



## Advice to actors and theatre staff on attending a touch tour

A touch tour is an opportunity for blind and partially sighted audience members (known as VIPs, short for Visually Impaired Patrons) to familiarise themselves with aspects of the production in advance of the audio described performance. This includes meeting members of the company to help distinguish between voices. These tips will help you to make the most out of meeting your VIP audience.

- If the describers don't introduce you, don't hesitate to introduce yourself to a blind or partially sighted audience member with "Hello, my name is ... and I play ..." (or "... my job is ....").
- If you can, come in costume, or with part of your costume or wig, or maybe with a prop that you use in the show. People often like to handle objects and feel their weight. Tell people what the item is like: "It's a really shabby old brown woollen coat. Its pockets are torn and it's so long it almost drags on the floor when I walk."
- Make sure you don't give away any of the plot – "Of course, I die in the first act." "I fall in love with Maurice, but he doesn't notice me."
- If you're using an accent for your character, give a brief example, perhaps by quoting a line or two. It helps the audience to 'tune in' to your voice during the performance.
- Don't worry about using the word 'see' as in "It's nice to see you." Just use your normal language.
- Don't hand someone something and say "Can you guess what this is?" They may be able to, but may be embarrassed if they can't. Only some VIPs will have sufficient sight to check. Just tell them what it is!
- If you're showing someone a prop or a piece of furniture, don't grab their hand and place it on the object. Say: "If you reach your hand up you can feel ..." Allow them time to explore the item themselves. Some people may prefer not to handle an item but listen to you talking about it instead. Others may have allergies or aversions to certain items.
- When you leave an audience member, let them know you're going or they might be left talking to empty air.
- If someone is accompanied by a guide dog, remember the dog is working and should never be petted without asking, and definitely not fed.
- Enjoy yourself! Company members regularly tell us they thoroughly enjoy this contact with their audience, and the audience members appreciate your time.