INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xergraphically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®
A Compilation and Study of Twentieth-Century Double Bass Solos
From the Orchestral Literature

by

Sandor Ostlund

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE

Doctor of Musical Arts

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

Walter B. Bailey, Associate Professor of Music
Shepherd School of Music

Paul V. Ellison, Professor
Shepherd School of Music

Timothy Pitts, Associate Professor
Shepherd School of Music

Gordon W. Smith, Professor
Economics

HOUSTON, TEXAS
MAY 2001
MAY 2001

ABSTRACT

A Compilation and Study of Twentieth-Century Double Bass Solos
From the Orchestral Literature

by

Sandor Ostlund

The purpose of this document is to identify in the twentieth-century orchestral
literature, noteworthy solos written for the double bass. Each solo is examined from a
variety of viewpoints, including: its musical context (i.e., within a larger work), musical
techniques and styles, pertinent information regarding the solo’s history (how and why
the solo came to be written for the double bass), technical insight, and the solo’s
pedagogical value. Following this, a clear and accurate rendering of the music is given.
The composers included in this study include: Bartok, Berg, Britten, Colgrass, Ginastera,
Gorecki, Henze, Kodaly, Mahler, Milaud, Penderecki, Prokofiev, Ravel, Schoenberg,
Shostakovich, Sibelius, and Stravinsky.

By studying how these solos have been written over the one hundred years of the
past century, one can see how composers have or have not followed the evolution of the
instrument itself. This document will use the information gained through this study to
trace the development of how the double bass has been used and perceived as a musical
instrument by composers throughout the century.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to acknowledge the unending support and friendship of Paul Ellison who has helped me in so many ways and made so much of what I have accomplished possible. I will be eternally grateful for the assistance, compassion, and generosity he has shown me.

Thanks also to the other members of my thesis committee, Dr. Bailey, Mr. Pitts, and Dr. Smith.

Special thanks to David Walter of the Julliard School for his generous contribution of a list of lesser-known double bass solos.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to friends and colleagues who have contributed their knowledge and assistance: Carla Clark, Christopher Michael Ewan, Dr. Robert Hanson, Robert Stiles, and Dennis Whittaker.

I would also like to thank my family whose love and support over the years has been invaluable. I have been lucky to have such great parents and a brother. Finally, I would like to thank my beautiful wife Vanessa for everything she has done and sacrificed in support of my endeavors.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii

PREFACE vi

NOTES ON THE MUSIC AND THE TEXT vii

INTRODUCTION 1

BÉLA BARTÓK 4
    Divertimento for Strings

ALBAN BERG 8
    Violinkonzert

BENJAMIN BRITTEN 12
    The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra
    Peter Grimes
    A Midsummer Night's Dream

MICHAEL COGOLRASS 24
    As Quiet As

ALBERTO GINASTERA 27
    Variaciones Concertantes
    Concerto per Corde

HENRYK GÓRECKI 39
    Symphony No. 3

HANS WERNER HENZE 43
    Concerto for Oboe, Harp, and Strings
    Aria de la Folia española

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY 54
    Dances of Moroszezk
    Psalmus Hungaricus
    Variations on a Hungarian Folksong (The Peacock)
GUSTAV MAHLER
Symphonies Nos. 4 and 7

DARIUS MILAUD
La Création du Monde

KRYSZTOF PENDERECKI
The Passion of St. Luke

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
Symphony No. 3
Lieutenant Kijé
Violin Concerto No. 2
Romeo and Juliet, Suite 2, No. 5
Symphony No. 5
Ivan the Terrible

MAURICE RAVEL
L'enfante et les sortileges

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG
Verklärte Nacht
Five Pieces for Orchestra

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH
Symphony No. 14

JEAN SIBELIUS
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

IGOR STRAVINSKY
Chant du Rossignol
Pulcinella Suite
Agon

COMPARISONS, REFLECTIONS,
AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

BIBLIOGRAPHY
PREFACE

The inspiration for the topic of this paper came from my preparation for the qualifying exams for the D.M.A. degree at Rice University in the spring semester of 2000. In preparing for the double bass portion of the exams, one of the subjects that Professor Paul Ellison asked to be prepared concerned the major solos written for the instrument from the twentieth-century orchestral literature. I prepared for the question, but was not asked about the solos on the exams.

Afterwards, over coffee, he asked what I would have answered if the question had come up. I responded with the solos that were familiar to almost all bassists: Ginastera's solos in the *Concerto per Corde* and *Variaciones Concertantes*, Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije*, Ravel's *L'enfant et les Sortileges*, Sibelius' *Violin Concerto*, the *Pulcinella Suite* by Stravinsky. It was not a long list, and in shock Paul asked whether I had heard about the jazz solo in Milaud's *La Creation du Monde*, or Henze's *La Folia*, etc. It was at this point that both of us realized that there was nothing that had been written that presented these solos, so very few bassists would know that there was a greater wealth of music written for solo double bass in the orchestral literature than is commonly known. Since many of the pieces that these solos are found in are somewhat obscure, it was only through experience playing and collecting these solos that they are currently known. We both decided that it was time further research was done on the subject.
NOTES ON THE MUSIC AND THE TEXT

➢ The solos are listed alphabetically by composer. If a composer wrote more than one work containing a double bass solo, those works are listed chronologically within that composer's sub-heading.

➢ François Rabbath's position system will be used throughout this document.

➢ The pitch identification used throughout the piece is as follows: middle 'c' is notated as 'c\textsuperscript{1}', one octave above middle 'c' is notated 'c\textsuperscript{2}', two octaves above middle 'c' is 'c\textsuperscript{3}', etc. One octave below middle 'c\textsuperscript{1}' is notated as 'c', two octaves below middle 'c\textsuperscript{1}' is notated as 'C', three octaves below middle 'c\textsuperscript{1}' is notated 'CC', etc. All of the notes between any given 'c' up through the 'b' a major seventh above that 'c' will use the same method of pitch identification. Thus a 'c' major scale starting on middle 'c\textsuperscript{1}' would be written: 'c\textsuperscript{1}', 'd\textsuperscript{1}', 'e\textsuperscript{1}', 'f\textsuperscript{1}', 'g\textsuperscript{1}', 'a\textsuperscript{1}', 'b\textsuperscript{1}', 'c\textsuperscript{2}'.

➢ A simple double bar line will be used to complete an excerpt if the movement from which the excerpt is found does not end with the excerpt. A final double bar line (with the second line being darker than the first) will be used if the end of the excerpt coincides with the end of the movement.

➢ There are several pieces included in this anthology that do not belong to the repertoire of the symphony orchestra. The term 'orchestral repertoire' is being used here to include the orchestral, operatic, and ballet repertoire, because an
orchestral double bassist may well encounter all of these genres and more in the course of his career.
INTRODUCTION

The Twentieth-Century Solo Orchestral Repertoire for the Double Bass

The study of double bass solos found in the repertoire of the orchestral player shows how composers have perceived the instrument. When a composer entrusts the double bass section, or the double bass soloist, with an exposed passage in an orchestral piece one gets a look at what that composer really thought was possible on the instrument, or at least what he thought would sound good and express his musical intentions.

A similar situation occurs when a composer writes a solo piece for the instrument, often with a particular soloist in mind to perform it. The composition that results may be a fusion of the musical language of the composer with the talents of the soloist. In this scenario the composer attempts to display the strengths of the performer in a way that composition, performer, and composer are all represented favorably.

Writing a work for the orchestra often does not allow the interpersonal exchange between creator and performer. The composer is in a situation where he may not know who will perform his work or what skill level that person will possess, so he may adjust what is expected of the double bassist accordingly. In this way, the solo double bass music written for the orchestra gives us an excellent viewpoint from which to examine how composers, and perhaps musicians at large, have perceived the limitations of the double bass as an orchestral and solo instrument.

In studying the works of the twentieth century, one also obtains a look at how the instrument has evolved over those one hundred years. The double bass has undergone a surge of advancement and innovation in its recent past. There have been many
technological advances in the past century that have helped to improve how the instrument sounds and is played. These improvements in instrument set-up include better strings, amplification, end-pins that allow the bassist to play on the instrument with greater comfort, and several different solutions to playing the contra notes below the ‘E’-string (including the five stringed instrument and various extension devices). These advances have aided the double bassist by improving his facility and maximizing his capabilities to a degree never seen before.

Furthermore, the work of some of the great twentieth-century double bass soloists such as Serge Koussevitsky, Gary Karr, Franco Pettrachi, François Rabbath, Ludwig Streicher, and Edgar Meyer, have raised the perception of what the double bass is capable of as a musical instrument. Stylistically, we have seen the bass take a crucial role in jazz and popular music with a number of great bassists coming out of that tradition: Jimmy Blanton, Milt Hinton, Ray Brown, Charles Mingus, Scott Lafaro, Ron Carter, Richard Davis, etc. This jazz exposure has broadened and expanded again how the public views the double bass musically.

As we study how composers have entrusted the double bass with their musical ideas over the last century, we also see how composers have or have not kept pace with the perceived limits of the instrument.

The author hopes that this collection will be useful for the bassist who may be required to perform solos in an orchestral setting. There is currently no available resource that the double bassist can call upon to find the solos written for the instrument so that he can prepare and study them. I have approached the preparation of these excerpts in a fashion that I believe will be useful, with not only a clear, accurate copy of
the written solo that is taken from a reliable source (the lesser known solos are often seen only in the handwritten notation of double bass pedagogues, and vary in their level of accuracy), but also enough background information to give the performer some context in which to place the piece being studied. Although the best way to learn any piece is through study of the complete score, this compilation offers a point from which bassists can start.

