

Abstract

Title of Dissertation: REPRESENTATIVE WORKS FROM THE
ITALIAN, FRENCH, AND AMERICAN
SCHOOLS OF DOUBLE BASS PLAYING

Ian Saunders, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2016

Dissertation Directed By: Professor James Stern, Music

Each successive stage in the double bass's history required the instrument to adapt to shifting musical aesthetics and technical demands. As a result, arrays of interesting (and sometimes disparate) approaches have emerged in the form of schools, intellectual traditions governed by playing concepts, and national aesthetics.

The emergence of each of these various schools contributed to the history and development of the instrument, yet scholarship on the matter is exiguous. By studying and understanding different schools, one becomes aware that generations of pedagogues contributed to the foundation of modern-day mastery. Furthermore, an appreciation of contextual aesthetics and innovations brought forth by these intellectual traditions can inform modern renditions of pieces from these distinct schools. This dissertation focuses on three schools: the first international school created by the Italians, the lost significance of the French school, and the evolution of the American school. Music associated with each school was featured in three recital programs.

The first two recitals were performed in the Smith Lecture Hall, and the third in the Ulrich Recital Hall, all at the University of Maryland. A re-recording of George Onslow's *String Quintet No.26 in c minor, Op.67* from the second recital took place on

April 4, 2016. Recordings of all three recitals can be found in the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM).

**REPRESENTATIVE WORKS FROM THE ITALIAN, FRENCH, AND
AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF DOUBLE BASS PLAYING**

By

Ian S. Saunders

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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2016

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Table of Contents

Programs and Tracking List.....	iv
Program 1 CD 1.....	iv
Program 2 CD 2.....	v
Program 3 CD 3.....	vi
List of Musical Examples.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
The Italian School of Playing.....	3
The Early Italian School.....	3
Domenico Dragonetti.....	9
<i>Twelve Waltzes</i>	10
<i>Duetto for Cello and Bass</i>	15
Giovanni Bottesini.....	16
<i>Fantasia sulla Sonnambula</i>	19
The Modern Italian School.....	22
Francesco Petracchi.....	22
<i>Simplified Higher Technique</i>	23
Nino Rota and the Inception of <i>Divertimento Concertante</i>	25
Application of <i>Simplified Higher Technique</i> in <i>Divertimento Concertante</i>	26
The French School of Playing.....	29
The Early French School.....	29
Simplification.....	31
Achille Gouffé.....	33
George Onslow and his String Quintets.....	35
Édouard Nanny.....	38
<i>Consignment Complet</i>	39
The American School of Bass Playing.....	41
The Early American School.....	41
Francois Rabbath.....	44
New Frontiers.....	45
David Anderson.....	46
Peter Askim.....	48
John Clayton.....	51
John Harbison.....	53
Conclusion.....	55
Bibliography.....	57

Programs and Track Listings

Program 1 and CD 1

Representative Works from the Italian, French, and American Schools of Double Bass Playing.

Dissertation Recital #1: The Italian School

Ian Saunders, Double Bass

Misha Tumanov, Piano

Seth Castleton, Cello

November 8, 2015

8:00 PM

Smith Lecture Hall

Twelve Waltzes for Solo Double Bass

Domenico Dragonetti
(1763–1846)

Track 1: Waltz No. 3

Track 2: Waltz No. 10

Duetto in D Major for Cello and Bass

Gioachino Rossini
(1792–1868)

Track 3: Movement 1 – Allegro

Track 4: Movement 2 – Andante Molto

Track 5: Movement 3 – Allegro

Seth Castleton, Cello

Fantasy on themes from “La Sonnambula” by Vincenzo Bellini

Giovanni Bottesini
(1821–1889)

Track 6

Misha Tumanov, Piano

Divertimento Concertante

Nino Rota
(1911–1979)

Track 7: Allegro Maestoso

Track 8: Marcia

Track 9: Aria

Track 10: Finale

Misha Tumanov, Piano

Program 2 and CD 2

Representative Works from the Italian, French, and American Schools of Double Bass Playing.

Dissertation Recital #2: The French School

Ian Saunders, Double Bass
Chris Koelzer, Piano
Duo Shen, Violin James Worley, Violin
Maria Montano, Viola Brian Kim, Cello
March 11, 2016
7:00 PM
Smith Lecture Hall

Three Caprices for Double Bass

Édouard Nanny
(1872–1942)

Track 1: Caprice No. 1
Track 2: Caprice No. 2

Concerto pour contrebasse et orchestre

Jean Françaix
(1912–1997)

Track 3: Tempo di Marcia
Track 4: Scherzando
Track 5: Andante
Track 6: Finale

Chris Koelzer, Piano

Sicilienne for Double Bass and Piano, Op. 11

Achille Gouffé
(1804–1874)

Track 7

String Quintet No. 26 in c minor, Op. 67*

George Onslow
(1784–1853)

Track 8: Introduzione Non Tanto Lento - Molto Moderato e Grandioso
Track 9: Scherzo - Allegro Non Troppo Presto
Track 10: Andante - Sostenuto e Cantabile
Track 11: Finale - Allegretto quasi Allegro

Duo Shen, Violin James Worley, Violin
Maria Montano, Viola Brian Kim, Cello

* This quintet was re-recorded on April 4, 2016 with

Duo Shen, Violin Audrey Wright, Violin
Valentina Shohdy, Viola Kacy Clopton, Cello

Program 3 and CD 3

**Representative Works from the Italian, French, and American Schools of Double
Bass Playing.**

Dissertation Recital #3: The American School

Ian Saunders, Double Bass

Chris Koelzer, Piano

April 2, 2016

2:00 PM

Ulrich Recital Hall

Concerto for Bass Viol and Orchestra

John Harbison
(b.1934)

Track 1: Lamento

Track 2: Cavatina

Track 3: Rondo

Bach to Blues

John Clayton
(b.1952)

Track 4

Capriccio No. 2

David Anderson
(b. 1962)

Track 5

Islands: Concerto for Double Bass and String Orchestra

Peter Askim
(b. 1971)

Track 6: Kauai - Na Pali Cliffs

Track 7: Oahu - Surf

Track 8: Maui - Haleakala Sunrise

Track 9: Hawaii - Lava Fields

Table of Examples

Ex.1: Ludwig van Beethoven: <i>Symphony No.5</i> , 3 rd movement (Allegro): mm. 141–146...	6
Ex.2: Ludwig van Beethoven: <i>Symphony No.5</i> , 3 rd : Improper Transposition.....	6
Ex.3: Ludwig van Beethoven: <i>Symphony No.5</i> , 3 rd : Italian Transposition.....	6
Ex.4: Fingering System using only 1 & 4.....	7
Ex.5: Selected scales from Asioli's <i>Elementi per il Contrabasso</i> : pp. 7-8.....	8
Ex.6: Domenico Dragonetti: <i>Twelve Waltzes for Bass, No.1</i> (Vivace): mm. 6–16.....	12
Ex.7: Domenico Dragonetti: <i>Twelve Waltzes for Bass, No.6</i> (Vivace): mm. 10–32.....	12
Ex.8: Domenico Dragonetti: <i>Twelve Waltzes for Bass, No.6</i> (Vivace): mm. 31–47.....	13
Ex.9: Domenico Dragonetti's Bow Pattern and Grip.....	14
Ex.10: Gioachino Rossini: <i>Duetto for Cello and Bass, Movement II</i> : mm. 41–50.....	15
Ex.11: Gioachino Rossini: <i>Duetto for Cello and Bass, Movement III</i> : mm. 61–79.....	16
Ex.12: Giovanni Bottesini: <i>Fantasia sulla Sonnambula</i> , Introduction: mm. 16–21.....	20
Ex.13: Giovanni Bottesini: <i>Fantasia sulla Sonnambula</i> , Variation 2: mm. 108–112.....	21
Ex.14: Franco Petracchi's chromatic (<i>cr</i>) fingering system.....	24
Ex.15: Franco Petracchi's semi-chromatic (<i>s.cr</i>) fingering system.....	24
Ex.16: Franco Petracchi's diatonic (<i>diat</i>) fingering system.....	24
Ex.17: Nino Rota: <i>Divertimento Concertante</i> , Allegro: 4 mm.before Rehearsal 21.....	26
Ex.18: Nino Rota: <i>Divertimento Concertante</i> , Marcia: 3 mm. after Rehearsal 2.....	27
Ex.19: Nino Rota: <i>Divertimento Concertante</i> , Finale: measure 4.....	28
Ex.20: Simplification illustration from <i>The Leipzig Allgemeine Musicalisches Zeitung</i> in 1816.....	31

Ex.21: Edgar Degas <i>L'orchestre de L'Opera (The Orchestra of the Opera)</i> , ca. 1870.....	33
Ex.22: David Anderson: <i>Capriccio No. 2</i> , Introduction: mm. 1–11.....	46
Ex.23: Guitar riff in sextuplets using hammer-ons and pull offs.....	47
Ex.24: David Anderson: <i>Capriccio No. 2</i> , Introduction: mm. 18–21.....	47
Ex.25: David Anderson: <i>Capriccio No. 2</i> , Allegro: mm. 28–54.....	48
Ex.26: Peter Askim: <i>Islands: Concerto for Double Bass</i> , Kauai:Na Pali Cliffs mm. 18– 30.....	50
Ex.27: Peter Askim: <i>Islands: Concerto for Double Bass</i> , Oahu: Surf mm. 149– 157.....	50
Ex.28: John Clayton: <i>Bach to Blues</i> , mm. 32–43.....	52
Ex.29: John Clayton: <i>Bach to Blues</i> , mm. 50–67.....	53

Introduction

The unwieldy size of the double bass has occasioned disparate philosophies and practices, each exploring different solutions to that preeminent obstacle to its mastery. Playing techniques promoted through pedagogical lineages and methods range from practical to preposterous. Of course, technical demands of the bass have always served the shifting musical aesthetics in orchestras, chamber music, and solo repertoire, thus creating intellectual traditions unique to countries and periods in history. Schools of double bass playing derived from these intellectual traditions chronicle the history of the instrument. Through study and understanding of different schools, it becomes clear that generations of pedagogues contributed to the foundation of modern-day mastery, and improvements in playing standards weren't solely shouldered by virtuosos. One of the best examples of this is the Viennese school.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, a “golden age” took root in Vienna. The first virtuosos emerged in this period, including Joseph Kampfer (1735–1788), Friedrich Pichelberger (1741–1813), and Johann Matthias Sperger (1750–1812). Compositions favored the five-stringed violone, tuned F A d g c for orchestral music, and F A d f# a for solos. This tuning afforded the soloist convenient finger patterns for triadic melodies, and easily facilitated double-stop playing on the upper two strings with harmonic support provided by lower strings.¹ One may easily hear all of these defining

¹ David Chapman, “Historical and Practical Considerations for the Tuning of Double Bass Instruments in Fourths,” *The Galpin Society Journal*, no. 56 (June 2003), <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/30044426> (accessed May 10, 2015)

traits in the concertos of Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739–1799), Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754–1812), and Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739–1813).

