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 virtuosi. Not only were their techniques exceptional and unique in that era, but these virtuosi 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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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
Corelli
Track 4: Preludio
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Famous Solo in E Minor for Double Bass and Piano
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Assisted by
Nadia Christova, piano
Nick Montopoli and Heather MacArthur violins
Gray Dickerson, viola
Amy Huzjak, cello
Tanya Ruth, soprano

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Track 1: Moderato
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Two Movements from Gran Quintetto C Minor  Giovanni Bottesini
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(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

       3
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**