



**English transcript of Fifi Garfield's interview with
Dr Terry Riley OBE and Louis Neethling
on 25th March 2019**

- Based on live voiceovers by Susan Booth, Darren Townsend-Handscomb and Mark Schofield

Fifi Garfield	Hello, and welcome to BSLBT 's live streamed interview.
Terry Riley	Hello.
Louis Neethling	Hello.
Fifi Garfield	<p>I'm Fifi; this is Terry and Louis. As you know, BSLBT are celebrating their 10th anniversary, but before I talk about that, we do have a spoken voice over, so turn up the volume! Also, if you can click "Like", then we'll know you're watching us.</p> <p>So, it's the 10th anniversary of BSLBT; it was established in 2008 with the first broadcast in 2009. Now, I want to talk about Wicked Revisited because it'll be out on 1st April, looking back at the Wicked programmes. The reason for this is that the first BSLBT programme, which was the Wicked Pilot, was first broadcast 10 years ago! And who created that... Louis!</p>
Louis Neethling	That's right.
Fifi Garfield	Talk a little bit more about what you remember of that process, when you created the pilot?
Louis Neethling	That's right, I remember when Terry came to me and said "We need to make a programme, we need to make the first ever new programme for BSLBT " and I said "what format are we going to make it in?" Terry wasn't sure because he'd literally just started working there, and we worked our way around it and actually, the way we came up with the first pilot, it was of a similar format to See Hear. We had an incredibly short period of time to do that in, so we worked really very quickly, because that was due for broadcast within 2-3 months.
Terry Riley	Less than 2 or 3 months.
Louis Neethling	Less than that?
Terry Riley	We had 1½ months.
Louis Neethling	Yes, so it was such a rush kind of job; we had to get a studio, we had to set up interviews, we also needed understand to what BSLBT actually was, which Terry can tell you about, of course. And do you remember when we had that pantomime, which you were in, Fifi, by the London Deaf Drama Group? It was great to have the opportunity to film and include that too!

Fifi Garfield	Yes.
Louis Neethling	And it was just an incredible job to get everything on, you know. After that, BSLBT was really born.
Fifi Garfield	So at the time when you were filming that first programme for BSLBT , that Wicked Pilot , could you have ever imagined that BSLBT would still be here 10 years later?
Louis Neethling	No. Do you know, at the time I guess I didn't really have any idea what BSLBT would be. I think I was just thinking it would be one or two years, so seeing any further than that was really difficult.
Fifi Garfield	So Terry, you were right there at the origins of BSLBT , which was set up in 2008 and started broadcasting in 2009... why was it established?
Terry Riley	Well you have to go back about 10 years. So Deaf people wanted our own channel, that's what we'd been campaigning for and we didn't get that originally, and then the DBC, the Deaf Broadcasting Council, the BDA and other organisations came together and discussed setting up a group. I know that Louis, you were involved as well. We set up a group and explained what we want, working with Ofcom, who are responsible for monitoring television, and came to an agreement. Some special research was commissioned to find out how many deaf people actually watched television, thus how many potential viewers there would be. They wanted to work out a formula that meant that the different companies would give us an amount of money, each company pooling that together. And so Sky conducted the research; on the basis of this, we pooled the money together and Ofcom agreed that we would start on January 1 st . But the problem, of course, was, how many staff did BSLBT have at that time? One – me. That was it, there were no other staff when we started. And so I finished work on a Friday at BBC See Hear, then on the Monday I was told that a new job was coming up; they were advertising for a new CEO, but they wanted a Chair first, so when the Chair had been appointed, I went for an interview for the CEO role and was offered it. Part of my remit was to set up the first transmission for the following 1 st January.
Fifi Garfield	And that was the Wicked Pilot ?
Terry Riley	Yes, but we didn't have any money yet. So the broadcasters were also going to start paying us the money on 1 st January so we had to make programmes before we had money to make them.
Fifi Garfield	Did you make it voluntarily, Louis?
Louis Neethling	Well we had to beg, borrow and steal, and negotiate!
Fifi Garfield	Re-mortgaging!
Terry Riley	No, what we in fact did was, we borrowed money from Sky to pay people. The people who work at Sky were renowned for being experienced TV people, so that helped initially until we