The following selection of double bass solos is by no means exhaustive. There has simply been too much music written in the twentieth-century to be sure that every solo written for the double bass has been found. I have attempted to locate and include the most important solos that have been written for the instrument, as well as the solos that best represent how the double bass has been used as a solo instrument in a large ensemble.
BÉLA BARTÓK

Divertimento for Strings

The Divertimento for Strings was written in 1939 and commissioned by and
dedicated to conductor and musicologist Paul Sacher. It was written in a very short
period of time, as is documented in a letter Bartók wrote to his eldest son on August 18,
1939:

I must work. To be precise for Sacher; it is a commission (something
for strings); this makes my situation similar to that of the old
composers. Fortunately the work went well; it is a piece of about
twenty-five minutes duration and I was ready with it in fifteen days--I
finished it exactly yesterday.¹

The piece is divided into three movements, and there are double bass solos found
in both the first and the last. Throughout the first movement Bartók often switches
between the tutti string sections, and those for solo strings, which suddenly thins the
texture. The first of these solos is found in measure 31 and is simply a G-sharp
descending Phrygian scale in eighth-notes that serves as transitional material. This short
solo of one measure is an excellent example of the method of providing musical contrast
by reducing the orchestration to the solo strings.

The next double bass solo passage occurs in measure 95 in the first movement.
Again, all of the strings are marked solo to achieve a lighter texture. In contrast to the
short previous solo, this passage contains melodic material. Within the space of three
measures each of the strings presents a theme in staggered entrances, with the double
bass beginning, and rising from low to high up through the string section. In measure 97
there is a three measure tutti section, which is followed by the solo strings entering in

similar fashion, this time with the first violin entering first and working from high to low, with the double bass entering last.

The third solo passage, in measure 124, serves the same function as the first solo passage; it is one measure in length and serves as a short transition passage. This time the scale is ascending.

The final solo passage Bartók writes for the double bass in the Divertimento for Strings is found at measure 175 in the third movement. The same technique is used as in the first movement—he gives the strings three measures in which they play a short melodic fragment in staggered entrances. This time Bartók groups the entrances: the bass and cello enter together, the viola and second violin enter together, and the first violin enters alone in the last measure. An added responsibility is given to the solo string players this time. The first measure of this short solo section is marked piano and it is indicated to crescendo to fortissimo at the end of the section, by which time the strings are again marked tutti. The solo players must therefore make a great effort to make the textural and dynamic transition as smoothly as possible by making a large crescendo that leads into the tutti section.
Divertimento for String Orchestra
I.

Allegro non troppo \( \cdot \) = ca. 76-72

Solo

Piu Tranquillo \( \cdot \) = ca. 69-66

Solo

Tutti

sempre \( f \)

Solo

Tutti

\( f \)
ALBAN BERG

Violinkonzert

Berg’s violin concerto was written in the last year of his life, 1935 as the result of a commission from American violinist Louis Krasner. Berg interrupted his work orchestrating the opera Lulu to write the piece and was not able to complete it before he died. The concerto was written as a memorial for Manon Gropius, who was the daughter of Alma Mahler. The work is also often seen as the composer’s own requiem because of his own death soon after the piece was written. Berg did not adhere to one style of composition in the concerto, and throughout the piece there are sections of music that are composed serially or tonally, or a combination thereof. The concerto received its premier posthumously on April 19, 1936 in Barcelona with Louis Krasner performing on the violin and Hermann Scherchen conducting.

There are several short solos for the double bassist throughout the concerto. The first is found four before rehearsal number 15. This short, legato solo is the only line marked Hauptstimme. The tempo is very slow; therefore more than one bow will be needed to perform the passage. The texture here is very thin, with only two bassoons and two violas accompanying the double bass. The second solo in the piece is found two measures after rehearsal number 30 and is similar to the first. It will also be necessary to use more than the one bow called for to manage both the length of the solo at this tempo, as well as to negotiate the string crossings.

The third double bass solo in the piece is found four after rehearsal number 75. It is a brief passage of sixty-fourth notes followed by sixteenth-notes and an eighth-note. This short solo again is set in a very light orchestration, and it directly precedes a run in
the solo violin line, which is similar to it. Despite the fact that the notes in this excerpt are very quick, the passage is well suited to be cleanly executed by the double bass because there are no large shifts to negotiate in the left hand or complicated string crossings for the right hand.

After a marked tacet of the previous tutti passage in rehearsal number 118 in which the solo bassist is asked to put a mute on the instrument, the fourth and final solo of the first movement occurs. There are two other solo string instruments at this point in the music: a violoncello and viola. The three instruments outline two major triads twice in the two-measure excerpt. The first triad, D-flat major, is found in the first two beats of the 3/8 measure. The second triad is contained in the third eighth-note of the measure, and it is a G major triad. The double bass plays the root of both of these chords, and the harp plays all three notes of each chord simultaneously.

The fifth solo of the piece is found in the second part of the concerto and is again marked as the Hauptstimme line. This time there are ten instruments with this marking.

The final solo for double bass occurs near the end of the piece, and it is the most technically demanding of the solos. The passage is an ascending sixteenth-note scale rising from ‘D’ to ‘c#4‘. The tempo of the excerpt is marked Molto adagio, making the primary focus the smooth navigation of the nearly three-octave scale under the slur, rather than the tempo of the excerpt. Using the open ‘g’ in measure 223 to shift the left hand to the third position facilitates a legato sound of the passage. The starting pitch of ‘D’ requires the use of a bass with the contra notes available. This is the only bass solo in the piece that uses a complete form of the originating tone-row. The row that is used in this solo is the prime form, starting seven half-steps higher than the original row.
Violinkonzert

I.

Andante $d = 56$
Hauptstimme

Solo Kb.

2

$2$

$2$

$moltotranquillo$

$pp$

Zeit lassen!

Allegretto $d = \text{tre}$
mit dpf.

$pp$

II.

125

Allegro $d = 69$
a tempo, ma molto pesante
Hauptstimme

$ff$

$ff$

$ff$ espr.
Molto adagio

tranquillo
BENJAMIN BRITTEN

The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, Op. 34

The music for The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra was originally intended to accompany a film about the instruments of the symphony orchestra. Since then it has become a standard piece in the orchestral concert repertoire. The piece, which is also referred to as Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell, was written in 1945, and it commemorated the 250th anniversary of the death of Henry Purcell. The melody used as the theme of this piece is a hornpipe from Purcell's Abdelazer or The Moor's Revenge.

The piece is not generally regarded as one of Britten's best works. Perhaps because Britten's objective was to show an audience what each of the different instrumental families and the individual instruments sounded like, he did not have the necessary time needed to develop his musical material in the best possible manner. Peter Evans states:

...there is no opportunity to show much more than one aspect of each instrument's character. So we find Britten, a master of imaginative instrumental colouring in almost all his major scores, dealing in stock responses--twittering flutes, soulful oboes, arpeggiating clarinets, and so on.²

Evans does go on to state that the bassoons are shown in a more flattering light, however. If the complaint is that each featured instrument is given a superficial treatment in their musical settings, the bassoons are given more musical material because their solo is in a ternary form. This allows the bassoon to perform music displaying contrasting moods and thereby expands the listener's awareness of the bassoons capability.

² Peter Evans, The Music of Benjamin Britten (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 301.
The double bass is also an instrument given a solo in a ternary form. The first section is a somewhat sparse figure that rises in pitch, tempo, and dynamic to its climax. At the end of the section there is a descending sixteenth-note scale which falls to a written ‘g’ half-note which glissandos up one octave. After this theme there begins a cantabile section which somewhat counteracts the humorous opening. After a rallentando molto the first theme is brought back, this time with the three-note motive inverted. Despite the motive being inverted, Britten still keeps the same dynamic and tempo scheme as the first section. The end of the final section is a more triumphant two-measure sixteenth-note ascending scale with the final glissando one octave higher than in the first section.

Technically and pedagogically this short excerpt has much to offer. There are many articulations and dynamic and tempo markings throughout the movement, which can be used to develop both the technical and the observational skills needed to perform the excerpt well. The opening eighth-notes need to be performed with space between the notes, yet each note needs to speak clearly and resonantly, while at the same time the player needs to observe and keep the sound consistent through the dynamic and tempo indications. The accented notes commencing at the end of measure 8 require less space between the individual notes, while one must maintain enough separation to distinguish every iteration of the ‘g’

The sixteenth-notes in measure 11 must speak clearly and the top note of the glissando must be resonant and reflect the sforzando Britten has indicated. The lyrical section requires an instant change, and the focus of the player shifts from clear articulation to perfect intonation and smooth, melodic playing.
The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, Op. 34

Benjamin Britten
1913-1976

VARIATION H
Comminciando lento ma poco a poco accel. ––––––

Soli

pp

poco a poco cresc.

Allegro

7

ff

veloce

al


14
mf

espr.

f

f

cresc.

21

ff

rall. molto

Cominciando lento ma poco a poco accel.
Peter Grimes, Op. 33

The opera Peter Grimes was inspired by the twenty-four letter/poems written by George Crabbe. These poems were published in 1810 and describe the life and characters in Aldeburgh, England, including the fisherman Peter Grimes. According to Crabbe’s son, the Peter Grimes in the poem was based upon an actual fisherman who lived in the middle of the eighteenth-century. Grimes is described as a cruel man, who was able to obtain orphan boys who were available to help tradesmen. After three of these children perished during their stay with the fisherman, Grimes was forbidden to take any more apprentices, was shunned by the people in the town, and began to lose touch with reality and sanity.

The piece was a result of a commission from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, and it was premiered in 1945. Britten asked Montagu Slater to write the libretto for the opera. It was decided that several changes needed to be made to make a more sympathetic character out of Peter Grimes, including reducing the number of his perished apprentices from three to two. Instead of the deliberately cruel man that Crabbe wrote about, Slater portrays Grimes as a “maladjusted aggressive psychopath. There is a chasm, which he fails to bridge, between himself and the external world.”

A double bass solo is found in the first scene of the third and final act. The double bass is playing in octaves with a solo cello, contrabassoon, trumpet, and the character of Mrs. Sedley. Mrs. Sedley is “one of the leading gossips in the Borough with a keen nose for scenting out crime as well as scandal…Though neither Peter nor his apprentice has been seen during the last few days, it is assumed that both are away

---

fishing...[Mrs. Sedley] overhears Ellen telling Balstrode that the jersey she
embroidered for the boy some time ago has been found washed up on the beach”.
Thus the chromatic rising and falling of the solo double bass passage underscores the dark
revelation of the death of Grimes’ apprentice, and the possibility of a murder.

