

**English transcript of Clark Denmark's interview with
Jean St Clair, Cathy Heffernan and Dr Paddy Ladd
on 7th February 2018: A Dot Miles Special**

- Based on live voiceovers by Adrian Bailey, Susan Booth, Tara Asher and Darren Townsend-Handscomb

Clark Denmark	<p>Hello. Hello Facebook. If you like or love what you're watching, please make sure to click "Like" or "Love", especially if you really adore it and you can give us that heart - you know, show us your "heart", show us that you're really enjoying what you're watching! Your feedback will really help us understand what you're enjoying about what you're watching.</p> <p>So, you might see that we are in the London offices of BSL Zone - BSLBT and tonight we are going to be talking about the two programmes that are coming out both tomorrow and next week that celebrate the life and work of Dorothy Miles. You might know that she's a poet, both in the written word and in sign language, and sadly, 25 years ago she passed away. So, this is our way of remembering her and her life and legacy.</p> <p>We'll be looking at her in her lifetime as well as the effects of her work now, so tomorrow night we'll see Dot's Legacy.</p> <p>Sorry, I thought that was my cue! And the second programme is called Dot, and that's a docu-drama. The second programme is called Dot and it features dramatisations of Dot's life.</p> <p>Tomorrow night we start with the first programme of this two-parter and we've actually got with me, as you can see, two people who were involved making it.</p>
Jean St Clair	Hello.
Cathy Heffernan	Hi.
Clark Denmark	<p>Hello you.</p> <p>These two very important people, I'm sure you'll all recognise as the well-known actress, Jean St Clair, who is in the second programme and features as a performer, but you might not recognise the other person that's with me. Her name is Cathy Heffernan and she's had an incredible responsibility in researching the archives of Dot's work as well as producing and directing both of these programmes, so "hi" to both of you.</p>
Both	Hello.
Cathy Heffernan	Nice to be here.
Clark Denmark	Firstly, Jean, I'd like to ask you, if I may, you ... did you know Dot?

Jean St Clair	I did, I met Dot, we weren't best friends, but we would chat. She came to Australia and stayed with us and I helped her to tour round Australia; that was just before she passed away. So I have photographs of her, I have a real love for Dot. We met for chats in cafés in London... I mean, when you think about the time then, it wasn't possible for us to text or communicate in that way.
Clark Denmark	So, when you met ... you met her in Australia ... did you ever meet her here?
Jean St Clair	Yes, what I remember is her being in a flat and somebody asking me to perform to her. I can't really remember exactly where; it may have been her flat? I also remember we met in a café and I was talking to her about some ideas I had, so I didn't meet her on a regular basis... but how we met, I really don't know.
Clark Denmark	So, you were already an actress at the time. Did you know that Dot was a prestigious actress at that time as well?
Jean St Clair	Yes, I did, I went to the NTD - she was the first British person to be a member of the NTD and I was the second, and no-one has come after us; we were the first two. I wasn't a poet particularly, I was more of an actress, unlike Dot. So, she was in America and I was in America... I remember the deaf community as very small, so everyone knew each other.
Clark Denmark	So just to clarify for our audience, the NTD is the National Theatre of the Deaf and it was based in America. It's produced some formidable Deaf theatre and, as Jean rightly says, she and Dot were involved. Dot first and then Jean later. So, have British people spoken to you since and asked if you knew Dot?
Jean St Clair	Oh yes, they always mentioned her names, so many times. And when she passed away, on the office door... they actually had a room for commemorating her, the Dot Miles room. There was great respect for her, absolutely.
Clark Denmark	Wow! And so, linking onto that, Cathy, so, Dorothy Miles was alive a long time ago, so it would be impossible for you to have met her, so how did you feel when you were asked to take on this task of producing these programmes? How did you approach getting this information, finding the right kind of information? Was it particularly challenging? How did you find it?
Cathy Heffernan	Before I moved to the UK, I'd never heard of Dorothy Miles, I didn't watch <i>See Hear</i> when I was growing up, so I'd never heard of her poetry or seen her perform on <i>See Hear</i> . I'd heard people discussing Dot Miles in passing, but I knew very little about her. I knew that she was a poet and involved in Deaf culture, but that was it. When I was asked to be involved in this project, I thought it was a brilliant opportunity for me to find out more about this person who I'd heard of by name alone. I came in with minimal knowledge and started my research and it was an eye-opening experience, finding out about her life, her achievements and all she had done. And also, I took a bit of a look behind the scenes; she had a fascinating life and the