	got more subscriptions. And so, the two of us were working together and then later on we were able to produce these programmes, but not from the start.
Fifi Garfield	So at that time, what challenges did you face? Back then.
Terry Riley	Well really it was first of all what the Deaf community wanted, what the broadcasters wanted as well. You can say, they avoided having programmes in sign language; they preferred to do in vision interpreted programmes because it was much cheaper. And we would say no, this is actually about presenting in our first language, having programmes in our first language. And then Ofcom were really supportive back at that time, and the Board was supportive. But how many Deaf people at that time, of course, were actually working in TV, making television programmes? We had Louis, he had his own business, that's one...
Fifi Garfield	Remark!?
Terry Riley	Well at that point, Remark! didn't have a TV production, they were still quite a small and new company in that area at that time. So they did get involved with Wicked in the first series but in fact, personally, what I wanted was to ensure that we were producing programmes and quality commensurate with the work at the BBC. I didn't want a "good enough to keep Deaf people happy" programme, I wanted everything, the scripting, the directing, the programme, the production values, at an equivalent quality to the BBC over 10 years. We've got that.
Louis Neethling	I think BSLBT also are aiming for leaning in the community, to develop media professionals who were directors, professionals, camera people. And at the time we were looking at an expansion in resource from the community to make programmes. So we wanted to have entirely Deaf teams. At the time, that was the vision that we were working towards. And over the years, you know, that's gone up and down, sometimes there hasn't been enough resources. So as much as somebody might want to do the work, they could start on one project but it wasn't continuous enough to sustain them. It's continuity that's been the problem, but that's what we've been working for.
Fifi Garfield	Yes, I remember when I was working at Remark! we commissioned you to work on Wicked . I learned a huge amount from you; before then I would be making videos for Local Authorities and the Government, which were quite simple. But that was a much more in-depth process, with all the paperwork and legal requirements. I think that had great benefit for us Deaf individuals learning about working in a TV spectrum.
Terry Riley	I think that with Louis and myself, and some others, we also had worked for BBC See Hear, which started in '81. When I became Editor, I started to bring more deaf people in because at the time, the BBC had the BBC Extend scheme, so I brought in Bim, Charlie, Billy and many of the others involved and so we had 10 Deaf staff at that time, 10 deaf people involved then, and we were developing. The problem now is where could they develop? At that time, if you wanted to support them to move into other programmes, they could move onto other programmes and then come back to the See Hear team. Louis, what was that programme that you worked on that was on TV every week?
Louis Neethling	That was Crimewatch.
Terry Riley	That's right. And so what would happen is he would go to Crimewatch and then come back, and so he had the security that work would be around, and so they would learn so much and

