



Module 3

Unit 1: Audio description of live events

Core video transcript

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Transcript

Slide 1

Hello. I'm Louise Fryer, from Utopian Voices. In this ADLAB PRO video I will give an overview of audio description for live events. This is Unit 1 in Module 3.

Slide 2

Audio description is not only recorded for film and television

Slide 3

It is also delivered live for all sorts of events plays, ballets, operas – even carnival and circus.

Slide 4

It's provided in some sports arenas too - but we won't be dealing with sport in this module.

Slide 5

There are differences between AD for screen and AD for live events in terms of content, scripting and delivery.

Slide 6

You should describe the performance space - what the theatre is like and where the stage is situated: at one end of the room or with audience on one,

two or three sides or even moving from place to place in what is called a promenade performance.

Slide 7

In live performance, the AD is enhanced by other elements: an audio introduction delivered live just before the performance or recorded and circulated in advance. There may also be a touch tour, when PSL are invited onto the stage, to explore the set and the props and perhaps to meet the cast.

Slide 8

Traditionally, AD in the theatre is “closed”. PSL listen to it using a headset. The sighted audience probably don’t even know the description is happening. Some PSL find headsets uncomfortable or isolating so the AD is integrated into the performance. For now I’m focussing on what’s called Traditional AD.

Slide 9

Unlike a film or a TV programme where the action is always the same, timings change. An actor might slow down or speed up from one performance to the next or forget their lines completely. The set might break down, or the performance is stopped because of accident or injury. You have to expect the unexpected and improvise.

Slide 10

In some countries for screen AD, the describer’s script is delivered by a voice talent, in AD of live events, you’ll deliver your own. That means you need to have good vocal skills to be able to read your own script live. You’ll have to work some simple technical equipment too.

Slide 11

For plays you'll have access to the script, but many types of live performance have no dialogue. You might need to learn technical terms for dance or circus, but also convey an impression of the impact of the movement. You have to get extremely creative.

Slide 12

Another difference is that the person listening is part of an audience. They need to be able to laugh or cry, gasp or applaud at the same time as everyone else.

Slide 13

As a describer of live events you'll have close contact with PSL. You might need to guide people at the touch tour and show them props or costumes. You will also liaise with the stage manager, brief the cast and the front of house team and work closely with sound technicians.

Slide 14

The description may be divided between two describers. For example one person might describe Act 1 and the other Act 2. Or you might divide the performance with one person describing scenes in the present and the other scenes in the past. Work closely with your fellow describer to keep the AD in synch. in terms of style and terminology. Your co-describer can give you feedback.

Slide 15

You may also have to incorporate feedback from PSL or the director or a member of the company.

Slide 17

That concludes this brief overview of the challenges involved in describing live events.



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