

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

ADA COMPLIANCE

Under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), both the facility and the presenter/producer have a legal obligation to provide effective communication for someone with a disability that does not fundamentally alter the nature of the product being offered or cause an undue burden to the venue. As cited in the ADA Technical Assistance Manual, open captioning is one of the examples of auxiliary aids and services that promote effective communication for people who are hard of hearing or deaf.

BENEFITS TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

People who are hard of hearing or deaf

Over 30 million people in the United States have a hearing loss, about 10% of the population. The majority of these individuals, 98-99%, use oral language rather than American Sign Language. (Resources: League for the Hard of Hearing, Hearing Loss Association of America)

Individuals developing a gradual hearing loss with age who do not identify themselves as hard of hearing or deaf. Only one out of five people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one.

Hearing audience members, children learning to read and individuals studying English as a Second Language

The backup of words on a text display helps anyone who may miss occasional words within rapid song lyrics, heavily accented dialogue, technical descriptions or foreign phrases.

Broadway production of *The Phantom of the Opera* (below) and Broadway production of *The Producers* (on cover)



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

TDF SPONSORSHIP ON BROADWAY



"Open captioning has become a welcome service for Manhattan Theatre Club's Family Matinee Series at the Biltmore Theatre on Broadway and provides an opportunity for people with hearing loss to enjoy shows that they otherwise would not be able to attend."

—David Shookhoff, Manhattan Theatre Club, New York, NY

TDF SPONSORSHIP ACROSS THE U.S.



"Those of us here at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts are delighted to be able bring live open captioned performances to our community. 'Amazing, thrilling and awesome!' are just some of the comments made by those having experienced this new medium."

—Garry Novick, Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

TDF SPONSORSHIP OFF BROADWAY



*"Playwrights Horizons' open captioning program would not be possible without support from TDF and TAP Plus. * It has enabled us to better serve theatregoers who are hard of hearing or deaf."*

—Sue Ferziger, Playwrights Horizons, New York, NY

***TAP Plus is an open captioning grants program managed by TDF in partnership with the New York State Council on the Arts for eligible organizations in NY State.**

For more information on open captioning for theatre, please contact:

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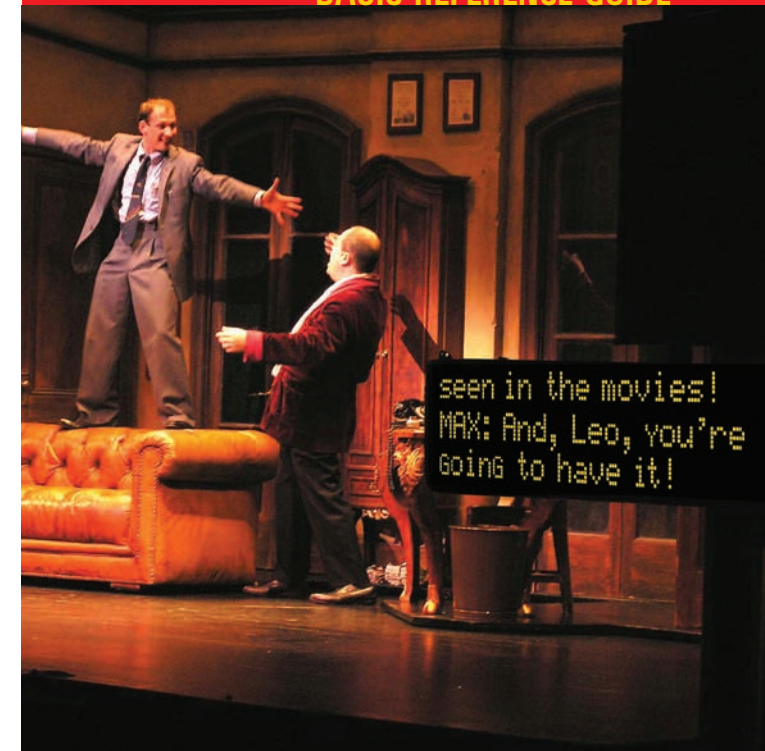
Open captioning provided by c2(Caption Coalition) Inc. TDF would like to thank the following major donors for their generous support of open captioning:

- Theodore H. Barth Foundation, Inc.
- Louise & Ardé Bulova Fund, Inc.
- Laurence W. Levine Foundation, Inc.



OPEN CAPTIONING FOR THEATRE

BASIC REFERENCE GUIDE



OPEN CAPTIONING
TDF Accessibility Programs

A service of
Theatre Development Fund

tdf

What is Open Captioning for Theatre?

Open captioning is a service for people with hearing loss that uses a text display to provide a simultaneous translation of dialogue and lyrics during a live performance, as well as a description of any sound effects on stage.

The service is open to everyone for viewing in a designated seating area without any special equipment needed by the audience member. Because of this, open captioning is considered passive assistance and is part of the Universal Design concept, which means that it can be used by all people, regardless of age and ability.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

EQUIPMENT

A portable LED (light emitting diode) text display connects to a laptop computer that is equipped with a special software program. From the keyboard, a live operator triggers pre-scripted text onto the display from the laptop in synchronization with the actors for an “in the moment” translation. For improvisational performances, the operator also uses a stenotype machine to input the performers’ words verbatim that then appear on the LED display. This “real-time” transcription is known as CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation). Also needed are: a copy of the script, preferably an electronic version, in advance for pre-scripted performances; a regular 120 volt power line, and a stand for the display.

POSITIONING

To avoid eye strain, it’s best to position the text display at the same depth of field as the stage that people are watching and at the same eye level with the actors; i.e., at the side of the stage by the proscenium, on the stage in an unused area or, for a thrust stage, on the opposite side so viewers look across the stage to read the open captioning.

OPERATOR

The open captioning is provided by a professionally trained operator who is skilled in script re-formatting, exact timing with the actors and, when needed, the ability to provide CART.

HOW DO YOU MARKET TICKETS FOR IT?

SEAT LOCATIONS

Designating orchestra seats closer to the stage usually provides the best opportunity for people with hearing loss to read the open captioning in tandem with the actors’ lips and facial expressions.

TICKET PRICING

If possible, making a discounted ticket price available for seats in the open captioning section of the orchestra helps to compensate for the lack of less expensive seating options available to people with hearing loss. Some individuals may just be able to afford mezzanine or balcony prices while the service being provided for them is helpful only if you are sitting closer in the orchestra. Also, if discounted orchestra tickets are already being made available to the general public, e.g., through subscriptions, special group rates, and credit card offers, providing similar discount opportunities for open captioning encourages a new audience.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Use of the OC logo (open captioning) on brochures and web listings for the general public, additional advertising through local service organizations for people with hearing loss, and a brief description of open captioning in press releases, all help in marketing the service. Many people with hearing loss are not aware that open captioning is even an option for theatre, and most hearing individuals usually know of at least one person with hearing loss who might benefit from open captioning.

(From left to right) Broadway production of *42nd Street*, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, Broadway productions of *Movin' Out*, *The Music Man* and *Beauty and the Beast*

