

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: A SURVEY OF COMPOSITIONS FOR BASS BY BASSISTS (1764-2007).

Julie Wagner, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2011

Directed By: Professor James Stern, Music

In early musical eras, the double bass was primarily an accompanimental instrument, providing the backbone of the harmonic structure. As a solo instrument, the double bass was generally disregarded until the latter half of the eighteenth century. This eventually changed thanks to the contributions of rising double bass virtuosos. Not only were their techniques exceptional and unique in that era, but these virtuosos also composed pieces that would become cornerstones of the standard repertoire. By writing new pieces that highlighted their own superior techniques, virtuoso double bass players were able to set new standards to which double bass students and amateurs strived. Their compositions became so significant to double bassists because of the exciting new flourishes but also because they were written with knowledge of the instrument's limitations and capabilities. From a historical standpoint, it is important to look closely at these pieces to see the advancement of the double bass.

In a series of three recitals, I presented a survey of works written by bassists, from 1763 to 2007 that cast the bass in a variety of solo and chamber music settings. My intention in doing so was to trace the evolution of the literature for the bass as it progresses through time to help better understand the origins and permutations of the repertoire.

Through the process of preparing and performing these recitals, I found that as bassists' technical abilities increased, compositions became more technically challenging. Concurrently, as composers' technical demands increased, the performer's capabilities needed to rise to the challenge. I was interested to observe that although they composed in different eras and styles, the composers were all similarly motivated by the quest for new sounds and methods of expression.

A SURVEY OF COMPOSITIONS FOR BASS BY BASSISTS (1764-2007).

By

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## Table of Contents

# Program I

### Compositions and Arrangements by Domenico Dragonetti (1763-1846)

Assisted by

Nadia Christova, piano

Lindsay Lam and Andrew Coccoli, bass

Gozde Yasar, cello

### From Twelve Waltzes for Solo Double Bass

Track 1: I. Vivace

Track 2: III. Vivace

Track 3: VI. Vivace

### Sonata Op. IV, No. 8

Arcangelo

Corelli

Track 4: Preludio

*Arr. Dragonetti*

Track 5: Allemanda

Track 6: Giga

### Concerto no. 5 in A Major

Track 7: Allegro Moderato

Track 8: Andante

Track 9: Rondo

### *Famous Solo* in E Minor for Double Bass and Piano

Track 10: Adagio

Track 11: Rondo

### Duo for Cello and Double Bass

Track 12: Adagio

Track 13: Rondo

Track 14: Finale

### Minuet and Allegro for Double Bass and Piano

Track 15: Minuet

Track 16: Allegro

## Program II

Assisted by

Nadia Christova, piano  
Nick Montopoli and Heather MacArthur violins  
Gray Dickerson, viola  
Amy Huzjak, cello  
Tanya Ruth, soprano

### **Caprice no. 2 in A major**

Eduoard Nanny

Track 1: Moderato

Track 2: Allegro

(1874-1942)

### **Two Movements from Gran Quintetto C Minor**

Giovanni Bottesini

Track 3: Allegro moderato

(1821-1889)

Track 4: Scherzo-Trio

### **Concerto in F sharp minor, op. 3**

Serge Koussevitzky

Track 5: Allegro

(1874-1951)

Track 6: Andante

Track 7: Allegro

Track 8: **Scherzo Capriccioso, op. 72**

Franz Simandl

(1840-1912)

### **Two Songs for Soprano, Double Bass and Piano**

Giovanni Bottesini

Track 9: *Une Bouche Aimee*

(1821-1889)

Track 10: *Tutto Il Mondo Serra*

*Text: anon*

Based on Chopin's Etude #19 in C Sharp Minor (Op. 25 No. 7)

Track 11: **Chanson Triste, op. 1, no. 1**

Serge Koussevitzky

Track 12: **Valse Miniature, op. 1, no. 2**

(1874-1951)

# Program III

## Compositions by Bertram Turetzky (b. 1933)

Assisted by

Lindsay Lam, Andrew Coccoli, and James Hein, bass

### Track 1: **Six Haiku Settings**

*I. A tree frog softly / begins to trill as raindrops / spatter the new  
leaves*

*II. A leaf is falling / Alas, alas another / And another falls*

*III. So cold are the waves/the rocking gull can scarcely / fold itself to  
sleep*

*IV. When a nightingale / sang out the sparrow flew off / to a further  
tree*

*V. In whatever beholding all is but dew*

*VI. Ballet, in the air / twin butterflies until twice / white they meet!  
They mate!*

### Track 2: **Kinderspiel for 4 Double Basses**

I. With driving intensity

II. Clouds of Clusters

III. A Succinct Scherzo (The Aviary)

IV. With driving intensity

### Track 3: **Meditation and Dance**

### Track 4: **Four for Ray**

#### **Neruda**

Poetry by David Henderson:

*Somewhere is a man*

*So gracious as to die with his people.*

*On the day of the mass killings.*

*On the day of the book burnings.*

*On the day of no political asylum.*

*On a day.*

*Twenty four of September, nineteen seventy three.*

*On a day of the noway Equinox.*

*Somewhere is a man.*

*Ascendant this day.*

*Somewhere is a man who this day truly died for his country.*

### Track 5: **Poems, Portraits, Ballades, and Blues**

I. Lou Harrison

II. Lament<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Poetry by Solomon Ibn Gabirol (1021-c.1056), translation by Yale Strom:

*See the sun toward evening red:  
As though wrapped in scarlet.  
Spreading to the North and South, it covers the West with lavender.  
And the Earth, left abandoned, seeks protection  
In the shadow of the night and sleeps.  
Then the heavens darken, as though covered with sackcloth,  
Mourning the death of Jekuthiel.*

III. Segovia

IV. Nancy

V. Mingus

Track 6: **Collage No. 1**