



Accessible Performances Guide



What are Access Performances and why do we do them?

Our 'Access Performances' is the description we use for a variety of different additions and adaptations we are able to make to our shows to make them enjoyable for audiences who may struggle with aspects of traditional theatre.

We provide accessible performances to accommodate deaf, disabled, visually impaired and neurodivergent audiences. We are committed to being as welcoming, inclusive and accessible as possible and these performances are very important to us.

We believe that every child should be able to enjoy the arts, regardless of barriers, and are passionate about creating enriching opportunities for all.

What do we offer?

We offer 4 different main options for accessible performances:



BSL semi-integrated performances



Touch Tours



Audio Described performances



Relaxed performances

Audio Description



Audio Description is a live verbal commentary to assist patrons who are visually impaired. A trained Audio Descriptor will be in the theatre, watching the show and conducting the description live.

The Audio Description is heard through headsets, or sometimes a phone app, not through speakers, so for audience members without headsets this does not change their experience of the show at all.

The Descriptor introduces the show and during silent moments (e.g. when there is a scene change and no dialogue), provides verbal commentary describing the setting, costumes, characters, facial expressions, body language and action. The description does not interfere with the performance but fills in the gaps.

When we have an Audio Described show we would generally expect to also run a Touch Tour to accompany it

BSL



British Sign Language (BSL) semi-integrated performances are designed for audiences who are deaf or who have hearing impairments and either use BSL as their primary language or find it helpful to support their understanding of spoken English.

We refer to these shows as 'semi integrated' as they are not side of the stage interpretation, nor is the BSL an inseparable part of the story.

Our interpreters are also usually performers and are rehearsed into the show to be fully a part of the performance.



Relaxed Performances

Relaxed Performances are open to everyone but are especially tailored to support audiences who may benefit from a more relaxed performance environment. This may include children, young people, and adults with neurodivergence, such as autism, learning difficulties and other sensory or communication needs.

The house lights will remain on throughout the show, and audiences will be able to come and go from the space if they need a break from the performance. There is also a relaxed attitude to noise, and the sound and lighting will be adapted to more comfortable levels.



Touch Tours

A touch tour is usually held before an Audio-Described performance, although it can also be done in conjunction with a Relaxed show.

In a Touch Tour a group of children and their adults are introduced to the set and certain items of costume and props.

Touch Tours provide context about the show and to allow patrons to familiarise themselves with the design of the space, costumes, and props ahead of watching the performance.

This can be helpful to the visually impaired, who may need to see items up close, or understand better through touch, as well as various other audience members with additional needs who benefit from going into the performance prepared with context for what they are going to see.



Visual Guide

Tall Stories creates a Visual Guide for each of our shows. This is a document that guides audiences through the process of visiting the theatre and gives them information about the show they are going to see.

The Visual Guides are designed to be useful to audiences attending our access performances, particularly our Relaxed shows, but they can be helpful to a wide range of audience members, including those with specific sensory sensitivities, those who are attending the theatre for the first time, and those who are simply nervous about the experience and prefer to go in with some level of preparation

What do we expect from Venues?

- All Access performances should be clearly listed on the venue website.
- Ushers should be made aware when they are happening and be aware of any additional needs their audiences might have for those specific shows.
- The theatre should be a welcoming space for those who may not be used to attending and the auditorium, toilets, and other amenities should be clearly signposted.
- The Visual Guide should be available on request to any audience member, on the website, or if possible sent out in advance of the shows.

Audio Description



As with BSL performances, we would expect a venue to share the costs of this 50/50. The total cost usually cumulates to between £600-£650.

Our Audio Describer will either use their own equipment or venue equipment and may need some assistance from the tech team to get set up. They will require a space with either a view of the stage or with a monitor of the stage and will conduct the description live.

The venue will need to set up and clearly signpost an area from which to collect headsets, and make sure these are returned at the end of the show.



BSL

As with Audio Described performances, we would expect a venue to share the costs of this 50/50. The total cost usually cumulates to between £550-£650.

In addition, due to the integrated nature of the interpretation, the company will usually require some rehearsal time on stage during the run (1-3 hours).



Relaxed Performances

There are no additional costs for a Relaxed Performance. The Tall Stories CSM will be responsible for adjusting the sound and lighting to appropriate levels, with the assistance of venue technicians.



In addition to the performance being listed on the website the Visual Guide (provided by Tall Stories) should be accessible on the website, as well as if possible sent out to the audiences booked on for the Relaxed performance prior to the show.

Ushers should be made aware that the audience might be noisier and more restless than usual and to allow for this and be as helpful as possible with audience members who might not be used to the theatre environment.

If possible a break out area should be available for audience members who need to take a break from the auditorium in a quiet space, although we understand this is not possible in all venues.



Touch Tours



There are no additional costs for a Touch Tour. They are run by either our Audio Describer if present, or our CSM and ASM, however if your venue has an access team we are happy for them to feed in.

Touch tours are generally booked on request, rather than listed to book on the website. Venues will facilitate this and include copy provided by Tall Stories on their website about the nature of Touch Tours.

Touch Tours usually take place 1 hour before the show, and last from 10 to 20 minutes.

When possible these should take place on the stage or in the auditorium, however if there is no level access it is important to have an alternate location option in case any attendees cannot access the stage.

Venues must provide ushers to gather the attendees and bring them to and from the tour.

The maximum capacity of one touch tour is approximately 20 people, however if there are more attendees they can be split into groups in the auditorium and be brought up to the stage one after another, the length of a Touch Tour is flexible and can easily account for this.

Please note that we regularly see more people signing up to Touch Tours than turning up on the day, so if you are oversubscribed this is unlikely to cause an issue, but please do just let us know.