

## A View on Access at the Alexandra Theatre Birmingham

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The audio described performance of Shrek, 2.30pm on Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> of February.

Audio description written and performed by Anne Hornsby of Mind's eye description.

Birmingham is blessed in abundance when it comes to arts and culture and its choice of theatre on offer is no exception with the Hippodrome and the rep instantly jumping to mind, which I've written about in recent times.

So it was an absolute joy to get to visit the Alexandra theatre (part of the Ambassador Theatre Group) for the first time and to sample what they offer in the way of access and services for those with disabilities.

It's important to mention that there is no step free access to the bars and auditorium from their main entrance but there is a buzzer you can press by the stage door and if you require refreshment you can have them brought to your seat by a member of staff.

With a show shrouded in so much publicity and cult status like Shrek it's not surprising that it was extremely busy on the Saturday afternoon so there was a little wait at times to beat the queues.

There was a touch tour on offer but due to the hold ups with traffic etc on the day those attending were not able to get there for the start time of 1pm. The touch tour would have taken place in the auditorium and would have included many of the key costumes and props from the show. Led by Anne this tour would give a vital overview of all the important visual and physical aspects of the show and given attendees the chance to touch and feel and gain an important sense of theme and meaning so when it comes to listening to the description everything falls into place.

An introduction to the show began at 2.15 pm and participants listened through the wireless headset provided. Anne gave a detailed narration

of the sets and attributes of the entire production including a breakdown of the company and characters and what to expect at the start by painting a very vivid picture of proceedings.

This level of detail and thought provoking description continued throughout both parts of the show. Due to Shrek being a very magical fantastical and colourful production an audio description is a crucial and invaluable tool for anyone with a visual impairment or a disability that requires some additional commentary to enhance the enjoyment of the show and to provide a greater sense of understanding.

The tour of Shrek echoes the Broadway and West end run with excellent design elements, lavish costumes energetic performances, stylish sets and some dazzling visual effects and is very faithful to the films and the characters and story we know so well , delivering a thoroughly entertaining theatre experience with dance, song, drama and laughter plus one or two surprises along the way

The customer relations team at the Alexandra we're warm, friendly and welcoming and very approachable.

The next audio described performance and touch tour will be:

Love from a stranger on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> of May at 230pm with a touch tour at 1pm

To find out more – go online at [atgtickets.com/Birmingham](http://atgtickets.com/Birmingham)

Call the ATG access line on 0800 912 6971 or tweet @newalextheatre