Another solo passage soon follows, this time without the vocalist. The people to
whom Mrs. Sedley has been speaking leave her to attend a dance. They do not believe
her story. The two solo passages, though pitched differently, are musically similar.
However, the second does not rise to a grand climatic moment as is found in the first
passage.

Britten wrote these solos in the lower range of the instrument. Careful planning
in fingerings the chromatic passages is needed to ensure that a smooth, legato sound is
obtained. Firm contact into the fingerboard by the left hand is critical to ensure that the
changes of notes using same-finger shifts (for example, playing two descending notes
with the fourth finger) approximate as closely as possible the changes of notes where
different fingers are used.

\[4\] ibid., 105.
Allegro molto $d = 126$

quasi niente
A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Op. 64

This opera is a musical adaptation of Shakespeare’s play and was completed and premiered in 1960 under Benjamin Britten’s baton on June 11. Britten collaborated with Peter Pears to adapt the text to work as an opera. Although nearly half of the original lines of the opera were omitted, Britten and Pears stayed very close to what Shakespeare wrote in the text that remained.

There are many solos written for the double bass throughout the opera, but most of them are not very substantial. A longer solo for the bass is found in Act III in the pick-up to measure 53. In the context of Shakespeare’s play the double bass solo extends from Act IV, Scene i to Act V, Scene i. Although the musical passage only consists of sixty-one measures, a great deal of the play can be covered in that time because of the editing of the text that was done by Pears and Britten.

The action occurring on stage during the double bass solo reflects a very different mood than the somber one in Peter Grimes. The solo is accompanying Theseus’ celebrated decision to allow Demetrius and Lysander to wed Helena and Hermia at the same time that Theseus will be married. At the end of the solo Hippolyta prepares to introduce the play that is the wedding present of Bottom and his fellow actors.

The first half of the solo is an excellent exercise for controlling a legato, slurred passage with many string-crossings. The string-crossings involved are sometimes somewhat complicated such as the second and third eighth-notes in the measure after 54. These two notes necessitate a string crossing involving three strings, which demands control to keep a sustained, consistent sound. Sustaining the first note in the left hand while the right hand completes the string crossing to the second note allows the first note
to resonate and helps to make the sound smoother and more connected. Alternatively, one can shift across two strings, which makes the string crossing much easier, but requires greater left hand control.

The second half of the solo utilizes a greater range of the instrument, reaching into the fourth position, and quicker passagework. The eighth-note triplets in the fourth measure before 56 cross rapidly over the break between the third and fourth positions; this passage presents the most technically demanding material in the excerpt.
A Midsummer Night's Dream

Benjamin Britten
1913-1976

March $d = 108$

Solo

$mf$

$ff$

dim.

$54$

$pp$

a little cresc.

$mf$

dim.

dying away

$55$

freely

Pesante $\frac{1}{4}^{\#2}$

$f$
MICHAEL COLGRASS

As Quiet As

As Quiet As was written in 1966 by the American composer and percussionist. Colgrass has had a wide range of musical experience, playing as percussionist under Stravinsky, Bernstein, and Dizzy Gillespie. His primary composition instructors were Darius Milhaud, Wallingford Riegger, and Ben Webber. Early in his compositional career, his output consisted primarily of music written for percussion. In the 1960’s he began writing atonal chamber works that show a jazz influence.5

In the preface to the score of As Quiet As, Colgrass writes:

As Quiet As was inspired by the answers of fourth-grade children asked by their teacher to complete the sentence beginning “Let’s be as quiet as...” From the twenty-one answers compiled by Constance Fauci and printed in The New York Times in December, 1961, I chose seven that seemed to make a nature study as might be perceived by a child. My purpose was to depict the very nature of each metaphor, as if I were demonstrating to a blind person the essence of a leaf as it changes color, of a creek abandoned even by birds, and of an ant--or many ants--skittering about.

Children Sleeping and Time Passing are like a dream sequence. Following light breathing and heart beats, a sonatina, written by Beethoven as a child, appears through a montage of “sleeping sounds,” and then reappears fragmentarily in musical styles from 1800 to the present--Haydn, Sibelius, Ravel, Stravinsky, Count Basie--as if one were taking a fleeting glance at music history moving through time. The jazz is interrupted by a distant sound (1945!) which ends the dream, and the last setting (Webern) is in post-war style.6

A solo for double bass is located in the fourth movement of the work, “Children Sleeping.” The composer indicated that the bass section should consist of four players, and in this movement each of the players is given a separate part. The first part is playing

a melody almost entirely in sixth position harmonics against a light, impressionistic background which is reminiscent of the double bass solo found at the beginning of Ravel’s *L’Enfante et les sortileges*.

The tempo of the excerpt and the string crossings that occur under a slur will require the bassist to break the slurs to avoid non-musical sounds from occurring during the string crossings. The last two eighth-notes in measure 20 are an example of a point where it is nearly impossible to play what Colgrass has written because the string crossing involves traversing from the ‘g’-string, over the ‘d’-string, to the ‘A’-string. To play the slur as written would create extra noise on the ‘d’-string as the player crossed over it to the ‘A’-string. Taking an extra bow when crossing to the ‘A’-string would eliminate this problem.

This excerpt is an excellent exercise for intermediate to advanced students learning the sixth position harmonics on the bass. Colgrass several times makes use of the seventh partial (the open string being the first partial) harmonic (a flat minor seventh and two octaves above the open string), which is often considered a difficult harmonic to find.
As Quiet As
Children Sleeping

Michael Colgrass
b. 1932
ALBERTO GINASTERA

Variaciones Concertantes, Op. 23

Ginastera wrote two very important, extended solos for the double bass. When asked by David Walter (professor of double bass at the Julliard School of Music) about writing for the double bass Ginastera replied:

A composer must exert himself to write expertly and to the limits--and beyond--of the technical resources of the instrument...It is not necessary to play an instrument to write well for it. What is required is much study of the capability of the instrument and the courage to write passages which may require a bassist to ‘do his homework’.7

Ginastera also spoke of his fondness for the double bass, especially the beauty of its soft passages and harmonics. The harmonics were described as “more transparent and pure” than the same notes played by the violins whom he referred to as “aggressors”.8

The first of these solos was the Variaciones Concertantes, which was published in 1953 and performed on June 2nd of that same year in Buenos Aires under the baton of Igor Markevitch. Ginastera revealed that he had originally conceived the solo movement--as in the first statement of the theme--for the cello, but later decided that he preferred the combination of the bass and harp, for its more distinctive sound.9

There have been three compositional periods identified with Ginastera: objective nationalism, subjective nationalism, and neo-expressionism. The Variaciones fall in the second of these three groups. Subjective nationalism in this instance is identified as an Argentine emphasis in the music that may be perceived by the composer but not

---

8 ibid.
9 ibid.
necessarily by the listener. An example of this subjective nationalism in this piece may be the repeated use of arpeggiated chords that duplicate the open strings of the guitar.\(^{10}\)

There are two types of variations used in this piece. The first type is a variation that embellishes the original melodic line. The second type is a variation that derives its musical material from the original theme, and develops that material into still further musical material.\(^{11}\) In the case of the eleventh movement written for solo double bass, Ginastera uses the former type of variation, and writes an almost literal reprise of the main theme stated by the cello with only slight changes. The harp accompaniment has been somewhat simplified and some of the passing notes in the solo line have been deleted.

This movement written for solo double bass may be one of the most melodically expressive solos the instrument has in its repertoire. The music also is very playable on the instrument, though there are some technical concerns involved in its performance. In the first three measures of the movement the player must address how to manage the long notes. Specifically in the third measure, where Ginastera slurs the entire measure in one bow, there is a problem of balancing the amount of bow the player has with the slow tempo of the piece, and still maintaining enough sound for the solo to project to the audience. The two viable solutions to this are to play with an extremely slow bow, or, perhaps the better alternative, to divide the measure into two bows, perhaps playing the \(\text{g}\) in a separate bow from the rest of the measure.

---


In the fourth measure of the solo there is an arpeggio that covers two and one half octaves on the instrument, from the ‘E’ to a ‘b¹’, which acts as a transition to the next section of the solo. There are many options for traversing this distance on the instrument, and each requires a decision on the double bassist’s part about where to cross to higher strings and where to shift to a higher position on the fingerboard. At most there should be one shift within the slurs to reach the higher positions to facilitate the smoothest possible sound.

In the next section of the solo, commencing in the fifth measure, Ginastera uses the same interval pattern that he used to start the movement. The musical pattern starts a perfect fifth higher than the opening ‘e¹’, and is inverted. The first interval in both phrases is a second, followed by a third, and finally a perfect fourth (this pattern is also used in the double bass solo found in the fourth variation of his *Concerto per Corde*). There is not as much of an issue with bow control in this passage because the note values are not as long as in the first section of the solo.

At the *poco precipitato*, marked number 66 in the score, the climactic point in the music is reached, and the music relaxes in intensity after that measure. Following this measure there are two shifts of an octave that need to be carefully navigated on the instrument. The first shift occurs one measure after 66 and is an octave interval from ‘a’ to ‘a¹’. The more treacherous octave shift happens in the transition from one measure before 67 to measure 67. This shift is from the note ‘e¹’ to ‘e²’ within a decrescendo to *pianissimo*. The bassist can use the resonance of the instrument to help make the shift between the octave ‘e’’s sound more connected. The lower strings of the bass will begin to resonate when the bassist plays the ‘e¹’, and they will continue to ring during the shift,
giving the bassist time to make a slow, smooth, and controlled shift in the left hand which will increase the accuracy of the shift.
Variaciones Concertantes
XI. Ripresa del Tema per Contabasso

Adagio molto Espressivo $d = 66$

Solo

Poco precipitato

rall. A Tempo

f esultato

cedendo

p Dolce

rallentando

pp
Concerto per Corde, Op. 33

The double bass solo in Ginastera’s Concerto per Corde builds on the expressive possibilities explored in the Variaciones Concertantes and adds a far more complicated and virtuosic solo part that makes use of many twentieth-century techniques such as quartertones, glissandi, harmonics, double stops, and bariolage.

