

# Audio Description Information

---

## 1. What is Audio Description?

Audio Description (AD) is the art of turning what is seen into what is heard; the visual is communicated through the use of the human voice and descriptive language. Audio Description services are intended to enhance the understanding of and access to visual information primarily for but not limited to people who are blind or have low vision. The describer uses a microphone transmitter, and sits in the booth or the rear of the auditorium. Audience members pick up a small receiver with an earphone at the box office and sit in their assigned seats or anywhere in the auditorium. The describer gives a pre-show description of material in the playbill – the director's notes, list of cast members and characters and other pertinent information – and describes what is seen in the auditorium, the audience and the set. Some describers may prepare the audience member for what is to come later – particularly if there are times when the dialogue will be too fast for description to be provided. A tactile tour is a nice way of allowing blind patrons to tour the set or feel various set pieces, props or costumes. During the show the describer tries not to talk over dialogue in giving concise "pictures" of what is happening visually onstage. Often the describer and patrons touch base at intermission to confirm that the transmission is working and to make adjustments – more or less or different description according to the patrons' tastes.

## 2. How is Audio Description provided in Minnesota?

To offer Audio Description service at one or more performances, theatre/arts organizations should:

- (A) Obtain the services of an Audio Describer, paid or volunteer, who will see the production prior to the publicly described show. (VSA arts of Minnesota has a list of audio describers and a sample contract.)
- (B) Pick a date that does not conflict with other AD performances. (VSA has a master schedule.)
- (C) If your theatre venue does not have audio description equipment, reserve free portable AD equipment (a transmitter and receivers) IN ADVANCE from the Guthrie Theater ([HunterG@GuthrieTheater.org](mailto:HunterG@GuthrieTheater.org), 612-225-6243, fax 612-375-8721), which voluntarily staffs this reservation/check-in/return system.
- (D) Apply to VSA arts of Minnesota for partial reimbursement for hiring an Audio Describer (up to \$100 per production) or making reduced price tickets available to AD patrons (up to \$7 off). The simple Access to Theatre Request form also serves to provide calendar information to VSA, which reimburses you upon receipt of a one-page Final Report after the performance.
- (E) Publicize the AD date(s) in your ads, posters, flyers, etc. and in VSA's Access to Theatre Calendar, which is distributed widely. Names/addresses of AD patrons are available from VSA for use in sending postcards or large-print mailings.
- (F) Work with the Audio Describer (as with an ASL interpreter) – provide a script, access to rehearsal or early performances, theatre technician or house manager (where will the describer sit), possibly director (is a tactile tour possible, what words would they use to describe movements, costumes, etc.).
- (G) Pick up the AD equipment at the new Guthrie Box Office (or Stage Door), 818 2nd Street South, Minneapolis, and return it the day after the AD performance.

### 3. What is the Access to Theatre & Dance Project of VSA arts of Minnesota?

Funding from VSA arts, United Arts and Medtronic assists theatres in paying expenses of Audio Describers as well as American Sign Language interpreters; publicizing described or interpreted shows; and making reduced price tickets available to patrons who cannot afford higher prices. Theatres that agree to offer this service give a discount for the patron and for one companion; upon receipt of a simple Final Report, VSA reimburses the theatre up to \$7 for every discount provided. VSA provides a list of accessible performances via e-mail, by voicemail, brochures, and in several media and websites. To receive or be included in the listings, contact Jon Skaalen at VSA arts of Minnesota, [jon@vsaartsmn.org](mailto:jon@vsaartsmn.org), 612-332-3888, statewide 800-801-3883 voice/tty, fax 612-305-0132, or at 528 Hennepin Ave., #305, Minneapolis, MN 55403; or go to [www.vsaartsmn.org](http://www.vsaartsmn.org). Listings are also available from the Minnesota Association of Community Theatres at [www.mact.net](http://www.mact.net), [mactfactor@aol.com](mailto:mactfactor@aol.com) or 612-706-1456 or 800-290-2428, voicemail box 4; in *Access Press*, [www.accesspress.org](http://www.accesspress.org); or at [www.TCDeaf.com](http://www.TCDeaf.com).

### 4. What is Audio Description International?

Audio Description International is an organization created to promote Audio Description services in various settings through shared information and referral, education, advocacy, and fostering the implementation and development of Audio Description. **ADInternational** is a free, easy-to-use e-mail listserv that allows audio describers, consumers and others the opportunity to discuss new techniques, share problems and creative solutions, and create a network in the international community now exploring description services. To subscribe to its unmoderated forum, send a message to: [ADInternational-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ADInternational-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). Leave the subject line and message body empty. To unsubscribe, send an email to: [adinternational-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:adinternational-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com). Website: [www.adinternational.org](http://www.adinternational.org).

The **Cultural Arts Access** forum is another source of accessibility information and feedback.

To Post messages: [culturalartsaccess@yahoogroups.com](mailto:culturalartsaccess@yahoogroups.com)

To Subscribe: [culturalartsaccess-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:culturalartsaccess-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

To Unsubscribe: [culturalartsaccess-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:culturalartsaccess-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com)