

---

# Motionhouse

Est. 1988

## **Without Walls Access Support Grant; learning outcomes of the project**

In January 2020 Anne Hornsby from Mind's Eye came to Motionhouse premises to deliver training to enable us to deliver touch tours, primarily for our outdoor show WILD with the view that we could deliver touch tours as part of this year's tour and widen accessibility to audiences who are visually impaired.



Motionhouse team undertakes training with Anne Hornsby from Mind's Eye

As a result, there are a number of specific learning outcomes from that training session which are explored below.

1. Greater awareness about visually impaired audiences

Anne presented specific information to the Motionhouse team (both performers and office team members present as well as Irene Segura from Xtrax) about the history and social perception of visual impairment including disability legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, the three main social models of disability and the acceptable terminology to use when describing someone who is visually impaired. This background gave the team a wider understanding of the disability landscape and reinforced the reasons why we are committed to attracting a diverse audience and making our work more accessible.

2. Physical understanding of the challenges facing a visually impaired audience member

Through role playing exercises we were encouraged to engage with our surroundings as though we had a visual impairment and experience first-hand the difficulties facing a visually impaired audience member. The exercises prompted us to think about our work and the sets we use in a new way – we were encouraged to think about texture, colour, different heights, obstacles and the overall experience that we wanted to deliver during our touch tours. We explored describing the set in a way that is more accessible to a visually impaired person (e.g. this pole is more than twice the height of you rather than stating it is 5 metres tall) and describing how they are used in different ways in the show by the performers.

### 3. Creating a touch tour 'script'

In March performers and office team gathered to create a 'script' that the performers who will be delivering the touch tour could use as a guide. On the initial training day, we were given the tools with which to start building the structure of the tour. Please find the script attached as **Appendix A**. We learnt the importance of introducing yourself to the touch tour participant and decided that a 'meet and greet' should start the tour and we should set an expectation of what the tour would entail, including how long it would last. Leading on from that it seemed logical to introduce the piece itself (in this case a 45 minute dance-circus piece) and set the scene in terms of the story, a brief introduction to the set, the inspiration behind the piece and any references they would need in order to better visualise the movement that they were unable to see clearly or at all.

We created a logical pattern to follow when moving about on the set, beginning with walking the length and breadth of the set to give a clear indication of scale and to contextualise the space. Then we itemised four different parts of the set to be explored with the view that if there were multiple participants on the tour they could alternate at different 'stations' to prevent overcrowding.

Once the set has been introduced fully the performers will assume positions or demonstrate movements that are in the show with the touch tour participants having the opportunity to fully explore these poses or motions by touch. We identified several options for the dancers to use which would also give them the opportunity to warm up whilst performing them.

The touch tour will finish with an introduction to audio description (if this is available at that certain festival) and leading the touch tour participants to their seats for the show.

### 4. Reminders

To accompany the script, we also created a list of "do's and don'ts" to lay down the basics of what we had learned and to serve as a checklist for the touch tour guides to refer to just before beginning the tour. Please find this attached in **Appendix B**.

### 5. Programming considerations

Not only did we learn about how to create a touch tour itself but we also learnt about the logistics of providing a touch tour and the considerations when programming a touch tour to make it feasible. A list of programming considerations include:

- Timings. The tour is around 20/25 minutes so needs to begin 50 minutes to an hour before the show to allow the dancers time to adequately warm up. This needs to be taken into consideration when access times to the site and get in times are discussed with the venue/festival
- A touch tour can only be offered before the first show of the day otherwise it breaks up rest time for the dancers between shows
- All dancers will need to be on hand to deliver the touch tour (6 performers in the show)
- 4 touch tour participants at once is optimum but can go up to 6 maximum
- Need to consider access requirements to the site, e.g. is the set on a stage that is accessible?
- Request extra stewards from the festival to help
- State on all advertising that no dogs are allowed due to allergies the performers have
- Ask touch tour participants to book in advance so that we can prepare accordingly and the performers can factor it into their schedule for the day

## **Next steps**

Previously we had planned to test out the touch tour in late April/early May by inviting visually impaired people through our association with The Guide Dogs to come and take part in a touch tour and watch the show at our rehearsal space in Leamington Spa. After that we had planned to offer it to as many festivals as possible over the summer (June and July 2020). However, due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty the sector as well as Motionhouse now faces these plans have been postponed and will be rescheduled when appropriate.



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**VITSOE**