It seems as though Ginastera was far less concerned with the playability of this movement, and greatly depended on the solo double bassist to “do his homework”. There are very few concessions to the instrument in this solo, meaning that Ginastera did not go out of his way to make the player comfortable. Some of the techniques that are often used by composers to write for string instruments to make the music more easily playable are to use open strings, easily located harmonic notes, and double stops that use intervals that are easily playable on the instrument. This idiomatic writing is remarkably little used in the Concerto per Corde movement for solo double bass which probably makes this the most technically complicated of the twentieth-century orchestral solos to perform on the instrument.

Ginastera does start the solo on a note that bassists will be comfortable with. The movement begins on a ‘d’ for the solo bassist, which is located on the ‘g’-string in the same place as its equivalent harmonic. In this movement Ginastera introduces the quartertones that will become important later in the movement. These quartertones, which are always grace notes, are written in two different ways in this solo. The first method is for the quartertone grace notes to be written as a glissando to the main note, which is what is done most often throughout the solo. In order to play this on the double bass, the performer needs to use one finger and slide it to the main note. The second
method is found in measure 65. Here it would be extremely difficult to use this one-fingered technique because of the rapidity of the repeated notes. Ginastera, no doubt aware of this issue, does not indicate a glissando between the quartertone grace note and the main note. This allows the bassist to use one finger for the raised quartertone and another for the natural, primary note, which facilitates the necessary speed in performing this passage.

It is interesting to note that Ginastera begins the solo with the same interval pattern that was used in the double bass solo in the Variaciones Concertantes solo for double bass in the first measure of this solo for the same instrument. The sequence of a second, followed by a third, followed by a perfect fourth (the intervals of a second and a third can be either major or minor) are the same as the beginning of the Variaciones, though on a different pitch level.

Two differences in the interval pattern between the solos for double bass in Concerto per Corde and Variaciones Concertantes concern the color that Ginastera adds to the pattern by using quartertones, and the extension of the pattern after the perfect fourth has been played to include the interval of a tri-tone above the movement’s starting note in the Concerto per Corde. The ‘g-sharp\(^2\)' which represents this tri-tone leap, is emphasized not only by its tessitura and dissonance, but also because it is the longest note that has been heard thus far. This tri-tone leap is also an example of the lack of concern Ginastera had for the solos’ playability, as this note is somewhat difficult to find on the double bass if one is not very familiar with the instrument’s upper range.

After the ‘g-sharp\(^2\)' has been played there are several measures that work around the opening pitch of ‘d\(^2\)' that again use quartertones, and also a rhythmic progression that
gradually adds more notes per beat which gives an improvisatory flavor to the solo. In measure 67, the music reaches another climax, this time to a ‘g\(^2\)’, which is easier for the player to locate than the previous ‘g\[sharp\]^2’, because the ‘g\(^2\)’ is a harmonic of the same note on the ‘g’-string.

In measure 68 there is a descending passage in eighth-notes that primarily uses perfect fourths and tri-tones to travel from the climatic ‘g\(^2\)’ to the ‘A’. The next measure is an ascending passage that reaches back up to an ‘a\(^2\)’ with a pattern that outlines four perfect fifths.

It is after this point that the most unidiomatic writing occurs in this movement. After holding the ‘a\(^1\)’ and ‘a\(^2\)’ double stop for two measures, Ginastera no longer divides the music into bar lines, and he launches an “assault” of double stops. There are four double stops of an octave, after which the intervals alternate between sixths and thirds. At the _precipitato_, the double bassist is given some relief from these difficult double stops because Ginastera writes the bass notes as open strings or harmonics. This passage is extremely complicated. The bassist will combine the techniques of double stops, string crossings while playing double stops, and shifting while playing double stops.

Following the double stops there is a series of _bardiolage_ harmonics. The series begins with a four-note chord built on perfect fourths with the harmonic notes in sixth position. The series continues and grows as one, two, or three notes of the previous series are raised to build the chord for the next series of notes. When the final chord is reached the player is instructed to diminish to nothing as the last series is repeated for about twelve seconds—the exact number of repetitions is left to the performer.
The musical pattern that presented itself twice in the *Variaciones Concertantes*, and once before in this movement is once again presented here in measure 75. The successive intervals of a second, a third, and a perfect fourth begin the final phrase of the movement, using descending intervals as in the beginning. The sequence is stated a half-step below the opening of the movement. The movement ends with a long, sustained ‘g’, held with the bow in the right hand, while the left hand simultaneously plucks the notes of the open strings. The ‘g’ must be played as an open string until measure 81, where it will be necessary to imperceptibly switch the open ‘g’ to a fingered ‘g’ on the ‘d’-string, so that the left hand can pluck the open ‘g’-string in the final two measures.
Concerto per Corde

IV.

VARIAZIONE IV

Tempo I $\text{} \quad \bullet \quad \text{m} = 56$

senza sord.

SoloV

$\text{mp} \quad \text{malincolico e rubato}$

63 gli altri$^*$ senza sord. pizz.

65 $\text{mf}$

65 $\text{mf}^c$

---

$^*$ To be omitted when only 1 Doublebass is available.

$\text{d}$ = 1/4 tone higher, $\text{b}$ = 1/4 tone lower.
** Played by 2nd V'celli if only 1 Doublebass is available.
a tempo suoni armonici

p dolce

molte volte

diminuendo al niente!

pui lento, quasi Largo $d=44$

$pp$ dolce

allarg. sino al fine

$pp$ dolce
HENRYK GÓRECKI

Symphony No. 3

The Third symphony by Górecki was written at the end of 1976 and was premiered in April of 1977 by the orchestra of the South-West German Radio under the baton of Ernest Bour. The piece's subject is the Holocaust, and it has enjoyed a great deal of success in both the United States and Europe.

The first movement of the symphony uses as its text a song from the second half of the fifteenth century, which is from the “Lysagóra Songs” collection. The English translation is as follows:

My son, my chosen and beloved
Share your wounds with your mother
And because, dear son, I have always carried you in my heart,
And always served you faithfully
Speak to your mother, to make her happy,
Although you are already leaving me, my cherished hope.\(^{12}\)

In the beginning of the symphony, the double basses are divisi. The piece begins with the second half of the bass section commencing a melody in E Aeolian that will later develop into a canon for the entire string section. The second half of the bass section is alone for twenty-five measures before the first half of the section starts the canon in measure 26, a fifth higher than the starting pitch. This pattern will be used throughout the opening of the piece, as each new voice of the canon will be half of a string section that will play their entrance a fifth higher than the previous entrance. There are eight string entrances, and all eight-notes of the E Aeolian scale are used. The movement is

---

symmetrically designed, with the complete canon in the beginning, the song in the middle, and the canon in retrograde at the end.

The canon begun by the double basses forms the foundation for an organic growth and climax that serve as a frame for the Holy Cross Lament prayer in the middle of the piece. There is no technical complexity involved in the performance of this excerpt. Górecki was not attempting to exploit the virtuosic capabilities of the double bass, but rather to create a profound and powerful mood on which to build the movement. The music is very simple, with only quarter-notes and eighth-notes throughout the entire section, and all in the lowest register of the instrument (although Górecki does not write below ‘E’, so no five-string bass or extension is necessary).

Good pedagogical use of this movement can be made by employing the two double bass parts. Often, inexperienced bassists have difficulty in accurately hearing the pitch of the lowest notes of the double bass. A good study in intonation can be made by practicing the first twenty-four bars of the piece with several bassists to listen carefully to the low, unison pitches. When this has been accomplished a study of the divisi section can be used, allowing the bassists to hear the pitches of the various intervals involved. The exercise would be valuable because the music is not technically complicated, so the bassists can concentrate on listening carefully to the pitches of the variety of intervals formed between the two bass parts.
III Symfonia
"Symfonia Piesni Zatosnych"
I.

Henryk Mikolaj Górecki
b. 1933

Lento (♩ 50 - 52) sostenuto tranquillo ma cantabile
HANS WERNER HENZE

Concerto for Oboe, Harp, and Strings

The Concerto for Oboe, Harp, and Strings was the result of a commission from Paul Sacher and was written in 1966. At this point in his career, Henze had renewed his interest in the concerto form as illustrated by the double bass concerto for Gary Karr that he composed in the same year. The Concerto for Oboe, Harp, and Strings was premiered in Zurich on December 2, 1966 with Paul Sacher conducting.

The orchestration of the piece consists of eighteen string instruments, each with its own obbligato line, solo oboe, and harp. There are often excerpts in the score where an individual member of one of the string sections is given a line that is exposed to a greater or lesser degree. Although there are no ‘solo’ designations, there are three of these excerpts written for the double bass in the piece.

The first of these occurs in measure 226. The solo is a long, atonal, melodic passage that is written in the usual orchestral tessitura for the double bass. This solo is very exposed, and it is lightly accompanied by the second violins playing a chromatic, tremolo passage; the violas playing sustained chords; and the solo harp. Because there are many voices present in the other parts, the double bass soloist will have to make sure that sound projection is considered in choosing his dynamic.

The next exposed passage for double bass begins in measure 296. This time the texture of the music is thick and is strongly contrapuntal. This is a tutti passage, with no soloists, and there are seven other equally important musical lines happening concurrently. At the beginning of the excerpt, the first double bassist is supported by the second double bassist. In measure 300 the texture of the piece is considerably thinned
out so that there are only three melodic lines, making the low dynamics that Henze writes in the double bass part possible to observe and still be audible. This solo also makes use of the extended range of the instrument, moving all of the way up to a ‘g^2’.

