



Audio Description Association

Welcome to our April Newsletter!

🌸 Spring into Action with ADA! 🌸

With Spring around the corner, we're bloomin' excited to share ADA's latest achievements and some exciting developments in the AD world. Our February launch of 100 free memberships for Blind and VI people has been an overwhelming success, bringing vital new voices into our community and strengthening our commitment to user-led development of AD services.

Inside this packed edition, you'll find an insightful interview with Anne Hornsby, founder of Minds Eye; a fascinating look at how London Fashion Week embraced AD technology; and updates on our popular Skillset and AD Soup sessions. From describing opera to creating content for young audiences, our upcoming workshops promise valuable insights for describers at all levels.

Whether you're a describer, user, or supporter of AD, this newsletter has something for everyone. With our What's On guide covering theatre, TV, and cinema, plus industry news and developments, we're your go-to resource for staying connected with the AD community. Stay inspired, stay connected, and let's continue growing together!

Warm regards,
The ADA Comms Team :)

ADA Spotlight -

🥁 Drumroll, please! 🥁 Mind's Eye Description Services director, Anne Hornsby joins Tim Calvert on [A View On Access Podcast](#) Take it away Tim...

Tim: Can you summarize who you are and what you do?

Anne: Hi, I'm Anne Hornsby, director of Mind's Eye Description Services. I've worked in audio description (AD) since the late 1980s, covering theatre, galleries, museums, film, online media, and also working as a trainer and access consultant.

Tim: How did you get started in AD, and what led to founding Mind's Eye?

Anne: I was head of marketing and customer care at the Octagon Theatre in Bolton when a visually impaired customer said she wasn't enjoying theatre anymore due to missing visual elements. She asked for AD, which was available in the U.S. and at the Theatre Royal, Windsor—the only UK venue offering it then. We worked together to determine what she needed to know, and a technician helped set up a system for broadcasting the audio description to the listener (a signal between the describer and listener.) With Sheila Birkett's help, we experimented with AD and introduced touch tours and pre-show introductions. I did this voluntarily for a few years before founding Mind's Eye in 1992.



Tim: Having been in AD for so long, how do you feel it has evolved?

Anne: AD is much more widely available now—on TV, in film, and integrated into performances. Some productions use narrators or incorporate AD into the show itself. A major change is pre-recorded AD, making it available for every performance. AI and apps now attempt to automate AD. Whether they do a good job is debatable, but it's a growing area.

Tim: Are you concerned about AI replacing live audio describers?

Anne: Professionally, yes, though not personally, since I've been in the field for a long time. But for my son and younger team members, the concern is quality. AI can provide basic details, like object location and size, but can't convey artistic nuance. For example, describing a painting isn't just about what's in it, but how it makes people feel. That's where human describers remain essential.

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ADA Events:

Skill Set sessions - with Tim Calvert.

Professional development workshops for AD practitioners.

"Describing Violence on Stage and Screen"

Tuesday 29th April, 14:00 - 15:30

Led by: Roz Chalmers

Master the delicate balance of describing sensitive content with clarity and appropriate tone.

"The Art of Opera Description"

Tuesday 3rd June, 14:00 - 15:30

Led by: Jonathan Nash and Julia Grundy

Discover techniques for bringing operatic performances to life through AD.

"Youth-Focused Description"

Date and Time TBC

Led by: Kate Taylor Davis

Learn effective strategies for engaging younger audiences through age-appropriate AD.

AD Soup sessions.

Informal monthly gatherings to share expertise and connect with AD colleagues

April: "Acting Skills in Audio Description"

Tuesday 22nd April, 19:00 - 20:00

Led by: Megan Smith

Enhance your AD delivery by incorporating theatrical techniques and performance skills.

May: Host and Topic TBC

June: Host and Topic TBC

Details coming soon!



Audio Description Association

ADA Spotlight Continued...

Tim: You're also a trainer and involved in the Audio Description Association (ADA). Can you talk about that?

