

# Audio description: character questionnaire for actors

The production [.....] is being audio-described for blind and visually impaired theatre-goers. We'd be very grateful for your input to make the audio description as useful as possible by completing this short questionnaire. It should not take more than 5 minutes.

## **Introduction to theatre audio description**

Audience members who are not blind or visually impaired will very quickly take in visual information about the set, props, costumes and characters on stage as soon as the curtain opens and actors appears on stage. The live audio description provided for blind and visually impaired audience members happens during the gaps in dialogue – and does not have time to give detailed visual descriptions. It usually focuses on describing the action as it unfolds.

To level the playing field between non-blind and blind or visually impaired audience members, people booking for the audio description are provided in advance of the touch tour and performance with an Audio Introduction (usually 10-15 minutes in length) that describes the visual world of the show in more detail. These are scripted by the audio describers beforehand, recorded and sent to AD bookers on CD and made available for download online. The audio describers also run through the Introduction just before curtain up, for those who prefer to listen at the theatre.

As part of the Audio Introduction, the appearance of each character is described. To aid this process we'd be really grateful if you, the actor, could help begin the description of your character or characters. Your responses will then be sent to the audio describer(s) working on this production. Your input is really valued, but please keep in mind that your answers will inform the process, but the precise

words or phrasings you give may not be used in the final version of the Audio Introduction – so please do not worry about crafting perfect sentences.

The description is mostly of the character. Some characteristics you, the actor, will share with your character and others you will not. Visual descriptions that connect with the character's internal life and motivations can obviously be particularly illuminating and will tend to be highlighted in the Audio Introduction. Please complete a separate questionnaire for each character you play.

## **The character**

- 1) Character name? (this might include how other characters address you as well as how it appears in the script or the programme)
- 2) What is the gender of your character? What pronouns should the describer use for your character?
- 3) Please give an approximate age for your character (e.g. early 20s)
- 4) What is your character's height and build?
- 5) How do you convey your character's personality through the way you move?
- 6) Please describe your character's hair: length, texture, colour(s) and style? Does it make some sort of statement?
- 7) How would you describe your character's skin colour and appearance?
- 8) Does the character have any particularly distinct facial features? Including facial hair. Is there anything that is highlighted either through performance or make-up?
- 9) Please describe the costume(s) that your character wears, and in particular, how it informs or constrains the way your character moves.

10) How do other characters respond to your character? (Do they notice your arrival or ignore you? Do they keep their distance or come close?)

## **You, the actor**

11) Do you have any preference for how you as an individual would prefer to be identified? E.g. a Black British actor, French-born, Korean, non-binary, partially blind.

12) What pronouns would you like the describer to use when referring to you?

This template questionnaire is an extract of the report:

**Describing Diversity: An exploration of the description of human characteristics and appearance within the practice of theatre audio description.**

[VocalEyes.co.uk/about/research/describing-diversity](https://VocalEyes.co.uk/about/research/describing-diversity)

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