

## **A template for the audio introduction of operas: A proposal**

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Fecha de recepción: 5 de enero de 2019  
Fecha de aceptación: 15 de octubre de 2019

**Abstract:** Audio Introductions (AI) consist of a brief description of the plot, history and technical aspects of an audiovisual product and are generally presented at the beginning of an operatic event. Despite their prevalence, literature related to the elaboration of AI in audio description (AD) guidelines is scarce. Continuing the investigation carried out by the research group Transmedia Catalonia in the field of AD for opera, this article focuses on the role of AI in opera, not only as an access service for the blind and visually impaired audience, but also for all audience members.

Furthermore, a template for AIs is put forward, in which the contents that AIs should cover for the appropriate presentation of the information relevant to the opera are detailed and explained. The article delves into these contents and underscores their importance for enhancing the experience of the opera for both the visually impaired and the general audience. The creation and distribution of a template draws attention to the potential of standardisation of this access service.

The article is based on the analysis of a template used at the Gran Teatre del Liceu of Barcelona by the audio describer, also a co-author of the article, employed in the production of AIs throughout the opera season 2016/17. The creation of AIs by means of the template improved the workflow by providing a clear understanding of the topics to be covered beforehand and by outlining the time constraints during the live performance on the contents.

**Keywords:** Media Accesibility, Audiovisual Translation, Opera, Audio Introduction, Audio Description

**Resumen:** Resumen: Las audiointroducciones (AI) consisten en una breve descripción del argumento, la historia y los aspectos técnicos de un producto audiovisual y generalmente se encuentran al principio de los eventos operáticos. A pesar de su uso frecuente, poco se ha escrito sobre la elaboración de AI para audiodescripción (AD). En línea con la investigación

llevada a cabo por el grupo de investigación Transmedia Catalonia en el campo de la audiodescripción para ópera, este artículo trata el papel de la AI para ópera no solo como servicio de accesibilidad para personas ciegas o con baja visión sino también como recurso para todo tipo de público. Se propone, además, una plantilla para AI en la que se explican y detallan los contenidos que una AI debería tener para una adecuada presentación de la información relevante de la ópera. Este artículo analiza estos contenidos y remarca la importancia que tienen a la hora de mejorar la experiencia operática tanto para el público ciego o con baja visión como para el público general. La creación y distribución de esta plantilla pone de relieve el potencial de estandarización de este servicio de accesibilidad. El artículo se basa en el análisis de una plantilla utilizada por el audiodescriptor, también coautor del artículo, en el Gran Teatre del Liceu de Barcelona para la producción de AI durante la temporada de ópera 2016/17. La creación de AI a través de esta plantilla mejoró el ritmo de trabajo ya que ofrece una visión clara de los temas que se deben tratar y de las restricciones de tiempo que afectan a los contenidos durante las funciones en directo.

**Palabras clave:** Accesibilidad a los medios audiovisuales, Traducción audiovisual, Opera, Audiointroducción, Audiodescripción

#### AUDIO DESCRIBING OPERA

The service of Audio Description (AD) provides accessibility for very different audiovisual contents. This first section aims to introduce the service and explore its application to live audiovisual events, such as opera. AD is an oral commentary based on an intersemiotic translational technique used to overcome the barriers encountered when audiences with specific needs, such as the blind and the visually impaired, consume an audiovisual product. It stands as a way of mediation which is “cross-modal, involving essentially a 'translation' of visual images into verbal text” (Braun 2008: 2). The description of the visual input “fits in the silences between dialogues and describes action, body language, facial expressions and anything that will help people with visual impairment follow what is happening on screen or stage” (Díaz Cintas & Anderman 2009: 8). This form of aural adaptation has proved very effective. In fact, studies on mental imagery — the capacity of creating images in the mind — have shown that this capacity is not only related to the ability of seeing. Essentially, people with vision loss can recreate images when exposed to the aural stimuli presented through AD (Fryer 2010; Pylyshyn 2002).

AD can be traced back as far as the Medieval Ages, when pilgrims needed oral explanations to understand and enjoy the visual narrative in the

stained glass windows of churches and cathedrals (Benecke & Dosch 2004; Pujol & Orero 2007). According to Ramos Caro (2016), the origins of AD as conceived in modern times are found in the 1940s, when the first films were described on Spanish radio after the Spanish civil war. Currently this service is offered around the globe, both from associations for the blind and from governments and broadcasters, and has become available in an increasing number of countries in the last 20 years (Fryer & Freeman 2013; Orero 2007b). As a result of its steadily growing presence in modern audiovisual production, the academic study of AD within the framework of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility Studies has attracted interest in recent decades (Fryer, 2016; Igareda & Matamala, 2012; Kruger & Orero, 2010) particularly within the field of cinematographic production. However, other kinds of audiovisual media such as opera, theatre or other forms of performing arts have also benefitted from this technique, in an effort to be inclusive to wide audiences.