	<p>life she led for the time she lived in was fascinating as well. It was a major challenge. A lot of people know of Dot, but everybody has their own interpretation of who Dot is and what Dot meant to them, and she means different things to different people. So, I met many people who knew her and people who were close to her through her personal life, her professional life; here and in America. I heard varying stories, but tried to verify those stories through the British Deaf History Society, who are based in Warrington in the North of England. They have an archive and they have all of Dot's paperwork - after she died, a lot of her friends who were quick thinking collated all of her stuff together and it was passed to her best friend, who then eventually, in his passing, passed it on to the British Deaf History Society. There's about 26 boxes, from manuscripts to diaries, even receipts that she kept from the fifties and sixties. She really did keep a comprehensive collection of items. So, working through all of that, verifying tales people had told me, some things did remain unclear but the puzzle was starting to become complete. I'd got the picture there; there were a couple of bits that still needed to be filled in, but I feel I've got more or less a grasp of her life.</p>
Jean St Clair	<p>I saw a friend recently who knew Dot very well and she said that she had a huge collection of postcards. They would say things like "meet me in a café at 7 o'clock", so if somebody didn't turn up, then you'd be waiting for ages! So yes, a huge pile of postcards.</p>
Clark Denmark	<p>Yes, that's very strong, that's really part of our life experience before we had text messaging - we'd have to either meet at the Deaf Club to arrange to meet or send postcards like that. I mean, some of you might think that's crazy but that's absolutely how it was. If Dot was still alive, she would be around 85 now, so now, so people who would be her contemporaries now would certainly relate to this. I mean, you know, if you didn't have email, you didn't have these kind of contacts, how would you get in touch with people?</p>
Cathy Heffernan	<p>It's interesting that you say that. Obviously, everybody communicated by letter previously. One of her poems called <i>Unsound Views</i> discusses how hearing people are attached and addicted to their phones. So, I wonder what she would think of how now, Deaf people are just as bad as their hearing peers, texting away on their mobiles! Dot and her friends come from a different generation. Whilst going through the research, the first port of call would be to go to Facebook to see if you can find somebody there and then get more information through Google. Most people now are Googleable, but some of these people unfortunately are not. They don't have social media pages...</p>
Jean St Clair	<p>Yes, but they get letters.</p>
Cathy Heffernan	<p>...They don't have things such as LinkedIn. To try to get hold of them, I had to go down the old-fashioned route, meeting up with people, asking people, do you know this person? Have you heard of this person? And getting mobile numbers, that often helped. But there were a couple of people who, no matter how many times I emailed or texted, I couldn't find them. Through the archives in Warrington, I found addresses from her address book, posted them a letter and I got a response!</p>

Clark Denmark	Perfect.
Jean St Clair	Cathy also told me that there was a list of names of the people that Dot knew in America and I had to erase some of them because I knew they had passed away. There were links with other people that helped her locate individuals. I mean, Dot lived in America for over 20 years.
Clark Denmark	Yes, that's right.
Jean St Clair	She spent much of her life there.
Cathy Heffernan	That was another challenge, because a 20-year period of her life being spent in the States meant it was a big part of her story. Knowing who to contact in that generation in another country was quite challenging. Thankfully, Jean helped me with people within the NTD and also through the archive. There were some people that we found who, unfortunately, we couldn't contact; there was an address for a good friend and we posted a letter and didn't hear anything back. Then I found a photo in the archives from one of her trips - there was a photo of people and they were named, and I found their children - I Googled their children's names and found a contact, so we contacted their parents through their children. It was the only way!
Clark Denmark	One thing that does make me think about is how film was around back then, so you can see Dot in those films, she's talking about things from the 1960s and 1970s that are still kept on film reels. <i>See Hear</i> started in the early 1980s and she recognised the power of that media to show what sign language was. I mean, without that, without those excerpts from <i>See Hear</i> , we wouldn't have a way to conceptualise what Dot looked like when she was signing, so it's so valuable and vital that we've got those resources. Can I ask you, Cathy, did you analyse all of those reels - have you seen all of those clips?
Cathy Heffernan	There's so much more out there that I unfortunately couldn't gain access to. <i>See Hear</i> is an archived programme and you have to pay quite a lot of money to see the wealth of the archive. But there were some clips on YouTube. I found some interviews with Dot on there. They were filmed in black and white – she was discussing her inspiration behind starting to write signed poetry. Hearing it in her own words was very powerful. This connected me to more clips on YouTube, but the issue was finding out who owned the copyright of those clips... getting the archive and finding out who owned them was problematic because people had passed away, companies have folded. People have moved on. So clearly, the archives were quite tricky, but when we found something we could use it was brilliant because we could see her in the flesh.
Clark Denmark	That's incredible because - I'm just trying to imagine this - you're talking about these 26 boxes filled with excerpts of Dot's life and work and it must have been such a mind-blowing task to undertake. I mean, how long has it taken you to research and film all of this?