Characteristics attributed to the Viennese school are well documented. However, the body of literature on most schools subsequent to the Viennese is quite exiguous. Thus modern analyses of double bass repertoire from these schools lack consideration and appreciation of contextual aesthetics and innovations brought forth by these intellectual traditions. This dissertation will focus on three schools: the first international school created by the Italians, the lost significance of the French school, and the evolution of the American school.

The Italian School of Double Bass Playing

The Early Italian School

David Chapman's article, *Historical and Practical Considerations for the Tuning of Double Bass Instruments in Fourths* reveals, "As the nineteenth century dawned, a new approach to tuning shifted the emphasis away from key-specific resonance (championed by the Viennese School) to sound projection, finesse, and power".² These emerging qualities became hallmarks of the Italian school. This divergence from the Viennese school is easily noted in Italy's first method *Elementi per il Contrabasso con una Nuova Maniera di Digitare* by Bonifazio Asioli (1769–1832).³ The method discusses tunings, fingering systems, bow grips, and even the favored three-stringed bass. It is ironic that Asioli, who did not even play the instrument himself, penned many of the concepts adopted by Italian bassists.

Asioli, a composer and theorist, served as first director of the Milan Conservatory from 1808 to 1814. The institution, as we will see, became a significant hub for the early Italian school of bass playing. Asioli wrote numerous treatises on solfege, harmony, and counterpoint during his tenure at the conservatory. In 1823, he published his method in Correggio after witnessing subpar standards of playing among bass students.⁴ He outlines these problems in his introduction:

² Chapman, "Historical and Practical Considerations for the Tuning of Double Bass Instruments in Fourths."

³ *Elements for the Double Bass with a New Method of Fingering*

⁴ Asioli had been forced out of his position by political pressure during the fall of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy in 1818.

This instrument, which is necessary in the orchestra, has only very few distinguished advocates [*sic*]. And if I am right there are three reasons for it.

- 1.) The difficulty in playing it is the reason why those who think they are able to succeed in a less uncomfortable instrument neglect it.
 - 2.) Degrading egotism because the ability of the player remains without applause since it disappears among the masses of performers.
 - 3.) The carelessness of the director and the teachers of the public and private music schools who present the bass to less capable students who don't have the ability to make great players.
- So it is not strange that while the other instruments have their method books, the double bass does not have any. The bass can still hope for methods from those few distinguished persons who know it perfectly.⁵

Three major trademarks characterize the early Italian school: the preference for the three-stringed bass, tuning in 4ths, and the new fingering system set forth in Asioli's treatise. It should be noted that the number of strings, tuning (whether in 4ths or 5ths), and methods of fingering were not standardized until the late nineteenth century. In fact, one can argue that discordance among bassists persists even today concerning a variety of topics. Nevertheless, different tunings, and preferences for number of strings, correlated with specific schools until the late nineteenth century. Asioli explains:

Three European nations which cultivate music for taste as well as knowledge, France, Italy, and Germany all use the same double bass in its form, but different in its parts and tuning. The French double bass is equipped with three strings, which are tuned in fifths giving the range of a ninth. [G d a] In Italy, the number of strings is not different, but it is tuned in fourths and produces the range of a seventh. [A d g] In Germany, it's equipped with four strings, which are tuned in fourths and produce the range of a tenth. [E A d g]. The French and German set-up seems better suited to perform the more difficult bass parts well along with fewer transpositions. While the set-up and tuning of the Italian bass seems suitable only for the performance of vocal music. Nevertheless,

⁵ Stephen Sas, *A History of Double Bass Performance Practice: 1500–1900* (D.M.A. diss., The Juilliard School, 1999), 124.

one will see that by means of practice and transpositions, it doesn't give anything away to the intrinsic qualities of the foreign double basses.⁶

In the eighteenth century, Italian bassists used a four-string bass tuned C G d a. Records of this practice exist in several treatises published in that century. Two treatises, *The Complete Instructions for Every Musical Instrument* in 1791 by Joseph Gehot and Denis Diderot's *Table du Rapport Des Voix et des Instruments de L'orchestre Comparés au Clavecin* from 1767, list C G d a as the Italian way of tuning.⁷ With this set-up, the bass could answer its primary function of doubling the bass line an octave below.

Unfortunately, string technology during this century detracted from this tuning system's potential. Excessive thickness of the C-string created a flexural stiffness that choked and muffled the bass with disproportionate pressure on the soundboard. Furthermore, the string was simply unplayable. Frustrated by the mediocre quality of the lowest string, Italian bassists removed it around the mid-eighteenth century.

The absence of the cumbersome C-string rendered remarkable results in the bass's quality of sound and playability. Increased volume coupled with a brighter, more penetrating tone was now present. Notes spoke more clearly and with greater ease, as the three-stringed bass elicited a quicker response from the bow. However, the bass became inadequate at the 16' register without the lowest string.⁸ To compensate for the loss, the Italians transposed musical lines up the octave, preferring clarity and power over range and even the intentions of the composer. Example 1 shows an excerpt from the third

⁶ Sas. "A History of Double Bass Performance Practice: 1500–1900," 124.

⁷ Paul Brun, *A History of the Double Bass* (France: Febodruk Press, 1989), 100.

⁸ A reference derived from organ pipe lengths, where the 8' register sounds at standard pitch, i.e. the A above middle C sounds at 440 Hz. 8' pitch contrasts with 4' pitch (one octave above the standard), 2' pitch (two octaves above the standard), and 16' pitch (one octave below the standard)

movement of *Symphony No.5*, Op. 67 by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827). Instead of spoiling the line of Beethoven’s bass part by transposing only the notes outside the compass of the three-stringed bass (Ex. 2), Italian bassists transposed the entire passage up an octave (Ex.3). Now the basses sounded at written pitch in the 8’ register and not an octave below.

Ex. 1: Ludwig van Beethoven: *Symphony No.5*, 3rd movement (Allegro): mm. 141–146



Ex. 2: Ludwig van Beethoven: *Symphony No.5*, 3rd: Improper Transposition



Ex. 3: Ludwig van Beethoven: *Symphony No.5*, 3rd: Italian Transposition



Furthermore, the Italians did not keep the bass tuned in fifths after removing the C-string. Instead, they chose to tune the bass in fourths, A d g, to achieve greater facility with fewer shifts. Two members of the early Italian school, Luigi Rossi (1810–1858) and G. Anglois⁹, clearly expressed these sentiments in their co-authored method *Metodo per il Contrabbasso d’Orchestra* published in 1846.

⁹ The earliest editions of the method simply list Anglois’s name as G. Anglois. It is unclear whether Giorgio Anglois (178x–184x) or his son, Giuseppe Anglois (unknown), co-authored the book with Rossi.

At first sight, the German system [E A d g] appears to be the best, for it combines a wide range of notes with ease of playing. However, in very forceful playing, a large number of strings make it difficult to avoid touching a neighboring string while bowing, and this is contrary to one of the essential qualities of the double bass; its power of tone. Free of this drawback, the French system [G d a] nevertheless presents difficulties in fingering, and it is almost impossible to play three consecutive whole-tones without shifting. The Italian system, with a narrower compás, possesses the twofold advantage of ease of playing and power of tone.¹⁰

Prior to Asioli's book, many bassists used a two-finger system for left hand articulations. To understand the reasoning behind this practice, we must revisit the inferior quality of bass strings before the nineteenth century. Gut strings wound in the 1700s rendered an incredibly thick cable necessitating a higher bridge to generate enough string tension for playability. The string's distance from the fingerboard required bassists to exercise a great deal of strength, making it difficult for the fingers, besides the index, to operate independently. Bassists typically articulated notes with their first (index) and fourth (pinky) finger, while the second (middle) and third (ring) fingers assisted the fourth in string depression. Some schools used the third finger instead of the fourth to articulate notes, but regardless of the choice, 1–4 (or 1–3) was employed to execute both semitones and whole-tones. Example 4 illustrates the application of the two-finger system.

Ex. 4: Fingering System using only 1 & 4



¹⁰ Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 102.

Asioli's new system added the third finger. In the three-finger system, 1–3–4, players used 1–3 for semitones and 1–4 for whole-tones (Ex.4). Before proceeding, it is important to acknowledge that Asioli's fingering system was not universal in Italy, as different regions adhered to their own practices. Bolognese and Neapolitan bassists utilized another three-finger system, 1–2–4, while other regions continued with two-finger systems.¹¹ However, the major Italian fingering system favored throughout the nineteenth century came from Asioli. Moreover, the Italians continue to use the 1–3–4 system today. Example 5 illustrates the application of Asioli's fingering system on two one-octave scales, F major and E^b major.

Ex. 5: Selected scales from Asioli's *Elementi per il Contrabasso*: pp 7–8.

Asioli's system might never have gained traction were it not for several actual bassists who saw its logic and propagated it. The first bassist to do so was Giuseppe Andreoli (1757–1830), the father of the Italian school, who became the first bass professor at the Milan Conservatory in 1808. In addition, he served as principal bassist of Teatro alla Scala, where he played a three-stringed bass tuned in fourths. Concepts noted

¹¹ Alfred Planyavsky. *Geschichte des Kontrabasses* (Tutzing: Verlegt Bei Hans Schinder, 1970), 220.

in Asioli's method advanced throughout Italy via Andreoli's students, constituting the beginning of the Italian school.¹²

Other great, yet obscure, bassists from this era include Antonio Dall'Occa (1764–1846) and Luigi Anglois (1801–1872), not to be confused with Giuseppe Anglois. Dall'Occa enjoyed a remarkable international career with engagements as far as St. Petersburg. Luigi Anglois spent much of his successful career in Paris, and Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) mentions Anglois's virtuosity in *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (1844).¹³ By the middle of the nineteenth century, Asioli's method and Andreoli's teachings flourished in Italy. Eventually, these concepts permeated other schools of bass playing, thanks in part to the careers of two great double bass virtuosos, Domenico Dragonetti (1763 –1846) and Giovanni Bottesini (1821–1889).

Domenico Dragonetti

Born in Venice, Italy to Pietro and Caterina Dragonetti, young Domenico began teaching himself the guitar at age nine. Although Pietro made a living as a guitarist and double bassist, Dragonetti's uneasy relationship with his father would have made it difficult for him to learn from the elder. His biography in the nineteenth century British journal, *The Musical World: A Weekly Record of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence*, states, “ he was accustomed surreptitiously to purloin his father's guitar, and in a remote quarter of the house to practice upon the instrument; and such was the force

¹² Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 101.

