

# Audio Description Association



## note pad

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May 2017

### **204 *Burlesque in Blackpool***

**Our next workshop takes place beside the sea on Monday 26 June 2017, and tackles the challenge of describing risqué dance performances, with discussion and practice.**

The afternoon begins at 1.30 with optional fish and chips at a café near Blackpool Grand, before moving to the theatre at 2.30 to work with burlesque artist Millie Dollar as she struts her stuff and divests herself of her garments.



Join us for a tantalising taste of true titillation – and where else but Blackpool? (Dressing up is also optional!)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millie\\_Dollar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millie_Dollar)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v+HKephT6Wu8g>

Full details as follows:

**Workshop:** Audio Describing Burlesque

**Audience:** Audio Describers

**Venue:** Grand Theatre, 33 Church Street, Blackpool FY1 1HT

**Date:** Monday 26 June 2017

**Time:** 14.30-16.45 (doors open 14.00)

**Cost:** ADA members: £25 Non-ADA members: £30  
(includes coffee/tea – but not fish and chips!)

**Payment:** Cheques payable to Audio Description Association and forwarded to: ADA, Box 306, 17 Holywell Hill, St Albans AL1 1RW. For bank transfers, ADA's account details are available from [office@audiodescription.co.uk](mailto:office@audiodescription.co.uk)

Please note payment must be made in advance and is non-refundable, unless the event is cancelled.

**Directions:** [www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk](http://www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk)

**Booking:** Numbers are limited and early booking is advisable. To book your place, email [office@audiodescription.co.uk](mailto:office@audiodescription.co.uk)

**Contact:** Anne Hornsby, Workshop Organiser at [mindseyedescription@gmail.com](mailto:mindseyedescription@gmail.com)  
07889 232438

## 205 Date for Your Diary

### ADA's AGM and Workshop on Social Media, 26 September 2017

ADA's next event takes place after the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 26 September 2017, at Theatres Trust, Charing Cross Road, London. The focus will be on social media – further details to follow.

## 206 2017/18 Membership Subscriptions Now Due

Annual subscriptions are due on 1 April – and many thanks to members who have already renewed for the current year.

The cost of individual membership is **£20.00** (for sighted members) or **£10.00** (for blind and partially sighted members). For corporate membership, the cost is **£50.00**.

To renew your membership (or to join ADA), please choose one of the following options:

- Pay by **cheque** made out to **Audio Description Association** and posted to **ADA, Box 306, 17 Holywell Hill, St Albans AL1 1DT**
- Pay by **bank transfer** – for ADA's bank account details, please contact: [office@audiodescription.co.uk](mailto:office@audiodescription.co.uk)

- Pay via **PayPal** – visit ADA’s website at [www.audiodescription.co.uk](http://www.audiodescription.co.uk) and click the PayPal logo on the **Join** page

An **individual membership form** with optional Gift Aid declaration is included as an attachment to this email.

A **corporate membership form** is included as an attachment to this email for corporate members who would like to be invoiced for their subscription.

Receipts will be emailed on arrival of payment and entries in our online directories confirmed.

Please email **enquiries** about membership to Jonathan Nash, Membership Secretary, at: [jonathan\\_sightlines@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jonathan_sightlines@yahoo.co.uk)

## **207 Shape Arts – Audio Description Symposium at Tate Exchange (February 23-26, 2017 at Tate Modern)**

Stirring words below from Jeff Rowlings, Head of Programme at Shape Arts, whose report from last February’s event at Tate Modern follows:

**Be bold.                      Take risks.                      Innovate.                      Be creative.**

It all sounds quite obvious when talking about running an artistic programme, but the moment access sits on the agenda there can so easily be a freezing up of minds, and a pervading sense (not restricted to art snobs or elitist institutions) that somehow the experience is going to be lessened, made odd, or damaged; or, to put it bluntly, not quite art.

It was for this reason that, with the support of artist and trainer Zoe Partington, we made sure that our Tate Exchange programme had creativity right at its heart, and that artists led the initiatives - in this case blind or partially sighted artists – all of whom brought a fresh perspective on our engagement with art for those who attended our ‘Ways of Seeing Art’ events.

Using audio description as a hook, we invited the public to describe in their own words the art showcase we had installed in the main space, or to listen to those recorded by others. By this means, people had the chance to compare one person’s description of an artwork with another’s – giving new insights into the artwork in some cases, and, inevitably, providing fascinating examples of how we perceive the same thing differently to each other, depending on our background, age, education, and all the rest of it.

To deepen our understanding of this subject, we organised a symposium on the second day, entitled 'Bridging the Gaps – Exploring the Links Between Art and Audio Description'. Demand for the event was high – in fact we had to cap the numbers of tickets to ensure that people had enough space to move around. Bringing together academics from a variety of disciplines, artists, curators, audio description makers, arts programmers and other cultural professionals, as well as blind and partially sighted users of audio description (AD), we had a dynamic set of participants ready to exchange views.