Many standards and guidelines on media accessibility include AD (see AENOR 2005; Benecke & Dosch 2004; Independent Television Commission (ITC) 2000) as a description placed in silent moments or when there is only background music during an audiovisual product. The implementation of AD in performing arts, though, is more complex, for they present specific challenges, the most prominent being the live aspect (Matamala 2007). This means that each individual performance can differ, particularly in terms of timing and structure. This kind of AD for live events is voiced live by the narrator, normally also the audio describer.

Due to these constraints, sometimes AD is unable to cover all the visual information appearing on screen or stage. The information may then be imparted in the form of audio introductions (AI), as it is usually done before an opera or theatre performance, or before each act or section. AI as a technique for conveying information as a part of the AD service has not been studied in depth as of yet with only a handful of articles on the topic (Di Giovanni 2014; Hammer et al. 2015; Jankowska 2013; Remael & Reviers 2013; Reviers 2014; Romero-Fresco & Fryer 2013).

The present article focuses on opera and its intrinsic characteristics. This medium can easily benefit from AIs due to the amount of information to be conveyed in the AD: what is happening on stage, the information provided by the surtitles and/or subtitles and, ideally, a summary of the contents in the libretto or leaflet (Matamala, 2005). The amount of information, combined with a rarity of silent gaps, make the AD of opera a very demanding task. In order to cover the information which may be lost due to all these limitations, an introduction before the opera play or before every act has the potential to be very helpful for audiences with sight loss. AIs stand as a form of descriptive

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prologue, and as in cinema, they consist of “a continuous piece of prose providing factual and visual information about the source material that must engage the listener’s attention [and] whet their appetite” (Romero-Fresco & Fryer 2014).

This article discusses the creation of a template for the implementation and delivery of opera AI which will form a common structure to meet the informative needs of visually impaired opera goers. The template is proposed based on the experience of the audio describer, Iturregui-Gallardo, co-author of this article, who created the AI scripts and voiced them live introducing the AD. This initiative adds to previous research carried out in the framework of the Gran Teatre del Liceu of Barcelona, which has become a research hotspot in the field of performing arts accessibility thanks to a Memorandum of Understanding between this opera house and the research group Transmedia Catalonia.

As one of the most important theatres in the country, the Gran Teatre del Liceu of Barcelona has introduced important technological changes which have improved its accessibility services, especially since 1994 when a fire caused extensive damage to the building. The reconstruction works provided an opportunity to implement a series of technological improvements in its subtitling, surtitling and media accessibility services (Matamala & Orero, 2007). The research group Transmedia Catalonia has played a leading role in the studies concerned with opera accessibility in Spain, particularly thanks to the relationship between this opera house and the university. By taking the literature produced by its scholars on AD for opera as a starting point, the following paragraphs aim to situate AIs and their characteristics within the research field.

As a live event, opera AD presents specific challenges. Matamala analyses the types of live AD that exist (2007) and the challenges faced by professionals when implementing them. She focuses on the Catalan scene (2005), paying special interest to opera performances. During the same years other studies were published solely devoted to the AD used in opera. Orero and Matamala (2007) present an overview of the application of subtitling and surtitling services to overcome the language barrier, as well as of AD services in opera. By taking one step further in accessibility for opera, the same research group tested an audio subtitling service which was able to read aloud written subtitles and surtitles (Orero, 2007a). In this case study, the interlinguistic translation surtitles and subtitles from the original language into Catalan was made available for blind and visually impaired audiences by means of audio subtitles. Their implementation was generally well received by end users. However, it is to be noted that, as the technique is characterised by the overlapping of the original musical pieces and the read-aloud

translation, the individual preference towards a more musical-centred experience or a more textual-centred experience of each user can affect how well it was received.

#### 1. AUDIO INTRODUCING OPERA

Nowadays, some opera houses and theatres across the globe—other than the Gran Teatre del Liceu— offer audio-described sessions for people with specific needs. Such is the case of the Opera North, in Nottingham; the Royal Opera House and the English National Opera established in the London Coliseum, both in London; the Spanish Teatro Real in Madrid; the Sferisterio di Macerata, adapted as opera house during the Macerata Opera Festival; or the Ópera National de Paris.