Cathy Heffernan	I think I made three or four trips to Warrington. My final trip up there was with another researcher because I realised we needed more manpower. So, I'd say, yes, I probably spent 4 full days; one of those days was with another person, so that's 5 full days, and we still didn't manage to go through all of it. There were bits we had to skip, but going through those meticulously was such an amazing project. I was so glad that I could take it on.
Clark Denmark	I will come back to you, Jean, but I have one more question for Cathy. So, if, say, you chanced upon a dead end because perhaps a person was deceased or was unavailable, or perhaps there were stories where you did chance upon something that you weren't expecting to, can you just, without spoiling too much, can you tell us what that journey was like?
Cathy Heffernan	<p>There was something that happened, and we won't say what; watch the programme and you'll find out; but it was quite a surprising revelation about Dot's life that had to be verified. I was given... oh I'm trying to recall how I was given this name... I contacted somebody who went to university with Dot. Norma McGilp, the other researcher for the programme, was actually in America, and she managed to get some contacts through the alumni services. I was given email addresses for people and there were two people who were within Dot's cohort at university. I was strongly advised to contact one specific person about this very unverified life event; I thought, if anybody knows, this person will. I tried to contact her to no avail, so I had to find other ways. Like I say, I found a photo of her with her son, contacted her son and her son contacted her.</p> <p>Sorry, can you just remind me of the question again?</p>
Clark Denmark	Yes, did you have any surprises?
Cathy Heffernan	There were a couple of avenues I had to go down to verify that this did happen, and when it was verified, it really was an illuminating moment. It was a key chapter in her life, a life defining event, and it helped me build a sense of who she was as a person.
Clark Denmark	Yes, sorry, I do want to just ask one more question.
Jean St Clair	Ask away, I'm really enjoying this.
Clark Denmark	There's this breadth of the task, I mean, how do you decide what to include and what not to include? How do you make those kind of editorial decisions when you're confined to two programmes?
Cathy Heffernan	Yes, it was very difficult. Because I was a producer on the docu-drama, and a producer director on the documentary, I knew the content of both programmes. If there were two different teams, I feel there would have been a lot of overlap. The documentary was focussing more on her work and her poetry, whereas the docu-drama was the story of her life. But of course, there wasn't a clear defining line between the two because her life influenced her poetry and her poetry shaped her life. So, you couldn't really separate them into two pieces of work. It was difficult to decipher what to put into what and how to select items.

	At one point, I was told my documentary narrative was very similar to the docu-drama, so I thought... films always have a protagonist. So, I decided, rather than having Dot as the protagonist within the documentary, the protagonist should be her life's work; her poetry; and her poetry should be a character in its own right. That helped me shape the documentary and follow the natural story and tale of her poetry. And then, we followed the story of her life within the docu-drama, but I do feel there were two separate clear narratives.
Clark Denmark	Excellent. We will come back to talk about that poetry because it's very important, but I just want to come to Jean.
Jean St Clair	Oh no, I want you to ask Cathy more questions!
Cathy Heffernan	No, the spotlight's on you now!
Clark Denmark	We've got to get you to answer some questions now! So, I just want to ask you now, taking the role of Dot, this person that you knew, how did that feel? Because 25 years after her death, you were looking at this poetry and this work that you maybe hadn't seen or focussed on for so long. Also, in addition to that, you had to step into her shoes. How did you approach that task?
Jean St Clair	Well the last time that I saw Dot was really as friend; like I said, she stayed with us in Australia. We went to museums together, which I know she really enjoyed. I had two young children, we chatted together - there was no real chat about theatre particularly. And it's impossible to mimic her and take her on completely because she was absolutely unique, so what I tried to do was just take on the essence of who she was. The wig that I wore was £3,000. It was real hair. But unfortunately, we weren't allowed to cut it in any way... yes, you can see it in this picture.
Clark Denmark	Yes, yes, I can see, I can see the wig now. And here?
Jean St Clair	So, Dot was very noticeable for having a fringe and we weren't able to make that because if we cut it, then we'd have had to pay £3,000 to do so.
Clark Denmark	Oh goodness.
Jean St Clair	I think there were 4 wigs and altogether they cost £12,000. So that's your budget spent.
Clark Denmark	My goodness.
Jean St Clair	My skin is a little darker, compared with Dot's, and it's impossible to replicate that. Looking at the videos, she was a similar age to me when she passed away. I noticed she used a lot of fingerspelling, which I tried to take on, and she had quite a slight head tilt. But to completely mimic her is impossible, so it was just the essence.
Clark Denmark	So, as you say, it's about capturing the essence and ...

Jean St Clair	Yes, a little bit.
Clark Denmark	It's impossible to mimic and I agree that that's a futile task. But in your performance and your interpretation of the role, I mean, do you focus on her whole life or are you focussing on a particular age, a particular chapter of her life?
Jean St Clair	Yes, absolutely.
Clark Denmark	And that matches your current age. Would you say that she was a strong BSL user? I mean, perhaps in her youngest days she was more proficient in ASL, and then we see her across these different chapters. So, you know, she went to a primary school in Manchester and then she went to America and learned ASL, so how did you capture all of that, did you reflect that in all of this?
Jean St Clair	Yes, we have Jovita, who is the young girl who plays her as a youngster.
Clark Denmark	Okay, excellent.
Jean St Clair	It's interesting; when I imagine Dot, I always think of her as being Deaf and a sign language user, but during her early years, she was hearing.
Clark Denmark	That's right.
Jean St Clair	So, well, you will see in the story; it shows that part of her life. Then we have Sophie Stone who plays the younger Dot - her clothes and how she looks reflect the era of that time. She uses fingerspelling; she also uses her voice as well. And then when it comes to me, there's still the sign language, but then there's the spelling of words such as "N-O; no". Also, there are slight slips into ASL.
Clark Denmark	That's right.
Jean St Clair	Because she was there for 20 years, so it's a habit that she took on, so I was just trying to select those elements from that.
Clark Denmark	So perhaps there might just be sections that seemed impossible to overcome. How did you deal with those challenges?
Jean St Clair	I think the biggest challenge for me, as Jean St Clair, was that I'm very laid back and Bim Ajadi, he was the director, he said no, Dot was very upright and quite fast with her signing. So, I tried to sign very fast and they went "whoa, slow down Jean!" With the poetry, they wanted to represent Dot's rhythm; again, I'm much more fluid and laid back. With Sophie, I think she found it easier because she was able to vocalise. Also, she was able to watch Dot's poem, <i>Defiance</i> , again and again, in order to learn and take on her mannerisms. For me, there wasn't much; it was more about her work at the BDA, so there was less of the video evidence for me to watch and think about how she was and how to play her.
Clark Denmark	I mean it's a remarkable challenge to face, it's absolutely not simple. I mean, I've known you as an actress for many years, adopting all kind of

