

Presence on Stage
Preparing a Spoken Introduction
Susan Lorette Dunn

- ‘**On Writing Well**’ – William Zinsser

“Clutter is the disease of American writing - we are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.”

- Imagination provides lights and colors in a darkened world.
- Condense, reduce and learn what *not* to include. Simplify.
- Use a thesaurus.

Writing a Narrative/Introduction

Speaking to introduce your piece in a program with no associated program notes

For the audience an effective introduction can -

- Create immediate ‘second circle’ connection and communication
- Stir curiosity
- Ignite imagination
- Share your passion for the music

Your goal-

- Immediately engage your audience with information that will help them connect to the work – drawing them into your musical world.

Your introduction should –

- Reveal aspects of your personality and your passion for the music
- Not be any longer than two minutes – concise communication is key
- Have an enticing beginning – grab the listener’s attention with a strong opening statement.
If you like, ask the audience a question.
- Introduce the piece – when/where was it written, and the overall style. **Do not** go into stylistic detail.
- **Hook the audience in with development of an idea** – something interesting that drew you to the piece, or an imaginative description of the piece, or the composer being influenced by world events. You can develop your idea with a personal story or insight.
- Who is your audience? Save musical analysis for program notes. Don’t assume the audience knows what you know regarding the definition of more complicated musical terms.
- The narrative should be interesting, engaging and stimulating – not too formal, but not too chatty. Introduce an element of humor, when appropriate.
- Invite the audience into the world of the composer and the piece/song/aria. Help them organize their thoughts into the visual landscape you are creating with your own subtext/narrative.
- Words to be careful of overusing: great, very, little, pretty, somewhat, clearly. Edit unnecessary words.
- A conclusion that invites your audience to engage in your creative world – use your imagination!

Getting your thoughts organized-

- Write out your introduction in its entirety
- Break your introduction down into beginning, middle, conclusion
- Read out loud to see how your introduction flows

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- Edit repetitive or unnecessary information
- Write and highlight main points and transitional phrases on a note card
- Practice out loud with notecard
- Practice without notecard