



*X-Culture Global Symposium, Macerata, Italy, 2018*



**Challenge Presented by:** <https://www.sferisterio.it/en/macerata-opera-festival-2018/>

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### **Macerata Opera Festival Background**

The Arena Sferisterio Association, founded by the Municipality of Macerata and its Province, promotes and organizes the Macerata Opera Festival.

The Macerata Opera operates the Sferisterio arena. The Sferisterio arena is unique in its shape and structure. It was designed in 1829 and was used as an opera theatre for the first time in 1921. The Sferisterio arena is an open-air theatre and its 100-meter stage is one of the longest stages in Europe. The arena has 2,500 seats (including 104 boxes).

The major competing opera houses are in Rome and Verona. The Macerata Opera is always interested in co-production opportunities with other Italian and European opera houses.

Every year, the Macerata Opera hosts a festival in July and August. The Macerata Opera holds three shows a week (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday). The shows are held on four separate weekends.

The opera festival draws about 30,000 visitors each summer. The visitors are from Italy (40-50%), Germany (15%), Belgium (up to 10%), Netherlands (up to 10%), and a few other central European countries. There are visitors from France, United States, Japan, or Australia.

Typically, the Friday show is at 100% capacity, the Saturday show is at 70% capacity, and the Sunday show is at 80% capacity.

The visitors are attracted to the opera festival during their vacation and they want to visit other tourist attractions in the area.

From a demographic standpoint, the Italian visitors are 35 – 50 years old, 60% female & 40% male, and well educated. The other European visitors are typical 50-70 years old and well educated. Since the average opera ticket costs 55 euro (with a range of 25 – 150 euros), the visitors have middle to upper class income levels.

The Macerate Opera only generates 25% of its total revenue from ticket sales. The remainder is from Corporate sponsors (20%), Government sources (50%), and Private memberships (<5%).

The Macerate Opera Marketing department has a limited budget (about 5% of total revenues). Most of their efforts to promote the Opera festival are through social media and the use of Google analytics to identify key words.



## THE SFERISTERIO ARENA

The Sferisterio arena is unique in its shape and structure. Built on the initiative of the Hundred Comrades (Cento Consorti), it was designed in 1829 by Neoclassical architect Ireneo Aleandri to host the game with ball and bangle. In 1921, it was used as an opera theatre for the first time (the first opera to be staged was Aida) and it's still the only open-air opera theatre with boxes.

After Gioconda, which was performed in 1922, activities were summoned again only in 1967. The season opened with Giuseppe Verdi's Otello, featuring Mario Del Monaco in the leading role. Since then, the Sferisterio has welcomed the most extraordinary artists of our time: Luciano Pavarotti, Katia Ricciarelli, Renato Bruson, Montserrat Caballé, Plácido Domingo, José Carreras, Raina Kabaivanska, Mariella Devia, Anna Caterina Antonacci, Désirée Rancatore, Francesco Meli, Rolando Villazon, Rudolf Nureyev, Carla Fracci, Roberto Bolle.

With its 2,500 seats, 104 boxes and one of the longest stages in Europe, the Sferisterio ensures perfect visibility and wonderful acoustics. A majestic yet intimate theatre, the Sferisterio was thus defined by tenor Luciano Pavarotti: "it is the most fascinating open-air theatre I have ever seen, I will never forget it".

## Macerata Opera Festival

From 20 July to 12 August 2018  
The 2018 theme is #verdesperanza

The main issues threaded into our next summer festival are connected with a green, clean environment and sustainability, with planting the seeds of a better future through the art of hope. Our aim is to build strong ties with other bodies and institutions working on these issues, building a dialogue on sustainability and bringing together culture, nature and the community. All three operas on stage will recall the four natural elements: water, air, earth and fire. These timeless masterpieces will be re-interpreted in close connection with today's world: the initiatory trials of Tamino and Pamina in Flauto Magico, along with Graham Vick's own reading, the earth (sand) and water (sea) of Michieletto's Elisir d'Amore, the liquid mirrors of the historic Traviata of the mirrors (Henning Brockhaus), along with the air, or aria, which is so intrinsically part of all operas.

### **Even more Sferistero at the Macerata Opera Festival**

A Festival programme that, alongside the three opera masterpieces Il flauto magico, L'Elisir d'amore, and La traviata, and the traditional Night of the Opera, includes complementary events, the return of dance to the Sferisterio, the contemporanea and three thematic parties on stage Vinicio Capossela, Francesco Micheli with Elio, Max Gazzè, Lella Costa, and Eleonora Abbagnato: these are the stars that will feature in the three operas to be performed from 20 July to 12 August 2018, in Macerata.

### **An opera festival for the young**

Over the years, viewers under 30 years of age have come to the Sferisterio more and more, making the Macerata Opera Festival an absolute leader in terms of young participants' numbers.

