

## Annual Report for (N.I.) Sightlines 2023-2024

Sightlines is a registered charity, run by volunteers, that makes theatre accessible to blind people by describing the visual element of theatre, including costumes, sets and props, to blind and visually impaired audience members. The process entails preparing programme notes which describe the set and scenery of the play, the characters' physical attributes and their costumes. These notes are provided in advance, in the chosen accessible format, to blind audience members. Meantime, the describers prepare a script which details the physical element of the production, including such essentials as arrivals on and off the stage, the visual component of humour, the major moves and actions. This has to be delivered between the lines of dialogue so that the blind people do not miss any of the spoken lines. It is delivered remotely, via a headset, into the ear of the blind person and enables them to respond to visual information at the same time as the mainstream audience. If a laugh is dependent on physical gestures or facial expressions the blind people laugh at the same time as the rest of the audience. Sightlines also describes exhibitions, art works, carnivals and tours for blind people, translating visual significance into verbal impressions.

NISightlines was once more indebted to the Dean's Sitout for a generous grant which enabled it to maintain its website. Additionally, thanks to this funding an online training programme was devised and delivered by the volunteer co-ordinator. This training programme is now available for the purpose of training others. As a result, four new describers, two of whom are based in Derry, were trained and began to take on audio description work.

From April 2023 to March 2024 the following shows and activities were described. At the Grand Opera House 13 shows in total were audio described: The Ocean at the End of The Lane; Six; Sponge Bob the Musical; The King and I; Dirty Dancing; Tosca; Bodyguard; 42<sup>nd</sup> Street; A Ghost Story; Snow White; The Full Monty; The Drifters Girl; Life of Pi; The Mousetrap. The Lyric Theatre arranged for seven of its productions to be audio described. They were: Agreement (described again almost a year later) The Beauty Queen of Leenane; Burnt Out; Hansel and Gretel; Have Yourself a Very Special Christmas; Little Women and the repeat of Agreement. In addition the Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC) had their Christmas show, The Night Before Christmas described and two newly trained audio describers were employed to describe the pantomime at the Millennium Forum in Derry.

As part of Belfast City Council's inclusive tourism initiative N.I. Sightlines provided audio description of a major conference which took place in the Titanic Building. They also reviewed the film which was developed to market Belfast as an inclusive city for tourists ensuring that the script produced carried enough visual information for blind people. A tour of various city venues with a blind patron was also undertaken. These were: a hotel; St. George's Market; the Museum and the Tropical Ravine. The Arts and Business Award ceremony at the Lyric Theatre was also audio described in its entirety.

2023 to 2024 was another busy year for N.I. Sightlines

Signed:

*Kate Ingram*  
Volunteer Co-ordinator

Date: 17/12/2024.