	<p>roles. Do you feel that this is your most challenging role to date or, I mean, how would you describe it; how would you describe the peculiarities of this? This is the first time a Deaf person's adopted that role, right?</p>
Jean St Clair	<p>It is the first time. Sophie found it a particular challenge because what she was scared of was the Deaf community saying, "Oh, that's not Dot, that's terrible, you know, Dot wasn't like that." So she felt that there was more pressure on her. But I said to her, really, it's impossible to exactly portray her. It's just about portraying bits of her, the essence of her.</p>
Clark Denmark	<p>This is truly astounding because it's so rare to see a person's life journey in sign language. I mean, this is something that linguists would die for; to see someone who had this Manchester schooling with signs from the north west of England; Trafford signs; and then they used ASL, and then British Sign Language as well. All of this, this is truly remarkable, and you have to watch it.</p> <p>But now, there is someone who I would really like to bring in who was a dear friend and colleague of Dot Miles - that is Dr Paddy Ladd.</p>
All	Hello!
Paddy Ladd	Hello everyone, hello, hi.
Clark Denmark	Hello Paddy. Paddy, I'd just like to ask you, how long did you know Dot Miles?
Paddy Ladd	It was in 1977 when she came to Britain that I first knew her. I knew her, well, as a social worker, working previously with deaf children in West London. She replaced me and we kept in contact, so really it was from then. We just hit it off; we had the same way of thinking about things; we just clicked. And so, 16 years later, she died.
Clark Denmark	So, you've been watching our conversation... is there anything that you want to pick out? Is there anything that we were talking about that you'd like to have some input into?
Paddy Ladd	Oh, I was just fascinated, myself, watching your stories. I'm trying to think about what I can link to. What I think was interesting was when you were talking about her acting... when she was making ... when hearing people make documentaries, particularly on television, for example, about Queen Elizabeth or whatever, then hearing people have to be vocal. They have to have the same vocal characteristics, but actually it's much worse I think, for Deaf people, because you have to get the sign language characteristics. Of course, Dot used ASL and her signing was interspersed with that and then for example, she would use this sign for "because" - that was one of the signs that she continually used.
Clark Denmark	That's very true. In terms of watching these two programmes, actually I think this reveals why I'm asking this, and why I've been asking these questions... Dot had this dream that whatever her work was, whether it was in her written work or her sign language performance work, she wanted to see it continue to be used and she wanted it to be referred to. So, do you

	think if Dot saw these programmes, do you think that she would approve of this? Do you think she would say yes, you've really captured my essence?
Paddy Ladd	I think that's a really interesting question. If she was looking down from above, well, I'm not sure if she'd be waiting to see this or looking at you doing the filming. Maybe she'd be waiting to see it.
Cathy Heffernan	She'll know what we're doing tomorrow night then.
Jean St Clair	I think maybe Dot would be going "my hair wasn't like that, the fringe is wrong, they should have cut the fringe!" That's maybe what she was saying.
Paddy Ladd	I do feel that would be one thing, she'd be a little bit embarrassed, but she'd also think; "recognition, at last". But the third thing would be details, really, like that. Because she would be; "it's like that and not like that!" and then there's the thing with the fingerspelling; it would be those details that she'd be looking at.
Clark Denmark	I just caught you on something there, Paddy, because during her lifetime in this country particularly, she was never really a self-promoter. Can I just ask why she was very humble about her work and just chose to get on with what she was doing? I mean, would you call her a shy person, was she particularly reserved?
Paddy Ladd	That's a good question, that's a tough question. Well she was a woman of that time; she was a Deaf woman who was developing her confidence, but wasn't that confident in a time when men dominated. When she was involved in the NUD - 20 years later, we set up the FDP and it was all women - but when it was the NUD, there were very few women in it; it was mainly men. So, you have to think about the time and the position of Deaf women who were trying to be leaders and the difficulties of sustaining your confidence and your self-doubt, and whether you should or shouldn't be thinking, "Am I crazy? Well yes, I am crazy but am I that crazy?" you know, it was really, really challenging to be her at that time.
Clark Denmark	Cathy?
Cathy Heffernan	I think throughout my research and looking through all of her papers, I did garner this impression that there was a lot of self-criticism. She was a perfectionist and her standard of perfection is difficult to achieve, so she seemed to never be satisfied. And I think you're right about Deaf women of that time and living through that era. The idea of standing up and gaining everybody's attention was difficult. But on top of that, women having notions of themselves and trying to do things above their station was not acceptable. If you think of Britain back then, we're in a different world now. There's a lot of self-promotion with the advent of social media, but back then, nobody knew what she was doing; there wasn't Facebook, there wasn't Twitter. She came back from America and nobody knew what she did, and perhaps people weren't asking her the right questions? Maybe nobody asked to understand.