¹³ Hector Berlioz, *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (Paris: Schoenenberger, 1844), 137. “M. L. Anglois, who played in Paris about fifteen years ago, produced very peculiar high tones of incredible power on the double-bass...”

of his genius, that in a short time, and without his parents being conscious of the circumstances, he had made extraordinary progress.”¹⁴

Dragonetti briefly received violin lessons from a local shoemaker and amateur violinist named Giacomo Sciarmadori. Lessons with Sciarmadori proved invaluable for the young boy, as he eventually transferred the knowledge he received to the double bass. At the age of twelve, he studied under Michele Berini, a bassist in the Ducal Chapel of San Marco. After only eleven meetings, Berini conceded that he could teach Dragonetti nothing further.

At age thirteen, Dragonetti began his professional career as principal bassist for the Teatro San Cassiano. By his early thirties, success as a soloist and double bassist with the Chapel of St. Mark’s in Venice brought him lucrative invitations from abroad. Dragonetti’s career took off after moving to London in 1794, where he primarily resided until his death. He earned tremendous fees for his talent, and principal positions with the King’s Theatre, Philharmonic Society, and Ancient Concerts. Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868), Louis Spohr (1784–1859), Niccoló Paganini (1782–1840), and Ludwig van Beethoven were a few of the composers and performers familiar with Dragonetti’s virtuosity.

Twelve Waltzes for Double Bass

Despite his having no formal training in composition, Dragonetti’s oeuvre seems vast and diverse with concertos, duets, string quintets, and obbligato bass parts for operatic arias. Although he was a utilitarian composer, life as a bass soloist of the time

¹⁴ Fiona Palmer, *Domenico Dragonetti in England (1794-1846): The Career of a Double Bass Virtuoso* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), 11.

forced him to rely on his own pieces and, therefore, his own imagination.¹⁵

Consequently, Dragonetti's pieces wonderfully showcased his impressive facility on the instrument.

His *Twelve Waltzes* for bass illuminates patterns found throughout his entire oeuvre. We owe our knowledge of the waltzes to Dragonetti's close friend Vincent Novello (1781–1861), since Dragonetti had composed the waltzes only for his personal use. Novello inherited his vast musical library after the virtuoso's death in 1846. He published the manuscripts a few years later, and cited them as the composer's "last playful exercises" written toward the end of his life.¹⁶

Each waltz follows the same musical structure, suggesting Dragonetti may have been challenging himself to maximize variety within this structure. Every waltz is in ternary form (ABA), with "A" always in a major key and "B" in the relative minor.¹⁷ The orchestral range of the bass receives much attention, but Dragonetti skillfully juxtaposes this with occasional forays into the higher register.

His predilection for the three-stringed bass (tuned in fourths) is evident in the waltzes, as the range never descends below the established A-string barrier. Dragonetti typically places rapid scales and arpeggio figures, a trademark of his writing, on the D and G-string. Quick passages solely on the A-string are rare. Instead, the A-string is often used as a drone or pedal, clarifying the harmony of fast arpeggio sequences.¹⁸

¹⁵ Palmer, *Domenico Dragonetti in England*, 76.

¹⁶ Domenico Dragonetti, *Twelve Waltzes for Double Bass Solo: Urtext*, ed. Tobias Glöckler (Munic, Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2007), IV.

¹⁷ Except for *Waltz No. 11*, which modulates to the subdominant key - D to G major.

¹⁸ Palmer, *Domenico Dragonetti in England*, 68.

Example 6 from *Waltz No. 1* illustrates Dragonetti's distinctive rapid arpeggios.

Notice that the moving notes of the sequence occur only on the G and D-string, while the A-string fills out the texture and harmony.

Ex. 6: Domenico Dragonetti: *Twelve Waltzes for Bass, No. 1* (Vivace): mm. 6–16

The musical score for Example 6 consists of two staves of music in bass clef, 3/8 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins at measure 6 and ends at measure 11. It features a sequence of arpeggios primarily on the G and D strings, with the A string providing harmonic support. The second staff begins at measure 12 and ends at measure 16, continuing the arpeggiated sequence. Trill-like figures are present in measures 11 and 16. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Example 7 shows how Dragonetti uses two different rhythms in a sequence of arpeggios found throughout this spirited waltz in 3/8. Once again, only the two top strings are used in the arpeggiations, and, once again, the A-string functions as a drone starting in measure 25.

Ex. 7: Domenico Dragonetti: *Twelve Waltzes for Bass, No. 6* (Vivace): mm. 10–32

The musical score for Example 7 consists of five staves of music in bass clef, 3/8 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff (measures 10-13) shows a sequence of arpeggios with a steady eighth-note rhythm. The second staff (measures 14-18) introduces a more complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth-note runs. The third staff (measures 19-24) continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff (measures 25-30) features a drone on the A string starting at measure 25, with arpeggios on the G and D strings. The fifth staff (measures 31-32) concludes the sequence. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

In a letter to Rossini, Dragonetti proclaimed that "...tuning in fourths is by nature more correct. Furthermore, I can show you, with evidence, that the French way of tuning

the bass [G d a] will never be able to allow the execution that my instrument does both in playing chords, and in facility, evenness and strength of sound.” Dragonetti did not have the gift of melody, and nimble acrobatics usurped melodic development in his compositions. Fast sequences and triadic chordal motives often governed his compositions.¹⁹ Tuning the bass in fifths would have posed a serious problem for Dragonetti’s chordal writing. Even though perfect fifths and fourths are easy to play in fifths tuning, the distance of major or minor third double stops nearly surpassed the reach of the hand; therefore, playing consecutive double stop thirds would have been out of the question. The passage below substantiates Dragonetti’s argument against fifths tuning for his music. The numerous thirds in this example would be impossible for any but the exceptional bass player if the bass had been tuned in fifths.

Ex. 8: Domenico Dragonetti: *Twelve Waltzes for Bass, No.6* (Vivace): mm. 31–47

¹⁹ Palmer, *Domenico Dragonetti in England*, 77.

Two observations recur frequently in contemporary accounts of Dragonetti's playing: his exceptional volume of sound, and the "heavenly fire" he created through bowing articulations. In contrast to the overhand bow, favored by the Asioli and Andreoli lineage, Dragonetti used an underhand bow with a distinct outward curve.

Ex. 9: Domenico Dragonetti's Bow Pattern and Grip



This underhand bow grip is a holdover from viol playing. Outwardly curved bass bows persisted well into the eighteenth century in Bologna, where bassists preferred and continually modified them. Dall'Occa, born in Cento near Bologna, used the outwardly curved bow throughout his entire career. Of course, due to Dragonetti's popularity, the outward curved bow became known as "the Dragonetti bow" by all bassists then and henceforth.

Quick and crisp articulations came easily with this bow. Combined with the resonance of a three-stringed bass, it produced exceptional clarity and power. However, such a bow did not lend itself to long, vocal, legato phrases, and Dragonetti's music, consequently, contains little such writing.

Duetto in D Major for Cello and Bass by Rossini

As mentioned before, Dragonetti's reputation was considerable among the greatest composers in his lifetime. In fact, some of them wrote pieces with his style of playing specifically in mind. A great example of this is Rossini's *Duetto in D Major for Cello and Double Bass* composed at the height of his operatic career. Commissioned by Sir David Salomons in 1824, the piece falls squarely between *Semiramide* (1823) and *Il viaggio a Reims* (1825). Salomons, a wealthy banker and amateur cellist, commissioned the work for a soiree honoring Rossini's English tour. The following example from the second movement suggests Rossini's familiarity with Dragonetti's crisp, clean articulations, both in slurred and spiccato 32nd notes. The example is in 3/4 time.

Ex. 10: Gioachino Rossini: *Duetto for Cello and Double Bass, Movement II*: mm. 41–50



The image displays three staves of musical notation in bass clef, 3/4 time. The first staff (measures 41-42) features a series of slurred 32nd notes, followed by a few quarter notes. The second staff (measures 43-44) continues with slurred 32nd notes and includes some accents. The third staff (measures 45-46) shows more slurred 32nd notes with accents and some quarter notes. The notation is dense and characteristic of the rapid passages found in the original score.

In Example 11, Rossini's treatment of the three-stringed bass is identical to Dragonetti's in example 6; further verifying Rossini's knowledge of the virtuoso's playing. Once again, only the two top strings articulate the rapid sequential arpeggiations as the A-string fills out the texture.

Ex. 11: Gioachino Rossini: *Duetto for Cello and Double Bass, Movement III*: mm. 61–79

The image displays a musical score for five staves, all in bass clef. The key signature consists of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is written in a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often beamed in groups of four. The first staff begins at measure 61 and includes a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The second staff continues from measure 65. The third staff begins at measure 69 and includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The fourth staff continues from measure 73. The fifth staff begins at measure 77 and ends with a whole rest. The notation includes various articulations such as slurs and accents.

Though Dragonetti did not adhere to every concept championed by the early Italian school, his advocacy for the three-stringed bass (in fourths) helped the school thrive outside of Italy. On the other hand, Giovanni Bottesini carried the school even further into the nineteenth century with his successful career, method book, and expansion of the bass’s solo capabilities.

Giovanni Bottesini

Giovanni Bottesini was born 1821 in Lombardy, Italy to Maria and Pietro Bottesini. Unlike Dragonetti, he received his earliest musical training from his father, a well-respected clarinetist. He continued his studies on the violin with his uncle, Cogliati, who played for the Cathedral at Crema. In his boyhood, his other interests included singing and playing the drums at the Teatro Communale.

In 1835, Pietro heard of two scholarships, offered at the Milan Conservatory, on double bass and bassoon respectively. Up to this point, young Giovanni had never played the bass, but his familiarity with the violin led him to audition on the instrument. The audition was not stellar, and at one point he remarked, “ I know, Gentlemen, that I play

out of tune; but when I know where to place my fingers this shall not happen anymore.”²⁰

This courage of conviction persuaded the audition committee to award him the scholarship, and his studies commenced at the conservatory that year. The young Bottesini studied with Rossi, who had become the bass professor at the conservatory after his own teacher, Francesco Hurt.²¹ The pedagogical lineage started by Hurt would eventually reach the twentieth century, thanks to Bottesini’s wide-ranging influence.

