

The Dirty Dozen: Identification and Elimination of Distractors Inhibiting Expressive Conducting

Patrick Dunnigan, The Florida State University College of Music, December 2005

I. Introduction

II. Some Background

III. Some Assumptions

IV. The “Dirty Dozen”

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V. Recommendations for eliminating distractors

VI. Our Goal: Continued growth toward more expressive *conducting* thus promoting more expressive *performances* from our students.

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Clinic Summary

Assumptions:

- 1) Distractors inhibit our ability to achieve maximum expressiveness;
- 2) Any gesture losses effectiveness if overused;
- 3) Distractors include: mannerisms, ineffective use of space, unclear gestures, and events that reduce the effectiveness of facial expression;
- 4) Most distractors develop over time as the result of incomplete training or the conducting environment itself.

THE DIRTY DOZEN

Head, Face, & Eyes:

- 1) Head In Score
- 2) Cues Without Eye Contact
- 3) Singing/Talking Over Playing
- 4) The "Prep" Breathe

Arms:

- 5) Left Hand Mirror
- 6) Omnipresent Left Hand

Ictus Clarification:

- 7) Third Beat Hook
- 8) Beat Plane Too High
- 9) The Up-Ictus
- 10) Unnecessary Subdivision
- 11) Locked Wrist
- 12) Pushing Forward

Recommendations:

- 1) Retrain the physical mechanism (hands, arms) to promote more natural gestures;
- 2) Reduce tension;
- 3) Use video tape feedback whenever possible;
- 4) Use cues to initiate the development of more desirable habits/gestures;
- 5) Seek feedback from a friend or colleague;
- 6) Dramatically change the rehearsal environment;
- 7) Devote more time to score study;
- 8) Practice!