	we would learn from them. But having said that, we only had one person at the start of BSL TV, at BSLBT , who had programming skills who was Deaf themselves. So it was like changing the mindset, so we had to work with hearing people.
Fifi Garfield	I agree. Just to let the audience know, I'm not going to be asking the questions myself all the way through, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments later, we'll let you know. So the next question, so for both of you, over the last 10 years, what have been your highlights?
Louis Neethling	Go on, you go first, I've got such a list!
Fifi Garfield	Just name one.
Terry Riley	Okay, it has to be Zoom because Zoom , for me, is my legacy. And the reason for that is it gave so many deaf people, talented film makers, directors, producers, make-up artists and script editors the opportunity to make films for 8 minutes long. Sometimes as long as 13 minutes. And we could also support hearing producers and work with them and build up good working relationships, and at the end of that I would say, so many of the Zoom programmes got awards, I never got awards [LAUGHS] but all the people working for me got the awards, which was amazing because they were amazing!
Louis Neethling	Apart from your OBE, Terry. That's probably the biggest award!
Terry Riley	Well, that's hearing people giving me an award, not Deaf people. So for me, it was important that their skills got recognised. Mine aren't important! So, I'll say Zoom was incredible.
Fifi Garfield	And you, Louis?
Louis Neethling	I think I would have to pick the first dramas I made for BSLBT , Coming Home and Departure Lounge , it would be them. I think that was a sort of breakthrough. I think it was something very different from what we've seen before. I think, you know, Wicked came out of the BBC essentially, but the way that we'd shot Departure Lounge , the way we ... the whole production was something else. I think I'd also say Small World , that was fantastic to see a sit com that was fully signed, a sign language sit com.
Fifi Garfield	Tell me about your break-through moment. What made that different for you?
Louis Neethling	Okay, so normally the script is written and actors take the script and translate that into BSL. What was happening here was quite the reverse, so the actors were producing the content and the signed content in its original form was then scripted, and so there's a very natural way of developing television and it was fantastic.
Terry Riley	And again, a big thing for me, the dramas were just amazing. I know I'm biased, but I remember Hal Draper; we played football together and then we did Switch, which he acted in. The scripts generally were written by hearing people like David, edited by hearing people too. But with BSLBT , we had much more Deaf input which meant the balance was addressed. And with the dramas, for me, you could just see them develop over time, and I have such

	respect for Hal. I mean, I get quite emotional when I see them now. I still, you know, you might make a thing and not watch it again, but well actually no, I go back to these time and time again. The actors, the characters, they draw you in and a lot of actors I think really developed in that programme.
Louis Neethling	Also, I think the other thing about BSLBT is that we've seen so many more deaf writers, so many more deaf actors that the field is growing, the professionals are there, in greater numbers than ever. I love knowing that. There's more as well, I mean there's so much more. Production teams as well. It's top to bottom.
Fifi Garfield	You gave deaf people an opportunity for these types of roles.
Terry Riley	One thing, with the BBC they have the benefit of in-house production. However, for the rest of us, we have to commission it, so we would commission each programme-by-programme, or series-by-series, and you can't survive like that. With Remark!, for example, they have to be thinking about new ideas and proposing new ideas all the time, now that's one way of innovating and developing, but when you had it in-house, it becomes more secure. Would you give up your family and everything for two months' salary and then spend the next 10 months looking around the work? Of course you wouldn't. And so we have to change the mind-set because if you think about the first Wicked , the budget was minimal.
Fifi Garfield	Yes, you were making low budget programmes.
Terry Riley	What you had then was a commitment to making it, what was important then wasn't the money, well money of course was always important, but it wasn't that important. It just covered our costs but what it allowed us to do was make programmes for deaf people and through developing of their skills that was the bonus. That was the benefit. Now I feel that somehow, not here in the UK, but generally, it's gone.
Fifi Garfield	I was just thinking about those deaf people who want to work with BSLBT or get into television generally, what's your advice, how do they start out?
Terry Riley	It goes back to... you have to give training opportunities, as Louis said, so for example, make-up artists, was it ...?
Fifi Garfield	Is that Kelly Moody?
Terry Riley	Yes, that's right. So we brought a make-up artist in.
Fifi Garfield	And her career's gone mad.
Terry Riley	And her career's absolutely rocketed. You know, and so we took those risks and people said, "Oh, how are deaf people going to communicate?" Well we would show them that it's not about what you can or cannot hear, it's about having skills in the relevant area, so we could demonstrate that whilst English was a barrier, signing was not. Before, at See Hear, our APs would start dictating scripts in BSL to interpreters, who would translate them, and so scripts would be generated from sign language. So the opportunities were there and people would

