**Audio Description in Theatres**

Many theatres across the UK provide audio description. This is generally available at one or two performances for each production, and is delivered via infrared, radio or WiFi to a head set that a blind or partially sighted audience member wears during the performance.

Audience members who are not blind or partially sighted will very quickly take in visual information about the set, props, costumes and characters on stage as soon as the curtain opens and actors appear on stage. The live audio description provided for blind and partially sighted audience members happens during the gaps in dialogue and focuses on describing the action as it unfolds.

To level the playing field for all audience members, people booking for audio description are provided with an Audio Introduction (usually 10-15 minutes in length) in advance of the performance. This audio introduction describes the visual world of the show in detail, scripted by the audio describer and is sent to bookers and made available for download online. The audio describer will also run through the Introduction just before curtain up, for those who prefer to listen at the theatre.

The Introduction includes information on the appearance of the set design, lighting and costumes and the appearance of each character, sometimes highlighting the character’s internal motivations if suitable.

Some audio described shows also offer a **Touch Tour** before the show, where audiences who are blind or partially sighted are guided on stage so that they can familiarise themselves with the set, handle costumes and props, and sometimes meet some of the actors.

To find out if there are audio described shows at your local theatre, check their website or contact them directly.

There are two key organisations who provide listings of audio described performances:

* **Hynt,** which is the national access scheme in Wales and it lists all the audio described performances in theatres and arts centres who participate in the scheme. <https://www.hynt.co.uk/en/whats-on>
* **VocalEyes** delivers around 180 audio described performances around the UK every year. Its website lists these and many other audio described shows in theatres across the UK, though mostly in England. <https://vocaleyes.co.uk/whats-on>

Just to note, sighted audience members are not aware of audio description taking place. The audio describer is usually seated within the control box or somewhere out of sight and hearing, away from the audience. The blind or partially sighted customers wear head-sets and are the only people who can hear the live audio description.