Some of these venues also provide the service of AI. These AIs are available for downloading directly from their webpages (see, for example, the AIs for the Royal Opera House and The English National Opera<sup>1</sup> or the Macerata Opera Festival<sup>2</sup>) or are performed live before the beginning of the opera (as in the Ópera National de Paris). The way the AIs are produced varies across the opera houses. During the Macerata Opera Festival, AIs can be found on its webpage and last from 5 to 10 minutes per opera. In the Royal Opera House or the English National Opera, the pre-recorded AIs, apart from being available for downloading them from the webpage are played repeatedly during the 15 minutes before the opera. In Paris, not all operas contain an AI, but if it is provided, this is done live before the beginning of the opera. The form and presentation of these AIs are different depending on the characteristics and needs of the venue, opera performance and delivery to the audience. This article proposes a template adapted to the Liceu opera house's reality, but it can serve as a model that could be reproduced.

The outcomes and conclusions of previous research in this Catalan opera house led to new approaches to opera AD. Cabeza and Matamala (2008), in their proposal for the AD of opera performances, introduce the AI as a way of conveying information before the performance and its various acts. Their chapter mentions the possibilities of such audio excerpts, which can be uploaded online and made available for sighted audiences as well. These AIs condense the information regarding not only the plot of the opera but the libretto and the historical and technical aspects of the opera in three different languages. Two years later, in the case study of the opera *Andrea Chénier*, Cabeza (2010) analyses the implementation of two types of AD for

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sightlines-audio-description.com/audio-introductions>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sferisterio.it/en/accessibility>

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opera: an AI combined with a comprehensive AD avoiding overlapping with the singing, and an extensive AI with no AD during the performance. The study found that users preferred the use of an AI complementing the AD during the performance. Corral & Lladó (2011) analyse the AD model for opera established after previous research by the Transmedia Catalonia group and comment on the application of such an AD model for Szymanowski's opera *Król Roger* and detail the best use of AD techniques in opera.

Beyond academia, the benefits of audio introductions have been discussed by different professional audio describers. Notably, Greg York shared his 40-year long experience in opera and ballet AD at the English National Opera and Royal Opera House. He highlights the importance of the AI resource, which he refers to as "Talking Notes", as a means for "uninterrupted enjoyment of the performance" (York, 2007: 215) for the visually impaired. In his recommendations on how to issue and deliver an AI, he provides a list of items to be included, namely: essential credits, nutshell synopsis, production concept—sets and costumes, scene sympathy, shapes, textures and colours.

York's recommendations are also considered in Puigdomènech, Matamala & Orero (2008) with the aim of creating guidelines for Catalan opera AD. They consider the inclusion of AIs in events where the information is to be given before and not during the event. Even though the article mentions the many aspects that the AD should cover, namely characters, stage, actions and so forth, and how these aspects should be delivered, the AI is not explored in detail. However, these scholars examine the differences between opera events (live or recorded, with or without breaks) and how the information to be provided can be distributed in each case, thus underlining the importance and utility of the AI strategy.

Having said that, and despite York's work on AI, there are currently no guidelines for the creation of AIs for opera, although some opera houses stick to the same internal model (e.g. The Royal Opera House in London or the Macerata Opera Festival). Having detected the lack of literature in the matter, this article presents a template for opera AI at the Liceu theatre in Barcelona. It stands, then, as a first step towards the creation of guidelines and ultimately the standardisation of opera AI. This final goal can be reached through more research and end user testing. Although standardisation could also entail some drawbacks, such as the fact that AI could be perceived as monotonous or with a lack of creativity, the template only aims at structuring and limiting the contents so as to fit timings in a live opera event and facilitate the work of the audio describer. Therefore, it is not a strict and fixed proposal, but a skeleton from which contents can adapt to the specific operatic event and venue.