Clark Denmark	Jean?
Jean St Clair	I would love to ask questions now. It's not that I wasn't interested then, it was just, if she was here, you know, I would ask her why didn't she join the British Theatre of the Deaf? Because there was a British Theatre of the Deaf then, it was a professional group. You know, I'd want to ask her why she didn't join. She did amateur stuff, she did <i>See Hear</i> , but there was the British Theatre of the Deaf. Did they ask her to join, because she had the skills?
Clark Denmark	Paddy?
Paddy Ladd	Well she had a very, very different philosophy to them. She absolutely believed that Deaf theatre should be paramount; it should be about everyday lives of deaf people, not about copying hearing plays and putting them into sign, which makes it very different.
Jean St Clair	The NTD was full of hearing participants, it was a very hearing dominated group.
Paddy Ladd	Yes. When I looked at this area, there's a lot of debate about that. She challenged them, she was very brave to challenge them. David Hayes, thank you, she challenged David and she would say "your sign is not understandable to deaf people, you need to translate it in a way that deaf people in the audience can understand," and they used to argue about it like cats and dogs. I really respect her and I think they respect her in America for standing up for Deaf people in that way; even though she wasn't confident she would argue this. Who supported her? Who kind of supported her in standing up for Deaf people in this way?
Jean St Clair	Yes, there's a lot there. For me it's just a shame because I would have wanted her to continue working as a professional here.
Paddy Ladd	Well, it is a good question. For me, if I'm thinking about her legacy and what her legacy is for us, I think there's perhaps five things. First of all, her poetry, we've talked about; her theatre, but particularly that she wanted Deaf lives portrayed in the theatre; that actually it was about Deaf people directing the theatre as well. So, she was the first Deaf director of a Deaf play. And she was also a sign language teacher; she taught BSL and she did the first manual in BSL; the blue covered manual, that was the first one. And then, politically as well. For me it was political as well, that she was really passionate about grassroots Deaf people - do you remember, she wrote and signed "The BDA Is You and Me", which was about identifying with grassroots people, not people who are from the elite. It was the same with Gallaudet, when she went to Gallaudet and she wrote the celebratory song. I can't remember what it's called now.
Clark Denmark	The Bison Song.
Paddy Ladd	The Bison Song, that's right, OK. And that was again a first, so she really identified, not from above but with people who are Deaf and the grassroots Deaf. And then lastly, I think it was her vision; her vision of Deaf people, her vision of us; which is what made such an impact on me. Deaf people

	<p>are special. At a time when Deaf people were less than - we were hearing impaired - she would say, "No, we're special, we have sign language. We can talk to Deaf people internationally. There's something that's brought Deaf people to be on the earth for a reason." And so, there's something beneath that, and that, really, in some ways, underpins my work on Deafhood. And where did she get that from, was it from America or her own personal beliefs? I don't know where it came from.</p>
Clark Denmark	<p>Paddy, that's so interesting. We were talking about Dot but her work comes through those ... these are the avenues which she expresses herself and this is how she's found success and she's given us a point, a benchmark from which we can grow on and we can develop. And this is ... things that have happened years ago, work that took place years ago, so we're seeing Dot's legacy in action, aren't we?</p>
Cathy Heffernan	<p>Do you think that people recognise that a lot of things that we have today actually link back to Dot and her work?</p>
Clark Denmark	<p>Jean, Paddy, would you like to chip in there?</p>
Jean St Clair	<p>Just linked ... could you just ask that again, Cathy? Do you think Dot's legacy is recognised as a whole, or is her legacy, her name, being forgotten about? Is she seen as a trail blazer for the British Deaf community?</p> <p>I mean, I would use Dot. When we did Poetry in the City, I was asked to perform in that. It was more of a mainstream poetry event and she wanted me to show sign language. So, I picked Dot's poem, <i>Nostalgia</i>. I mean I have never seen Dot perform it and it's quite a short poem, but it's perfect for a hearing audience if you're trying to talk about how something written in English can be translated into sign language, like showing a duck. When I'd finished that, people really, really took it on and it's thanks to Dot that I was able to do that.</p>
Clark Denmark	<p>Right, I just want to draw on that point. I will carry on asking questions, but Jean's just mentioned Dot's poem... I can let you know there are 5 videos of poems that Dot signed and created; different people have added their interpretations to them and have re-interpreted and performed them; you'll see snippets in tomorrow's programme. Now I can show you a 30 second teaser, but on Saturday, as of Saturday, the 5 full revisions, reinterpretations will be online. Have a look...</p> <p>[A clip of Zoe McWhinney signing <i>The Staircase</i> is shown]</p> <p>So watching that, how do you feel?</p> <p>Incredible. There's definitely more for you to watch this Saturday.</p>
Jean St Clair	<p>That poem was about you. How does that feel?</p>
Clark Denmark	<p>You're right, I mean, you're talking about <i>The Staircase</i>, clearly. I remember at the time I was working at Durham University and Dot was a colleague of mine and, as you said, we were both teaching. She really enjoyed that; we were teaching teachers who would then go out and teach sign language. This poem in particular refers to the first graduation ceremony. We wanted to plan something special because this was a</p>