Bottesini improved only marginally during his first year at the conservatory. He still divided his time between bass and singing, but after realizing his maturation would soon end his singing career, he assiduously practiced the bass to make up for lost time. In three years, he surpassed every bassist at the Milan conservatory, including his teacher. World-renowned cellist and classmate Carlos Alfredo Piatti (1822–1901) said, “After three years of study Bottesini never played better, he only gained experience”.²² Bottesini left the conservatory years ahead of schedule to pursue professional engagements in 1839.

His solo debut in Crema the following year met with tremendous success, and he continued to tour extensively for the next six years. Few know that Bottesini maintained several orchestral positions between solo recitals at the outset of his career. He played with the Teatro Grande of Brescia as a section bassist before accepting a principal position with an orchestra in Verona. While working with the La Fenice theatre of Venice in 1845, he crossed paths with Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) who was producing *I due*

²⁰ Paul Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Paul Brun Productions, 2000), 226.

²¹ Francesco Hurt’s dates are unknown. Scholars only know him as Andreoli’s student and successor. Rossi studied with Hurt at the Milan Conservatory before succeeding him as bass professor.

²² Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass*, 227.

Foscari at the same theatre. Verdi urged Bottesini to pursue a career as a soloist after hearing him play, and in the following years, both men became close professional colleagues.

Beyond the bass, Bottesini's career encompassed opera conducting. He appeared in opera houses in Cuba, North America, France, Spain, and Cairo, where he conducted the premiere of Verdi's *Aida* in 1871. In 1888, he served a short term as director of the Parma Conservatory thanks to a recommendation from Verdi. Unfortunately, he died less than a year later in 1889. A telling quotation from his obituary reads,

...on his favourite instrument, the double bass, he elicited from that unwieldy instrument, his marvellous facility, not to say agility, in executing the most difficult passages - the grace, elegance, and delicacy of his touch and method, gave proof of the most consummate art and unrivalled talent... In precision, dash, accuracy, and withal in the softness of touch and phrasing, Bottesini had no equal on the contra-basso²³

Bottesini carried on the teachings pioneered by Asioli and Andreoli. His method, *Metodo Di Contrabasso*, embodies the same concepts and values expressed in Asioli's method of nearly forty years prior. A staunch advocate of the three-stringed bass, Bottesini went as far to say the "true double bass, for ease of playing as well as clarity and fullness of tone, must only possess three strings."²⁴ Furthermore, he gave little credence to basses tuned in fifths, stating "The tuning in fifths which is to be found in some countries is absurd. It leads to hardness of sound and continual shifting, which

²³ C.P.S, "Giovanni Bottesini," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 30, no. 558 (August 1889): 476, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/3360528> (accessed November 12, 2015)

²⁴ Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass*, 93.

makes playing difficult, uncertain and incoherent.”²⁵ In contrast to Dragonetti, Bottesini preferred the overhand bow championed by the Milanese players. This overhand bow, known as the French bow today, became the staple in Italy when Dragonetti’s influence subsided after his death.

Fantasia sulla Sonnambula

Bottesini’s compositions integrated the use of *Bel Canto*, a vocal Italian style from the 18th and 19th centuries, favoring perfect legato production throughout the instrument’s range, with use of a light tone in the higher registers to facilitate agile delivery.²⁶ Bottesini achieved these “light tones” with harmonics. Bassists and composers prior, including Dragonetti, often used harmonics to juxtapose registers. However, Bottesini incorporated harmonics into lyrical legato lines and virtuosic arpeggiated passagework, thus augmenting the solo capabilities of the bass. Even a cursory listen to Bottesini’s music quickly sets him apart from other bassist/composers. His four fantasias, particularly *Fantasia sulla Sonnambula*, provide a compendium of unique compositional characteristics.

Bottesini wrote four fantasias based on themes from operas of Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835): *La Straniera*, *Beatrice di Tenda*, *La Sonnambula* and *I Puritani*. Reportedly, a fantasia on *Norma* was written, but an original manuscript has not surfaced. Even after his death in 1835, Bellini was still wildly popular, and the composer inspired

²⁵ Ibid., 128.

²⁶ Ellen Harris and Jander, Owen, “Bel Canto,” *Grove Music Online*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02551>> (Accessed 12 May 2014)

Bottesini during his conservatory years. At age 19, Bottesini composed his *Fantasia sulla Sonnambula* using three arias, *D'un pensiero e d'un accento*, *Ah! non giunge uman pensiero*, and *Ah! Vorrei trovar parole*.²⁷ Loosely following a theme-and-variations form, the piece highlights Bottesini's virtuosic facility and exceptional range on the double bass.

The opening of *Fantasia sulla Sonnambula* (example 12) features a beautiful ascending legato line from nearly the lowest point on the three-stringed bass. The line seamlessly traverses two octaves in the first statement, and nearly three in the second. Although the upper registers were not off limits in solo bass repertoire prior to Bottesini, florid lines connecting the registers had not been prominent.

Ex. 12: Giovanni Bottesini: *Fantasia sulla Sonnambula*, Introduction: mm. 16–21

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of 'Fantasia sulla Sonnambula' by Giovanni Bottesini, measures 16-21. The score is in 6/8 time, key of D major, and marked 'Allegro vivo' with a tempo of 14. It features a double bass line starting with a low note, followed by a melodic line in the upper register marked 'a piacere' and 'f'. The piece includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

In example 13, note Bottesini's incorporation of harmonics into virtuosic arpeggiated passagework. In this relentlessly undulating passagework, the harmonics fundamentally contribute to the architecture by expanding the range of the arpeggios

²⁷ A program from Bottesini's recital at the Teatro Comunale of Trieste in April of 1840 lists *La Sonnambula* on the program, though the precise date of composition's completion is unknown.

possible on the bass. In addition, they create the illusion of even greater acrobatic prowess than the player is actually employing.

Ex. 13: Giovanni Bottesini: *Fantasia sulla Sonnambula*, Variation 2: mm. 108–112

Вар. 2

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in bass clef and the lower staff is in treble clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The score is labeled 'Вар. 2' at the beginning. The upper staff contains measures 108, 110, and 111. Measure 108 has a trill (tr) and a dynamic marking of *sf*. Measure 110 also has a trill (tr) and a dynamic marking of *sf*. Measure 111 has a triplet of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *sf*. The lower staff contains measures 109, 111, and 112. Measure 109 has a dynamic marking of *sf*. Measure 111 has a trill (tr) and a dynamic marking of *sf*. Measure 112 has a dynamic marking of *sf*. The score is written in a style typical of 19th-century piano music, with many slurs and ornaments.

The Modern Italian School

Francesco Petracchi

Method books published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries attempted to address a fundamental problem concerning the bass: how does one effectively manage such a sizeable and laborious instrument? By the twentieth century, bassists had largely solved this issue, yet the overall playing standard still did not measure up to the quality of their upper-string counterparts.

Consequently, bass pedagogues and virtuosos of the twentieth century collectively sought to elevate the instrument's technique and artistry. New schools emerged while older, established institutions adapted to new string technology and modified setups for the double bass. Several Italian bassists such as Italo Caimmi (1871–1964), Isaia Bille (1874–1961), and Guido Battistelli²⁸ modernized playing concepts for the twentieth century, but one bassist in particular broadened the fundamental techniques of the Italian school. That player is Francesco Petracchi.

Petracchi was born 1937 in Pistoia, Italy. At age 13, he began studying the bass with Guido Battistelli at the Saint Cecilia Conservatory in Rome. Upon graduating *summa cum laude* in 1958, he quickly gained immense notoriety as an orchestral bassist, soloist, and pedagogue. He won his first principal job at age 23 with the RAI Symphony of Turin in 1960. By 1962, he moved to the RAI symphony of Roma, where he remained until his retirement from orchestral playing in 1980.

His solo debut took place in 1961 at *La Fenice* in Venice. Since then, Petracchi's virtuosity led to collaborations with legendary conductors Leonard Bernstein (1918–

²⁸ Guido Battistelli was born in 1910. He is known to be deceased, but the year is uncertain.

1990), Herbert von Karajan (1908–1989), Riccardo Mutti (b. 1941), Zubin Metha (b. 1936), and Lorin Maazel (1930–2014). Commissions from composers include *Duetti per Violoncello e Contrabbasso* by Virgilio Mortari (1902–1993) and *Divertimento Concertante* Nino Rota (1911–1979). In 1971 he began his academic career, teaching at conservatories in Frosinone, Bari, l’Aquila, and Rome. Early in Petracchi’s teaching career, he started developing a system of fingering to improve the dexterity of his students. After nearly a decade of refinement, Petracchi codified his method in 1982 with his book *Simplified Higher Technique*.

Simplified Higher Technique

Simplified Higher Technique focuses on improving the efficacy of a bassist’s left hand. The method takes inspirations from piano techniques which, as Petracchi claims, is “a double bass fingered horizontally instead of vertically.”²⁹ Much of the technique centers on the incorporation of the thumb. Traditionally, bassists use the thumb as they move into thumb position, a technique used to access the upper register of the bass. Bassists typically use only three fingers in neck positions, while four fingers are utilized in thumb position. Petracchi introduced the thumb into neck positions, granting the bassist an extra finger to execute quick passages.

But the crux of *Simplified Higher Technique* comes from preset hand positions. Three major hand positions govern this technique: chromatic (*cr*), semichromatic (*s.cr*), and diatonic (*diat*). Each preset uses the thumb as the base for the hand position.

²⁹ Alexandre Ritter, “Franco Petracchi and the *Divertimento Concertante per Contrabbasso e Orchestra* by Nino Rota: A Successful Collaboration Between Composer and Performer” (D.M.A. diss., The University of Georgia, 2010), 18.

A chromatic position (*cr*) constitutes three consecutive semitones executed by the fingers consecutively.

Ex. 14: Franco Petracchi's chromatic (*cr*) fingering system



The semi-chromatic (*s.cr*) position spans a whole-tone and two consecutive semitones. The whole-tone lies between the thumb and first finger, while second and third fingers articulate consecutive semitones.

Ex. 15: Franco Petracchi's semi-chromatic (*s.cr*) fingering system



Finally, the diatonic (*diat*) has two consecutive whole-tones between the thumb and the first finger, and the first and second finger. The semitone sits between the second and third fingers.

Ex. 16: Franco Petracchi's diatonic (*diat*) fingering system



Ideally, the player will seamlessly move from one hand position to another while playing. *Simplified Higher Technique* applies these basic hand positions to major scales, minor scales, arpeggios, and modes. Prior to the publication of the method in 1982, a comprehensive demonstration of *Simplified Higher Technique* could already be found in the fingerings and annotations Petracchi provided for Rota's *Divertimento Concertante*.

