

This is a transcript of the radio version of the story. We do not routinely include the audio transcripts of our stories, but because of the subject matter of this story, we wanted to make all versions of it available to all audiences.

Host: Imagine watching every movie without sound. That's a reality for people who are deaf, or have partial hearing loss. A film festival in Seattle this weekend will offer up selections that include sign language, subtitles and themes that speak to deaf audiences. KPLU's Ed Ronco met with some of the festival's organizers, and a sign language interpreter.

Ed Ronco, KPLU News: The film "Two Worlds" splits its time between an interview with a man who is deaf, and a song.

Film Clip: *[Man singing:]* I read your lips / When I see your face / Relationships / Already taking place...

This is one of about three dozen films to be shown during the Seattle Deaf Film Festival. Patty Liang is the event's director. Liang is answering my questions in American Sign Language. An interpreter is sitting just to my left. He voices her responses as she signs them. She says the festival is meant to celebrate deaf culture and issues, but also to educate people outside the deaf community.

Patty Liang, SDFP director: "I hope they're inspired to learn about our language, our culture, and open their minds about other minorities as well, through this."

There are a lot of misunderstandings about people who are deaf or who have hearing loss. Liang describes something that happened to her once on an airplane.

Liang: "A representative on the plane came up, entered the plane, and labeled me 'disabled,' meaning I needed help. They brought me a wheelchair. I don't need a wheelchair. I can walk just fine. I can see just fine. So, those types of things happen. The point of the film festival is to show the variety in our community, and what their experiences are, and how different they are."

Take, for example, sign language. It's used in the films, but the selections come from around the world, so it's not all American Sign Language.

Liang: "We want to learn about other communities and our commonalities that we share. Everyone is different, but we do have those commonalities, and it's a good way to support each other."

The films are subtitled as well, and have audio. There are dramas, documentaries, a category of films for mature audiences, and family friendly selections, too. Some of the films deal with serious issues, like the Dutch documentary *Onbeperkt*.

SOUND: *[Bus engine noises.]*

In it, we meet 29-year-old Simone, riding the bus on her way around town. Simone has Usher Syndrome, a rare and incurable genetic disorder that causes both hearing and vision loss.

SOUND: *[Woman speaking in Dutch.]*

“Tomorrow I’ll finally get the results of the eye test,” she says. “I’m a little bit nervous.” There are comedies, too. “Still Here” is a British comedy about aging deaf club performers who rally around one of their own who falls ill. Liang says the film choices are varied because the deaf community is varied. For example, some people identify as deaf...

Liang: “... some identify as hard of hearing. Some identify as just having a hearing loss. So the community, it’s not all the same. There’s no formal census. The deaf community still has feelings, emotions, creativity; the same as everyone else in this world.”

I have to admit here, I was a little nervous going into my interview with festival organizers. I’ve never interviewed anyone who is deaf or has hearing loss before, and I didn’t know how the sign language interpretation would work, or whether I’d accidentally do something that might cause offense. I worried for no reason. We communicated easily, even though I don’t know any sign language at all. The festival organizers say people who might feel like I did should relax, show up, and take in a few films.

Ed Ronco, KPLU News.

Host: The Seattle Deaf Film Festival runs until April 6th, at the Northwest Film Forum. And as you heard in the story, the festival’s organizers used American Sign Language, and the services of an interpreter, to talk to KPLU. We have video clips from the interview, in sign language, on our website, KPLU.org. You can also download a full transcript of this story.