	have to think about how to change the way we worked. You can't expect just to give someone an English script. You have to work. And it's not easy. It's not.
Fifi Garfield	It's about working together.
Louis Neethling	And if you want to be involved in the media you need to be on courses, you need to learn, you maybe do work experience, you need to just get that knowledge and experience.
Fifi Garfield	As I did in mine, I learned on the job.
Louis Neethling	Yes, you absolutely have to get involved. You can't just sit down and wait for someone to ask you to do something. You absolutely must begin your journey, learn, get involved, find out who else is involved, get in there and watch what directors do on the job, watch what producers do.
Fifi Garfield	Do some shadowing.
Louis Neethling	Absolutely, be there with these people, you have to actively engage and really pay attention to what's going on.
Fifi Garfield	And be bold, be bold, keep going.
Louis Neethling	Absolutely, be determined.
Fifi Garfield	So, a question. In terms of the BSLBT's content over the years, how's that developed?
Louis Neethling	I think the content has got broader in scope over time. I think we've seen a real range of programming there from documentaries, drama, children's programmes. So I think they are very well received as well by the audience. The documentaries that we've made, I think are a real strength for the community, the children's programmes as well, really great programming for that audience. I think those are changes that we've seen over time. We still have magazine programmes which are fairly standard in a way, but the documentaries have really opened things up and I think we're seeing that sort of breadth that we see in mainstream programmes.
Terry Riley	I think, I feel that we were on the way up and then we plateaued and perhaps we're now just continuing along a certain direction. We've got different things like Punk Chef ...
Fifi Garfield	Yes, cooking with children.
Terry Riley	Punk Chef . We've got documentaries, dramas and I don't know why, I don't know what script writing perhaps externally is as good as it was before? If we look at Zoom , we had the script and it was my role to work with the script. I never worked on location, I never worked on location. I was involved with the script to make sure that the script was as strong as it could be, that was my bible, everything rested on having a good script. It didn't matter what else went wrong, as long as the basis was OK and the basis of the script. And I wonder if

	perhaps people haven't been as focussed on getting that right, you know. You can say, well, let's go to South Africa, well fine ...
Fifi Garfield	Do some research.
Terry Riley	Yes, you need to do the research, and it's not enough to have a good idea, you have to go – why are you going there, what are you going to do there, what is the advantage for us in the UK going there to do the filming? What's the relevance to the audience? You have to think outside the box.
Fifi Garfield	What would the audience be interested in, why does this programme need to be made?
Louis Neethling	That's right, so really you're talking about the programmes themselves having this range, but there has to be a demand.
Terry Riley	The biggest impact was, I think, The End , that one, just made such an impact, it had such an emotional resonance. Still around the world, deaf people talk about that and also Silent Child, you know, everyone already knows about the problems that covered. And I'm not criticising the people that made that programme, but why didn't we do it?
Fifi Garfield	I think over the last 10 years, if you think about technology and the way that social media has changed, that's had a huge impact. So of course, you've had to change your programmes to match what's happening in the world. I think we're ready for questions from our audience. Is that okay, shall we start asking our audience questions? Okay, so our first question is from Stefania and she's asking: after you ran a workshop, Louis, why haven't deaf people had opportunities ...
Louis Neethling	Remind me which workshop you think that was. I've done quite a number.
Fifi Garfield	Maybe a television, acting workshop, being in front of the camera?
Louis Neethling	Ah, okay, I've run a number of different workshops actually. I think after that it's up to production companies to choose who they have work for them and people need to be applying for work and sending out their CVs. They need to get in touch. No-one's going to get in touch with them to say ... they have to make the approach, they have to say what they've got, what they can offer, are they the right person for the job? In all the years that I've run these, I've talked about that question and in 5 years, I think that so many people, I can't think of anything specific, but actually most people start by doing assistant work or working as runners.
Fifi Garfield	So let Louis know that you're here, give him your details! Expect a barrage of emails later, Louis!
Terry Riley	Or send video messages.
Fifi Garfield	The next question is from Adam, he's asking: have you made a feature film, Louis?