Anne: I attended the first ADA conference in Nottingham and was part of the founding executive. I've been involved for most of its existence, with a brief break before returning. ADA is a valuable resource, advocating for quality in AD while welcoming both professional and volunteer describers. It offers training, organises conferences, and serves as a community and sounding board for AD professionals. Funding has always been a challenge, but the organisation has grown, especially through its skill-sharing sessions, which now attract people worldwide.

Tim: How important is training for the future of AD?

Anne: It's crucial. I trained six new describers for Mind's Eye recently, bringing more diversity to our team. In visual arts, I train museum and gallery staff who know their collections but lack AD skills. Many people don't realise the time commitment AD requires, and it's not a high-paying profession. ADA is currently revising its training curriculum, which I'll roll out in Ireland this autumn, including training drama students.

I also conduct AD training and consultancy internationally—in Poland, the U.S., Russia, and soon Albania, where I'll work with museum curators and theatre describers, including those specialising in puppet theatre.



Tim: What keeps you motivated after all these years?

Anne: There are challenges—late-night travel delays, for instance—but I love working with people and making performances accessible. Hearing positive feedback, like someone saying; "I felt completely involved in the world of the play—thank you for the touch tour and description" makes it worthwhile. I've always loved theatre and performance. AD is a performance in itself—you don't upstage the actors, but you ensure the description is in sync with the show. Every performance is different, and I consider myself lucky to do this work. As long as I have the energy, I'll keep going.

Tim: Excellent. Thank you!

To learn more about Anne's extraordinary experience you can listen to the full interview on

 [A View On Access Podcast](#) 



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ADA News:

International Steering Group...

The ADA International group will be foregoing a few changes in the coming months with some exciting times ahead

The group will become 2 entities

A main group meeting every month except Summer and Christmas where everyone will be welcome and will feature an international speaker/s in each session

and a steering group meeting every 3 months that will consist of international members and devise the content of the main group sessions and be a support group for International members

Please bear with us while this is being developed and once up and running we will keep you in touch on how to participate or be involved

What's On Theatre: April - June

April:

Magic Mike Live: Hippodrome Casino, London
Audio Described: Wed 2nd April 19:00
Note: 18+ only

Backstroke: Donmar Warehouse, London
Audio Described: Sat 5th April, 14:30
Touch Tour: 12:45
Starring: Tamsin Greig & Celia Imrie

The Shark Is Broken: Theatre Royal Brighton
Audio Described: Tue 8th April, 19:30
Touch Tour: 18:00
Note: Intro notes available online 5 days before

Now That's What I Call A Musical: Wimbledon New Theatre
Audio Described: Wed 9th April, 19:30



Audio Description Association

ADA successfully launches 100 FREE Memberships for Blind & Visually Impaired AD Users – A Fantastic Response!

On February 26th, the Audio Description Association (ADA) launched an exciting initiative—100 FREE one-year memberships exclusively for Blind and visually impaired AD users! Our goal was to amplify user voices, expand the ADA community, and ensure more Blind and VI people had direct access to resources, networking, and professional development.

An Incredible Response!

We have been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and support for this initiative. Since launching, we have already welcomed 52 new members—a testament to the growing demand for high-quality AD and a stronger voice for AD users in shaping and protecting best practices.

New members have gained access to:

- ✓ Quarterly newsletters packed with industry insights and event listings.
- ✓ Regular Zoom sessions, including our brand-new VI User Group, hosted by ADA Trustee Yusuf Osman, where members share experiences and connect with describers.
- ✓ Opportunities to join advisory panels and contribute to the development of ADA's accredited training program for VI assessors.

What's Next?

With the first wave of memberships well on its way to our goal of 100, we're excited to see the impact this growing community will have on the future of audio description in theatre, TV, film, museums, and beyond. We encourage everyone who has signed up to get involved, share their experiences, and help drive the future of accessible storytelling.