## 2. RATIONALE

While some standards and guidelines provide guidance for the creation of AD, neither the function nor the incorporation of AI in different kinds of audiovisual contents have been treated in depth yet. Similarly, in standards and guidelines few is said about other long-established opera accessibility services, such as surtitling. Surtitle form and functioning is dictated by previous research based on aspects such as reading speed or text positioning (Burton 2008; Eardley-Weaver 2014; Griesel 2005; Mateo 2007; Palmer 2013; Wijnants 2014). Also, surtitles are launched with the help of specialised computer programs. Meanwhile, live human-voiced AI presents a hand-crafted nature. The details to be included are not regulated by any convention or software, but rather time limitations, and the content decision-making is to be faced by audio describers.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the creation of a template for AI found its rationale in a series of common unmet needs. For each of the operas played on the Liceu's stage, Transmedia's research group is in charge of providing the live AD for the accessible session. Apart from preparing an AD script to be narrated to the audience, each of the operas had to be introduced before the beginning of the event. While some of the operas, such as *Macbeth* or *La Fille du Régiment*, presented a more traditional *mise-en-scène*, others, such as *Quartett* or *The Magic Flute*, combined more innovative particularities, such as unusual stage designs and video projections. The latter may require further information, making the AI almost an indispensable part of the experience. Thus, it can be argued that the form and the structure of an AI will depend heavily on the particularities of the audiovisual product being audio described. As previously mentioned, operas differ greatly even among the different productions of the same oeuvre. However, the application of a skeleton from which the various pieces of information can be hung could perform the following functions:

- provide cohesion amongst performances;
- standardise AI structures so users will know what to expect;
- convey the information in a more concise way to speed-up the work of the audio describer when producing AIs;
- and make circulation and exchange of the AIs across languages more agile if the operas tour across different territories.

Primarily, following a pre-determined template will provide cohesion throughout all the AIs provided by the same theatre, in our case, the Gran Teatre del Liceu. Over the years this opera house has cultivated a corporate identity which includes among other things a series of symbols, logos and

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product design (found in its leaflets, website and brochures) which audiences associate with the theatre. AIs could become another item in this corporate identity, an extra service that the users can expect in every performance.

Secondly, it will aim for clarity and ease of use with its customers, since consistently providing similarly structured AIs in each audio described event offered by the opera house will familiarise the user with the information provided by the AI, its duration and structure. Depending on their experience with the opera house, they would be able to predict the amount of information available in the AI and look for more in-depth details beforehand if they so desire.

At the opera house of Liceu, every operatic performance is accompanied by a vast amount of textual information included in the programme and brochure. Such information does not only concern details about the production itself, but also interpretations and analyses provided by different scholars or other opera musicologists or historians. A template will provide guidance in terms of how much information is to be conveyed, therefore ensuring the successful condensation of information and streamlining the creation of the AI itself.

Finally, the use of guidelines will contribute to the standardisation of such introductory pieces of information and foster the circulation and exchange of AIs across opera houses. It will save some work and provide internal harmony, create expectations in the audience and avoid bad or incomplete introductions. Opera performances held in the Barcelonan opera house are big productions created with large budgets that normally go on tour to different theatres. A template like the one proposed here would avoid the repetition of the research step and the task of discriminating the relevant information. This would be true not only for the reproduction of the AI in other performances, but also its translation into other languages.

### 3. THE CREATION OF A TEMPLATE FOR THE AUDIO INTRODUCTION OF OPERAS

By means of questionnaires, Fryer and Romero (2013) illustrate how AIs can enhance visually impaired audiences' access to screen media by contributing additional cinematic and other visual information. We argue that the same can be true for live performances such as opera. Thus, following Romero-Fresco and Fryer's proposal of an AI for Quentin Tarantino's motion picture *Inglourious Basterds* (2014a), and adapting it to the specific needs of opera, we have designed a template for opera AI within the framework of the 2016/2017 season.



This comprehensive template aims to summarize the most relevant aspects of an opera that may go unperceived for visually impaired audiences. It includes not only the obvious visual description of the stage, but also the details usually appearing in the libretto, which is not always accessible by means of braille or an audio guide. It also covers aspects of the visual style or the intertextual references that might go unnoticed even by sighted audiences.

As stated by Reviere (2014), the possible functions of an AI are informative, foreshadowing, expressive-aesthetic, and instructive, which she defines as follows:

- a) Informative: information about the most factual data is provided; namely, the director, the cast, the running time of the opera, its synopsis, etc.
- b) Foreshadowing: information about the characters and their wardrobe or makeup is also provided, aiming to ease their identification during the opera. Furthermore, when audio introducing the characters it is recommended that a brief recording of each of the actor's voices is included, where possible. In this way, the blind or visually impaired audience members are able to easily recognize which character is speaking at any given moment.
- c) Expressive-aesthetic: this includes the visual techniques used on stage. Apart from the narrated information, the tone of the AI itself should be considered. The AI should set the opera's mood, or at least not conflict with it, be it sad, heroic, romantic, etc. as suggested by some studies on AD intonation which suggest departing from a neutral intonation in certain audiovisual genres (see Walczak2017; Walczak & Fryer 2017; forthcoming).
- d) Instructive: the most practical pieces of information about the theatre venue and the technical aspects of the AI/AD service.