Nino Rota and the inception of *Divertimento Concertante*

Nino Rota was a prolific and revered Italian composer. He studied at the Milan Conservatory and the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, at the encouragement of Arturo Toscanini (1867–1957). Considered one of the greatest Italian film composers, he produced 157 film scores including the first two *The Godfather* films, *La Dolce Vita*, *The Glass Mountain* and *Waterloo*.

Rota became a lecturer at the Bari Conservatory in 1939 before serving as director of the same institute from 1950 to 1977. In 1967, Franco Petracchi began teaching at the Bari Conservatory. That same year, he asked Rota to compose a work for double bass and piano. Though Rota was initially hesitant, Petracchi eventually convinced him to write *Divertimento Concertante*, and he composed the four movements over the next several years.

Marcia, the second movement, was the first to be composed. Petracchi wrote, “This *Marcia* contained numerous exercises that I use to give to my students, a kind of training music, realized in living music to make them [the exercises] more enjoyable, as Rota said. In fact his studio and his sitting room were situated right below my classroom. It certainly was not enjoyable for the Maestro to rest at certain times with that ‘concert of

scales'.”³⁰ In 1968, Rota composed *Aria*, the third movement. Originally this music was intended for the film *Doctor Zhivago*, but due to contract disagreements, Rota withdrew from that project.³¹ The *Finale* was the third movement to be composed, in 1969, followed by the first movement, *Allegro*, composed in 1971.

Application of *Simplified Higher Technique* in *Divertimento Concertante*

A superficial study of the method yields few results, but if one fully commits to learning the preset hand positions, the most challenging bass repertoire becomes more accessible. The following examples show the method’s potential applications in virtuosic writing.

Ex. 17: Nino Rota: *Divertimento Concertante*, Allegro: 4 mm. before Rehearsal 21



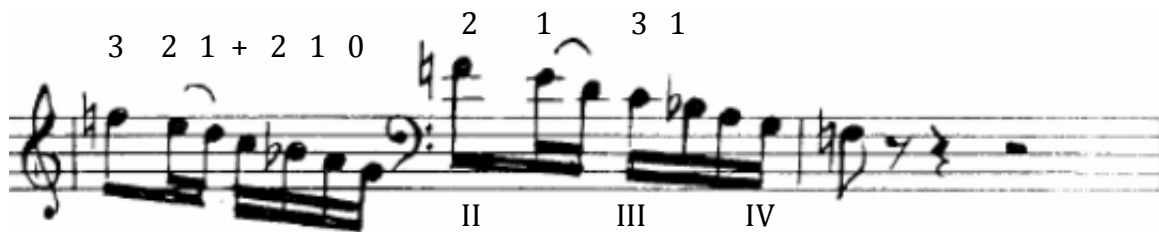
In this example, the beginning of the line calls for a chromatic (*cr*) position. First the player should use the thumb to depress C \flat . With the thumb as the base, the first, second, and third fingers can play C \sharp , D \flat , and E \flat , respectively. On beat three, a half-step shift into another chromatic position occurs. Now, the thumb articulates C \sharp , while D \flat and E \flat are played with the first and third fingers. If the passage needed an E \flat , a bassist would employ the second finger. The bassist will shift another half step into the next bar,

³⁰ Alexandre Ritter, “Franco Petracchi and the *Divertimento Concertante*,” 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*

but the downbeat needs a semi-chromatic (*s.cr*) position. Once again, a semi-chromatic position spans a whole-tone and two consecutive semitones. Here, the whole-tone between the thumb and first finger is D \natural and E \flat . The first semitone, between E \flat and F \flat , require the first and second fingers. Finally, the third finger plays the second semitone of the hand position, F \sharp , in the last measure of the example. In example 18, the shifts between hand positions occur much faster, but when done correctly, they allow the player to traverse two octaves seamlessly.

Ex. 18: Nino Rota: *Divertimento Concertante*, Marcia: 3 mm. after Rehearsal 2



A diatonic (*diat*) hand position is needed at the start of the run. After the shift from C \natural to B \flat , the player will end up in a semi-chromatic position. Instead of moving down the G-string, the player will move across the bass, repeating the semi-chromatic position on the D-string. On beat four the player will keep the thumb in the same place, moving to a chromatic hand position with the third finger on the C \natural to finish the passage.

Example 19 doesn't seem conducive to any hand position at first, but utilizing a diatonic pattern followed by a chromatic position will save many hours of practice on an otherwise awkward passage. The example is in 4/4 time.

The French School of Double Bass Playing

The Early French School

While the Italian school flourished during the first half of the nineteenth century, the same could not be said of the French school. Collectively, the French vacillated between tuning in fourths or fifths and three-stringed versus four-stringed bass. In addition, several practices leading to technical deficiencies stalled developments in France until 1820. Michel Pignolet Montéclair (1667–1737) was the first bassist to play in France as a member of the Paris Opera around 1700. During this time, seven-stringed viols played the bass line, and French composers utilized the double bass as an orchestral effect. Special parts written for the bass in the 1706 opera *Alcyone* by Marin Marais (1656–1728) and the 1713 cantata *Léandre et Héro* by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault's (1646–1749) use the bass to depict tempest scenes.

Compared to the viol, basses have a brighter sound with clearer articulations. By the time Jean-Phillippe Rameau (1683–1764) composed his first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733), the instrument had evolved into an essential voice in French orchestras, thus replacing the bass viols.³² Unfortunately, several factors plagued the early school. Poor string making hampered the players, even though this problem was not unique to France. Unlike the Italians, the French did not have an instruction book delineating a rational approach to the instrument until the 1830s. This seems absurd since the first method written for the bass was published in Paris; however, that method was far from practical.

³² Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 173.

Michel Corrette (1709–1795) published his *Méthodes pour apprendre à jouer de la contre-basse à 3, à 4, et à 5 cordes* in 1773. Like Asioli, Corrette wrote his manual as a theoretician and not a bassist. He authored seventeen methods for other instruments encompassing the organ, violin, harp, flute, and one of the first methods for cello. In the bass method, Corrette surveyed concepts practiced throughout the century, and considered solutions that would improve playing standards.

As discussed in the first chapter, late eighteenth-century French bassists could not settle on an appropriate number of strings; moreover, they couldn't decide how to tune those strings. Corrette's method shows sensitivity to this debate by considering all possibilities, even though he felt the four-stringed bass tuned in fourths was the best option. A standard French fingering system was still in the initial stages, and Corrette attempted to contribute to this endeavor. While Asioli had somehow managed to create a system of real practical value, Corrette proved less successful.

Only the first and third fingers were used on the lowest strings to play whole-tones and semitones. Without the use of second and fourth fingers, chromatic lines were difficult to execute since the fingers had to be repeated. For example, players performed a chromatic line from B^b to C[#] on the A-string with 1-1-3-3.³³ On the bottom strings, the player could only finger the range of a fourth before moving to the next string, thus restricting efficient fingerings of arpeggios.

Players only utilized the second finger on the top string (which was a G-string when the bass was tuned in fourths, and an A-string when the bass was tuned in fifths), but Corrette employed 1-2 for whole-tones instead of semitones. The distance between an A[♮] and B[♮] on the G-string is approximately 12cm, assuming the bass has a 42" string

³³ Sas. "A History of Double Bass Performance Practice: 1500–1900," 104-105.

If composers wanted to write a simplified part, mixed bass sections made this unrealistic. For a short period, French bassists utilized a mixed bass section with an equal number of four-stringed basses (in fourths) and three-stringed basses (in fifths). Three-stringed basses were used to emphasize harmonic changes and add power to the section, while the other set-up, considered more nimble, played as many notes in the original part as possible.³⁶ Composers could not write a single simplified bass part since what was easy for one bass was not so for the other. Therefore, the players were left to their own devices, each creating their own simplification. Bedlam ensued and composers detested hearing their works with a proliferation of conflicting bass parts. Berlioz, a staunch opponent of simplification, once stated:

This buzzing chaos (that of the simplifying bassists), full of odd noises and hideous grumblings, was completed and further augmented by the other double bass players, more zealous or more confident in their skillfulness, who wore themselves out on useless efforts to play every note of the reading passage.³⁷

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the reputation of French bassists suffered. A new French school of bass playing grew out of a need to improve playing standards and practices, and make them capable of fulfilling the composer's intentions. Bassists still debated the merits of the three and four-stringed bass, but under the influence of Achille Gouffé (1804–1874), the four-stringed bass tuned in fourths became standard.

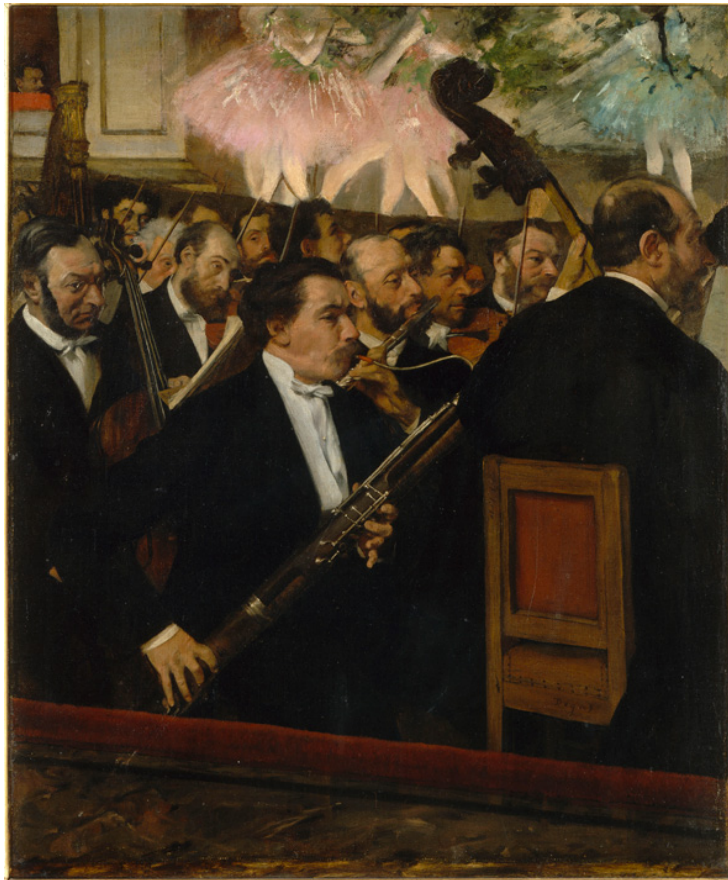
³⁶ Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 47.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

Achille Gouffé

Even among bass players, Achille Gouffé's name finds little recognition. Apart from his birthplace in Pontoise, information on his childhood and early music education is meager. As a young man, Gouffé initially studied law in Paris before following his calling into music. Most of his professional career was spent in the Paris Opera as the principal bassist for 35 years. Famed French artist Edgar Degas (1834–1917) depicts Gouffé in his painting *L'orchestre de L'Opera* (*The Orchestra of the Opera*), ca. 1870.