### **Accessibility**

In 2008, the Macerata Opera Festival launched an ambitious and unique accessibility project with the aim of providing its audience with a wide range of free access services. These services do not only make the opera experience but also the theatre itself, with its backstage areas, accessible to the widest possible audience, including those with special needs.

Since 2008, all opera performances are audio described for blind or partially sighted people. In addition, the theatre opens its doors to the audience before all audio-described evening performances with fully guided tactile tours. Since 2009, surtitles, are projected onto the big wall of the Arena Sferisterio, during all opera performances so that not only people with a hearing impairment but also the whole audience, can easily follow the librettos. And since 2017 two new worthy additions: the translated English version of the surtitles will be supplied for all opera performances, and a sign-language-interpreted tour will guide the hearing impaired through the theatre, the stage, and its backstage areas.

## **MACERATA OPERA FESTIVAL – STUDENT CHALLENGE**

The Macerata Opera Festival is a major contributor to the success of Cultural Tourism and in the hospitality industry in Le Marche region.

The key markets for inbound tourism to Le Marche region are Germany, Austria and Benelux (Belgium and the Netherlands). As our closest neighbor, these countries represents a real opportunity for the development of cultural tourism linkages.

Cultural tourism encompasses a wide spectrum of cultural and heritage experiences that generally involve events, opera, festivals, artistic performances, cultural activities, museums, galleries etc.



Research has shown that, with rising education levels in recent times, the culturally inclined tourist seeks out participation in new and deeper cultural experiences that involve innovative arts programming, the creative process and living culture. The cultural tourist needs real involvement.

Different types of cultural tourists:

- The Motivated Cultural Tourist: The choice of location is inspired by a particular cultural characteristic. Their interest is the motivating factor behind the decision to book.
- The Inspired Cultural Tourist: Has a strong interest in culture. Their choice of destination is inspired by the blend of cultural opportunities associated with a given place.
- The Incidental Cultural Tourist: Typically have another primary reason for being in the destination and can be converted into sampling the local cultural activity. This group is more likely to respond to what is made available to them once they are already in the destination.

Your challenge is to develop a marketing strategy to attract and to increase awareness of the Macerata Opera Festival program that will generate a 10% increase in the German and Austrian market in the next 2 years.

**Your specific challenge is to develop a strategy for increasing attendance of the Macerata Opera Festival.**

Please include the following in your proposal / presentation:

- Start with a market research. Try to understand your customers.
  - Who are the competitors of the Macerata Opera Festival? How the potential visitors choose which festival to visit?
  - Who are the people who are likely to attend the Festival?
  - Are there associations, organizations and groups of tourists that the Macerata Opera Festival can develop long-term relationships and through which the Festival can be promoted?
  - It may be a very good idea to survey/interview potential visitors to better understand their thinking and decision-making process. What attracts them to Macerata vs. other vacationing options?
  - Analyze buying patterns; how customers decide to attend this sort of events, how they learn about these opportunities, how they purchase the tickets, do they travel alone or in groups, centrally organized or individually, planned in advance or spontaneous, in combination with other activities or solely with a focus on the festival, are they likely to attend several years in a row, etc.?
- What are the most promising market segments (geography, demographics)? Describe them, including their tastes, preferences, and interests.
- Develop a message that would be the foundation for the Festival promotion campaign, a message that will be used in communication program for visiting the Le Marche region during the Macerata Opera Festival in July and August. Consider your visitors' expectations and build your offering to provide a meaningful visitor experience)
- Identify the best channels to communicate this message and inform the potential visitors about the Festival and convince them to attend it (e.g., social media, associations, tour companies, clubs, magazines, etc.). Develop a promotion strategy for the channel (what sort of communication should go through the channel, in which form, at what time, how frequently, how much will it cost, what is the

expected return on investment, etc.). It may be a good idea to design the entire marketing funnel and describe the entire conversion process.

- Develop an example of an ad, promo video script, brochure or other form of communication and promotion that can be used for the channel you recommend for promotion.

### SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

June 10: Initial brainstorming, exchange of ideas; all ideas are considered.

June 20: Select the best ideas around which the team will be developing their strategy

June 30: Decide on the team member roles (who works on what part)

July 10: Share the initial work and input from each team member

July 20: Have the complete first draft of the report that the presentation will be built upon (you will not need to submit the report, but you want to put everything on paper in a form of a single coherent document)

July 25: Have the complete draft of the slides for the presentation and the one-page handout

July 30: Have a finished set of slides and one-page handout for the presentation

August 1: Initial rehearsal of the presentation, update the slides and one-page handout.

August 2: Final rehearsal of the presentation, final update of the slides and one-page handout

August 3: The Presentation:

Presentation: 15 minutes + 5 min Q&A

Handout: One page