Thank you to everyone who has helped spread the word! If you know someone who would benefit, please encourage them to sign up before all 100 spaces are gone.

Blind and visually impaired people can sign up here:
<https://www.audiodescription.co.uk/join-ada>

Simply select the VI Membership Plan and input 'VIP' into the discount code box.

For more details, contact VIGroup@audiodescription.co.uk



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What's On Theatre: April

Little Women: The Lowry, Manchester
Audio Described: Fri 11th April, 19:30
Touch Tour: 18:30

Dear England: National Theatre
Audio Described: Sat 12th April, 14:30

Pig Heart Boy: Wolverhampton Grand
Audio Described: Sat 12th April, 14:30
Touch Tour: 13:00

Richard II: Bridge Theatre, London
Audio Described: Sat 12th April 14:30
Starring: Jonathan Bailey

Tina The Musical: Bristol Hippodrome
Audio Described: Wed 16th April, 19:30

Unicorn: Garrick Theatre, London
Audio Described: Sat 19th April, 19:30
Starring: Stephen Mangan & Nicola Walker

Kinky Boots: Birmingham Hippodrome
Audio Described: Sat 19th April, 14:30

& Juliet: Birmingham Hippodrome
Audio Described: Sat 26th April, 14:30
Touch Tour: 13:00

May

Krapp's Last Tape: Barbican Centre
Audio Described: Fri 2nd May at 19:00
Touch Tour: 18:00
Starring: Stephen Rea

Retrograde: Apollo Theatre, London
Audio Described: Sat 3rd May at 19:30

Abigail's Party: Royal Exchange, Manchester
Audio Described: Sat 10th May, 14:30
Starring: Kym Marsh

& Juliet: UK Tour
Regent Theatre, Stoke on Trent
Audio Described: Wed 14th May at 14:30

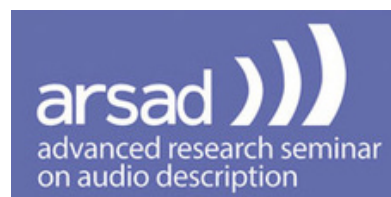
Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield
Audio Described: Thu 29th May at 19:30

The Devil Wears Prada The Musical:
Dominion Theatre, London
Audio Described: Thu 15th May, 19:30
Touch Tour: 18:00
Starring: Vanessa Williams



Audio Description Association

ARSAD 2025: A Personal Reflection on AI and the Future of Audio Description. By Cara Edney



Last week, I found myself in the vibrant halls of Barcelona for ARSAD's (Advanced Research Seminar on Audio Description) 10th anniversary conference. As someone who founded Hear Say Audio Description Agency out of frustration with industry limitations, this year's theme "Creativity in the Age of Generative Artificial Intelligence" resonated deeply with my mission to make audio description truly accessible to all.

Embracing Change While Preserving Artistry

Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Surrey, Sabine Braun's keynote and the subsequent industry debate struck a powerful chord. As both a practitioner and advocate, I've witnessed AI spark both excitement and concern in our community. While AI currently excels at static image description, it still grapples with consistent narrative flow and emotional undertones. Yet, the pace of development is staggering - prototype software has made remarkable strides in understanding context and continuity.

The Digital Content Challenge:

Here's the reality we're facing: every single minute, 500+ hours of video content flood YouTube alone - that's a staggering 720,000 hours daily. Traditional AD production simply can't keep pace.

While AI offers an unprecedented opportunity to bridge this accessibility gap, we must ensure that scaling up doesn't mean scaling down quality. As an industry, we need to stand firm in our commitment to excellence, ensuring that increased content availability doesn't come at the cost of diminished user experience. The dangers lies in the powers-that-be eyeing AI as a quick, cheap tickbox solution, potentially compromising quality for cost savings. We can't let maladapted AI alt text or image descriptions be perceived as "good enough for AD" which ultimately becomes the enemy of genuine accessibility.