Ex. 21: Edgar Degas *L'orchestre de L'Opera* (*The Orchestra of the Opera*), ca. 1870



Gouffé played the four-stringed double bass in the Paris Opera. Dissatisfied by the E-string's poor quality, Gouffé sought to improve the manufacturing process instead of discarding the string. Work with violin luthier Auguste Bernardel (1797–1870) yielded a new process of double winding alternating spirals of plated copper and steel.³⁸ This produced an E-string that was much easier to manage. It produced clearer articulations, and sounded better in the 16' register. The process was universally adopted, eventually making the four-stringed bass standard.

Gouffé's advocacy of the four-stringed bass continued with one of the first methods written exclusively for that instrument, *Traité sur la Contra-Basse à quatre cordes*, published in 1839. Interestingly, it was the first method authored by an actual bassist in France. Slowly but surely, French bassists earned back the respect and trust of composers thanks to Gouffé's work.

Swayed by the emerging potential of the four-stringed bass in France, several composers dedicated works to Gouffé over the course of his lifetime. Eugene Walckiers composed *Flute Quintet op. 90* (1854), and Adolphe Blanc composed his *String Quintet No. 3, op. 21* in 1857. String quintets featuring the bass never prevailed in chamber music literature despite the enormous potential of the medium. George Onslow (1784–1853) explored this vehicle of artistic expression to great effect, but unfortunately the composer and his work rest on the fringes of music history.

³⁸ Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 164.

George Onslow and his String Quintets

André George Louis Onslow was born on July 27, 1784 in Clermont-Ferrand, the Auvergne region of central France. His father, Edward Onslow, was an English nobleman forced into exile due to scandal in 1781. During his refuge in France, he married and fathered four children with Marie Rosalie de Bourdeilles. Two of them became distinguished painters, and George, the eldest, thrived as an important composer on the Parisian scene.

Onslow took piano lessons with Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760–1812) and Johann Baptist Cramer (1771–1858). At the turn of the century, operas had taken Paris by storm, and young Onslow's winters spent in the capital left a lasting impression on him. With the encouragement of a friend, Onslow tried his hand in composition at age twenty-two, teaching himself the basics without the help of a teacher. As a result, his early works did not receive critical acclaim since his writing, though full of promise, suffered from fundamental weaknesses.

In need of a proper teacher, Onslow sought out Anton Reicha (1770–1836), a lifelong friend of Beethoven, whose notable pupils include Franz Liszt (1811–1886), Hector Berlioz and César Franck (1822–1890). Reicha's tutelage allowed Onslow's writing to flourish unencumbered by technical deficiencies. Eventually, his music gained notoriety in France and abroad. Contemporaries such as Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), Robert Schumann (1810–1856), and Franz Schubert (1797–1828) admired his music, and Berlioz once wrote, "Since the death of Beethoven, he [Onslow] wields the scepter of instrumental music."³⁹

³⁹ Ali Yazdanfar, "The String Quintets of George Onslow," *Bass World* 34, no. 1 (2011): 48.

Traditional string quintets included either the two cellos found in the oeuvre of Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805), or two violas, as preferred by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791). Onslow gravitated toward both instrumentations in his early quintets. During his tour of England in 1826, he premiered his *String Quintet No. 10, op. 32* at a soiree. That evening, the second cellist failed to show, and a colleague informed Onslow that Dragonetti was in attendance, suggesting that the illustrious bassist fill in for the missing cellist. Nearly insulted by the proposal, Onslow remarked “no...,no...,one hundred thousand times no!...I am sure the bass will give a detestable effect.”⁴⁰ Realizing the cellist would not arrive, he soon relented and Dragonetti played the part. According to accounts, Onslow had begun to contemplate the possibilities of a bass quintet before the group completed the exposition.

Enlightened by Dragonetti’s playing, Onslow integrated the bass into a second edition of Op. 32, in addition to the next three string quintets: Op.33, Op. 34, and Op. 35. It is important to note that the quintets listed were published with two supplementary parts: a second cello part replacing the bass and a second viola part supplanting the first cello. Driven more by financial potential than by purely artistic consideration, the quintets were published with these varied options, making it difficult to determine Onslow’s actual preference. Fortunately, his intent for quintet No. 26 is clearly disclosed in a letter written to the Baron of Trémont on July 11, 1843. In the letter he states, “I am finishing a work for you for the next winter. I am trying to compose a special quintet written for a bass with 4 strings.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Viviane Niaux, *George Onslow, Gentleman Compositeur* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2003), 103.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

Dragonetti's incredible playing inspired Onslow but, like Berlioz, he detested the transpositions utilized by three-stringed bassists. He felt that the transpositions produced bass lines that compete with, and obscured the cello voice.

I have to say that if the 4-string bass[...]were more in use in France, I would have greatly preferred it to the second violoncello, in that it separates the instruments in the group and serves as a true bass without confusion of sound with the first violoncello. I believe that in addition to the useful effect obtained, bassists would see a means to extend the domain of their instrument and to multiply their presence in chamber music.⁴²

Gouffé, a noted companion of Onslow, shared the same sentiments, and impressed the composer with his own playing. For 40 years, Gouffé hosted soirees in his home showcasing promising composers. Onslow premiered a number of his quartets and quintets at these events. In fact, the cover page of *String Quintet No.26 in c minor, Op.67* (1844) proclaims, "Dedicated to Monsieur Gouffé." In another letter written to the Baron of Trémont on October 18, 1843, Onslow proclaims "However, I have finished my bass quintet with four strings, and if I am under no illusion, quite familiar to the author, it is one of my most complete constructions."⁴³

The augmented compass of the four-stringed bass perfectly suited the composer's writing style. Bassist Ali Yazdanfar concisely articulates the elevated role of the bass in *The String Quintets of George Onslow*:

Onslow's writing for the double bass doesn't simply double the cello. His use of the bass for the "true" bass line freed the cello to contribute in a more melodic context, but also demanded the bass a greater responsibility than that of source of

"Je vous prépare de la besogne pour l'hiver prochain et suis en train de composer un quintette spécial écrit pour la contrebasse à 4 cordes"

⁴² Yazdanfar, "The String Quintets of George Onslow," 48.

⁴³ Viviane Niauz, *George Onslow, Gentleman Compositeur*, 353.

"J'ai cependant terminé mon quintette à Contrebasse à quatre cordes et si je ne me fais pas l'illusion assez familière aux auteurs sur le retour je le regarde comme un des mes ouvrages le plus complets"

texture. Although extended bass solos are rare, the melody does find its way to the lower octave. Inclusion of the bass feels organic and never forced, and the harmonic and rhythmic role is independent of other voices.⁴⁴

During the twentieth century, Onslow's string quintets faded into obscurity, along with his name. But in his time, the popularity of the bass quintets endowed the French School of playing with recognition and reverence.

Édouard Nanny

Édouard Nanny was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye March 24, 1872. Despite his renowned career as a soloist and pedagogue, little is known of his youth. His father, Jacques, was Swiss, and the younger Nanny did not gain full French citizenship until 1890. Perhaps this accounts for the void in his biography.

Nanny first studied the cornet with a local bandleader named Carlos Allard. In 1891, shortly after moving to Paris, he switched to the double bass. He studied at the Paris Conservatory with Professor Victor Frédéric Verrimst (1825–1893), a sought-after teacher who performed with the Paris Opera, the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, and the Opéra-Comique. Under Verrimst, Nanny quickly progressed on the instrument, and even won a concerto competition in his second year of study.

From 1894 to 1895, Nanny served in the military. Upon completion, he began his professional orchestral career under Charles Lamoureux (1834–1899) at the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire.⁴⁵ Lamoureux championed German baroque music by J.S. Bach (1685–1750) and George Frederic Handel (1685–1759), an endorsement considered unusual at the time. Exposure to baroque music played by the Société motivated Nanny

⁴⁴ Yazdanfar, *"The String Quintets of George Onslow,"* 49.

⁴⁵ Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 173.

to participate in France's early music revival. In 1901, he co-founded the nation's first historically informed performance group with Henri Casadesus (1879–1947), called the Henri Casadesus Society of Old Instruments. French composer Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) routinely collaborated with the ensemble.

Unlike Bottesini and Dragonetti, Nanny built much of his solo career on music borrowed from the baroque era. He edited and transcribed numerous works from the period, premiering transcriptions of several cello sonatas by Benedetto Marcello (1686–1739), and Mozart's *Bassoon Concerto K. 191*. Nanny may also have been the first double bassist to perform a transcription of *Bach's Cello Suite No.1 in G major, BWV 100*.

Consignment Complet

In 1919, Nanny took up his prestigious post at the Paris Conservatory. The following year, he composed *Consignment Complet* (1920), a compilation of pedagogical studies comprised of *Méthode complète pour la contrebasse à quatre et cinq cordes*, the *Vingt études de virtuosité*, and *Dix étude-caprices*. In contrast to most nineteenth century methods, *Consignment Complet* demanded mastery in both the orchestral and solo ranges of the bass.

Eight years after *Consignment Complet*, Nanny composed several considerably difficult concert studies, the *Three Caprices for Double Bass*. Caprices No. 1 and No. 3 are dedicated to Austrian bassist and pedagogue Joseph Prunner (1886–1969). Nanny dedicates Caprice No.2 to three of his students: Baronnet, Delesecluse, and Perotin.⁴⁶ All

⁴⁶ Nanny lists the surnames of the dedicatees on the original manuscript. Aside from Pierre Delesecluse, the given names of the other two could not be located.

of the caprices span the entire range of the bass with scale-based melodies and arpeggios. Success in performing these concert studies requires a sense of comfort in the solo range that is essential to the mastery of the bass.

Arguably, the French may have created the first school of double bass playing, but circumstances surrounding the school impeded its success in the earliest years. Despite these setbacks, the school emerged as a keystone in the bass's history. Many of the players of the school lie in obscurity, along with their methods. Bringing these to light not only honors the feats of the early pedagogues and virtuosos, it also provides context for understanding subsequent schools.

The American School of Double Bass Playing

The Early American School

Currently, an unprecedented period of technical and artistic achievement is taking place in the double bass world. Numerous original works, expansion of pedagogical insight, and innovations in lutherie suggest a bass Renaissance. Modern schools have synthesized the best attributes of their predecessors in an effort to push the capabilities of the bass further. The school of playing found in the United States of America represents an amalgamation of several intellectual traditions. Most American bassists can trace their pedagogical lineage to one of two players: Ludwig Emanuel Manoly (1856–1932) from the Prague school, or Antonio Torello (1884–1959) of the Spanish school.

