

A View on Audio described performances at Sheffield Theatres.

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Wednesday the 19<sup>th</sup> of July – Tribes at the Crucible Studio Theatre

And Thursday the 20<sup>th</sup> of July – The Wedding Singer at the Lyceum Theatre

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2017 I ventured to Sheffield Theatres to experience a couple of their access performances for those visually impaired.

Sheffield is such a diverse cultural City with so much going on and it was wonderful to be able to gain a glimpse into the audio description offered.

The audio description team are all volunteers who have been trained by a professional audio describer and all put so much passion and commitment into each performance.

First up on Wednesday the 19<sup>th</sup> I went to experience a wonderful new play called Tribes by Nina Raine which was on at the Crucible Studio theatre – a tragic comedy/drama about a dysfunctional family and their deaf son who after getting a g/f develops the guts to tell them all a few home truths.

The Crucible's studio is a more intimate performance space with seats almost the way around.

The play consisted of 6 actors 3 male 3 female and two who are deaf actors.

Audio Describer Jane Ensell – did the main audio description giving a strong confident narration throughout painting a very accurate portrayal of all the visual elements and nonverbal communication unfolding on stage never ever feeling intrusive and coming in at all the right moments and feeling like a guide in your ear.

The Play was directed in such a way that during scenes where Characters Sylvia and Billy Sign and their dialogue appeared on the wall for the audience to see there were two additional describers who became those characters voices – Brad Lambert Played Billy and Barbara Crossley voice Sylvia, This was an extremely affective technique that added extra layers and was an invaluable addition for those visually impaired and was performed in such a professional manner.

Tribes was such a refreshing, experimental play all about the human condition and how we communicate with each other.

On Thursday the 20<sup>th</sup> of July I headed next door to the Lyceum for a completely different experience – A loud frivolous Musical based on the Hollywood hit movie from the 1990's – The Wedding Singer – A Romantic Comedy with an original score and songbook that centres around A Wedding Singer and a Waitress who are spoken for with others but deep down know they belong together.

The Lyceum is a more traditional old fashioned type theatre with stacks of rows going backwards and a large stage in front.

An audio introduction started around 7.15 PM in a very busy full house Jean took the reins for the first half and Pauline for the second

The introduction set up all the visual aspects and gave an overview of the characters, costumes and details of the company.

As the show began it was obvious it was a loud fast moving production and the description complemented this and worked hand in hand.

Jean description for part one and Pauline for part 2 was assured and detailed coming in at all the right moments and giving just the right amount of detail becoming like a guide and a friend in your ear that became an important part of the soundscape . Both with natural soothing voices that were nice to listen to and expressed confidently all the action unravelling illustrating an accurate picture in the mind and creating understanding.

The staff from both venues offered high quality customer service and could not have been more friendly supportive and helpful. It's clearly

evident they have a passion and commitment towards access and making theatre and the performance as enjoyable and inviting as they possible can. Both the Lyceum and Crucible are very accessible for those with mobility issues and very welcoming.

I highly recommend checking out what Sheffield theatres have to offer There are some splendid productions coming up with Audio description available.

For more information go to [www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk/your-visit](http://www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk/your-visit) for further details.

This insight is produced by the Audio Description Association.