

Audio Description Association

note pad

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April 2019

282 Reinventing Audio Description

ADA Professional Development Session, Derby Theatre, July 2019

Join us in July for an exciting opportunity to explore the Rationale Method - an important and innovative approach to audio description based on the user's perception of movement and sound.

Our next professional development session promises a stimulating afternoon with Nathan Geering, dancer, choreographer, and director of Rationale Theatre Company, who specialises in promoting accessibility to dance and physical theatre through creative audio description. Full details of the session below:



Title Reinventing audio description: the Rationale Method

Date Monday 22 July 2019

Venue Derby Theatre (formerly Derby Playhouse)
15 Theatre Walk, St Peter's Quarter
Derby DE1 2NF

Audience Audio Describers, Users, Venue Staff, Dance and Movement Specialists

Time 2.15-4.15pm (doors open 2.00pm)

Directions The theatre is located inside Derby's Intu Shopping Centre, with a café on site and other eating places nearby. For directions, visit the venue's website:

www.derbytheatre.co.uk/your-visit/how-to-find-us

Workshop programme

The afternoon session will cover various approaches to developing audio description, and feature the many different aesthetics of how audio description can be presented. The workshop element will involve participants in practical tasks which will give them an introduction to the following topics:

- Audio description as part of the creative process
- Aesthetics and dynamics
- Movement visualisation
- Vocal percussion/beatboxing
- Going beyond objectivity.

Workshop bookings

Reservations To reserve a place, please email office@audiodescription.co.uk

Booking fees £25 (ADA members)
£35 (non-members)
(includes coffee/tea)

Payments

- Please make **cheques** payable to **Audio Description Association** and send to ADA Treasurer, 5 Greenbanks, St Albans AL1 1JA
- For **bank transfers**, ADA's bank details can be obtained from office@audiodescription.co.uk when booking
- **PayPal** payments should be referenced **Derby PDS 2019** and sent to accounts@audiodescription.co.uk

Please note that payments should be made in advance and are non-refundable unless the event is cancelled.

Enquiries For all other enquiries, please email Emily Malen, PDS Organiser at: emily.malen@nottinghamcity.gov.uk or phone: 0115 989 5609.

Speaker profile



Sheffield-based **Nathan Geering** is artistic director and chief executive of Rationale Theatre Company and creator of the Rationale Method. He has reinvented audio description utilising the sound effects of beatboxers, emotive text and poetic text to create a richer soundscape for people with visual impairment. His company has worked with the British Paraorchestra, the Royal Opera House and the 2017 Special Olympics Opening Ceremony.

Nathan Geering has also collaborated with neuroscientists at Sheffield University on research into blind and partially sighted listeners' neural responses when exposed to ballet, contemporary and break dance, with the aim of enhancing accessibility to physical theatre and dance. Recently he returned to his home town of Ipswich to work with Unscene Suffolk, Ipswich's resident theatre company of visually impaired people, on their new ensemble show. Called *The Tree of Dreams*, the show will be staged at the New Wolsey Studio on 6 July 2019 before going on tour in the local community.



<https://rationalemethod.com>

283 'Project Egg'

Training children to audio describe

Teaching children to audio describe for their peers is not a new idea, but last February's training weekend in Bath is believed to be the first time the UK has seen it put into practice. Trainer **Willie Elliott** reports:

Training a group of adults to audio describe in three days is a big ask - but when The Egg approached me about training a group of 8-12 year olds, I found the prospect quite terrifying. Would they get it? Would they be interested? Would they have the patience for long periods of thinking and writing? What would the end result be like?

The Egg is a young people's theatre connected to the Theatre Royal, Bath. With an upcoming international production, performed in English and Spanish, and designed for children aged 5+, they wanted the show to be audio described by children. The aim of the project was for them to write some, or all of the description and deliver it live to a listening audience of blind and partially sighted children.

In designing the course I considered the engagement level of the age group I would be working with and decided that shorter sessions of work with frequent breaks would work best. Each day ran from 10.00am - 4.00pm and I opted for three morning sessions of 50 minutes with two ten minute breaks, an hour's lunch break and two afternoon sessions with one break. I also decided that I would alternate the sessions between being active and settling down to write.

The course content was drastically adapted from an adult group, omitting a lot of background material and focusing on the core needs: to understand audio description and to put together a script.

I was assisted during the weekend by Tiffany Burr, who was already known to the participants, and is a freelance theatre worker and director.

DAY 1

The six participants, all girls aged 8 - 12 years old, arrived sheepishly and sat in a corner. They all knew at least one other person in the group, so no one was alone. We talked about their understanding of audio description; they all had a pretty good knowledge of what it was and some had accidentally heard it on TV.

My approach was to work as a group and use familiar material as a way in. For character description, we used Disney characters and set out the questions one would ask about them. When we had answers to the questions, the participants joined them up, turning the list into sentences and paragraphs. The same approach worked for describing spaces, mapping out the space, and then asking them to describe a room in their house.

We did movement games using various descriptive terms, including Laban's (although we didn't get into that), and they were able to describe short pieces of movement that they had made up. We also looked at dance extracts, and they called out words for

what they saw the dancers do. By the end of Day 1, we were far into Day 2 on my schedule!

DAY 2

We looked at writing an introduction to a performance and how a script is laid out, and even had some spontaneous description from the participants in the process. We also watched a video of the show we were to describe, and by the end of the day had three sets of preshow notes, with the participants working in pairs.

