

Captioning: Making Theatre Accessible for the Deaf, Deafened and Hard or Hearing

Captioning is just like subtitles on your TV. Captioning usually presents the actors words, sound effects and a description of any music played on an LED screen above or to the side of the stage.

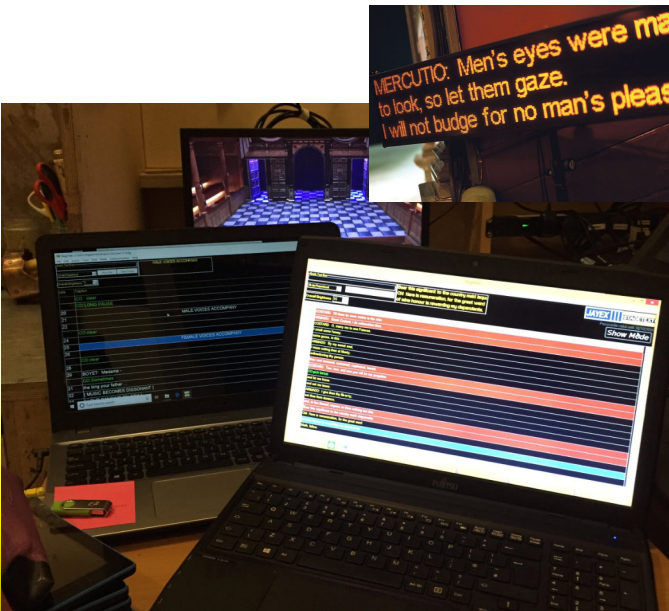
There are now multiple ways to caption a performance (there is really no excuse not to...)

Open Captioning

Open Captioning is the most commonly used form of captioning as this is how captioning all started.

This form of captioning is with the LED screen and usually involves live outputting from a trained captioner.

The LED screen means when no words are shown, no light is admitted from the caption units. This still allows the designer to have an *'uninterrupted blackout'*, even on open captioned performances!



Closed Captioning

Closed Captioning presents all the same descriptions as open captioning but is **output on to a tablet** that the user can hold on their lap.

This means *only people who have requested a tablet will be able to see the captions.*



Developed with Accenture and Epson, the National Theatre have started using smart caption glasses. *Users wear the glasses and see the captions and the stage at the same time.*

There is no live outputting, as they are used for all shows, so the **technology uses word recognition to fire the next caption cue**. If actors forget their lines this can be problematic and there will be no visible captions available until the software is able to find its place.

This could be revolutionary for the captioning world.



Creative captioning is where the captions are **integrated into the design of the show**. Usually via projection.

This is difficult to get right as there are normally a lot of caption cues per production.

More information about creative captioning can be found at:

<http://www.stagetext.org/creative-captioning>

An article in The Guardian by Catherine Love talks about how *"Jack Thorne's The Solid Life of Sugar Water and a revival of Gogol's The Government Inspector are among new accessible productions enriching the experience for audiences through design and casting choices"*

Roxana Silbert, artistic director of Birmingham Rep thinks that BSL is beneficial for everyone not just users. She said *"having that second language enhances what the play is already trying to do."*



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Things you must consider when setting up a captioning service.



Where you put the screens or users seats.

You *can't have a user having to look through light to read the captions*. This is because this is much more likely to make the captions hard to read and *increase the chance of headaches for the users*.

"Through a light" means you have to consider where the lighting designer has put the lights and the direction they are pointed. Users shouldn't have to look through the beam of one light to see words written in a different light source.

Lots of people who have hearing problems can also struggle with problems caused by the fluid in your ear; things *like balance and nausea*. Therefore it is important to consider the location of the users seats with open and closed captioning. If someone is having to *move their head side to side or up and down a-lot during the performance* it can make you feel quite sick- even if the fluid in your ears is perfectly normal.

They have come to watch a show at the theatre, not pretend they are at a tennis match.



The colour of the text

If you use a charity like StageTEXT they will decide the colour for you; *yellow*.

If you are setting it up independently, yellow is the best option to go for against the black LED screen background. It is easiest to read due to *high contrast* and scientists have discovered that *yellow is the last colour for the human eye to lose sight of*. If someone older is using the captions then the chances of their eyes being a 'little less than best' is higher and therefore, *yellow will be the most comfortable colour for them to read*.



Being clear with creative captioning

In order to promote your show as a captioned performance the captions need to be accurate and very clear, even if they are presently slightly abstractly.

Creative captioning, done well, can be a huge success because it is integrated into the design of the show (e.g available every performance), can be seen from any seat (excluding reduce priced restricted view seats), and doesn't draw attention to caption users.