Mainly focussing on the visual arts, our panel of experts (Zoe Partington, Dr Louise Fryer, Vidar Hjordeng MBE, Craig Ashley and Anna Murray, with Tony Heaton OBE chairing), made important observations to the effect that experimentation is not only fine to do within an access context, but like all forms of progress and innovation, it is essential in ensuring that access improves in quality and well as availability.

The discussion ranged over issues such as the role of technology and digital tools, the role of service users and access forums in arts spaces; of language, translation, research and methodologies, as well as the importance of collaborations and the use of the authentic voice in cultural representation. The importance of words as a means of painting pictures in the mind, and bringing art to life through the involvement of all the senses, were two other themes which resonated in the debate.

But the discussion did not stop there. Artists Rachel Gadsden, Aaron MacPeake, Sally Booth, Lynn Cox and Liz Porter joined Zoe Partington in leading break-out sessions in which the attendees set to work identifying the gaps that exist between artists, venues and audiences, whilst seeking solutions to improve the current state of AD practice. Of the many recommendations made, placing the needs of audiences first and making accessibility integral to projects from the start were the most widely agreed upon, with many feeling that with access built into the commission or brief given to artists by institutions, there could be much deeper levels of public engagement with art – the point being made that all audiences, not just disabled people, would benefit from this approach.

Supporting these events was a booklet on audio description made of short essays written by many of the day's contributors and participants. This is just one of many resources we created that week, and one of many reasons we would like to thank all those who took part in Tate Exchange with us, including the bloggers supported by the Sensing Culture project.

[Click here](#) to find out more, and be directed to numerous online links or to follow our Tate Exchange blogs on the Shape website.

[Click here](#) to read or listen to the AD booklet.

[Click here](#) to follow the filmed recording of the symposium panel discussion on the Shape Arts Youtube channel.

So, be bold. Take risks. And do get in touch – we'd love to know your views.

To contact us for more information, join our mailing list or to request an audio CD or printed version of the booklet, or a transcript of the symposium, please contact us via [marketing@shapearts.org.uk](mailto:marketing@shapearts.org.uk) or call 0207 424 7330.

[www.shapearts.org.uk](http://www.shapearts.org.uk)

@ShapeArts #WaysofSeeingArt



## 208 Sennheiser MobileConnect App for Theatre AD

*Note Pad* is taking an informal look at the use of Sennheiser's new MobileConnect app in British theatres – and any information you can add to our pool of knowledge would be welcome!

MobileConnect allows audio content to be streamed via WiFi directly to the user's smartphone. It can be downloaded free of charge from the Apple App Store and GooglePlay, with installation starting automatically directly after download.

"Definitely the way forward" was Anne Hornsby's verdict after describing *Shrek the Musical* for The Lowry's soft launch of MobileConnect in February 2016. Other venues with the system installed are Birmingham Rep, and the Arena Theatre and Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton, where iPods pre-loaded with the app are available for listeners without their own smartphones. Sennheiser headsets have been retained for those who prefer traditional technology.

Anne reported from the Lowry launch that listeners "liked having the option of using their own phones", and there seems little doubt that in terms of comfort and convenience the app will become a popular choice, especially with the younger generation of theatregoers. As far as quality and reliability of reception are concerned, Sue Howell, Wolverhampton Grand's Access Officer, says the app is "undeniably better" than the venue's existing infrared system. The news from Birmingham Rep is that the app is performing quite well but does not match the venue's current radio system for consistently good reception.

WiFi has a shorter indoor range than conventional radio, and additional access points may be needed to provide adequate coverage both inside and outside the auditorium.

There are still technical wrinkles to be ironed out, and potential issues around the use of mobile phones in theatre auditoria, but giving listeners the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) option has a lot to recommend it.

Please send your news and views on MobileConnect to: [office@audiodescription.co.uk](mailto:office@audiodescription.co.uk)

## 209 RNIB/Action for Blind People Merger

On 1 April 2017 Action for Blind People merged with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). Founded in 1857 as the Surrey Association for the General Welfare of the Blind, the charity changed its name to the London Association for the Blind in 1910, and was renamed Action for Blind People in 1998. Its reputation was built on direct provision of services and accommodation to people with sight loss, championing employment and campaigning on housing, education and welfare.

In 2009, Action for Blind People became one of the RNIB Group of charities, with a distinctive presence at RNIB's London headquarters in Judd Street. The move enabled the two charities to combine some of their operations, and the merger continues that process by removing any confusion about their different roles and pooling their knowledge and expertise in one organisation in order to maximise the services they offer to blind and partially sighted people.

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