



Module 3

Unit 8: Dance and opera

Core video transcript

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Transcript

Slide 1

Hello. I'm Louise Fryer, from Utopian Voices. In this ADLAB PRO video I will give an overview of describing dance and opera. This is Unit 8 in Module 3.

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Dance and Opera take place in the same venue or within the same production. Strategies to describe dance can be useful for any type of choreographed movement including fights and aerial circus.

Slide 3

Opera and dance are similar as the story (if there is one) is told musically and visually but non-verbally. In dance because there is no dialogue; In opera because the words are hard to decipher – whether or not they are in your mother tongue.

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In many opera houses, the libretto or its translation is displayed on captioning (surtitling) units for the sighted audience to read as they listen to the music and watch the action. For audiences with sight loss, who can neither see the surtitles nor the action, the AD must provide both. It is a type of audio subtitling (AST).

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You will need to decide whether you are voicing the original libretto or the surtitles. Will you paraphrase or give them verbatim?

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For Dance and Opera music is an important part that you don't want to mask with your AD. But if you don't speak over the music how can you make the performance accessible?

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Part of the solution lies in enhanced AD, the Touch Tour and the AI. The rest is solved by describing economically, fitting the AD to the rhythm of the music and choosing carefully where to place it, to minimise masking.

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The AI will include a synopsis. The amount of the plot you divulge will depend on whether or not a synopsis is included in the printed programme. You might also include a paragraph giving a general idea of the dance style.

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The Touch Tour might take the form of a workshop where the dancers demonstrate key steps or sequences from the show. PSL may be invited to feel the dancers holding fixed positions, or encouraged to try out the steps and positions themselves.

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Some musical passages are sacrosanct. Famous arias are best left alone.

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You might need to describe what is happening in the orchestra pit, too. Tell us when the conductor comes into the pit so your audience can applaud at the same time as the sighted audience.

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You might write your script in a copy of the score, so that you can take your cues from the music. Or synch your AD to the surtitles or the action.

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When describing dance technical terms can be helpful e.g. the ballerina **pliés**, sinking low, heels together, knees bent'. The purpose is to ensure your audience feels they're attending a ballet – not a piece of contemporary dance nor a story with music.

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A dance or a fight isn't just about moves. A description listing a sequence of kicks, skips and jumps would become dull very quickly.

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Rudolph Laban compiled a vocabulary of expressive movements classifying movement flow, in terms of weight, time and space. His ideas are helpful for AD.

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Think about space - how the dancers move through it. How much space does the dancer occupy?

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Time – is the movement slow, sustained and calm; or quick, darting and impulsive?

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Weight – how much force does the movement use? Is it strong or light?

Slide 19

Don't just describe what a move 'looks' like, convey what it 'feels' like. Are the dancer's muscles tense and rippling with effort? Is the breathing rapid and fast? Or is there a sense of effortless grace?

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That was a video about describing dance and opera, unit 8 of module 3 AD of live events. You'll need to allow yourself more time to script these art forms. It's likely to take at least twice as long as writing the AD for a play of the same duration. It's a challenge but one, I hope you will rise to and enjoy.

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