In both of these solos, Henze writes many large ascending intervals which take the player from the lower position of the instrument into the higher position range. Examples of this occur in measures 233, 300, 301, and 303. These sudden changes in register are the most technically demanding aspect of these solos because of the distance that needs to be traversed on the shift, and the dissonant intervals that are written. This requires that the double bassist makes his fingering choices thoughtfully, and clearly hears the pitches in his head, to minimize any risk of missing these higher notes.

The third exposed passage in the concerto happens in measure 386. This passage is a long melodic passage written in the medium and upper registers of the instrument; it is very similar to the first solo that was discussed. This time the music is reduced to a trio texture between the basses, first viola, and solo harp. There are no serious technical problems associated with performing this excerpt on the double bass.

The final passage is located in measure 409. For much of this solo the second player is supporting the first bassist. Like the first solo, the accompaniment is made up of chromatic tremolo strings in a pianissimo dynamic. While the technical complexity involved in performing this excerpt on the bass is not nearly as great as that of the first two solos, the rhythmic complexity in this excerpt is greater than the other double bass solos in this piece because of the more frequent and more complicated time signature changes.
Doppio concerto per Oboe, Arpa ed Archi

Hans Werner Henze
b. 1926

Cb. 1

\( \text{\textit{dolce}} \)

\( \text{\textit{espr.}} \)
Andante  \( \frac{d}{=50} \)

un poco meno mosso

300

\( \text{p dolce mp p} \)

303

\( \text{mf mp pp} \)


*Aria de la Folía española*

*Aria de la Folía española* is a piece for chamber orchestra written in 1977. Henze explains in the score that:

'La Folía' (or 'folly') is a popular Spanish Carnival dance that masked people danced in the streets at night. It is said their dancing was bacchic and rebellious, and not at all to the liking of the authorities, for it was considered vulgar and despicable. The tune has attracted many composers, among them Arcangelo Corelli, C. Ph. E. Bach, Alessandro Scarlatti and Franz Liszt, who based variations on it. In my 'Aria' (meaning 'fantasia') I use it in many disguises and employing many contrapuntal devices, and develop it into a symphonic movement. I also introduce the fandango rhythm, which gradually invades the musical structures until, at the end, it dominates the whole score.\(^{13}\)

There is a very exposed solo written for the double bass that commences in measure 220. The solo double bassist is the only melodic line at this point in the music and is lightly accompanied by the string section using *pizzicato* and *col legno* techniques that allow the solo line to be heard through the texture. This solo uses a very wide range of the double bass, from a written 'D' to a 'b\(^2\)'. The writing is very melodic, and despite the higher tessitura that is used for much of the solo, the music is well suited to be played on the instrument, although there are some awkward intervals that need to be carefully navigated.

At the end of the solo, in measure 271, Henze indicates that the notes without stems may be repeated and played in a rhythm of the performer's discretion. The solo finishes with twelve seconds of music written in graphic notation. There are five other instruments that are also given music written in graphic notation, though each instrument receives a different graphic line. These players include one percussionist and four

\[^{13}\text{Hans Werner Henze, *Aria de la Folía española for Orchestra* (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1978), introduction.}\]
violoncelli. The result of the musical material in the graphic notation is a musical cacophony that finishes in a fortissimo climax at the end of measure 272.

In the beginning of the score, Henze explains that “the graphic signs are to be freely interpreted.”\textsuperscript{14} Using his key to for the written symbols he uses in this piece, there is some guidance for interpreting the graphic notation. The easiest choice to make is how loud to play the twelve second excerpt. Henze states in the beginning that a line that gets thicker represents a crescendo. In the double bass’ graphic notation, the line stays the same thickness for slightly more than eighty percent of the twelve-second duration. Therefore the performer is being instructed to stay the same dynamic (mezzo-forte) for the first ten seconds of the graphic line, saving the crescendo to fortissimo for the last two seconds of the allotted time. The other instruments all have different instructions for when to change their dynamics, with most of them getting louder before the double bass, which will probably drown out the bass’ sound. Regarding pitch, Henze writes a smoothly contoured, rising and falling line. This line is meant to represent the highness or lowness of the pitch. If one starts the graphic section around a ‘c’ (where the graphic line matches the staff in the score), one can play a sustained sound that follows the slopes of the line. The apex of the line matches approximately a ‘g\textsuperscript{1}’ or an ‘a\textsuperscript{1}’, so an attempt should be made to make the crescendo, in the last two seconds of the excerpt, in the vicinity of these pitches.

\textsuperscript{14} Hans Werner Henze, \textit{Aria de la Folia española for Orchestra} (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne, 1978), explanation of symbols.
Aria de la Folía española

molto calmo (\( \bullet = 96 \))

\[ \text{Solo} \]

\[ p \quad \text{espr.} \quad f \quad pp \quad f \]

\[ p \quad pp \quad p \]

\[ f \quad p \]

\[ f \quad p \quad ff \quad fff \]
ZOLTÁN KODÁLY

Dances of Moroszeék

The melodies that form the basis of Kodály’s Dances of Moroszeék are of Transylvanian origin, and they were taken from Kodály’s own previous research. Kodály writes in his introduction to the piece:

The famous ‘Hungarian Dances’, well-known through Brahms are the expression of the spirit of the Hungarian city about 1860, being mostly composed by native musicians of this epoch. The Moroszeék dances are of a former period, suggestive of the image of Transylvania, one called ‘Fairyland’.¹⁵

The piece was first composed in 1927 for solo piano and later orchestrated in 1930. The orchestrated version is pitched one half step higher than the version for piano.

The simple, songlike double bass solo found in measure 148 has many grace notes and expressive modal notes. The theme is essentially built on a descending motif, with measures 148 and 149 centering around the note ‘f’, measures 150 and 151 centering on the note ‘e-flat,’ measures 152 and 153 centering on the note ‘d-flat,’ and finally resolving to ‘B-flat’ in measure 153. The accompaniment is made up of syncopated reiterations of ‘F’’s’ in octaves from the strings, with a drone ‘f²’ in the piccolo and the first flute playing ‘f¹’ on the off-beats with grace notes alternating between ‘f¹’ and ‘g-flat¹’.

Perhaps the primary difficulty in the performance of this solo results from the key in which the solo is written. The greatest problem is found in measure 149 on the second beat where Kodály asks that the ‘f’ and the ‘A-flat’ be slurred together. This results in a choice for the performer: whether to perform the ‘f’ on the ‘d’-string and have to cross

over a string to get to the ‘A-flat,’ or whether to finger the ‘f’ on the ‘A’-string and
have a shift to the ‘A-flat,’ thus eliminating the problem with the string crossing. The
choice depends on the instrument on which the performer is playing and on which way
the player is more comfortable playing the passage. On some instruments, playing up the
‘A’-string may make the sound too dark, and the double bass’s melody may be obscured.
Dances of Marosszek

Zoltan Kodaly
1882-1967

Moderato \( \text{\( \frac{4}{4} \)} = 100 - 104 \)

Solo

pp

\[ \begin{array}{c}
150 \\
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{c}
153 \\
\text{Tutti}
\end{array} \]

sf
Psalmus Hungaricus

In 1923 Kodály wrote his oratorio Psalmus Hungaricus on the text of the Fifty-fifth Psalm as translated by the sixteenth-century preacher and poet Mihály Vég. The piece was written in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the union of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda to form Budapest. The premier was given November 19, 1923 and was conducted by Erno Dohnányi (who also wrote music to celebrate the occasion). Psalmus Hungaricus did much to establish Kodály’s reputation as a renowned composer, especially after its premier outside of Hungary three years later.

The piece may have also been part of the impetus that drove Kodály to turn his attention to young musicians and their education. The chorus that Kodály was writing for in the piece was under staffed because of the casualties of World War I, so he decided to include a boys’ chorus. As Kodály observed, “their fine singing inspired me to write some short pieces for them..., and in a couple of years with the collaboration of some of my pupils a little literature [for children] came into being.”

There is a short double bass solo at the measure marked ‘40’. The English translation of the text of this excerpt is as follows:

These words King David wrote in his Psalter,  
Fifty and fifth of his songs of praising,  
And for the faithful, bitterly grieving,  
For consolation,  
I from it made this song.

The purpose of the solo is to provide a solid foundation for the chorus. The soprano, alto, and bass lines follow the same melody in octaves. The tenor part is given more ornamental treatment, though still with the same text. The double bass differs only

---

slightly from the soprano, alto, and tenor lines and is the only instrument called for at this point in the piece. In this texture, the double bass line will not stand out, but will blend and add substance to the chorus.

The music written for the double bass soloist is a modal melody played in the lower positions of the instrument and is not difficult to perform. It is important however that the double bassist is aware of his relation to the chorus at this point, and that he take great care to match their dynamics, articulation, and phrasing.

The musical excerpt prepared for this piece includes the chorus part with the text. The text contains diacritical markings that are not included in the following excerpt.
Psalmus Hungaricus, Op. 13
Zoltan Kodaly
1882-1967

Molto moderato $\frac{\text{\textbf{p}}}{\text{\textbf{p}}} = 84$

S & A

Tenor

Bass

Cb.

Solo

pp

Orvondo dik di esse re te ben,

Melbol az bi - - - - vel ke se ra

Orvondo dik di esse re te ben,

poco cresc.
Variations on a Hungarian Folksong (The Peacock)

The Peacock Variations were commissioned by the Amsterdam Concertgebouw to celebrate the orchestra's fiftieth anniversary in 1939. The premiere of the piece was on November 13, 1939, and it was conducted by Willem Mengelberg. The theme for the variations is a melody collected from the folk-song repertoire of the Mari people who were separated from Hungary over 1,500 years ago to reside in Russia.\(^{18}\)

In contrast to the other double bass solos written by Kodály, The Peacock makes use of the upper range of the instrument. Neither the solos found in Dances of Morossezék nor Psalmus Hungaricus went above a written 'c'\(^1\). In The Peacock there are two short double bass solos. In the first one, found in measure 232, Kodály starts the solo bassist on a 'd'\(^2\), which is considered by many bassists to be in the range of the instrument usually reserved for solo pieces. The double bass plays in unison with the cello, and sounds a fifth below the bassoon and viola. This melody is marked mezzo-forte in the score, and neither of the other strings playing at this moment is marked solo in the score. A possible practical reason for the solo marking in the double bass part, aside from any orchestral idea Kodály may have had, is to facilitate intonation. The fact that the tessitura would be considered high for many players, and intonation would be a factor in performance, may have prompted Kodály to reduce the risk involved with the passage and have only the soloist of the double bass section responsible for the part.