DAY 3

We began writing the scene description. I thought about omitting a visit to the venue and spending the whole day writing, but in the end, I decided that it would be better for them to see their work space. Unfortunately, the AD kit was going to be hired, so there was nothing there for them to practise with. I was glad, however, that we did visit the venue. The theatre had allocated a space behind glass at the side of the Circle with a slightly restricted view of the stage. For a tall adult, this would not have been a problem: for an 8 year old, half my height, it was impossible. So we asked for them to be given a video monitor for the performance.

We set up the space up as we hoped it would be on the day, with a computer to read the script from and another in place of the video monitor. The participants each had a few minutes to describe a section of the show and practise reading from the computer. Changing describers five times during a show needs some choreography and we also practised swapping places.

By the end of the three days, I was confident that the girls had a good foundation of knowledge to take them on to the live performance. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the performance, due to work commitments. However, the feedback from The Egg was very positive.



Contact Willie Elliott for further information at:

willie@wevoices.co.uk

and/or visit his website at:

<http://wevoices.co.uk>

284 A world first? Theatre names seat for describer



Mind's Eye Description Services celebrated its 25th birthday in December 2017, and to mark the occasion Liverpool's Everyman Theatre dedicated a seat in its auditorium to the company's award-winning director, Anne Hornsby.

It is a well-deserved tribute to Anne, who introduced audio description at the Octagon Theatre in Bolton, when she was Head of Marketing there in 1988 – the same year that Theatre Royal, Windsor put on Britain's first audio described performance. She went on to pioneer audio description services across the North of England.

No photo exists for the 'brick' bought in Anne's name at the Octagon, but here is the dedication on Seat F5 in the back row of the Stalls at the Everyman. As far as we know, this is the first time any venue has named a seat in honour of an audio describer – could Liverpool be the start of a trend?



www.mindseyedescription.co.uk

285 Nominations for ADP's 2019 achievement awards



The American Council for the Blind's Audio Description Project is inviting nominations for its 11th annual awards to companies or individuals who have made a significant contribution to audio description. There are five categories of awards (see details in accompanying flyer).

Previous winners from the UK are Joan Greening and RNIB (Achievement in Audio Description – International, 2009); Anne Hornsby and Mind's Eye (Achievement in Audio Description – International, 2015); and Dr Louise Fryer (Margaret Pfanstiehl Memorial Award in Audio Description – Research and Development, 2014).

You may submit as many nominations as you wish. Self nominations are also permitted. The closing date for nominations is 7 June 2019.

www.acb.org/adp

286 Touch tour logos

As a follow up to an earlier item on AD logos, here is a brief look at logos for touch tours – brief because there are far fewer examples. Venues that use logos for assisted events (and many do not, or in some cases, have abandoned them) rarely identify touch tours separately from AD.

There is no universal symbol for either AD or touch tours. Designers are free to adopt or adapt an existing design (copyright permitting) or create their own. The touch tours logo most commonly seen in the UK is the **two tees** design recommended by See A Voice (the joint Stagertext/VocalEyes project which ran from 2006-10). The black-and-white symbol illustrated on SaV's legacy website features two capital 'T's standing side by side with their crossbars touching (www.see-a-voice.org).

Local variations usually consist of widening the gap between the 'T's, which makes their identity more distinct but loses any allusion, intentional or not, to 'touching', and altering the border. A single 'T' is sometimes used, or TOUCH TOUR spelt in full.



See A Voice
Project



Northern Stage,
Newcastle



Theatre Royal,
Bury St Edmunds



Belgrade Theatre,
Coventry

The use of initial letters matches logos for other assisted performances, eg. C, CC or CAP (captioned); R, RP or RX (relaxed); and DF (dementia friendly). For those who prefer a pictorial approach which is not language-dependent, a **hand with extended fingers** is the usual choice. Two examples come from the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh, which uses a basic hand shape, and Escalator East to Edinburgh (the East of England artist development programme managed by Colchester Arts Centre and Cambridge Junction, which ran from 2003-14). Its touch tour logo neatly combined the concepts of **touch** and **tour** by enclosing the hand in a circle with the spread fingertips forming part of the circle's rim.



Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

Escalator East to Edinburgh Project





British Museum, London

Adelaide Festival 2015 (Graphic Artists Guild, N.Y.)



The generic symbol for blindness sometimes referred to as the **slashed eye** (also the symbol for content that cannot be viewed), is used at the British Museum to identify objects for its touch tours, as well as other access provision for blind and partially sighted visitors. Another generic symbol for blindness – the matchstick **man with a cane** – is used for touch tours on various non-UK websites, such as New York Transit Museum and South Australia's Windmill Theatre Company. One of the early set of 12 access symbols developed by the Graphic Artists Guild, New York, it focuses on the concept of **tour** rather than **touch**, but was recommended for guided tours, nature trails, scent gardens, and "a tactile tour or museum exhibition that may be touched". Later designers have varied the border (square, circular or none) and presented the symbol in white-on-black or reversed.

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A D A 's T W E N T I E T H B I R T H D A Y !

ADA turns twenty this month – two decades since our founding conference was held on 30 April 1999 in the Swan Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon.

We plan to combine 20th anniversary celebrations with this year's AGM at the Reform Club in London on Monday 23 September (details to follow). Meantime, put the date in your diary, blow up a balloon and raise a glass to ADA!

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