

A view of the Touch tour and audio described performance of La Cage Aux Folles at the Birmingham Hippodrome – Saturday May 20th 2017

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Access performances including audio descriptions and touch tours vary up and down the country with a lot of theatres doing things very different from each other and adopting their own special touch.

These views on audio description are designed to give a flavour of different venues in relation to how they deliver accessible services and audio descriptions and touch tour and the result of the overall experience.

When it comes to customer service and the feel good factor – The Birmingham Hippodrome excel on every level, making you feel welcome and a part of their community from the moment you walk through their doors trying to cater for your every need and to make sure you have a great time.

It's clearly evident that the Hippodrome value inclusion and making productions accessible for the needs of all disabled patrons and go to great lengths to achieve this including the training of staff, and recruitment of volunteers with a passion for what they do, the scheduling of varied performances to suit all tastes, and even has an access forum that consults on what they do and how they can do things better.

The touch tour for La Cage Aux Folles on Saturday the 20th of may began at 1pm where all participants gathered in the foyer and where met by Jonathon and Julia from Sightlines – the audio describers and Liz the Hippodromes Access officer and were led onto the stage where they got to experience the set, and touch and feel costumes and ask questions.

The touch tour is an invaluable experience that enhances the understanding of the show for anyone who needs the extra assistance and clarification and is executed here to professional standards

It wrapped up around 130 giving everyone the chance to relax a while and get refreshment before the introduction to the show began at 2.15 pm before the actual performance at 230pm.

The introduction to the show was an informative overview filled full of specific detail to enable a better comprehension of not only the aesthetics of the production but all the physical elements and embodiments about to unfold on stage.

Before comments on the actual description – a little about La Cage Aux Folles itself- A show enriched in cult status and with a fan base all over the world – its history began in Broadway in 1983 based on the French play of 10 years earlier with a book by Harvey Firestein and music and lyrics by Jerry Herman. A flamboyant camp extravaganza with plenty of heart and soul defining the notion that you should always stay true to who you are inside and what you believe.

Having gone through many revamps and revivals on Broadway and the west end including a successful one back in 2008 starring John Barrowman, Douglas Hodge and Graham Norton in the infamous lead role – 2017 has seen the ignition of a UK tour with a fresh injection of creativity but still retaining the same charm Utilising the talents of Musical and Eastenders star John Partridge as Albin giving a fresh if not dividing portrayal of the character and a strong supporting cast to bring this much loved classic back to life.

It's a show that really complimented the Hippodrome stage in every way as it did an audio described performance – The description was delivered in two parts – The first by Jonathon and the second Julia Both expertly skilled in the art of description and delivery and added and enhanced the overall experience by illustrating all of the physical and visual elements unfolding on stage and complementing that aspect 100 percent never feeling intrusive instead working hand in hand with the audio soundscape of the show to create a good picture in the mind of everything taking place.

This was a fabulous show with great production design, great performances and an overall feel good factor. The hippodrome also has a great staff and team of volunteers who always help to make me feel

welcome and if there's any support or assistance needed all I need to do is ask.

The audio described performances coming up at the Hippodrome in Birmingham include Grease on Saturday the 3rd of June at 5pm, The Adams Family on Saturday the 10th of June at 230PM and the curious incident of the dog in the night time on Saturday the 8th of July at 230PM To find out more call 0844 338 5000 or visit Birminghamhippodrome.com for further information.