Louis Neethling	Not yet. I've made a film an hour in length, a drama, so that's the longest, the Switch special, which constitutes a feature film.
Terry Riley	What's interesting is that we went to a film festival at Gallaudet in America and we saw a number of feature films made by deaf people and they did it by re-mortgaging their houses, by selling DVDs, raising the money in all sorts of different ways to fund their film making. High risk, but they made them. I'm not criticising, but we tend to sit and wait for funding to come. It's easier for us; in America there is no TV avenue for them so they have to. I remember that man way back in London... Pink? Stephen Pink.
Fifi Garfield	The Dracula one?
Terry Riley	He made the programme himself.
Fifi Garfield	It's quite old-fashioned technology that he used!
Terry Riley	He's made it himself.
Fifi Garfield	Yes, show it in the deaf clubs, yes. He'd charge half a crown.
Terry Riley	And at that time he went around all over the place with it...
Fifi Garfield	He had that passion.
Terry Riley	And he had a passion, I'm not talking about you, Louis, but he went out there and we don't do the same as him, why? It's just the same with hearing people.
Louis Neethling	Let's go back to where my passion lies, my passion lies in television drama series. I'm happy to make other things too but those are really where my passion lies.
Fifi Garfield	Okay, our next question is from Caroline, it's for you Terry, what is your proudest moment?
Terry Riley	I think the days of BSLBT transmitting the Wicked Pilot . That was "mine". It was made with deaf people. You know, the BBC always had the final editorial word, but we were all involved in that. I'd also have to say, secondly, seeing how people like Louis and others have developed, for me that's a proud moment.
Louis Neethling	I remember the Wicked Pilot . I mean it's a very, very proud moment, but I do remember how Terry felt on that day.
Terry Riley	10 years ago!

Louis Neethling	And then that became the Wicked series.
Fifi Garfield	And how many deaf people have been involved over that time? Okay, moving onto our next question and this is from Adam. Louis, why did you want to be a film maker?
Louis Neethling	Because of my father actually, he loved film and making them on an 8mm camera.
Fifi Garfield	How old would you have been?
Louis Neethling	When I was really small actually. I was two or three. I remember he used to have me acting in his productions and I just used to help developing the film and I just got really excited about it all. We'd sit together and just watch him edit the old-fashioned way.
Fifi Garfield	You'd have cut it...
Louis Neethling	Yeah and I learned so much from him. I grew up with it, essentially. I remember the first time I actually filmed something completely was my brother's wedding. I filmed it, I edited it, my father taught me and that's where my passion is from!
Fifi Garfield	Wow. Oh this is just a comment, there's a lot of love to you, Louis, for Switch and Small World.
Louis Neethling	Thank you very much.
Fifi Garfield	If you do have any more questions, please ask them now, but I have another couple of questions. So BSLBT has been the starting point for television and documentary opportunities for deaf people. Without that, where do you think they would be? Where do you think the opportunities would have been elsewhere?
Terry Riley	I know that See Hear advertised for researchers recently and it looks like they may have had to re-advertise if they hadn't had many applications. When I first applied at See Hear there was a list of 50 applicants and when other jobs were advertised, there would be so many applicants, but now there's very few people applying, and I'm not sure why that is. It maybe goes back to fear, or people not knowing how to do this, people maybe thinking that they're not good enough because previously deaf people felt very limited, but actually now people have more opportunities, so maybe there are better job opportunities there than there are as researchers for See Hear.
Fifi Garfield	What do you feel, Louis?
Louis Neethling	I think that there are more opportunities for deaf people across the media. I think it's given them a bit of freedom. I think BSLBT gave that freedom so that people have options and choices and I think that See Hear's a magazine programme, it's an in-house production, if

