

Guide to Hearing Access in NYC Theaters

People with hearing loss require special assistance to experience and enjoy live theater in a manner comparable to those with normal hearing. In the years since passage of the first Americans With Disabilities Act in 1990, theater operators have taken various approaches to providing such accessibility, as technology has improved and laws and legal decisions have affirmed hearing loss as requiring accommodation. The specific types of hearing access available, as of March 1, 2014, at Broadway and Off Broadway theaters is indicated below.

Broadway Theaters

Currently, all Broadway theaters are equipped with **assistive listening systems**, which transmit sound wirelessly to the audience. Most of these systems utilize **infrared (IR) systems**, although a few FM systems may also be found. These sound signals can be accessed by theater patrons, via either **headset receivers** worn over the ears or, for patrons with hearing aids and/or cochlear processors containing telecoils (or t-coils), **neckloop receivers** that transmits signals to their hearing devices.

A number of headsets and neckloops are available at theaters at the time of performances. Patrons may also reserve them by calling Sound Associates, 212.582.7678, 48 hours prior to performances. Because IR systems transmit their signals via line-of-sight, users are advised to sit as closely as possible to the center of theaters and avoid sitting in seats in the front rows (which may be below stage level), on the extreme sides, or in the last rows of mezzanine sections with overhangs.

In recent years, Broadway has begun to offer closed captioning devices for a limited number of shows, generally the longest-running and most successful. These devices, known as **I-Caption**, are especially valuable to deaf theatergoers and to those with the most profound hearing loss, for whom the signal from neckloops is inadequate for clear understanding of speech.

I-Caption devices, which are about the size of a hard-cover book, are currently available at these six shows: “The Book of Mormon,” “Jersey Boys,” “The Lion King,” “Mama Mia,” “Newsies” and “Wicked.” Captions appear on the device’s screen in synch with

the stage action. The devices are also available at the time of performances or by calling 212.582.7678.

The newest development is the introduction of **hearing loop technology** on Broadway. In theaters equipped with hearing loops, patrons with hearing devices containing t-coils simply switch their devices to the t-coil setting to access the sound of performances. There is no equipment to obtain and because there is nothing to wear, the theatergoer is not seen as requiring any special accommodation.

The first two theaters to install hearing loops are the Gershwin Theatre and the Richard Rodgers Theatre of the Nederlander Organization. As theater owners continue to renovate their venues, it is hoped that more and more will be equipped with hearing loops.

Established in 1995, the Theatre Development Fund's **Theatre Accessibility Program (TAP)** seeks to make Broadway theater more accessible to people with disabling conditions, including the deaf and those with hearing loss. TAP members. Reduced price tickets are offered to TAP members for a limited number of open-captioned performances of specific shows, at which an electronic text display board to the side of the stage shows, in real time, what the actors are saying or singing and describes the sound effects.

ASL sign language interpreting for theatergoers who are deaf is also provided and the seating for those with hearing loss and the deaf is in the orchestra on the side where the display board and sign language interpreter are located.

Off Broadway Theaters

As the list below indicates, Off Broadway theaters vary in their accessibility to people with hearing loss, from none to headsets only, to headsets and neckloops, and even an occasional captioned performance. To the best of HLAA's knowledge, no Off Broadway venue has been equipped with a hearing loop as yet. Theatergoers are encouraged to check directly with the box office or theater management before purchasing tickets.

<u>Theater</u>	<u>Headsets</u>	<u>Neckloops</u>	<u>Captioning</u>
Atlantic Theater 336 W.20 th St.	Yes	Yes	_____
Barrow St. Theater 27 Barrow St.	Yes	Yes	Occasional
Classic Stage Co. 136 E 13 th St.	Yes	Yes	Occasional
The Duke Theater 229 W. 42 nd St.	Yes	Yes	Occasional

<u>Theater</u>	<u>Headsets</u>	<u>Neckloops</u>	<u>Captioning</u>
59 E 59 Theater 59 E 59 th St. - Main stage - Other two stages	Yes No	No No	
Flea Theater 41 White St.	No	No	
Irish Repertory 132 W. 22 nd St.	Yes	No	
Lucille Lortell 121 Christopher St.	Yes	No	
Manhattan Theater Club 131 W. 55 th St	Yes	Yes	Occasional
Mitzi Newhouse 150 W. 65 th St. (Lincoln Center)	Yes	Yes	
Mint Theater 311 W. 43 rd St.	No	No	
New World Stages 340 W. 50 th St	Yes	No	
NY Theater Workshop 79E. 4 th St.	Yes	No	
Pearl St. Theater 555W.42 nd St	Yes	No	
Playwrights Horizon 416 W. 42 nd St.	Yes	No	Occasional
Public Theater 425 Lafayette St	Yes	No	
Roundabout Theater (American Airlines, Studio 54, Laura Pels)	Yes	Yes	

<u>Theater</u>	<u>Headsets</u>	<u>Neckloops</u>	<u>Captioning</u>
Second Stage 307 W 43rd St.	Yes	No	One for most productions
Signature Theater 555 W. 42nd. St	Yes	Yes	Occasional
St. Lukes 308 W.46th St.	No	No	_____
Vineyard Theater 108 E.15 th St.	No	No	_____
Westside Arts 407 W.43rd. St.	Yes	No	_____
Theater Row 410 W.42nd St.			
- Acorn Theatre	No	No	_____
- Beckett Theatre	No	No	_____
- Clurman Theatre	Yes	No	_____
- Lion Theatre	No	No	_____
- Studio Theatre	No	No	_____
York Theater 619 Lexington Ave. (St. Peter's Church)	No	No	_____

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