Although the starting note is located high up on the fingerboard, it is easy to find because it is in the same spot as a harmonic of the same note.

---

The second solo is found in measure 240. This time the bassoon, viola, cello, and double bass are all playing in unison. Again, the double bass is the only stringed instrument with a solo indication. The starting note is an ‘a’, and the melody is very similar to the previous one, but with a less complicated rhythm.

In both solos, the main focus of the double bassist is perfect intonation and a smooth, melodic playing style. It is important that every one of the written sixteenth-notes under the slur are articulated clearly with the left hand.
Variations on a Hungarian Folksong
"The Peacock"

Zoltan Kodaly
1882-1967

Piu Vivo \( \text{\textit{mf}} \)

Solo

\( \text{\textit{p espr.}} \)

Tutti
GUSTAV MAHLER

Symphony No. 4 and Symphony No. 7

The two short double bass solos that are found in Mahler's Symphonies No. 4 and No. 7 are far less prominent than the solo found in his Symphony No. 1 from 1899. While in his first symphony he exploited the expressive possibilities of the instrument, in these two later symphonies Mahler used the bass solos as a textural device.

The Fourth Symphony was written in 1900 and was first performed the following year with Mahler conducting. The bass solo occurs in the final movement at measure 72. It serves to complete a descending musical figure that is started by the cello section in measure 70, then passed to the bass section in measure 71, and finally given to the solo double bass in the measure 72. The passage asks for the double bass section and soloist to use a ricochet bowing in a very soft dynamic. Often times, this ricochet bowing is not used, and is instead played with separate bows. When the double bass section enters in measure 71, it is a soli passage and no other instruments are playing. The solo bass is completely alone for the first half of the measure, with flutes entering in the last half of the measure. Due to the fact that the solo bass is the only instrument playing for the first half of this measure, the pianissimo dynamic may have to be raised so that the solo is audible to the audience. It may also be advisable to play the second and fourth beats of the measure in one up bow to facilitate the down-bow ricochet bowing that is required.

The Seventh Symphony was premiered in 1908 in Prague. There are three brief solos for the double bass found in the third movement in measures 121 and 152, and in the fourth movement at measure 187. These excerpts present no extraordinary technical or musical challenges. In the fourth movement solo, the string section all are marked
solo at this point in the music. The solo strings are joined by the *tutti* string sections four measures before 188.
Symphony no. 4 (1900)

I.

Wieder gemachlich

Solo

pp

dim.

pp
Symphony No. 7

Gustav Mahler

III.
Scherzo

Schattennaft
Solo

| p | < f | p | < f |

Solo arco

| sf | f^z p | < ff |

IV.
"Nachtmusik"

Andante amoroso

Solo

| pp |

| V |

| V |
DARIUS MILHAUD

La Création du Monde

The ballet La Création du Monde was written in 1924 after Milhaud had had the experience of listening to jazz music. He first heard jazz on a visit to London in 1920 where he heard the group “Billy Arnold and His Band.” This introduction to American music enthralled the composer, and afterwards he saturated himself in this new musical style. In 1923 he toured the United States and he heard black jazz in Harlem at Negro theaters and dance halls. Milhaud himself wrote, “Its effect on me was so overwhelming that I could not tear myself away.”¹⁹

He decided to take the same instrumentation that he heard in Harlem and used it as the orchestra for the ballet. La Création du Monde was the first time Milhaud had the opportunity to incorporate the jazz elements he had been studying during the previous several years into one of his own works.

After a prelude, Milhaud begins a jazz inspired movement that prominently features the double bass. The movement begins with a short introduction from the piano and percussion after which the double bass begins a bowed melody. This melody is treated as the subject of a fugue and first the trombone, then saxophone, and later the rest of the instruments join in developing the subject. This movement serves as an excellent example of how popular music can be successfully combined with the compositional techniques of traditional art music.

A striking observation to be made by examining the double bass line is how Milhaud was in essence foreshadowing the future of the jazz bass by over ten years. It is

famed bassist Jimmy Blanton, who played with Duke Ellington's orchestra until his untimely death in 1942, who is often credited with liberating the jazz bass by performing solos and melodies with and without the bow. When Milhaud was writing La Création du Monde the double bass was still relegated to playing simple accompaniment lines in jazz bands. It is interesting to see how Milhaud took the music he heard and assimilated the style and blended it with his own musical ideas and classical genre techniques. In this manner of orchestration, by having the double bass start the fugue melody, he brought the instrument a decade beyond what the authentic jazz bassists were actually doing at the time.

For most of the solo, the lower range of the double bass is used. However, near the beginning of the solo in measures 5 through measure 7, Milhaud writes in the fourth position range of the double bass. The music he writes in this section is not difficult to play and lies well on the instrument. The higher range is probably used at this point because the double bass is still the only instrument playing the fugue's subject, and the higher tessitura allows the bass to sound more soloistic.

Despite the fact that this music is written in a jazz style, there is no indication for the players to play "swung" eighth-notes. Milhaud creates a jazz-like sound with his use of syncopation throughout the movement. There is one occurrence, in measure 6, where Milhaud writes an approximation of the "swung" eighth-note feel with a dotted eighth-note followed by a sixteenth-note.

Milhaud writes for the contra notes throughout the work, so a double bass with five strings or an extension is necessary in performing it.
La Création du Monde

I.

Darius Milhaud
1892-1974
KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI

Passio et Mors Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Secundum Lucam

The St. Luke Passion has been considered by many to be one of the most important choral works in the second half of the twentieth century. The piece was premiered on March 30, 1966 at the Cathedral of Münster in West Germany and helped to propel the young Polish composer into a place of prominence in the music world.

The significance of the work is articulated in the following quote:

The factors that made the Penderecki premiere such an important event were not only of a political and social nature... No other composer since Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) had captured the dramatic intent and the musical essence of the Passion story in the way Penderecki had. And it had been accomplished in the compositional idiom of the avant-garde. The St. Luke Passion was indeed a twentieth-century Passion, a legitimate contemporary expression that overwhelmed its hearers and convinced them that even in a modern setting this 2,000-year old text still contained the same mystery and drama that moved men and women during the earliest years of the church. The obvious musical craftsmanship of the work, combined with the fact that here was a courageous young composer dealing with a topic that was forbidden by his government, made the St. Luke Passion all the more appealing to the protest-minded musical public of the mid-1960’s.  

A remarkable aspect of Penderecki’s career as a composer is that “he has been able, from the first, to write music of wide and direct appeal which makes use of advanced vocal and instrumental effects and places no long-term reliance on tonality.”  

In creating the Passion, Penderecki turned the sound experiments that he had made in a series of instrumental works including: Anaklasis (1960), Polymorphia (1961), Dimensions of Time and Silence (1959), Threnody (1960), and Fluorescences (1961), for

---

instrumental techniques and timbers. In an interview given in 1969, Penderecki said that he had "stopped his search for new material. I had worked out my material in earlier works such as Polymorphia [1961] or Threnody [1960]. I then applied the experience that I had gained from these works to the composition of the St. Luke Passion."\(^{22}\) The instrumental techniques used in the piece include tone clusters, distributed melodies (melodies in which each successive note is sounded by a different instrument or voice), and flurries (where several parts play fast figures simultaneously). In "flurries" the figures may not be related, making the individual lines indistinguishable. He also employed harmonics, ponticello, tremolo, jarring sounds, glissandi, playing between the bridge and tailpiece, and "highest and lowest possible notes" designations.

The double bass is marked solo in a passage from movement four. The excerpt is a featured short duet with the soprano soloist, and it contains several of the extended techniques listed above. The primary feature of this excerpt is the "flurry" technique. Throughout the solo there are sixteenth-note passages that occur at the same time as sixteenth-note passages in the solo soprano line; however, there is often a different number of notes in each part to be played in the same time period. At the Piu vivo end of the excerpt, the double bass and soprano are joined by four flutes, which make the flurry texture much thicker. Other extended techniques given to the double bass in this excerpt are harmonics, glissandi, and an indication to play the highest note possible at the last note of the excerpt.

The notation of the score during this excerpt allows room for the vocal soloist and the double bass soloist to listen to each other and wait until the other has finished his or

\(^{22}\) Ray Robinson and Allen Winold, 113.
her passage before continuing. There is not a lot of technical complexity involved in performing this solo on the double bass. More important is a familiarity of the soprano soloists part, to allow the two musical lines to align correctly.
SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Prokofiev ranks as perhaps the foremost twentieth-century composer for the double bass in the orchestral literature in both the quality and quantity of the solo passages written. In his solos for the bass, he often reveals the lyrical sound that the instrument can create.

Prokofiev as a composer was influenced by the great double bassist and conductor Serge Koussevitzky. In 1914, Prokofiev performed his First Piano Concerto at one of Serge Koussevitzky’s subscription matinees in Moscow. This was at the beginning of Prokofiev’s career, just as he was completing his studies at the conservatory in St. Petersburg, and was an important step for him because it gave him high-profile exposure at an event that was very popular with the musical public.

The musical relationship between Prokofiev and Koussevitzky was to last a number of years. There are many instances of Prokofiev’s music being performed at Koussevitzky’s concerts, from that first concert in 1914 to a 1931 performance of his Fourth Symphony, Op. 47, written to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.\(^\text{23}\)

It is certainly not unreasonable to assume that Prokofiev knew of Koussevitzky’s fame as a double bassist, and perhaps he even heard and was impressed by the lyrical playing that Koussevitzky was famous for. Even though Koussevitzky performed on the double bass less and less as his fame and interest as a conductor grew, he was still thought of as a renowned player for many years after the podium superceded his aspirations to be a virtuoso double bassist. Perhaps Prokofiev’s compositions were in

---

some way influenced by Koussevitzky’s eminence on the double bass, and he therefore wrote parts in his music that reflect the influence and support that Koussevitzky showed him throughout his career.