	<p>landmark event; the first generation of teachers who were going out to teach sign language.</p> <p>Unbeknownst to me, I mean, clearly, I knew that it was a special day because people were going to get their diplomas from the Vice Chancellor of the University, no less, but for Deaf people to understand this, that we were going to get something from somebody so prestigious, it was just completely unheard of at those times. But I had no idea that this was going to happen - Dot stood very firm that she wanted to express something in poetic form. She wanted to create something herself to be part of this event. So of course, I attended, because I was so proud of my students who were graduating, but then seeing this, I hadn't actually really contemplated that it was about me because Dot was so skilful in her use of metaphor, you know, when she said "we face these challenges, we climb the staircase" and at the end she refers to this man over there, slightly balding, a little bit pudgy, sat there watching. And then that's when it clicked that this was about me. It really hit me and it was such an honour. I hadn't actually really considered that I had such a venerable position. I was just there doing my job, I was working.</p>
Cathy Heffernan	Can I just ask – how did you feel watching Zoe McWhinney's rendition of <i>The Staircase</i> ? Zoe's using Visual Vernacular in her interpretation. Do you think stylistically she is a world away from Dot, or can you see that within there?
Clark Denmark	I actually haven't seen the whole clip of that, so I'm with you dear viewers, I'm looking forward to watching it myself!
Cathy Heffernan	Oh, okay.
Clark Denmark	Can I ask you? Can I open that question out, linked to what we were talking about before about Dot as a person? I also want to broaden this out to our audience. You might be sitting there clamouring to join! By all means, please, type your comments below or you can sign them and upload them so we can take questions - the questions that we see I will pose to our guests here. So by all means, ask away. Ask away now, Facebook!
Jean St Clair	So, the 5 poems, I'm aware that one of them that will be shown on Saturday is the <i>Art Gallery</i> - John Wilson, who performs it, and I sat and talked about this and the number of layers that that poem has. We tried to categorise them into three different - I'm not going to say what it is - you'll see that on Saturday! But she didn't just write something, she had a real rich element to it; there were so many layers. And of course, poems are English based, but through her work with the National Theatre of the Deaf, she got a sense of how she could translate them and then eventually she would sign the poems herself, so both deaf and hearing people can enjoy her poems. And now with Visual Vernacular it means that her legacy does continue, which was her dream and her dream has been achieved.
Cathy Heffernan	The one thing that I loved about John Wilson's rendition ...

Clark Denmark	There he is.
Cathy Heffernan	He performed <i>Art Gallery</i> , which is a beautiful poem, which is one of the reasons I picked it, it's one of my favourites. I asked him to translate it, but he said, "oh, I've never seen Dot perform this poem, so I need to work out personally how to translate it from English into sign language" and they worked together on a translation, him and Jean. And I said to him "how did you do it; how did you translate it and also use Dot's inspiration and influence?" John always felt inspired by her throughout all of his poetry performances. I personally don't know much about poetry so it's a bit ironic that I've directed this, but hey ho! I've learned a lot about BSL poetry by making these documentaries. John said "have you never seen her perform this"? He used her poetic techniques to help him translate from English to BSL. So, I learned a lot about the poetry techniques, the repetition, what is it?
Clark Denmark	Yes, Jean.
Jean St Clair	Yes, so using the same hand shape.
Clark Denmark	That's right.
Cathy Heffernan	Yes, the same hand shapes.
Clark Denmark	Absolutely.
Cathy Heffernan	It's similar to written poetry having rhythmic rhymes. Using these techniques in translation was interesting.
Jean St Clair	So, she might use a single finger, and then that pointing finger would continue on for three different elements of the poem. I mean, it's beautiful, but at the same time, hats off to her. This poem, I think, really shows Dot's human side, you know, that who we are, her experience.
Clark Denmark	Absolutely.
Jean St Clair	It's definitely there in that poem.
Clark Denmark	Yes, that's crucial. Through her work, through her written and her signed work, we see elements of her life and it just may be that that's the vehicle for transmitting, understanding it herself. We do have some audience questions; let's just take a look. OK, so very interesting. We have a question from Ramon Woolfe and he's asking "if Dot was here and alive today, how would she see the VV as it's clearly so popular around the younger generation? What would be her take on it?"
Paddy Ladd	I don't mind answering this. Hi. Remember she lived in America for 20 years and worked with the NTD, the National Theatre for the Deaf. Bernard Bragg was a famous person who worked in the National Theatre for the Deaf - he really came up with Visual Vernacular. So, I feel they must have had many conversations about Visual Vernacular. Now, I don't know, I

