

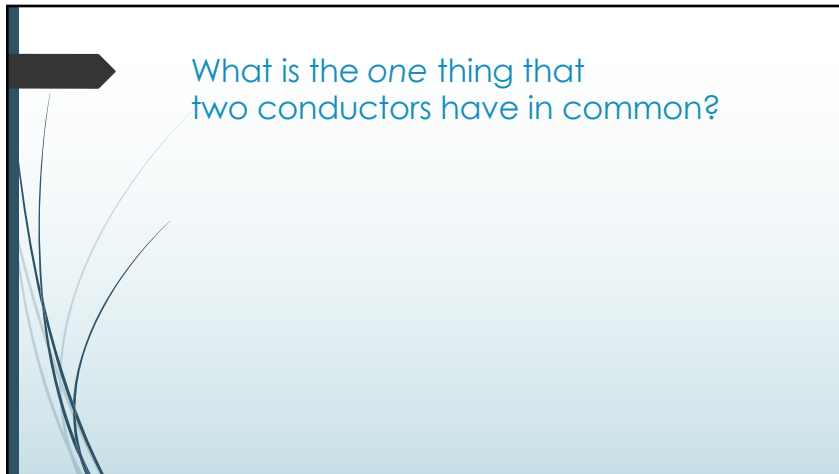
Conducting Gesture:
Incorporation of Breath, Resonance, & Clarity
Dr. Peter Steenblik
FLACDA 2023

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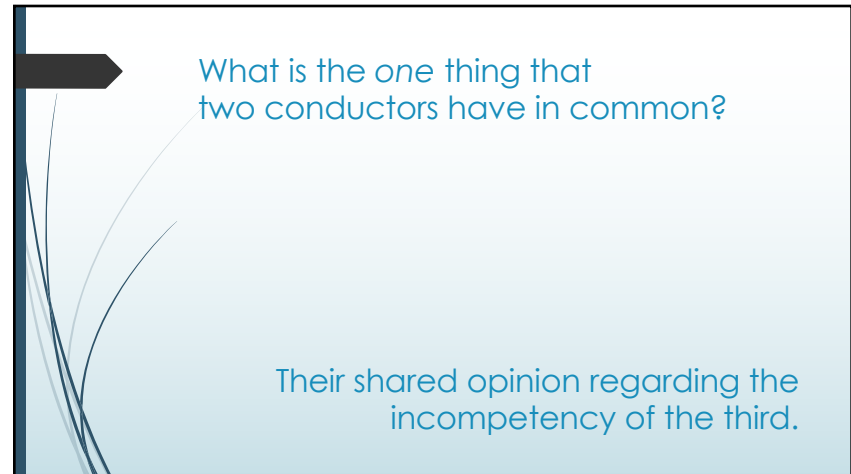
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What is the one thing that
two conductors have in common?

3



What is the one thing that
two conductors have in common?

Their shared opinion regarding the
incompetency of the third.

4



I. Role of the Conductor

5

Role of the Conductor

- ▀ Humility & respect for the choir
 - ▀ Least important person in the room
- ▀ Human instruments
 - ▀ breath
 - ▀ eye contact
 - ▀ emotional awareness
 - ▀ modeling [posture, breath, spirit, health]
- ▀ Project manager / Momentum designer

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Role of the Conductor

"My most persistent memory of stand-up is of my mouth being in the present and my mind being in the future: the mouth speaking the line, the body delivering the gesture, while the mind looks back, observing, analyzing, judging, worrying, and then deciding when and what to say next.

"Stand-up is seldom performed in ideal circumstances. Comedy's enemy is distraction, and rarely do comedians get a pristine performing environment. I worried about the sound system, ambient noise, hecklers, drunks, lighting, sudden clangs, latecomers, and loud talkers, not to mention the nagging concern *is this funny?* ... I suppose these worries keep the mind sharp and the senses active. I can remember instantly retiming a punch line to fit around the crash of a dropped glass of wine, or raising my voice to cover a patron's ill-timed sneeze, seemingly microseconds before the interruption happened."

-Steve Martin, *Born Standing Up*, pgs. 1-2 [Scribner, 2007]

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Role of the Conductor

"My most persistent memory **while conducting** is of my **arms** being in the present and my mind being in the future: the **arms showing** the line, the body delivering the gesture, while the mind looks back, observing, analyzing, judging, **listening**, worrying, and then deciding when and what to **do** next.

