

National Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE COLLABORATES WITH YOUNG VISUALLY IMPAIRED AUDIO DESCRIBER IN UK FIRST



For images, click [here](#)

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The National Theatre has collaborated with 12-year-old Eleanor Stollery making her the first young, visually impaired person to audio describe a performance at a UK theatre. Eleanor undertook the role in a recent schools' performance of *The Witches*, a co-production with Roald Dahl Story Company, experienced by 850 school children, 76 of whom were visually impaired, from 29 primary and secondary schools.

The performance of *The Witches* marked a milestone for the National Theatre's dedication to providing accessible experiences for all, and was the largest attended audio described performance to date.

Eleanor delivered audio description during the performance using a braille script and cued by professional audio-describer and mentor Roz Chalmers MBE, Eleanor delivered audio description during the performance attended by 850 children from 29 primary and secondary schools. The original audio description script was written by Roz and fellow audio describer Andrew Holland.

The National Theatre's Sound Department developed an innovative system that enabled Eleanor to operate the Audio Description console and microphone using a foot pedal so she could read her script with both hands.

This collaboration not only showcased Eleanor's skill and talent but also created a platform for visually impaired children to experience audio description from a young person like themselves.

Visually impaired children attending the performance also received a tailored touch tour and other additional activities including a pre-show workshop exploring the characters and plot of *The Witches*, or an additional touch tour of the Linbury Prize Exhibition with a professional stage designer to learn more about theatre design.

Eleanor Stollery said *"I know how important Audio Description is and I was so glad I could help the visually impaired school children experience and enjoy the show together with their classmates. At first it was challenging finding the best way to adapt everything, but to be able to work with Roz Chalmers and the National Theatre on this project was a dream come true. It was amazing being given the opportunity to do something that has never been done before and that the team felt that they could put their trust in me to deliver. With the right help anything is possible."*

A teacher from Westbrook Primary School, Hounslow who attended the performance said: *"The children have not stopped talking about their experience. It certainly has enriched their lives and given them a love for all things theatrical. Our visually impaired pupils enjoyed the touch tour and benefited greatly from Eleanor's audio description. They commented that it helped them connect what the actors were saying to what they were doing."*

David Bellwood, Head of Access at the National Theatre: *"We believe the National Theatre is the first in the UK to work with a young visually impaired audio describer, and our collaboration with Eleanor received a positive response from our audience. As a result, our sound team are developing systems and provisions to make the process more accessible to work with visually impaired audio describers in the future, including Eleanor. The National Theatre believes that theatre is for everyone, and we are committed to exploring and developing innovative ways of providing access provisions to expand our audiences."*

ENDS

Notes to the Editor

For images of activity from the schools' audio described performance, click [here](#).

For press enquiries and more information, please contact Orla Bentley, at OBentley@nationaltheatre.org.uk

With Thanks

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The development of new music theatre is supported by the Genesis Foundation through the Genesis Music Theatre Programme. The New American Work Programme is supported by the Lawton W Fitt & James I McLaren Foundation. The Witches is an Edgerton New Plays Commission. New Play Commissions are also supported by the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation. Costumes for this production supported by Jordan Roth.

About the National Theatre

The National Theatre's mission is to make world-class theatre, for everyone. The National Theatre creates and shares unforgettable stories with audiences across the UK and around the world. On its own stages, on tour, in schools, on cinema screens and streaming at home, it strives to be accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

The National Theatre empowers artists and craftspeople to make world-leading work, investing in talent and developing new productions with a wide range of theatre companies at its New Work Department. Our nation thrives on fresh talent and new ideas, so the National Theatre works with young people and teachers right across the UK through performance, writing and technical programmes to ignite the creativity of the next generation. Together with communities, the National Theatre creates ambitious works of participatory theatre in deep partnerships that unite theatres and local organisations – showing that nothing brings us together like theatre.

The National Theatre needs your support to shape a bright, creative future. For more information, please visit nationaltheatre.org.uk