The order in which all this information appears is based upon Reviere's recommendations (2014) found in the AD ADLAB guidelines (Remael, Reviere, & Vercauteren, 2014), as detailed below:

- Begin with a welcome word, present yourself/the speaker and relate the running time of the introduction;
- Begin with factual details and include more descriptive elements at the core of the introduction;
- Combine the description of the plot and characters, as it helps to remember characters when they are placed in a narrative;
- End with the instructive function, if there is one.

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Reviere's assertions were considered in the creation of the template. In the following section the items that are to be included in this template for AI for opera are presented and accompanied by a sample of the contents.

#### 4. A PROPOSAL FOR AN AI TEMPLATE

The template for AI of opera proposed in this article based upon the available literature on the subject and put into practice by the audio describer during the season 2016/17. The creation of a template is born out of the audio describer's needs, who had a limited time for the delivery of the AI before the opera started and received multiple sources of information that were to be summarised. The limitation of time made the audio describer had to choose on the contents to include in the AI. Since the informative materials about each opera follow the same pattern and thus, the same kind of information and organisation, some key points were selected to develop in the AI.

Therefore, the contents in the template are based on previous research and proposals on AI and then materialised from the audio describer's needs when dealing with all the information provided on the operatic event to be audio described. All the aforementioned aspects are tackled as follows (Table 1):

TYPE OF ITEM	CONTENTS
<b>Audio introduction presentation</b>	Good evening, my name is [insert audio describer's name] and today I will accompany you during the audio description and audio introduction of the opera [insert name of the opera], [genre of the opera: melodrama, tragicomedy, etc.] in [number] acts, by [name of the composer].
<b>Opera introduction (title, name of the director and composer, date of release, duration)</b>	This opera was composed by [insert composer]. The libretto was written by [name of the librettist]. - Information about previous collaborations between composer and librettist. - Renowned pieces by the librettist. This performance is directed by [insert director] and: a) is a production of [name of the institution/producer] b) is a co-production of the [name of the institutions/producers] This performance was premiered on [date] at [insert opera house/theatre].
<b>Background information</b>	- Historical context - Special features of the genre - Composer's biographical and professional circumstances at the time of creation and performance of the opera - Anecdotes of the release, specifications of the theatre itself - Release and public reception at this specific opera house and total number of performances (if performed in the past)
<b>Other aspects</b> that might need explanation	[For example, intertextual references]
<b>Characters and a cast summary.</b> If possible, insert a little extract of the main actors singing voices as well	The main characters are: - [Insert name of character], portrayed by [nationality] [or city when talking about national singers] [voice category] [insert name of actor]
<b>Wardrobe and makeup</b> descriptions if relevant	This section can be intertwined with the characters' descriptions: - [Name of the character] is wearing a [colour, texture, etc. garment/piece of clothing] and has [description] [hairstyle, make-up specificities]
<b>Synopsis</b>	Brief synopsis of the whole opera. It has to be taken into account that more in-detail summaries of acts/parts are also provided.
<b>Locations, scenery and visual style</b>	- Divisions of the stage - Changes in the set - Curtain work - Lighting - Other relevant details concerning scenery and decoration.
<b>Practical information</b>	- Timing and pauses - Any other practical aspects relevant to the performance The opera has a running time of [insert duration of opera] minutes. The first part, of [number of minutes] is followed by a [number of minutes] break. Act[s] [numbers] will be performed in the [second, third, etc.] part.

Table 1. Contents of the audio introduction

Special attention should be paid to the suggestion to include a short recording of the main actors singing voices when introducing them. This would allow visually impaired spectators to recognize the characters as they appear on stage. Further, Reviere's structure is not strictly followed, with slight modifications based on the researchers' personal experience at the Grand Teatre del Liceu. A real example of this experience is provided in the next section.

#### 4.1. Example of an opera audio introduction for the Gran Teatre del Liceu

With the aim of testing this template, an AI was issued following the template for the opera *Macbeth* by Giuseppe Verdi (Table 2), co-produced with the Grand Théâtre de Genève and performed in the Gran Teatre del Liceu from 7th to 23rd October 2016. The opera session offered with the AD service (including the AI) was staged with on 19th October 2016.