	that's what you want to do, that's what we can apply to do, but there are so many opportunities too so maybe we maybe people are thinking of looking elsewhere. What I would say in terms of the world of deaf media is that it's really grown, it's really increased, but we need to look for directors, cameramen, performers, you need to see the production managers as well, and producers, I think that's somewhere where we're seeing a gap actually. So more of those. It's a hard path but I think it will come, I think in time it will come.
Terry Riley	Can BSLBT ... what I'd like to see would be BSLBT setting up something like the BBC Extend scheme, where, when you make a programme, the director or producer must be Deaf, and a percentage of the crew should be too, like the DoP, the lighting crew and so on, all of these roles as part of a contract. Because sometimes you need to force people to try these different things, and invest in them, because otherwise how are you going to find Deaf people? Then we have the contracts and would know who to employ for different jobs according to their specific skills. That's one way BSLBT could do it anyway.
Fifi Garfield	Okay, time's running out and I need to get on with some more questions. This is a question from Sean. How do you decide on the casting of actors, because the same faces seem to be on screen all the time?
Louis Neethling	People have always said that for a long, long time and I think it's up to directors and producers to make those decisions about who they cast in their productions. You know, they often work with scriptwriters, who may have written with someone in mind, or they may have a handful of cast members in mind who they ideally would like to cast. It could be a straightforward process, or they may have to go through an auditioning process. I think really directors may feel the security in knowing that they're working with experienced well-known actors as well, perhaps. There's a lot on the line when you're making a production; you might find a new face who turns out to be a brilliant actor, or they may not be good and thus affect the film and the director's reputation. It's difficult to actually find the right person and feel safe.
Fifi Garfield	It's the same if you look at many films. It seems that Tom Cruise is never off screen and nobody complains.
Louis Neethling	Exactly, he's safe!
Terry Riley	Absolutely, and it's the same with BBC TV as well, with the Flog It presenter moving to Countryfile, for example, because they like them.
Fifi Garfield	Yeah, they're popular.
Terry Riley	And they know that they're going to attract the audience, the audience likes them, they feel safe with that person. And so, rather than bring somebody new in, they just shift them to a different programme.
Louis Neethling	That's right and I would love to see different faces too, if people are really great, bring them in, definitely!
Fifi Garfield	So, one more question before we come to a close. So looking at the next 10 years, this is a question from Kate, what do you expect the achievements to be and what area needs to be developed?

Terry Riley	With BSLBT ?
Fifi Garfield	Within the next 10 years, what will be the the biggest achievements and developments?
Louis Neethling	I would love to see more deaf production companies, because there are hearing productions company who are doing great, and are finally engaging with deaf people but when the production ends, those deaf people may not remain, and thus won't learn. I'd like to see the stability of having a deaf production company that is really sustainable and lets people have a true career where they're learning. In 10 years' time, I'd love to see more deaf production companies themselves, that would be really nice.
Terry Riley	BSLBT has to see how we can promote new talent out there. That could be by, for example, encouraging short films to be made; not like the Seeds, but behind the scenes as well, not necessarily transmitted films. But films by people of any level are acceptable on the web. So they could be given an hour or two of work experience, to encourage them to be proactive, because without BSLBT , this kind of thing won't happen. And we need Ofcom to make sure that broadcasters continue to pay, because they have been for 10 years and they could decide not to; there's always the risk. We have to make sure that broadcasters carry on paying, otherwise we won't be able to make programmes.
Fifi Garfield	<p>Okay, just to sum up, you need to be pro-active, you need to get out there and not sit and wait for somebody to come to you. Be active, tell people who you are, tell them where you studied. Hopefully you've enjoyed this interview. Thank you to both of you.</p> <p>And remember, Wicked Revisited starts on Monday 1st April and BSL Zone will, from 1st April, be on television on Mondays and if you miss it, you can catch up anytime on our app and on the website. And that's it. Thank you for watching! Thank you for your questions and see you next time. Bye!</p>