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**Prime Stage Theatre and Nathan Ruggles
Honored with National Achievement Award
Recognizing Significant Contributions in Audio Description**

(Pittsburgh, PA – September 6, 2022) Prime Stage Theatre and their audio describer, Nathan Ruggles, are honored to be the recipients of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) 2022 Audio Description Achievement Awards in the Performing Arts/Organization and Performing Arts/Individual category. Prime Stage Theatre and Ruggles were recognized for their continued efforts to develop and present audio described performances that bring literature to life for audiences in the Pittsburgh area.

“Prime Stage not only has given me unparalleled support and access in doing my job, they have allowed me to strive for second-to-none quality, continuous improvement, and to push Audio Description services forward,” said Nathan Ruggles, Audio Describer.

Audio description is a service that makes performances accessible for audience members who are blind or who have low vision. It is a real-time account of all the visual elements of a show, delivered live. Description users hear the describer through headphones attached to portable audio receivers.

Audio description is written to fit into spaces in the dialogue so it does not interrupt the natural flow of the piece, but rather, enhances it, and allows users to follow the physical, visual elements of the show, as they happen.

Audio description usually involves two, carefully crafted scripts. The pre-show “Touch Tour” workshops provide close-up, hands-on interaction where the patrons feel the textures of the costumes and props from the show. They have an opportunity to walk around the set for a better description of the overall production accompanied by detailed descriptions from members of the production team describing costumes, props, which character(s) each actor is playing, and what those actors/characters look like. (The “Touch Tour” is currently on hold due to covid concerns).

The in-show description is a real-time account of the action, delivered live during the performance itself.

Ruggles brings more than audio description including Actor Voice ID and the aforementioned “Touch Tours” to Prime Stage and their patrons. With his recommendation, Prime Stage Theatre features large print playbills created by the Carnegie Library for the Blind which provides braille programs.

In addition to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, audio description can help people on the autism spectrum to understand interpersonal/emotional cues, people with ADHD and other attention challenges to figure out where to direct their focus at any given moment, children and others acquiring language for the first time and English-language learners.

Although Ruggles has been providing audio description services for Prime Stage Theatre since 2017 he officially joined their staff in 2021. This move has vastly increased his ability to affect change and make improvements to their audio description program.

“Prime Stage is honored to be awarded this recognition and to have Nathan Ruggles, our Audio Describer receive this prestigious national award. It ensures audiences that we are consistently presenting quality experiences that truly bring literature to life and make theatre accessible for everyone,” said Wayne Brinda, Prime Stage Theatre, Producing Artistic Director.

This season, to accommodate the needs of our patrons, all Audio Described performances will be on selected Sunday afternoons during each production by Prime Stage. The dates of Audio Described performances are on the Prime Stage website along with how long each performance lasts for those who use accessibility transportation.

The awards were presented on July 4, 2022 during ACB’s 61st annual conference and convention. The annual Audio Description Awards Gala will be held virtually on November 29, 2022. The gala celebrates the best of the best within the art and science of inclusive audio-described media.

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Nathan Ruggles
Prime Stage Theatre Audio Describer