	would have to ask Bernard Bragg, well in fact, I will ask him for you, or you can just ask him directly yourself, but they were very close, so I can't imagine they didn't have that conversation.
Cathy Heffernan	And just to add to that, when Dot was in America, she wrote a book of poetry. She didn't only write it, but she filmed herself performing all the poems. The publisher of the book filmed her. So, if you bought the book you also got sent a VHS tape. Those videos have now been converted to DVDs; as part of the research we were given those DVDs and few of them, I think about 16 poems in total were performed. One of them that I looked at I see as a form of VV.
Paddy Ladd	Which one was that?
Cathy Heffernan	I can't remember the title.
Jean St Clair	What's the title? Bim Ajadi, who directed the docu-drama, sent me it; he said, "look at this poem, it really is Visual Vernacular" and you can see, kind of, the early roots of VV.
Clark Denmark	It may be the one with the parts about the morning, afternoon and evening, when you see the twin trees, that sign. I mean could that be VV? I'm just trying to help you come up with something.
Cathy Heffernan	No, the twin trees one was performed on <i>See Hear</i> . I'm very sorry, the title escapes me, I'll post it on Facebook later.
Clark Denmark	Okay, Jean?
Jean St Clair	I'm sure that with regards to VV, Dot's very proud of her work and very proud of her legacy, so she doesn't mind if you use VV or you choose to vocalise her poetry; it's whatever you come up with, what your concept is. She'd be proud of it, regardless.
Clark Denmark	Excellent. I just want to add in a second question that ties to the first person - this question comes from Carolyn Nabarro, and she asks: "do you think Dot would see VV as part of sign language poetry? And if not, how would she distinguish it"?
Jean St Clair	She ... there's a very old film that she did of <i>The House That Jack Built</i> , have you seen that? I mean, it isn't in English structure, but there are elements of VV in there because you will see the house and the dog, and then she'll replicate the dog, and you can see that Visual Vernacular being used. It's definitely there. And I'm sure if she lived today she would develop it, she would look at English text, think about how to translate it into sign language, into VV, using current technology. Who knows?
Clark Denmark	Paddy?
Paddy Ladd	Yes. It's an interesting conversation when we're talking about these things. I just keep watching and thinking, "Oh, oh, right, you want to talk to me as well then!" Erm, Visual Vernacular for me is about grassroots Deaf people

	and it's about the experience of people in residential schools telling each other stories; boys and girls, telling each other stories about what they see, going home for the weekend and coming back and telling each other about things. So that's where I think it starts. It's part of our upbringing. And so poetry, I don't know that it's poetry ... I'm not ... I don't know that I would call the Visual Vernacular poetry. For me it's storytelling, for me it's - you can disagree, does it matter? There's an American poet called Peter Cook, he's a Deaf American and I'd look at that and say "that's not poetry" or, you know, I think it doesn't matter, you can argue about it whether it's poetry or whatever it is.
Jean St Clair	I think if there is a written poem you can paint a picture of that poem and then a picture is a painting. I mean any art, any art that's created, so whether VV is poetry or not we can debate it, but it's how you develop from the written work, it's whatever you create.
Clark Denmark	I think that hits the nail on the head. It started this conversation that is unending because, if we trace the roots of this conversation, well it's Dot again isn't it? And it just makes you honour this person even more when you find that out.
Paddy Ladd	And just to add...
Clark Denmark	Go ahead Paddy.
Paddy Ladd	Just to add, should I give this away or hold it back? Oh, whatever, I'll let it out. So Bernard Bragg said that Dot invented ABC Stories.
Clark Denmark	Wow.
Paddy Ladd	ABC Stories... so the Americans are famous for doing stories by using the American fingerspelling alphabet; it might be this and then the B handshape and then the C handshape to tell a story. I always thought that was from Gallaudet, then recently I was looking into it and discovered that Bernard Bragg said no, it was Dot who invented it. So, a British person invented one of these American Sign Language games. So, when we're talking about VV and poetry and sign songs, it's all there. I mean, she loved sign songs as well.
Clark Denmark	Excellent, that is truly incredible and a really important point - that's another way, another reason that we have to honour her and these things that nobody else knew about. So, there is another question. Clara Allardyce is asking this question. She wants to know: if Dot was here today, what would her message be to the younger Deaf community?
Jean St Clair	Probably forget texting and being obsessed with your phones, create something. It's a waste of time.
Cathy Heffernan	Or, to disagree, Dot wanted Deaf people to film themselves using their language and preserving Deaf storytelling.

