

A View On Access – [Sweat](#) at the Donmar Warehouse, The West End on Saturday 19th January 2019 at 2.30 PM.

Audio description by Veronika Hyks and Jenny Stewart Cosgrove for VocalEyes.co.uk

The Donmar Warehouse is a little gem of a theatre hidden away in a side street not far from the Cambridge theatre where Matilda is currently showing and close to Leicester Square tube station.

This smaller quirky venue is renowned for presenting some of the most unique and critically acclaimed theatre in the West End often producing fresh original creative pieces that leave a lasting effect and Sweat by Lyn Nottage was no exception.

They are also exceptional in relation to accessibility and making performances inclusive for those with disabilities.

The touch tour began at 1PM and all participants around 8 in all were led into the auditorium by theatre staff and audio describer Jenny and we were later met by Veronika Hyks. We all took a seat and were given a brief overview of the play before getting to our feet and exploring the stage.

As I entered the auditorium, the stage was open to us. It's approximately ten metres wide and six deep. The audience sit around the stage on three sides. Two walkways, on the left and right, lead through the stalls to the front corners of the stage floor. They are used by the audience entering the auditorium and also by the actors during the performance, in addition there are two more entrances in the back left and right corners of the stage.

The back wall of the stage is built of red brick and the floor is painted an industrial grey. Set into it is a large steel shutter and that opens up to reveal a bar set bursting with colour, the set has an enormous steel structure that fills the whole space, Most of the action takes place in Mike's Tavern and a large sign signifies this, The bar set is bursting with detail and colour. The back of the set is mirrored and crammed with multiple bottles of alcohol, various brands and glasses, and a cream push button telephone, a small lava lamp and an electric till to name just a few of the items, above it a wooden panel full of neon signs and

pictures. The bar itself has 6 draught beer pumps on the right hand side sits a bull terrier light lamp with the words bud light glowing on, adjacent is a bowl full of snack and a tall glass full of paper straws, there are bar stools directly in front and 2 sets of tables and chairs in the centre of the stage, in The far left hand corner is an old fashioned 1950's jukebox that stands out as a prominent colourful set piece.

The group taking part had the chance to explore all these elements, touching and feeling them and asking questions along the way, the majority of the cast were also present with elements of their costumes and each introduced their character and accent and we all got the opportunity to ask questions. The stage crew were also on hand to offer additional insight and the tour was led brilliantly by Jenny and Veronika in a fun lighthearted manner.

This touch tour was at the top of its game and proved what can be achieved when the theatre, production team and audio describers work in harmony with each other. It proved immensely popular and beneficial for all those taking part. This finished around 1pm where we all had chance to relax and get some refreshment.

Sweat is based on extensive research and eyewitness accounts in and around the town of Reading, Pennsylvania, once a profitable industrial hub, which became the poorest city of its size in the nation according to the 2011 census.

Set in the year 2000 it tells the story of a cohesive multi-racial community reliant on its steel industry and what happens to that community and the relationships within it, when that industry is threatened, becoming part what is now popularly known as the Rust Belt.

We all took our seats around 2.15 and listened in to the introduction through the senheiser headset provided which was working to full efficiency, Veronika took the reigns for the intro and part 1 delivering a confident narration.

Firstly giving an excellent overview preparing everyone for all the visual set pieces to come, this included details of sets, costumes, props, characters and the actors playing them, story details and any important points that you needed to know.

Going into the description for part 1 she weaved in and out of all the action punctuating the physical and visual aspects of the drama unfolding before us, and

blended in to the soundscape perfectly never sounding intrusive.

Jenny described part two equally brilliantly providing a great contrast to Veronika's style and illustrated all the entrances, exits, and nonverbal communication like expression and gesture superbly.

Sweat was an excellent piece of drama that moved me and surprised me in equal measure and featured some spell binding performances and an example of excellent writing and plotting

The audio description and touch tour was also a shining example of when its done right its flawless and should be commended.

The next audio described performance at the Donmar Warehouse will be:
BERBERIAN SOUND STUDIO 16th March at 2.30pm

SWEET CHARITY 1st June at 2.30pm

To find out about access visit

<https://www.donmarwarehouse.com/visit/access/audio-described/>

Box Office

020 3282 3808 | boxoffice@donmarwarehouse.com

Mon - Sat: 10:00AM - 6:00PM

A booking fee will be applied for delivery by post

Donmar Warehouse

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You can also find out about theatre described in London by visiting officiallondontheatre.com/access and vocaleyes.co.uk

Many thanks to Jenny, Veronika, The Donmar Warehouse and Vocal eyes for their help in producing this feature.