---

Symphony No. 3

Prokofiev’s Third Symphony was composed in 1928, and it was premiered in Paris on May 17, 1929 by L’Orchestre Symphonique de Paris conducted by Pierre Monteux. The piece enjoyed good, but not overly enthusiastic reviews. The music was generated from Prokofiev’s work on the opera The Fiery Angel. The opera was not successful, and Prokofiev decided to use musical material from The Fiery Angel to create a symphony. Prokofiev was very happy with the result he obtained, but he did not like the association that listeners made with the music from the opera:

...the Third Symphony—I consider one of my most important works. I do not like it to be called “The Flaming Angel” Symphony. The most important thematic material was composed independently of The Flaming Angel. Naturally, when it was included in the opera it acquired a certain coloration from the subject matter; but having been removed from the opera and put into a symphony, it has once again lost that coloration, in my opinion. Therefore, I should prefer that the listener perceive the Third Symphony simply as a symphony, without any sort of program.25

The double bass solo in the following excerpt, which is extracted very directly from the opening of Act V of The Flaming Angel, occurs at the beginning of the second movement of the symphony, when it is played along with the violoncelli and violas. Although the excerpt is not specified as a solo or soli for the double bass, it is very exposed, and serves as an early example of the lyrical, exposed writing Prokofiev would give to the basses in later compositions. It is interesting to note how Prokofiev orchestrates this short section. There are two parts to the melody. Prokofiev gives the higher melodic part to the double basses and the lower melodic part to the violoncelli. The violas are split divisi and are given both parts of the two-part harmony.

At the beginning of this excerpt, Prokofiev is very specific as to which string the notes are to be played. For the first measure and one half he indicates that everything should be played on the 'd'-string, and afterwards he asks that the bassist use the 'g'-string. After the second measure there is no other indication telling the performer what string to play on. Prokofiev does not specify anything after the first two measures, leaving the rest of the passage to the discretion of the performer. Possibly, he was trying to communicate that he wanted the passage to sound very facile, and that he did not want a lot of shifting noise between the individual notes. If this were the case, the indications were made not for the specific timbre each string produces, but to make sure that the bassists did not attempt to play the entire passage on the top string.
Symphony No. 3

II.

Andante
con sord.
sul G

pp sul D
Lieutenant Kijé

The symphonic suite *Lieutenant Kijé* was created in 1934, as an arrangement of the music Prokofiev wrote for the film of the same name. There are two versions of the suite; one to be performed with vocalist, the other without. In the version without vocalist a solo double bass is given the melody sung by the baritone in the second movement. This solo is perhaps the most well known twentieth-century double bass solo.

This solo bears several resemblances to the bass solo written by Mahler in his *Symphony No. 1*. Both of the solos occur in the second movement of the piece in which they appear, are in an *Andante* tempo, and have a two-note ostinato bass line accompaniment; Mahler's uses the tympani for this ostinato, while Prokofiev's uses the rest of the double bass section, celli, and harp. They are also written in the fourth position on the bass, where it is easy to obtain a smooth, lyrical, and resonant sound. Both of the solos include indications to use a mute, but the mute may be employed more for the tone color that it gives the instrument than as a means to make the instrument even more difficult to hear (remembering that the double bass is replacing a vocalist).

Technically, this solo lends itself to the double bass better than its counterpart in Mahler's symphony. There is less space to travel on the instrument, and there are no awkward shifts.

There are several instances in this solo of non-symmetrical articulation. Instead of dividing the measure neatly into four equal beats, as he does in the third measure of the excerpt, Prokofiev uses slurs to elide the beats together. The first example of this is found in measure 4, where the second eighth note of the first beat is slurred together with the first eighth note of the second beat. Similarly, Prokofiev connects the last eighth note
of measure 5 with the first eighth note of measure 6. These markings add additional
musical interest to the solo.

It is also interesting to note the text of the vocal arrangement to get an idea of the
mood that the music is trying to convey:

*The gray dove moans, he moans day and night. His beloved sweetheart has flown far away. He no longer coos, but only grieves and
grieves. From one tender branch to another he flits, and awaits the
arrival of his dear companion from all sides. Enough, my heart, grow
calm, flutter no longer like a butterfly. Try, without fear, to gain another
nook. The heart has begun to seek. Enough, my heart, grow calm, flutter
no longer like a butterfly. How, then, my heart: have you decided where
we shall dwell in summer? My poor heart began to throb, and did not
know how we were to exist. The gray dove moans, he moans day and
night. His beloved sweetheart has flown far away. The gray dove
moans.*

---

Lieutenant Kije Suite, Op. 60 (1934)
No. 2A. Song (variant without text)
Serge Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Andante $\frac{3}{4}$ = 68
Solo

mp con sord.

mf

senza sord.
Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 63

A period of nearly twenty years separates the first and second violin concerti of Prokofiev. The second concerto was written in 1935 for the French violinist Robert Soetens, who was given exclusive performance rights of the piece for one year. The concerto was immediately successful with both the public and the critics. Instead of the more virtuosic music of the first concerto, the second concerto relies more on beautiful melody to carry the music.

Although not marked solo or soli in the score, there are two instances in the third movement of the piece where the basses share an important melodic line with another instrument. The first occurs at measure 51, where the double basses play the same written melody as the violas (therefore the basses will sound one octave lower). The second melodic line is in measure 69, when the basses double the melody of the violin soloist--again at the same written pitch. This is essentially the same melody as heard in the earlier solo, transposed up a third.

Both solos are lyrical and in the middle register of the instrument. They are marked *espressivo*, and each has crescendos and decrescendos written throughout to show the melody’s phrasing.
Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 63

III.

Allegro, ben marcato \( \text{\textit{mf}} \)

Serge Prokofiev
1891-1953
*Romeo and Juliet, Suite 2, No. 5*

The Second Suite from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* was composed in 1936 and premiered in Leningrad on April 15, 1937. Audiences knew the Suites taken from the music of Prokofiev's ballet before the ballet was ever performed. This situation represented a point of frustration for the composer who had spent a great deal of time and energy on the ballet and was eager to have it performed. Unfortunately, he had to wait until 1940 to see the premier of the ballet. The double bass soli is found in the movement entitled, "Romeo at Juliet’s before Parting".

There are two iterations of a melodic double bass solo found in this movement. For each the double bass section is divided into two parts and performs the melody in octaves. The tuba also doubles this melody, and is in unison with the lower octave of the double basses. The first melody, found four measures after 49, begins on an 'a-sharp' (for the double basses playing the top line of the divisi, the bottom players of the divisi are notated one octave lower) and leaps quickly up the instruments register by arpeggiating a second inversion E-minor chord. The excerpts highest note is a 'd-sharp'.

The greatest difficulty presented in this melody is playing with accurate intonation. There are several musical concerns that make accurate intonation somewhat problematical in this passage. The first is the tessitura of the excerpt (for the top players of the divisi); specifically it starts in the lower register of the instrument, and quickly leaps to the upper register. Added to this is the fact that the passage does not lie idiomatically on the instrument, particularly in reaching the 'd-sharp'. Every player of the upper part needs to find a fingering to reach the high note that is comfortable and
accurate. Added to this is the starkness of the writing. Any flaw in intonation stands out immediately in the octave and unison texture.

The second solo excerpt is very similar but is in a lower range of the instrument, eliminating some of the intonation problem. The excerpt is also only three measures long, half the length of the first excerpt.
Romeo & Juliet, Suite 2, No. 5

Serge Prokofiev
1891-1953
Symphony No. 5

Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 5, Op. 100, was composed in 1944 and received its premier in Moscow on January 13, 1945 by the Moscow State Philharmonic Orchestra with the composer serving as conductor. Prokofiev regarded this work very highly and said:

[My work on the Fifth Symphony was] very important not only for the musical material that went into it, but also because I was returning to the symphonic form after a break of sixteen years. The Fifth Symphony is the culmination of an entire period in my work. I conceived of it as a symphony on the greatness of the human soul.27

The double bass solo at the end of this forty-five minute work does not display the lyricism of the other solos. Rather, this solo, which starts at number 113 in the final movement, is an unexpected thinning of the texture that is used to finish the symphony. Each of the string sections are reduced to a solo (with two violoncellists being used), and piano, harp and percussion are also playing. All of the instruments play an ostinato figure for six and one half measures before the entire ensemble, including the winds, brass and tutti string sections, return for a fortissimo ending in the last two measures of the piece.

The only technical concern for the solo double bassist is that the string crossings between the ‘A’-string and the ‘d’-string are as even as possible, allowing the notes on both strings (the ‘B-flat’s on the ‘A’-string, and the ‘e-flat’s and ‘f-flat’s on the ‘D’-string) to be articulated in the same manner. Choosing a spot on the bow between the frog and the balance point, instead of towards the middle of the bow, will allow the bow

to bounce enough to give the *spiccato* that is indicated, make the string crossing easier, and will make playing the *forte* dynamic effortless.
Symphony No. 5

Sergei Prokofiev
1891-1953

[Music notation]

Allegro giocoso  \( \frac{1}{2} = 72 \)

Solo

\[ \text{f} \]

tutti

\[ p \text{ cresc.} \]

\[ ff \]
Ivan the Terrible

Prokofiev wrote Ivan the Terrible to accompany the film by Sergei Eisenstein. The music was begun in the year 1942 and finished in 1946. The film was released in two parts, the first in 1944 and the second in 1946. The film’s subject was Tsar Ivan IV who ruled from 1533 to 1584 and was known for his expansion of Russia, military strength, political suspicion, and ferocity.