Quality In, Quality Out

The quality of AI-generated AD will only be as good as the data we feed it. This means establishing robust industry standards and best practices for:

- High-quality scripts and show guides
- Comprehensive character and plot descriptions
- Detailed scene-setting information
- Cultural context and nuance markers
- Emotional tone indicators
- Diverse representation in training materials.



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What's On Theatre: June

Hamlet Hail to the Thief: Royal Shakespeare Theatre Stratford
Audio Described: Sat 14 Jun, 14:00

My Master Builder: The Wyndham Theatre
Audio Described: 14 Jun, 14:30
Starring Ewan McGregor, Elizabeth Debicki and Kate Fleetwood.

London Road: Olivier Theatre London
Audio Described: Fri 20 Jun, 19.30

& Juliet: WMC, Cardiff
Audio Described: Sat 21 Jun, 14.30

Here We Are: National Theatre
Audio Described: Thu 26th Jun, 19:30

Six The Musical: The Vaudeville Theatre
Audio Described: 28 June, 16:00



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ARSAD 2025: A Personal Reflection on AI and the Future of Audio Description continued...

By setting these standards now we create a framework that supports both efficiency and excellence in AD production. This proactive approach ensures that as technology evolves, quality remains at the heart of accessibility.

Shaping Tomorrow's Standards

Our role is evolving beyond traditional description. We're becoming architects of how AI will learn to describe content for generations to come.

This means actively participating in:

- Defining clear quality benchmarks for AI-assisted AD
- Creating comprehensive training datasets
- Establishing ethical guidelines for AI description
- Maintaining human oversight in the development process
- Advocating for accessibility best practices at every level

My Key Takeaways from ARSAD 2025:

- AI is our ally in scaling AD services across online content, broadcast media, and public services.
- Human creativity remains vital in guiding AI development and limiting unconscious bias
- Quality standards and human expertise are crucial in training the next generation of AD tools
- We must actively resist the "race to the bottom" in AD quality.

Looking Forward:

What struck me most about ARSAD 2025 wasn't just the technological advances, but the spirit of collaboration in our community. I left the event with a renewed sense of purpose: to ensure AI enhances rather than diminishes the art of audio description.

Join the Conversation: I'd love to hear your thoughts. How do you think we can best maintain quality standards while embracing technological advancement? What does "good AD" mean to you in this evolving landscape? Write to us and share your perspective on shaping the future of accessible media.

*By Cara Edney, Founder of
Hear Say Audio Description
and ADA Board Trustee*



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What's On TV:

BBC iPlayer

Towards Zero (Agatha Christie)

This City is Ours

Virdee

ITV X

Bend It Like Beckham - Rom-com

Zulu - Michael Caine

Protection - Crime Thriller

Little Boy Blue - Crime Drama

The Escape Artist - Legal Drama with David Tennant.

The Victim - thought-provoking drama about a woman who 'outs' the man she believes served time for her son's murder.

Netflix

Adolescence
Emotional Thriller

Running Point
Comedy starring Kate Hudson

The Residence

Formula 1 - Drive to Survive - New Docuseries

Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning

Amazon Prime

Reacher New Series

Canary Black

Apple TV+

Surface

Dope Thief



Audio Description Association

**Bringing Fashion to Life Through Audio Description
London Fashion Week 2025**

*Based on an article by
bbc.com/news/articles/c1en7pgvvvlo*

Fashion is an art form that thrives on visual spectacle—bold colours, intricate textures, and dynamic movement. But for blind and visually impaired audiences, much of this creativity can feel out of reach. This year's London Fashion Week embraced inclusivity by offering live audio description (AD) for select shows, ensuring the catwalk's energy could be experienced beyond sight alone.

Making High Fashion More Accessible

Traditionally, fashion events rely on visual storytelling, limiting access for many. However, the industry is evolving, and AD is at the forefront of this transformation. At London Fashion Week, trained describers from VocalEyes and Stagertext provided live narration of outfits, fabrics, colors, and silhouettes, bringing fashion to life for blind and visually impaired attendees.

