street Theatre (UK), Urban Angels Circus (UK) Cie Amanda Polo (France), Cie Songes (France), Cie Bulle & Plume (France), Cie DuO des Branches (France) and Vice & Versa (France).

She has performed and taught in France, UK, Spain, Italy, Austria, Finland, Ireland and the Czech Republic, and has worked with children, adults, young people with learning and behavioural difficulties, and in universities, schools and prisons.

In 2014 she will be working on three creations, aerial-dance piece, *Je m'appuie sur toi* and children's shows *JoJo* and *Billie's Tour de France* and *Silver Moon*, as well as heading LAB+, an international artistic laboratory of creative development and exploration in visual and physical theatre.

She will also be developing her own pedagogy in inclusive choreography; her

work has recently been followed by Reading University's BA in Deaf, Education and Theatre Studies.

Having studied dance as part of her training at Bretton Hall, as well as following the BA in Dance' practical sessions, she continued her professional training at Yorkshire Dance Centre and had work experience in the education department at Phoenix Dance, assisting on the Outreach programme.

She was recently outside eye for dance company Compagnie 158 for their solo show for young audiences and early years, "*Dans mon potager*".

She dances with aerial dance company, 'DuO des Branches' in their street show, 'DuO d'Elles'.

Tango dancer for over ten years, she trained with many dancers including Pablo Rodriguez, Fernando Sanchez, Marcelo Almiron and Andres Cejas, and has danced in milongas all over Europe.

When she's not dangling in the air or writing funding applications, she plays the role of Bessie in this show, bakes biscuits for the crew, is in charge of football practise during lunch breaks for the company (generally ending in someone losing the ball over a wall), oversees team massages, group hugs, and is generally quite splendid.

You can read more about her [here](#).

## Performers

### Julien Aubrun/Sam Exley

Julien lives in Lyon and has worked with the company since 2010, where he replaced one of our artistic collaborators, Sam, on a number of shows, including **Diaspora**, **Portmanteau** and **The War of The Buttons**.

He has more recently been part of the team on first full creation with the company, **Silver Moon**.

His journey with the company has taken him on tours in the UK, Ireland and France.

He also works for Cie Mavra, TAC-Théâtre, Cie LA Bleu D'Armand and has a company called Cie La Formule.



Sam also lives in Lyon and has been one of our main collaborators since his arrival to us in 2007.

His adventures with us have included a snake crawling onto the stage, fish and chips on Dorset beaches, many many van and car break-downs (and as a result, some nervous ones), having to cover on stage whilst a team member was noiselessly sick in the wings, making cakes in the early hours of the morning, and being woken up by a mouse on his sofa bed. Needless to say Sam's experience in hard-core rural touring has led him to being wanted by other exciting companies and so we've had to replace him.

# Technical manager

## Tristan Assant

A highly experienced sound and lighting engineer, Tristan started with the company in 2009 and has also taken to the stage in our shows **Diaspora** and **Jojo & Billie's Tour de France**.

Tristan is from the South-East of France and originally trained as a sound engineer, working for 7 years for Radio France Bleu,

Champagne, before moving to Canada where he worked for music festivals.

Passionate about bringing music and artistic events to the community he moved back to France where he programmed for three rural venues and a yearly festival with the association Coeff. 7.

He was responsible for programming, marketing, artist relations and graphic design and continues to design for other venues.

He works as the sound engineer for the children's concert, '**Bas Les Pattes**', which has toured all over France in the last 4 years, including the festival Les Francofolies and many prominent children's festivals.

He is embarking on a new adventure as a musician in the duo **Radio Edith**, a electro-concert where he plays bass, clarinet, keyboard and machines.

With the company Tristan has negotiated with technicians from venues in Finland, Ireland, France and the UK and is bilingual in French and English.

He is highly adaptable to large venues, small venues, studios, village halls, open air spaces, as long as there's a coffee for him, and maybe the promise of a biscuit if he works really, really hard.



## Other team members

Lucile Feroussier - Tour manager (Scotland 2015)