Jean St Clair	I'm talking about texting.
Cathy Heffernan	She probably would have been in awe of the technology, she would have.
Clark Denmark	Straight away, yes.
Jean St Clair	Yes, but not texting though, maybe filming.
Clark Denmark	Okay, Paddy?
Paddy Ladd	She definitely would want to encourage younger people to be creative, to be proud of themselves. There are now many deaf children who are mainstreamed and are lost in the mainstream schools, so how would we find them and how would we get them? How would we use poetry to help them be more confident as individuals, as Deaf people?
Clark Denmark	Okay, thank you very much. Now the fourth question comes from Bob Duncan. Bob asks: don't you feel that Deaf drama really should be focussing on BSL and not add additional elements, like VV?
Paddy Ladd	That's definitely your question.
Jean St Clair	I mean really, theatre is a broad page. BSL is one element. It depends on the play, it depends on the story, whether a certain style suits it. I mean, there's a play opening tonight, <i>Up and Under</i> . There are four Deaf actors in the play using sign language - every so often they'll use VV, and that's great. I don't think there should be any limits. I think people should be open minded when they're being creative.
Clark Denmark	That's a great point, Jean. I do agree with what you're saying but I just want to chip in here. I think Bob's concern is perhaps we are spending too much time focussing on VV and not enough on BSL, to then neglect BSL... what are your thoughts on that?
Cathy Heffernan	Going back to Dot, in America she worked in a Californian university for a couple of years and she taught creative signs. She was unencumbered by barriers, she wasn't held back by anything. So, I think she would respond to whatever demands were made of her, whatever she thought was beautiful. Her art always was meaningful. It was never put into sides, it was very much inclusive. For example, she wanted the integration of Deaf and hearing people, not two separate camps. So, I don't think she would view it as VV or BSL.
Clark Denmark	Yes, she wanted things to flourish, she wanted things to develop.
Cathy Heffernan	But I never met Dot, so this is all just based on my opinion from the research.
Clark Denmark	Do you think you're getting the essence of Dot there? Are those Dot's views Paddy?

Paddy Ladd	I think especially in South England where people sign like this from mainstreaming, that kind of talking signing thing, I think VV is the opposite of that. It's the medicine to cure that and it's about appreciating the visual aspects of sign language. So at the moment, I'm happy that VV is spreading, I'm happy to see that. Now I want to link it back to what you were saying earlier. You said that Dot was perhaps embarrassed or modest, and I'm thinking, I've just been mulling this over while we've been speaking. Poetry is about standing up and performing when you do this. If you're a hearing person you can write it down. Now of course there are poetry slams now, but at that time you wrote poetry, but if you were a sign language poet you had to perform. So everything, the way you perform it, some of the videos that you've seen of the varied films made of her, it's the same poem but it's done in different ways with different expressions and different moods. Now of course, if you're using technology you can, and if you're a singer then some nights you're best, some nights you're worse.
Jean St Clair	Yes, it's developed too. I think there's SSE, and then you take that on and then you go back and look at it, and also through experience as well. Her life experience. You could see the relevance within those poems and you think, "why am I signing it like this?" and then you can change it.
Clark Denmark	Okay, we have another question. We do have more questions. And this question comes from Noel, I mean, we all know him as Paul Scott. And he's asking: do you feel that in Dot's signed poetry there are undercurrents of a political note, of a political type?
Paddy Ladd	Well done.
Clark Denmark	Sorry, everyone's looking around.
Cathy Heffernan	I think, within the documentary this is a theme that we do explore. I don't know if you will agree with me, but I think her later work had a much more politicised agenda. First and foremost, it was about creating visual images in people's minds through her written English, and then it was about the meanings and the metaphors. And then it became more personal as she evolved. More about her experience as a woman and her life experience, and I feel that when she moved back to the UK, she started to use poetry for a different purpose. It was a political outlet for her.
Jean St Clair	Yes, <i>The World</i> , the poem she wrote "as the world has become destroyed" and it's because we've destroyed it, we've ruined it. I think that it's almost like a recipe, it's somebody cooking and it's about us, it's about the human factor in the world.
Paddy Ladd	That's really interesting.
Clark Denmark	That's interesting, we've only got time for one more question I'm afraid, so I'm going to pick a good one to end on. Do you think that filming this is easy for ... in filming this, is it making it easy for us to appreciate the art that Dot's created or if not, what else? Do we appreciate Dot's art better? And do you think that we, as people, will find it easy or have you found it difficult to match her art in filming this?

Cathy Heffernan	Do you think: does the programme match the quality of art? Well hopefully!
Jean St Clair	I feel that's quite difficult because I don't think they're long enough. I'd want two hours. Half an hour of each is just not enough to capture the skills of Dot. I'd want more.
Cathy Heffernan	I feel that yes, the docu-drama focussing on her life could have been an hour and the documentary itself could have been an hour easily. We focused only on her poetry. She did so much more than that that wasn't even looked at.
Clark Denmark	<p>OK, so the last question's a really difficult question to ask. I think actually it's well worth asking yourselves that too, among the community. And tomorrow at home; make sure you remember; half 7 tomorrow evening on the Together channel! You can look for it on Freeview, on Sky or on Virgin Media - it's just easy to remember - half 7 tomorrow evening. The first of these two programmes, Dot's Legacy, will be broadcast. And for those of you who don't already know who Dot Miles is, you may gained a new appreciation for her, for those of you who do know, you'll have fond memories. Don't forget, as soon as you watch it, get online, give BSLBT some feedback. Make sure you Like and Love the post!</p> <p>I'd like to thank my guests this evening. I'd like to thank you for joining us, it's been a very lively discussion, and thank you, Facebook, for watching.</p>
All	Thank you.
Clark Denmark	Bye bye.