

# Hand Ships Sail Behind the Scenes Film Transcript.

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

DaDaFest 2025, Cathy Mager, Deaf artist, immersive installations, Liverpool pier head, International Women's Day, Cunard building, projection, BSL, Vilma, Sophie, hand ship sail, Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council, Spectroscope.

## SPEAKERS

Speaker 2, Speaker 1

### Speaker 1 00:00

Titles. 'Hand Ships Sail', by Cathy Mager was projected onto the Cunard building on Liverpool's pier head as part of DaDaFest 2025, and DaDa's 40th anniversary celebrations. The award winning, pioneering multi-art form charity DaDa is an integral part of the campaign for greater equality and access for disabled and Deaf artists. The biannual DaDaFest International presents a national and international platform for new and existing work by disabled artists. Cathy Mager is a Deaf artist and curator known for her powerful public realm projects. She specialises in immersive and monumental art installations in unusual spaces. She is founder and director of spectroscopy, an artist collective with an international practice in creating artworks that shine a light on lost histories and hidden communities. Cathy Mager is a white woman with shoulder length blonde hair and a cheerful, inviting expression wearing a black leather jacket. She stands in a studio overlooking the Liverpool Pier Head waterfront. She signs in BSL.

### Speaker 1 01:06

We're here in Liverpool for International Women's Day and also the 40th anniversary of DaDaFest. It's going to be really exciting tonight. I'm projecting

my artwork onto the Cunard Building. It's my own projection. It's called Hand Ships Sail.

**Speaker 1** 01:22

Cathy stands at a window overlooking Liverpool's Pier Head. Outdoor shots of waterfront buildings and statues near sunset as people gather. Visit Liverpool banners flap in the wind. Cathy walks towards the Cunard building, a stately early 20th century Palazzo style building constructed of white Portland stone with a symmetrical facade, rows of square windows and a flat roof line. Under a protective tarp, a technician wearing headphones configures a giant projector. Other crew set up portable speakers on site. At the waterfront, Cathy gazes upwards.

**Speaker 1** 02:11

People gather on the roof of the Mersey ferries building. The scene transforms tonight. A tall projection of a woman appears on the facade of the Cunard building. She signs as titles appear on the wall. In beams of light, a technician hovers over the stack of large projectors. He watches the projection on the building from his distant station. A view of the ferry's building shows beams of light projected from its roof. A panning shot of the waterfront settles on the Cunard building with two figures projected, Vilma and Sophie. The projectionist, huddles over his laptop.

**Speaker 1** 02:52

Projections of hands appear on the building, one reaching from the left and the other from the right. The hands circle delicately around each other, never quite touching. Fingers wiggle.

**Speaker 1** 03:20

The hands drift apart and disappear. Sophie, a white woman with long, light brown hair wearing an orange top and blue trousers, appears on the right side of the building's facade walking towards us. She looks around cautiously, then signs

**Speaker 2 03:39**

Suited man walks up. Stern words lost on me. Hooded, hooped earring woman chattering happy. Talk, unknown. Passersby. What do they say? As their eye contact drifts away.

**Speaker 1 04:02**

Sophie fades out as Vilma appears on the left. She has dark skin and long black hair and wears an orange top cinched at the waist with loose orange trousers. She mimes sitting in front of the telly and signs

**Speaker 2 04:13**

On TV today three men standing. Rambling instructions. Garbled words of fear and warning, going over my head. Can't fix the aerial. No interpreter signal.

**Speaker 1 04:54**

Vilma fades, Sophie appears, signing.

**Speaker 2 04:58**

I dream of your face. Fluttering fingertips, the shape of your lips.

**Speaker 1 05:08**

Vilma appears next to her as Sophie mimes embracing someone. Vilma signs.

**Speaker 2 05:16**

Sign a message in the stars to guide you. In my arms,

**Speaker 1 05:27**

Vilma reaches up, searching around her. She seems to catch something. Vilma fades. Sophie loses whatever was in her arms.

**Speaker 2 05:37**

Isolated. A ghost.

**Speaker 1** 05:47

Sophie fades, Vilma reappears.

**Speaker 2** 05:52

Visions of a place. Friends signing so strong. Where we can belong.

**Speaker 1** 06:12

Vilma's image fades as Sophie reappears. She signs with wavy gestures,

**Speaker 2** 06:17

Let our hand ship sail.

**Speaker 2** 06:29

Silent, rockets, roar.

**Speaker 1** 06:36

One finger points upwards. Gazing upwards, she fades. Wavy hands reappear across the building's facade. Two hands, then four, making undulating wave motions.

**Speaker 1** 07:08

Sophie's hands on the right cup, as though holding water while Vilma's on the left gently rock.

**Speaker 1** 07:29

The hands fade. A glowing orb appears, growing larger. The women appear behind it. Vilma's hands surround the orb.

**Speaker 2** 07:41

Deaf world.

**Speaker 1** 07:44

A second orb hovers in front of Sophie's hands. They glance at each other with excitement.

**Speaker 1** 08:01

Looking forward, their expressions deflate as the orbs disappear. They look upwards towards the left then signing.

**Speaker 2** 08:15

Each day we are ignored. Lock my language away. Invisible, alien.

**Speaker 1** 08:47

Gazing forwards then up, their chests pulsate as each floats, one hand upwards.

**Speaker 2** 08:52

Ghosts.

**Speaker 1** 08:57

Suddenly Sophie grins.

**Speaker 2** 08:59

Run, fly. Break out into the sky, rise. Soar together.

**Speaker 1** 09:20

Vilma nods. They point and look upwards. As though created by their squishing hands. Multiple orbs, white and pale blue, rise from the bottom of the building like floating bubbles. The bubbles erase the images of the women as they rise up the building. Projected titles Hand Ships Sail by Cathy Mager, supported by logos Arts Council, England, Liverpool City Council, DaDa Spectroscope.

**Speaker 1** 10:04

Credits: Hand Ships Sail. A Spectroscope production for DaDaFest International, 40, Written and directed by Cathy Mager. Performers, Sophie Stone and Vilma Jackson. Production Coordinator, Cat Roberts. Animation, James Merry.

Projection Design, Rod Maclachlan. Music, Steve Joe of Toddler and Henge.  
Based on a culture and quarantine Film Commission for The Space, BBC arts and  
Unlimited. Originally adapted for Bristol Light Festival. Logos, DaDaFest  
International 40, The Space, Arts Council England, Spectroscope.