This initiative, led by accessibility advocates including the RNIB and supported by the British Fashion Council, marks a growing commitment to inclusivity. With brands focusing on diverse representation on the runway, extending accessibility to audiences through AD is an essential next step. Hair & Care also played a key role by offering a tactile experience, allowing attendees to feel the textures of clothing. This hands-on approach deepened engagement, helping guests understand fabrics, patterns, and craftsmanship beyond verbal description alone.

The Power of Audio Description in Fashion

Describing fashion requires a unique skill set. Unlike film or TV, where setting and action dominate, fashion description must capture intricate details—how fabrics move, how light plays on textures, and the overall aesthetic of a collection. This year's AD scripts brought designs to life, from shimmering metallics to sharp-structured blazers, making runway shows truly immersive.

A Step Toward a More Inclusive Industry

London Fashion Week's use of live AD is a vital step, but true inclusivity means integrating AD into online streams, exhibitions, and retail spaces.

Accessibility must be a standard, not an afterthought.

This initiative proves that inclusivity enhances engagement. With continued support from VocalEyes, Stagertext, RNIB, and Hair & Care, we hope more industries embrace AD, ensuring fashion's artistry is accessible to all.



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Exciting News:
We're Now on
LinkedIn!



The Audio Description Association is expanding its digital presence – we've officially launched our LinkedIn account!

Stay connected with us for the latest updates, industry insights, and community discussions on all things audio description. Whether you're a professional, advocate, or enthusiast, our LinkedIn page is your go-to space for networking and staying informed.

Follow us now and be part of the conversation:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/audio-description-association-67382634b/>

Let's build a stronger, more inclusive community together!
#AudioDescription
#Accessibility #InclusiveMedia



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Bringing Football into Focus: How Crystal Palace Transformed the match day Experience for Visually Impaired Fans

In a groundbreaking step towards inclusivity, Crystal Palace Football Club made history by becoming the first English football club to introduce vision enhancement technology for fans with sight loss. This pioneering initiative, launched during their match against Manchester United on September 21, 2024, allowed both home and away supporters at Selhurst Park to experience live football like never before. Now, as we look to the future, there is hope that this revolutionary technology will be embraced by more clubs across the league.

At the heart of this innovation was the GiveVision headset, which streamed live match footage directly to fans in real time. This cutting-edge technology provided an ultra-clear, magnified image tailored to the user's vision needs, helping those with low vision to follow the game in incredible detail. Unlike traditional audio description services, this system allowed fans to visually engage with the action, creating a richer and more immersive experience. Most importantly, it enabled fans to remain in their usual seats rather than being restricted to specific accessible areas, ensuring a more inclusive match day experience for all.

With an estimated one in 30 people in the UK experiencing some degree of sight loss, this initiative addressed a significant gap in football accessibility. Many clubs remain unaware of the number of visually impaired fans who do not attend matches due to accessibility barriers.

According to a study conducted by UNADEV, 73% of sports fans with visual impairments choose not to attend matches due to the lack of adequate support. Crystal Palace's commitment to improving the match day experience for these individuals has paved the way for other clubs to follow suit.

Sharon Lacey, Chief Operating Officer at Crystal Palace FC, expressed the club's pride in implementing the GiveVision technology, highlighting its alignment with their broader Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives. Sam Jackman, Chief Development Officer at Shared Access, praised the club for championing the use of assistive technology, while Joanna Liddington, Head of Operations at GiveVision, emphasised the transformative impact this could have on visually impaired sports fans.

As we reflect on this landmark achievement, there is hope that more football clubs will recognise the importance of accessibility and adopt similar solutions. Crystal Palace has set a precedent, proving that technology can bridge gaps in accessibility and create a more inclusive match day experience for all. The question now is: which club will be next to embrace this game-changing innovation?



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