

A View on Access at the National Theatre

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The Touch tour and audio described performance of Pinocchio

Saturday the 27th January 2018

The National Theatre in the heart of London's South Bank has gained a reputation in recent years for offering the highest quality and range of diverse theatre productions that not only entertain and engage Capital City audiences but have taken successful creations like War Horse and The Curious Incident out on tour all over the country to wide acclaim.

Its no surprise that they also excel in making theatre inclusive for all by making their venue and productions totally accessible and approachable whatever the need may be.

On Saturday the 27th of January I was invited to attend the touch tour and audio described performance of their stunning new production of Disney's Pinocchio at the lyttelton theatre.

A creative interpretation of the much loved fantasy classic filled with song, dance, drama, lavish detailed costumes and some of the most innovative puppetry design I've ever been witness too.

The excitement all began at 12pm where a large group of visually impaired visitors and their guests gathered in the overly spacious foyer lounge area and were met on arrival by the Nationals expert customer relations team and couldn't have been more helpful and supportive with their warm welcome and assured assistance. We were all led onto the main stage where the access manager and audio describer both named Roz gave an informative introduction that covered many aspects including all the elements that make up the production and what to expect.

What was an amazing addition was that virtually all the cast and puppetiers involved in bringing Pinocchio to life on stage were present and on hand to answer questions and take an active part in

the tour where everyone involved was able to explore the sets, props, costumes and puppets and touch and feel every physicality and therefore gain an insight into all of the visual elements that would later unfold on stage. Talking to patrons taking part it was evident that this was a crucial and invaluable experience that added so much value filling in any gaps that may have occurred and that so much passion, time and commitment is poured into the preparation for this making theatre as inclusive as it possibly can be and with a production as ambitious and fantastical as Pinocchio a touch tour really does make a massive difference.

The touch tour lasted about 35 minutes and then gave everyone some personal time before the introduction to the show began at 1.45pm and the actual performance itself at 2pm. Everyone was issued with a headset and offered a copy of the production notes in large print or brail.

The introduction to Pinocchio was expressive and detailed giving an informative overview to all the visual and design elements making it all so much clearer and preparing those listening in for what's to come.

Pinocchio is such an imaginative offering with more detail and design elements than you could ever imagine that the description needed to keep up with the scope of the performance and did not disappoint on any level as Describers Roz Chalmers and Tony McBride expertly led a skilled and detailed description of all the action that complimented the soundtrack creating a perfect balance in every way. The sound quality and delivery was flawless adding a very professional polish to proceedings.

The company were all excellent with special mention going to David Langham as the Fox and Joe Idris Roberts giving a awe inspiring performance as Pinocchio. The original Disney songs added an extra dimension and made it all the more entertaining. The duration is 2 hours and 30 minutes including a 20 minute interval.

The National theatre and Pinocchio in general was a very enjoyable experience and the access services offered were second to none.

There are further audio described performances of Pinocchio on Friday the 16th of February at 7pm and Saturday the 17th of February at 2pm with a touch tour also on that day at 12.30pm

