

A View on Access – The Audio Described performance of Wicked that took Place at the Birmingham Hippodrome on Thursday April the 12th at 2pm

Click [here](#) for the audio.

The Hippodrome quite often has the honour of hosting some of the best shows around and a few that are still immensely popular in the West end with Wicked certainly falling into that category and you may think the production would be scaled down for another city but fear not as its just as big and epic in Birmingham as it would be anywhere else.

If you don't know already its based on the novel of the same name by Gregory Maguire and the story delves into the world of Oz and the events that led up to the Wizard of OZ – an absolute classic
With a book by Winnie Holzman and Music and Lyrics by award winning composer Stephen Schwatz.

This much loved musical has enchanted audiences all over the world and it's popularity continues to grow and grow.

There was a touch tour before the show at 12pm which was a tour de force and an invaluable insight for anyone blind and partially sighted to gain a unique understanding of all the visual aspects coming to life on stage.

As you can imagine this was a very popular event and there were 2 touch tours of 20 participants each. These were led by describers Jonathon Nash and Pat Hayes and the access team of volunteers at the hippodrome. A whole host of actors in their costumes and production crew were on hand to describe props and costumes and answer any questions along the way.

The tour began in the auditorium where we all sat down and items were brought to us to touch and feel and lots of information shared regarding their purpose in the show. The items includes, Elphaba's broom stick, an original sent from America, a book of spells, Glinda's wand, and a monkey head mask.

We then swapped places with the other group and went to explore the sets on the main stage touching and feeling all the physical elements and chatting with the stage crew and asking further questions, One of the main attractions was an animatronic metal wizard head with glowing eyes that makes lots of noise and moves up and down and from side to side, the back of it has room for an operator to bring it to life.

All of the many participants on the tour were mesmerized and enthralled by the scale and detail and speaking to a few after it was clearly evident what a difference it made to their overall enjoyment of the show.

An introduction to wicked began around 1.45PM through the wireless headset provided, led by Pat Hayes and was a detailed account of all the visuals and physical elements that would unravel through the 2 and half hour running time. Everything from what the sets look like to characters and actors playing them and what they are wearing. She then went on to deliver the description for part one with Jonathon taking over the reigns for part two. Both gave a thorough narration of events, interpreting all of the action in an informative and entertaining manner. Weaving their carefully scripted description in and out around heavily sung or dialogued scenes.

The customer service at the Hippodrome is second to none with a professional approach to access having a large team of volunteers to assist and support every step of the way, whether it be on the touch tour, for a toilet visit, fetching a drink from the bar, looking after a guide dog, or problems with headsets, this enriches and embellishes the experience for anyone blind or partially sighted. They also schedule audio description for a wide range of plays, musicals, opera and ballet throughout the year.

Some of those coming up are

Sat 9 Jun 2018

Sat 30 Jun 2018

Sat 18 Aug 2018

Sat 29 Sep 2018

Sat 27 Oct 2018

Fri 16 Nov 2018

Sat 24 Nov 2018

Titanic the Musical

BRB Romeo & Juliet

Matilda The Musical

BRB La Fille mal gardée

War Horse

WNO La traviata

BRB The Nutcracker

Call the Access phone line 0121 689 1060 when booking assisted performances. Or visit <https://www.birminghamhippodrome.com/whats-on/access/>