"**Music** is seldom performed in ideal circumstances. **Music's** enemy is distraction, and rarely do **conducting** get a pristine performing environment. I worried about the sound system, ambient noise, **inattentive audience**, lighting, sudden clangs, latecomers, and loud talkers, not to mention the nagging concern *is this funny?* ... I suppose these worries keep the mind sharp and the senses active. I can remember instantly retiming a **cadence** to fit around the **ring** of a **cell phone**, or **elongating a fermata** to cover a patron's ill-timed sneeze, seemingly microseconds before the interruption happened."

-Steve Martin, *Born Standing Up*, pgs. 1-2 [Scribner, 2007]


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II. Energy of the Body

Form a circle

9



III. Breath is the Engine

Keeping gestures low, connected & visible

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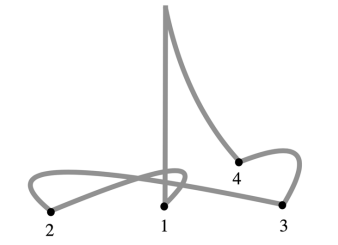
Conducting Terminology

- Conducting Planes:
 - Horizontal
 - Vertical
 - Sagittal
- Elements of Gesture:
 - Preparation
 - Ictus
 - Rebound

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The 4_4 Pattern

Basic 4_4 pattern (RH dominant)



12

The 4/4 Pattern

Basic 4/4 pattern (RH dominant)

Basic 4/4 pattern (RH dominant) with no rebound – only preparation

13

“Music is what happens between the notes”

- Music is what happens between the notes –
 - Breath
 - Articulation
 - Phrase
 - Vowel purity
 - Speaking of ... hand position

14

The 4/4 Pattern

Basic 4/4 pattern (RH dominant)

15

Holy, Holy, Holy!

Single-line Vocal Score

Conducting 1: 4/4 pattern excerpt

John B. Dykes

Boldly ♩ = 100

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16

The 3/4 Pattern

Basic 3/4 pattern (RH dominant)

17

Single-line Vocal Score

God Save the King

Conducting 1: 3/4 pattern excerpt Thesaurus Musicus

Stately ♩ = 86

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IV. Tone & Resonance

Hands & visuals

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The 1 Pattern

The 1 Pattern

20

The 1 Pattern

The 1 Pattern

21

The 1 Pattern

The 1 Pattern

22

Single-line Vocal Score

Sing We and Chant It

Conducting 1: 3/4 (in 1) pattern exercise

Thomas Morley

Sprightly $\text{♩} = 66$

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V. Clarity

Intentional gestures

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Laban Exercises

- ▶ Rudolf Laban (1879-1958): movement theory
 - ▶ Movement, dance, music
- ▶ Four elements:
 - ▶ Weight heavy vs. light
 - ▶ Space direct vs. indirect
 - ▶ Time sudden vs. sustained
 - ▶ Flow free flow vs. bound flow
- ▶ Let's explore
 - ▶ Weight + space + time

26



Walk like a ____.

▶ Heavy	▶ Light
▶ Heavy/direct	▶ Light/direct
▶ Heavy/indirect	▶ Light/indirect
▶ Heavy/direct/sudden	▶ Light/direct/sudden
▶ Heavy/direct/sustained	▶ Light/direct/sustained
▶ Heavy/indirect/sustained	▶ Light/indirect/sustained
▶ Heavy/indirect/sudden	▶ Light/indirect/sudden

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Walk like a ____.

▶ Heavy	▶ Light
▶ Heavy/direct	▶ Light/direct
▶ Heavy/indirect	▶ Light/indirect
▶ Heavy/direct/sudden	▶ Light/direct/sudden
▶ Heavy/direct/sustained	▶ Light/direct/sustained
▶ Heavy/indirect/sustained	▶ Light/indirect/sustained
▶ Heavy/indirect/sudden	▶ Light/indirect/sudden

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Conduct like a ____.

1. Light direct sudden
2. Light direct sustained
3. Light indirect sudden
4. Light indirect sustained
5. Heavy direct sudden
6. Heavy direct sustained
7. Heavy indirect sudden
8. Heavy indirect sustained

29

Conduct like a ____.

1. Light direct sudden dab
2. Light direct sustained glide
3. Light indirect sudden flick
4. Light indirect sustained float
5. Heavy direct sudden punch
6. Heavy direct sustained press
7. Heavy indirect sudden slash
8. Heavy indirect sustained wring

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Conduct pairs... ...in pairs

- Dab
- Glide then dab
- Dab then float
- Punch then press
- Wring then slash
- Press then flick

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