##### 4.1.1. Putting the template into practice

Since the beginning of the 2016/2017 season, all the AIs preceding the AD for each of the audio described operas performed at the Grand Teatre del Liceu were issued by following the template. The Liceu offers one live audio described performance for every production that is staged. To date, 11 operas have been audio introduced through this method. The personal experience of the audio describer, who was also the narrator (co-authoring this article), has been positive. The AI and the AD was performed live from one of the studios in the opera house. The audio describer and narrator delivered the contents of the description through a microphone. The AD was received by the blind and visually impaired audience by means of headphones provided before the opera starts, that were plugged in the special plugs with which some of the seats are equipped.

Having a template for these AIs that can be reproduced makes the task easier and faster for the audio describer. The template has also improved the process in the following aspects:

- Unification: before the performance, the opera house provides the audio describer with the leaflet of the opera and the official brochure issued for Liceu members. Both documents present a common corporative image and have a consistent structure and way of presenting the information. A template specifying the contents to be present in the AI helps the audio describer to identify and extract the needed information found in both the leaflet and the brochure.

**Table 2. *Macbeth* audio introduction**

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- Time and space: the identification of the topics to be treated in the AI in advance is essential when managing the time the audio describer has for the live narration of the AI. This has allowed for better timed AI, that suits the time constraints posed by the live genre. Every opera house has its own practices. In the case of the Liceu, three pre-recorded notices are delivered to the audience before the beginning of the opera. The notices typically ask audience members to switch off their phones, inform them of the remaining time before the beginning of the performance and are played in three languages. Being aware of the time it takes to read aloud each of the parts of the AI certainly helps avoid any overlapping of the audio describer's words and the notices delivered through the speakers inside the theatre.
  - Translation and transfer: during the 2016/2017 season, the Gran Teatre del Liceu carried out different trials for the improvement of its accessibility mobile phone app (Orero et al., forthcoming). Some members of the research group were involved in the creation of the materials, both written and voice-recorded, for the trials. AIs for the operas, *Werther* and *The Magic Flute* were required in three different languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. The template was an aid when writing and translating the AI as it allowed the different texts to respect the space and time constraints. Further, it provided consistency within the app trials and its future commercial running.

#### CONCLUSIONS

As stated by Di Giovanni (2014), given “the flexible nature of AI, its relatively simple and not too costly production, its stand-alone nature, which allows for fruition any time before (or even after) a film is viewed, and, last but not least, its audience-reaching potential”, it is worth researching and leveraging this service. One possibility is to standardise it, to optimise the limited time available for AI before each opera production or act. A standard of AI could assure that the most important, useful and enjoyable information is available for blind and visually impaired opera lovers. However, it is important to highlight the fact that not only the visually impaired can take advantage of these selected extra details. The information provided in AI, as has been stated before, is summarized from various sources, some of which are available and easily accessible to the public, and some are wordier and more specialised. Therefore, this AI, duly recorded, can be uploaded to the

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website of the opera house accompanying the presentation and plot of the opera performance, so sighted people can also listen to this service and learn more about the opera in which they are about to delight.

This template indicates the possibility of standardizing the production of the AI for opera. The future standardisation of this part of the AD not only guarantees that the most relevant information reaches all types of audiences, but it also accelerates the elaboration process, as it serves as a guide for the research to be conducted prior to the writing of the script. The current ISO standard on AD (International Organization for Standardisation, 2015) only mentions AI as complementary content offered before the commencement of the AD itself. Therefore, this AI template also potentially improves the quality of such writing, allowing the professional audio describer more time to polish aesthetic and stylistic features, of high importance in a cultural event such as the opera. Moreover, it could also prove to be a very cost-effective method of AI productions, since a future standardisation could also make AIs easier to share, and even translate, from opera house to opera house, therefore avoiding duplicated efforts.

The production of AI during the 2016/2017 season was made following this template. It has been used in 11 operas by the same audio describer. In practice, and from the audio describer's expertise, having a template has helped to identify the pieces of information that had to be extracted from all the materials prior to the issuance of the AD script. The use of the template has also provided a common structure for every opera, not only for its live delivery but also for the addition of AI in the smartphone app that is being tested.

The presentation of a template for AI leads a path towards more research in this subject. Further testing of the effectiveness of this template in terms of a) production time, and b) end user satisfaction could be useful. A potential experiment would consist of inviting visually impaired users to an opera with an AI issued following the template and another with an AI issued without following the template. Likewise, during the production process, the audio describer could be monitored to establish whether the template makes the process easier.

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