Natasha Holmes - Outside eye

Chris Gylee - Set Design

Mandy Mouallim - Costumes

Michael Addison - Deviser



## **DATES - YOU MISSED US HERE.....**

### **FINLAND**

The Lowry, Manchester, 2012

### **FESTIVALS**

Tara Theatre, London, 2012

30th Oulu International Children's festival,  
2011

Norden Farm, Maidenhead, 2012

Harrogate Theatre, Harrogate, 2013

### **UK**

Edge Hill University, 2013

### **FESTIVALS**

Dorchester Arts, 2013

Depot Untapped, Arts Depot, London,  
2009

Cornerstone, Didcot, 2013

### **VENUES**

Bridport Arts, 2013

Jacksons Lane, London, 2008

The Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis 2013

Stratford Circus, London, 2008

### **RURAL TOURING**

Waterman's Art Centre, London, 2008

Beaford Arts (Devon), 2009

Half-Moon Theatre, London, 2008

Creative Arts East (Norfolk), 2009

The Egg, Bath, 2007

Northants Touring Arts (Northampton),

The Hawth, Crawley, 2009

2011 Yorkshire Schools Tour

Square Chapel, Centre for the Arts, Halifax,  
2009

2011 Frank Barnes Deaf school, Camden

2011 Oakwood School, Chichester

Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield,  
2009

### **IRELAND**

The Mill, Guildford, 2009

### **FESTIVALS & VENUES**

Acorn Arts Centre, Cornwall, 2009

Flip Flop Festival, Dun Loghaire, 2011

Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury, 2011

Roscommon Arts Centre, 2011

Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead, 2011

lotus, Castleblany, 2011

Trinity Arts Centre, Tunbridge Wells, 2011

Royal Theatre, Waterford, 2011

Arlington Arts Centre, 2011

Droichead Arts Centre, 2011

The Nuffield, Southampton, 2011

Backstage, Longford, 2011



**FRANCE**

**FESTIVALS**

Rencontres Entres les Mondes, Chabeuil,  
2009

Festival Vice & Versa, Bourg-lès-Valence,  
2008

L'art traverse les frontières, Loriol, 2012

**VENUES**

Café Culturel, Livron, 2011

Centre Culturel Espace Agora, Santes,  
2011

Espace Françoise Mitterand, Bully Les  
Mines, 2013

**LOCAL TOURING**

Schools touring, Drome region, 2008-2012

**But you can  
catch us  
here....**

6 JUNE 2015, FESTIVAL HANDIVERS  
HORIZONS, VERQUIERES, FRANCE

19 AUGUST 2015, ISLE DE COLL,  
SCOTLAND

21 AUGUST 2015, ISLE DE LUING,  
SCOTLAND

22 AUGUST 2015, ISLE DE SKYE,  
SCOTLAND

23 AUGUST 2015, MELVICH, SCOTLAND

24 AUGUST 2015, LOCHINVER,  
SCOTLAND

# PRESS RELEASE

## **PRESS RELEASE: FRENCH THEATRE COMPANY, COMPAGNIE ANIMATION, VISITS SCOTLAND WITH THEIR CHILDREN'S SHOW, THE WAR OF THE BUTTONS.**

French theatre company Compagnie Animation have been making theatre accessible to Deaf audiences for the last ten years.

Their work uses no or very little spoken language, transcending boundaries between hearing and non-hearing communities as well as international audiences.

The War of The Buttons is a show for 3 to 11 year olds and their families, an exciting adventure with two characters George and Bessie who use play, gesture, and imagination to take the audience on an energetic and sweet journey where a button can be a kiss, a wish or a trophy of war!

For young and young of heart alike, this story will charm all ages, as it delves into the imagination of a child and explores the themes of friendship and difference through life, love and war!

The War of The Buttons was first created in 2007, with an International Artistic Team which included Natasha Holmes from children's theatre company Tell Tale Hearts as director, and has since toured in France, the UK, Ireland and Finland.

Five years later George and Bessie have visited village halls, large and small-scale venues, performed in -30 degrees, in over 35 degrees, and have made children all over Europe laugh with their antics.

This year Compagnie Animation are coming for the first time to Scotland in August to test out your love of Buttons and banish those end of holiday blues with this charming and button-filled tale.

Keep in touch with their tour dates on their blog at their website [www.compagnie-animation.org](http://www.compagnie-animation.org), or on the shows website <https://thewarofthebuttons.wordpress.com>, follow us on facebook or on twitter Cie\_Animation.

## LETTER TO SCHOOLS - EXAMPLE

School Name

Address

Town

Postcode

To (insert name of Headmaster/Head of Drama/Head of French)

We are pleased to tell you that the acclaimed French Theatre company Compagnie Animotion is coming to our venue (insert name of venue), on the (insert date) at (insert time) with their show The War of The Buttons.

Making work since 2004, Compagnie Animotion is one of the leading companies making work for Deaf audiences ; their work uses no or very little spoken language, transcending boundaries between hearing and non-hearing communities as well as international audiences.

With their children's shows, they aim to provide greater accessibility to theatre in education for all children, regardless of ability or cultural background.

The War of The Buttons aims to create participatory visual theatre experiences for children in schools and in the wider community and includes themes such as friendship, healthy competition, accepting our differences, resolving conflict and sharing.

It also touches on KS1 and KS2 science, PHSE, Geography and English skills.

The War of the Buttons is a silly and beautiful tale, where buttons are lost and won and can be a wish, a kiss or a trophy of war ! Told by George and Bessie, this show has made children laugh all over Europe from Finland to Ireland.

We look forward to welcoming you and your children at one of their performances. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information or booking on (name, number).

(Your name, Position, Venue)

## workshops

Have you thought about...one of our workshops in your venue to support the show and to encourage new audiences?

Our workshops for The War of The Buttons are for 5-11 years and adapted to the participants. \*

### Say it in sign! (5-11)

An hour of games and fun exercises giving children the confidence to express themselves with movement and facial expressions as well as learning over 40 words of BSL vocabulary. The sessions ends with a big book storytelling and signing session with our actors.



### Physical Theatre and Expression (5-11)

This hour long workshop explores the skills it takes to tell a story without using any words.

Using the set of the show as a base, the children are led through games and learn that we can make more noise without speaking as well as developing spatial awareness and movement skills.

### Sensory (children with learning/behavioural difficulties)

This workshop is based on the themes of the show and is adapted to your needs. Please ask for details.

\*unless previously discussed with your venue, all workshops have an extra fee.

Finally please remember to copy us into your tweets Cie\_Animotion, find us on facebook, follow our blog as we tour around Scotland and write to us! We love letters!

**Compagnie Animotion**

**Maison Pignal**

**Parc Pignal**

**Rue Docteur L'hermier**

**26250 Livron sur Drome**

**France**

**00 33.4.69.301.001**

**[info@compagnie-animotion.org](mailto:info@compagnie-animotion.org)**