Founded in 1811 by Wenzel Hause (1763–1847), the Prague school boasts a number of important Czech bassists who've substantially contributed to the instrument's history.⁴⁷ Josef Hrabé (1816–1870), Antonín Sláma (1804–1881), and Emanuel Storch (1841–1877) are a few names from this pantheon, but none surpass the influence and importance of Franz Simandl (1840–1912). His method *Neueste Methode Des Contrabassspiels* (1874), written for his students at the Vienna Conservatory, standardized basic techniques of modern bass playing.

Emanuel Manoly studied with Simandl at the Vienna Conservatory, where he graduated in 1876. Shortly after completing his studies, Manoly immigrated to the United States, quickly securing spots with the Theodore Thomas Orchestra and the Boston

⁴⁷ James Barket and Alfred Planyavsky, *The Baroque Double Bass Violone*, (London: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 133.

Symphony Orchestra.⁴⁸ In 1880, he became a section bassist with the Philharmonic Society of New York, later to become the New York Philharmonic. 1892 marked the beginning of Manoly's teaching career after Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, appointed him as bass professor, thus sowing the seeds of the Prague school in America.

Eventually, Manoly moved to the Institute of Musical Art, now the Juilliard School, where he taught noteworthy bassist Herman Reinshagen. Succeeding his teacher in every way, Reinshagen became principal bassist of the New York Philharmonic and professor at Juilliard after Manoly's departure. Gary Karr (b.1941), the acclaimed American soloist of the twentieth century, and jazz legend Charles Mingus (1922–1975) both studied with Reinshagen. Like his teacher before him, Reinshagen trained his successor, Frederick Zimmerman (1906–1967), who became principal of the New York Philharmonic in 1930 and faculty at Juilliard in 1935.

Considered “the father of bass teaching in the United States”, Zimmerman also taught at Mannes College of Music, Columbia University, Manhattan School of Music, and New York University.⁴⁹ He arranged, transcribed, and composed numerous pieces for students. In addition to his own method, *Contemporary Concepts of Bowing Technique for the Double Bass* (1966), Zimmerman revised and edited a number of Prague school methods by Slama, Simandl, Storch and Hrabé. Furthermore, his students occupied positions in every major American orchestra. In addition, two of his pupils, Stuart Sankey (1927–2000) and David Walter (1913–2003), emerged as major pedagogues in America.

⁴⁸ The Chicago Symphony Orchestra was briefly renamed the Theodore Thomas Orchestra from 1904 to 1913 in honor of their first music director.

⁴⁹ Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 155.

The fingering system of the Prague school differs slightly from that of the Italian school. Though both schools use a three-finger system in lower positions, the fourth finger is favored over the third finger in the Prague school. In thumb position, the player switches out the fourth finger for the third. Extensions, pivots, and forked fingering don't carry much weight in the system. Czech bassists favored the underhand (German) bow over the overhand (French) bow. While Zimmerman endorsed the Prague school in New York, another school began to take root in Philadelphia in 1926.

Founded in 1924 by Mary Louise Curtis Bok (1876–1970), the Curtis Institute of Music has graduated world-renowned musicians for over 90 years. Anton Torello (1884–1960), principal bass of the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1914 to 1948, joined the Curtis faculty as the institute's first bass professor in 1926.⁵⁰ Originally from San Sadurn de Noya, Spain, Torello studied with Pedro Valls Duran (1865–1935) at the Escuela Municipal de Música de Barcelona. Valls started the Spanish school of bass playing, closely modeled after the Italian school. Valls teacher, José Roveda, studied with Bottesini, and the Italian virtuoso's influence upon Valls is undeniable. During his interview for the Escuela Municipal de Música de Barcelona in 1928, Valls proposed a curriculum centered on Bottesini's method and pieces.⁵¹

Torello brought the Spanish school of playing to America in 1909. Although Torello did play a three-stringed bass, he chose to do so only in solo repertoire, and played a four-stringed bass in the orchestra. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Simandl fingering permeated different schools, and Torello ultimately adopted this

⁵⁰ Joanna Cowan, "Anton Torello," *International Society of Bassists* 12, no. 2 (1986): 10.

⁵¹ Xosé C. Gándara, "La Escuela de Contrabajo en España," *Revista de Musicología* 23, no. 1 (Junio 2000): 155.

system for his teaching. However, his significant contribution to American playing was the overhand bow.⁵²

Over the past century, neither bow has supplanted the other in America. Therefore, mixed orchestral bass sections with both bows became commonplace. This diversity in the bass section seldom exists outside the United States. Torello's students consist of major symphony principals and revered professors of the bass at some of the most important American music schools. A few noted students include Rodger Scott (1919–2005) former principal of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Warren Benfield (1931–2001) from the Chicago Symphony, former principal of the Boston Symphony, Henry Portnoi (1914–1996), and longtime principal of the Cleveland Symphony Jacques Posell (1909–2000).

The Rabbath Method

Over the past 25 years, concepts from *Nouvelle Technique de la Contrebasse* by Francois Rabbath (b.1931) have appeared in the American school with increasing frequency. Simandl's method is the "old" in relation to Rabbath's "new" technique for the bass. The two methods primarily differ on left hand position and mobility. In Simandl's method, bassists have twelve notes available to them in one "block" position (three notes per string). However, a bassist can only play two consecutive semitones, or just one whole-tone, before the music forces them to shift into another position. As a player moves into a new position, the entire hand moves as one unit from one block position to the next. Some players feel that blocking positions create jagged phrases and inefficient movements on the bass.

⁵² Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, 178.

In contrast to Simandl, which defines positions by the placement of the first finger, the Rabbath method uses the thumb to anchor position while pivoting the left hand. An effective pivot can span a perfect fifth, depending on hand size, before the player needs to shift into another position. Because of pivots, Rabbath's fingerboard divides into six positions. Once his system is mastered, a player can seamlessly move between positions, allowing fluent coverage of the bass.⁵³

New Frontiers

Concepts from the Prague, Spanish, and Rabbath methods are all valuable elements to a variegated American school. Yet despite the blend of foreign elements, American music for bass maintains its own aesthetic identity through the impact of rock, jazz, groove, and swing. It is the latter two of these influences that especially stand out in the literature. Groove (swing) is a propulsive, and often cyclic, rhythmic pattern underlying the characteristic "feel" of a piece.⁵⁴ American composers enhancing the soundscape of solo bass repertoire using harmonies and rhythms from these genres include David Anderson (b. 1962), John Clayton (b. 1952), Peter Askim (b. 1971), and John Harbison (b.1934).

⁵³ Francois Rabbath, "Left-Hand Pivots and the Crab Fingering System," *Strad* 126, no. 1506 (2015): 84.

⁵⁴ Geoffrey Whittall, "Groove," *Oxford Music Online*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2284508>>(Accessed 12 January 2016)

David Anderson

David Anderson has been principal bassist of the Louisiana Philharmonic since 1996. As an undergraduate, Anderson studied bass and composition with Frank Proto (b.1941) at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Other teachers who influenced him include Warren Benfield, Stuart Sankey, and jazz legend Jaco Pastorius (1951–1987).

Anderson took up composition in 1984 after recognizing the dearth of solos written for bass. Although his published works now encompass music for chamber orchestras, duets, quartets, and pieces for other instruments, his solo works for bass are especially revered in the double bass community. The Philadelphia Orchestra performed his *Concerto for Double Bass, Strings, and Harp* with Harold Robinson in a 1997–98 subscription series, and his *Sonata No. 1 for Bass* and *Four Short Pieces* have become standard repertoire.

Capriccio No. 2 for Solo Double Bass served as the required solo piece for the 1997 International Society of Bassists solo competition. In the composition, harmonies and rhythms are governed by rock influences. Phrygian, Dorian, and Mixolydian modes all feature heavily in rock, and the *Capriccio*'s introduction opens with a melody snaking through the tonalities of A minor and A Phrygian, over an open-string drone.

Ex. 22: David Anderson: *Capriccio No. 2*, Introduction: mm. 1–11

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of *Capriccio No. 2* by David Anderson, measures 1 through 11. The score is written for a double bass (bass clef) and a piano (treble clef). The bass line features a melodic line with triplets and a steady accompaniment of open strings. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes, with dynamic markings of *mf*, *f*, *p*, and *pp*. The score includes performance instructions such as *p espr.* and *sul II*. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece concludes with a fermata over a final chord.

In the escalating rhythms between measures 18 and 22, Anderson imitates a guitar riff consisting of hammer-ons and pull-offs. Slur articulation mark hammer-ons and pull-offs in guitar tablature, meaning, the guitarist will articulate six notes in the left hand for every pick. This idiosyncratic technique of the electric guitar is illustrated in example 23.

Ex. 23: Guitar riff in sextuplets using hammer-ons and pull-offs

In example 24, Anderson's riff centers upon five notes cycled through in decreasing note values, creating a written-out acceleration rhythmic. Unlike the passage in the previous example, this one undulates asymmetrically with seemingly chaotic energy.

Ex. 24: David Anderson: *Capriccio No. 2*, Introduction: mm. 19–21

Example 25 shows how Anderson uses power chords to propel the harmony.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, he establishes a groove by placing an open A on the beginnings of pulse groups, moving between 2/4 and 6/16. Rhythmic tension occurs as Anderson abrades the pulse through a barrage of time changes, creating an erratic energy that drives the piece. Furthermore, Anderson's treatments of the low and middle range of the bass deserve praise, as these regions normally host few virtuosic passages.

Ex. 25: David Anderson: *Capriccio No. 2*, Allegro: mm. 28–54

The image shows a musical score for David Anderson's *Capriccio No. 2*, measures 28–54. The score is written for a double bass and consists of five systems of music. The first system (measures 28–33) is in 2/4 time, marked *Allegro* with a tempo of 144. The second system (measures 34–39) is in 6/16 time, marked *mp*. The third system (measures 40–45) is in 2/4 time, marked *poco a poco crescendo*. The fourth system (measures 46–51) is in 6/16 time, marked *f*. The fifth system (measures 52–54) is in 2/4 time, marked *f*. The score features a complex rhythmic structure with frequent time changes and a strong emphasis on power chords. The bass line is characterized by a driving, repetitive pulse that changes rhythmically throughout the piece.

Peter Askim

Deemed a “Modern Master” by *The Strad* magazine in 2008, Peter Askim has played a significant role in the development of the double bass in the twenty-first century. His works have been commissioned and premiered by the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra,

⁵⁵ Power chords are not technically chords since they only contain two notes, the root and the fifth.

Honolulu Symphony, Orchestra Asia-Japan, and the Portland Chamber Music Festival. His works for bass such as *Edge for Solo Double Bass* and *Eight Solitudes for Bass and Piano* have become modern staples in double bass repertoire. Askim has studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna with esteemed bassist Ludwig Streicher (1920–2003), and at Yale University under Dianna Gannet and Donald Palma.

In 2004, the Iolani School in Honolulu, Hawaii commissioned Askim's well-known *Islands: Concerto for Double Bass and String Orchestra*. The concerto is based on "the four major islands of the Hawaiian chain: the jagged contours of Kaua'i's Na Pali coast, the play and shimmer of Oahu's surf, Maui's majestic Haleakala sunrise and the bubbling and crackling of the Big Island's lava fields."⁵⁶ The Iolani School orchestra premiered the work the same year with the composer as the soloist.

Minimalism features prominently in the work, with repetitive melodic patterns above slowly changing harmonies; however, instead of perpetuating the motoric rhythms typifying minimalism, Askim embeds several of his melodies into grooves. Example 26 below shows the initial entrance of the bass with a true minimalist melody composed of small units continuously reiterating five notes.⁵⁷ The harmony is nearly motionless, except for the slight variation in measure 26, but Askim draws in the listener by changing the number and placement of accents in every bar. This gives each bar a distinct rhythmic feel, and the juxtaposition of these assorted "feels" generates a visceral response in the audience.

⁵⁶ *Islands: Concerto for Double Bass and String Orchestra*, <http://peteraskim.com> (accessed March 23, 2016).

⁵⁷ Keith Potter, "Minimalism." *Oxford Music Online*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/40603>> (Accessed 14 January 2016)

Ex. 26: Peter Askim: *Islands: Concerto for Double Bass*, Kauai: Na Pali Cliffs mm. 18–

30

18 SOLO Aggressive, intense *f*

22

26 *cresc.* *mf* I *sim.*

The second movement uses a traditional minimalist approach. Example 27 illustrates uninterrupted 16ths gradually transforming the harmony with arpeggiated figures. Furthermore, the timbral quality Askim establishes with the harmonics in this example evokes a delicate weightlessness seldom associated with the bass.

Ex. 27: Peter Askim: *Islands: Concerto for Double Bass*, Oahu: Surf mm. 149–157

149 I II III II *sim.* "shimmering", quasi accompagnato *p*

152 *sim.*

John Clayton

In the jazz world, the bass has amassed an unassailable level of respect still sought after by classical bassists. Oscar Pettiford (1922–1960), Charles Mingus (1922–1979), Scott LaFaro (1936–1961) and Jimmy Blanton (1918–1942)⁵⁸, were not only significant bassists, but also central figures in the history of jazz.

Considered one of the greatest jazz bassists of our time, John Clayton continues to work as an innovator and ambassador of the double bass. Born in 1952, he began studying with revered bassist Ray Brown (1926–2002) at the age of 16. By age 19, Clayton became the bassist for Henry Mancini's television series *The Mancini Generation*. After graduating from Indiana University, he toured with Count Basie, and won the 1982 International Society of Bassists Zimmerman-Mingus Jazz Competition.

In 1999, the Los Angeles Philharmonic appointed Clayton as Artistic Director of Jazz. Since this appointment, Clayton has fulfilled similar roles as director of the Centrum Jazz Workshop in Port Townsend, Washington and the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival in 2006. Currently, he co-leads the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra with his brother, saxophonist Jeff Clayton, and drummer Jeff Hamilton.⁵⁹

Equally comfortable in the classical world, Clayton has an orchestral career that includes a position as principal bassist of the Amsterdam Philharmonic. His expertise in the two worlds converges in *Bach to Blues* (1999), where Clayton ingeniously alternates between a classical style idiom and a great blues groove. Pizzicato is employed throughout, requiring players to use strums, rakes, and muted pizzicatos.

⁵⁸ Prior to Blanton, the bass was only utilized to keep time and lay down a basic harmonic foundation. Blanton's virtuosity and innovative solos, using pizzicato and arco, revealed the possibilities of using the bass as a melodic instrument in jazz.

⁵⁹ *John Clayton's Biography*, <http://johnclaytonjazz.com> (accessed March 27, 2016).

In example 28, Clayton pays his respects to Bach by imitating the contrapuntal style prevalent in Bach's solo string works, giving the impression of melody and accompaniment occurring simultaneously on one instrument. Clayton frames this in four-bar phrases comprising a larger harmonic structure known as 12-bar blues.

Ex. 28: John Clayton: *Bach to Blues*, mm. 32–43

The musical score for Example 28 is presented in two systems. The first system, starting at measure 32, is titled "Blues" with a tempo of 108 and a "Swing Feel". It features a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a bass line. The second system, starting at measure 38, includes a note in the treble clef marked "(strum with thumb)". Both systems contain triplets and various rhythmic patterns.

A cursory glance at example 29 may not reveal any esoteric features of jazz bass playing, but Clayton begins using major 6ths, minor 7ths, and major 10ths at measure 58.

Although major 6ths are not uncommon in solo bass repertoire, 7th and 10th double stops did not exist prior to jazz. This is because a string lies between the two notes of those large intervals; consequently, a bow cannot play them concurrently. But a jazz player, using the thumb and first (or second) finger, can play the two notes of the double stop together.

Ex. 29: John Clayton: *Bach to Blues*, mm. 50–67

John Harbison

Considered one of America's most distinguished contemporary composers, John Harbison, in a career spanning nearly 60 years, has contributed to the collective national voice of American music in the twentieth and twenty-first century. His compositions have earned him a Pulitzer Prize, a Heinz award, and a MacArthur fellowship. Every major American orchestra has commissioned a work by Harbison, thus expanding an oeuvre that includes three operas, four symphonies, nine concerti, four string quartets, and numerous cantatas, oratorios, chamber, and vocal works. In addition, he has served as composer in residence for the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tanglewood, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festivals.⁶⁰

Harbison's *Concerto for Bass Viol and Orchestra* is the first significant work written for the bass by a major composer in this century. The International Society of Bassists along with former dean of the Shepherd School of Music, Michael Hammond, commissioned the piece in memory of David Capoccioni. The concerto was premiered via a large-scale consortium project over the course of two years. As part of a “rolling” premiere, the concerto progressed from coast to coast via consecutive performances from

⁶⁰ Matthew Power, “Recasting the Viol,” *Double Bassist* 40, no. 1 (2007): 16

principal bassists in many of the top orchestras across the United States. Orchestras included Boston, Philadelphia, Houston, Los Angeles, and many others. Joel Quarrington gave the world premiere in Canada with the Toronto Symphony on April 1, 2006. Just over a month later, Timothy Pitts gave the U.S. premiere with the Houston Symphony on May 5, 2006.

The concerto begins with a *Lamento*, featuring the orchestral bass section echoing the soloist. Harbison wrote this peculiar exchange in an effort to evoke the sound of a viol consort. He states, “I wanted that sonority to be the first thing we deal with, like a look through a telescope—back to the beginnings of the instrument...”⁶¹ Throughout the movement, Harbison pairs the solo bass with other unique instrumental groupings in the orchestra, traversing disparate and startling soundscapes.

The title of the second movement, *Cavatina*, refers to the long, unfolding song that originated in the Classical period. In this movement, the bass expounds a florid melody atop a passacaglia played by the orchestra. Harbison moves the ensemble through the harmonic series, pushing the bass further and further up the fingerboard. Once the bass cannot ascend any further, the largest orchestral *tutti* in the entire work begins to close out the movement. Shortly after, the passacaglia reemerges to form a coda, with repeated fragments receding into a secondary role.

In the third movement, *Rondo*, Harbison’s experience as a jazz pianist shines through. In an interview with *Double Bassist* magazine, the composer asserts that his time spent in combo rhythm sections afforded him a keen understanding of the role of the bass, along with a gift for creating effective walking bass lines. This intimacy with the

⁶¹ Matthew Power, “Recasting the Viol,”¹⁷

bass is most apparent in the piano reduction, as the piano actually “comps”⁶² during the bass’s virtuosic sections. At the end of the piece the bass takes on a true walking bass role, supporting the piano’s reiteration of previous themes and motifs.

Conclusion

Each of the schools of bass playing discussed in this dissertation played a significant role in the history and development of the instrument. The Italian school, while initially limited by the number of strings, pushed the bass beyond perceived limits by continuously redefining the boundaries of bass techniques. While Dragonetti and Bottesini brought virtuosic bass playing to the forefront of public consciousness, twentieth-century Italian bassists, like Petracchi, successfully convinced major composers that the bass was a viable medium of artistic expression.

Meanwhile, innovations in string winding pioneered by the French school allowed the bass to successfully support the bass line an octave below. Creating a manageable E-string bolstered the role of the bass in the orchestral ensemble. Once bassists could play on the lowest string with adroitness, which had previously been unrealistic, composers gradually made bass parts harmonically and rhythmically independent of the cello, thus elevating the bass from a mere source of texture to an actual voice in the ensemble.

The success of the American school of playing derives from the amalgamation of diverse schools. The co-existence of these different concepts grants players an opportunity to customize an approach conducive to their physiology and playing style. Finally, American double bass music illuminates the strengths of the instrument, but

⁶²Comping is a term used in jazz music to describe the chords, rhythms, and countermelodies a keyboardist (or guitarist) uses to support a musician's improvised solo or melody.

never acquiesces to its weaknesses, indeed pushing the limits of the bass well beyond traditional boundaries in the twenty-first century.

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Brown, Christopher. *Discovering Bows for the Double Bass*. Saint Paul, MN: Beaux Arts, 1994.

The first, and only, publication chronicling the development of double bass bows from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. Brown includes real-size color photos and measurements of nearly every bow featured, along with biographical information on every significant bow maker.

Brun, Paul. *A History of the Double Bass*. Netherlands: Febodruk Press, 1989.

Brun sheds light on the obscure history of the double bass. He addresses how the makeup of the bass derives from both the viol and violin family, in addition to the evolving roles of the double bass since the eighteenth century.

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Thanks to Joel Quarrington, renowned soloists and principal of the London Symphony Orchestra, the argument of tuning basses in fourths or fifths has resurfaced. Chapman takes his stance in this article by thoroughly discussing the advantages and limitations of different tunings since the eighteenth century.

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An article tracing the life and career of Anton Torello through select anecdotes and performance reviews.

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Bassist Ali Yazdandar explores George Onslow's string quintets in this article written for the International Society of Bassists journal, *Bass World*. He provides background information on the composer, and analyzes the unique role of the bass within this instrumentation. Furthermore, the author promotes Onslow's quintets as outstanding options for chamber works featuring the bass.