The double bass solo in this piece is found in section number 21 entitled “Ivan Pleads with the Boyars,” at measure 81. As with the soli in Romeo and Juliet, the double bass section is again divided into two sections. In this case the bottom group of bassists play an accompanying role to the top group who have the melody. The melody itself is a slow, deliberate tune, which uses chromatism to give it an exotic sound. The first four measures of the soli are an ascending sequence that is followed by two measures of a repeated descending passage. The second double basses accompany with a relentlessly plodding Alberti bass.

In measure 31 of this section the melody is repeated in the same fashion, this time with the first violins with mutes on. This entire section is repeated, so the melody is heard a total of four times.

The performance of this solo presents similar problems to those seen in Romeo and Juliet. Because of the chromatic intervals, intonation will be a concern for the double bass section. Particular attention must be paid to the intonation of the ‘e-flat’ found first in measure 21, because this note is a sudden leap from the largely scalar musical material preceding it.
MAURICE RAVEL

L’Enfante et les sortileges

The premiere of L’Enfante et les sortileges was given on March 21, 1925 in Monte Carlo. The idea and libretto for the opera were conceived and completed much earlier, however. Paris Opéra director Jacques Rouché had convinced Colette to write a libretto, and they chose Ravel to be the composer. Colette, though usually a slow writer, was excited by the project, and finished the libretto—the story of an unruly child who learns compassion from the various woodland and fairytale figures he has abused—in less than a week. Ravel received a copy of the libretto in 1918. He did nothing with it until 1920, although there was correspondence between Ravel and Colette regarding the opera and ideas and changes they both had in mind.

It may have been the deadline for the premiere in Monte Carlo that gave Ravel the necessary incentive to finally complete the music for the opera in 1925. L’Enfante was well received there, but its performance in Paris at the Opéra-Comique got mixed reviews. In a letter to her daughter Colette wrote, “The partisans of traditional music do not forgive Ravel, the composer, for his instrumental and vocal audacities. The modernists applaud and boo the others, and during the ‘meowed’ duet, there is a dreadful uproar.”

Reaction to the piece has been strongly divided since its premiere. Some authors have seen the opera as the musical pinnacle in Ravel’s career: “In this work Ravel truly formed his way back to all mothers, and therefore L’Enfant is without a doubt his opus

---

magnum. It embraces all the characteristics of his personality, psychological as well as musical."29

Other commentators have seen *L'Enfante et les sortileges* as more of a musical stunt, and for all of its qualities, not a masterpiece. "It is brilliantly clever...but it is fundamentally, I feel, a pretext for some dazzling musical legerdemain, brilliantly executed and faultlessly presented, yet, in the last resort, more 'Malerei' than 'Empfindung'".30

Ravel stated that *L'Enfante* was composed "...in the style of an American operetta... The vocal line should dominate. The orchestra, though not renouncing virtuosity, is nevertheless of secondary importance."31

Despite this statement, the orchestration is vital to the opera, and the individual style in which Ravel orchestrated the opera was one of the controversial topics of debate regarding the piece. An example of this is the opening of the opera, which begins with two oboes playing in parallel fifths and fourths, joined by a solo double bass in high register harmonics in the twelfth measure.

The way in which Ravel wrote the harmonics for the double bass in his music can be somewhat confusing. The double bass, as a transposing "C" instrument, generally sounds one octave lower than what is written on the page. In normal music notation, Ravel followed this rule, but with harmonics he sometimes wrote them as he wanted them to sound. A bassist looking at this music without knowing this might be led to believe that either the piece was impossible to perform, or that Ravel intended that the

---

bassist use artificial harmonics in order to achieve the proper notes. Performing the harmonics at concert pitch (or, as a bassist, thinking of them as being written an octave higher) shows us that in order to perform the first ‘f\(^2\)', one must begin at the seventh partial of the ‘g’-string (with the open ‘g’-string being the first partial), and stay on that string for the entire passage. Ravel indicates this by the “sul SOL” instruction at the beginning of the excerpt.

This is an example of a solo that goes far beyond the usual realm of the symphonic double bassist, though undoubtedly most of these same bassists have studied the virtuosic solo pieces that would give one the skill and knowledge necessary to perform this passage. There are very few excerpts in the orchestral literature that venture to this high tessitura, and as a solo this passage offers a unique sound.

A potential problem for the performer of this solo would be that of intonation. The harmonic series of the double bass is naturally tempered (rather than the even temperament used for modern keyboard instruments). In general, the further away from the fundamental pitch of the open string, the further the intonation will differ from equal temperament. Ravel begins this solo on the ‘f\(^2\)’, which we would hear as a very flat note. The ‘b\(^1\)’ used in the solo will also sound flat. It is likely that Ravel, a master orchestrator, would be well aware of this and would have allowed this sound, perhaps even desiring this effect to represent the unruly child who makes his first appearance after this solo.

Three before measure 24, the solo double bass plays an _esspressivo_ counter melody to the vocal soloist for three bars. After measure 24 the soloist returns to a more customary supportive role, and rejoins the double bass section in playing pizzicato
quarter-notes. The bass soloist does have *arco*, sustained notes in the measure before 25, the measure before 26, and nine measures after 26, which are used as transitional material.

The final solo passage, found at 95 in the score, uses the special effect of glissandi, as well as one harmonic at five after 95. This time Ravel notates the harmonic at written pitch, as is the norm in writing for the double bass. At 95, Ravel instructs the player to perform the excerpt entirely on the 'C'-string, requiring that the solo bassist have a bass equipped with a 'C'-string in order to play these harmonics. This indication reveals that the solo is played at written pitch, and sounds one octave lower than written.
L'Enfant et les Sortileges

Maurice Ravel
1875-1937

Tranquillo  \( \texttt{\#}\) \( \text{\#}\) \( \text{\#}\)
Solo  \( \text{\#}\) \( \text{\#}\) \( \text{\#}\)
sul SOL

[Music notation]

2

esp.
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4

Verklärte Nacht was originally written in 1899 for string sextet. Schoenberg later orchestrated it for string orchestra in 1917, and he made a revised version in 1943. The version for sextet has been called a "novel combination of chamber music and program music" and "the earliest programme-music for chamber ensemble." The piece was inspired by a poem written by Richard Dehmel that was published in 1896. The poem "describes a moonlit stroll by a man and woman in the woods. The woman reveals that she is pregnant, but not by the man. The man says that his love for the woman will transfigure the child, it will become his."

There is a two bar solo for the double bass in measures 167 and 168 of the orchestral arrangement. At this point in the music there are thirteen solo strings: four from the first violins, two in the second violins, three violas, three violoncelli, and one double bass. The two measure double bass solo is a one-measure figure that is transposed a minor sixth lower in the second measure and is doubled an octave higher by the third cello soloist. The solo presents little technical challenge to the bassist.

---

Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4

Arnold Schoenberg
1874-1951

Poco Allegro

Solo

\[ \text{ff arco} \]
Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16

This piece was written in 1909 and was first performed on September 3, 1912 in London with Henry H. Wood conducting. When it is compared with Verklärte Nacht, one can hear not only how Schoenberg has developed as a composer by 1909, but how his opinion had changed regarding program music. In a journal entry Schoenberg wrote:

They want titles for the orchestral pieces—for technical reasons to do with publication. I may give in, since I have thought of titles that are at least possible. Not, on the whole, sympathetic to the idea. For the wonderful thing about music is that one can tell all, so that the educated listener understands it all, and yet one has not given away one’s secrets, the things one doesn’t admit even to oneself. Whereas titles are a give-away. Moreover: what had to be said has been said by the music. So why add words? If words were needed, they would be there. But after all, art says more than words. -- The titles I shall perhaps give do indeed give nothing away, being partly technical, partly very obscure. Here they are. I Vorgefühle (Premonitions) (everyone has those). II. Vergangenheit (The Past) (which everyone also has). III. Akkordfärbungen (Chord-colourings) (technical). IV Peripeteia (surely that’s general enough?) V. The obligato (perhaps better than ‘worked-out’ or ‘endless’) recitative. -- In any case, with a note that this is a technical matter to do with publication, and has nothing to do with the ‘poetic’ content. 35

The third movement, which he described as ‘chord-colorings’, is written for solo double bass for much of the movement. The movement is harmony-based and centers on a chord, C, G#, B, E, A, that is heard in many different combinations of instruments and textures. With a minimalist approach, the same chord is shown throughout the movement in a different way. This style of writing was unusual, and to help conductors Schoenberg wrote:

In this piece, the conductor’s task is not to encourage individual parts to stand out because they strike him as (thematic) important, not to tone down sound mixtures because they seem uneven. Whenever one part is meant to be more apparent than the others it is scored in a suitable way.

and the sounds are not meant to be toned down. His task is, on the other hand, to ensure that each instrument plays at exactly the level of dynamics indicated: with (subjective) exactness, i.e. in terms of the instrument—not subordinating itself (objectively) to the overall sound. --The changes of chord are to happen very gently; the instrument entering must not receive any perceptible emphasis, so that one only notices the change because the colour has altered.\footnote{Willi Reich, \textit{Schoenberg: A Critical Biography}, Translated Leo Black (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 52.}

Using changing tone color through orchestration as an integral parameter of his writing was an aspect of this composition that became increasingly important to Schoenberg later in his career.
Five Orchestral Pieces, Op. 16
III.

Mäßige Viertel
Solo ohne Dämpfer

pp

3 Solo-Kb mit Dämpfer

pp

pp

23

ppp p
Kb.

3 Solo-Kb

pp

arco
Flag. auf der E-Saite

ppp

3 Solo-Kb

Flag. auf der C-Saite

One five-string bass with a C-String

ein 2. Solo-Kb.

ppp

3 Solo-Kb

pp
DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 14, Op. 135

Symphony No. 14 was written in 1969 and was given its first performance by the Moscow Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Rudolf Barshai on September 29 of that same year. The piece deviates greatly from what is considered standard in the symphonic idiom, because it is a collection of eleven poems in musical settings. Only one of these poems is of Russian origin, while the remaining poems come from Western Europe and are translated to Russian. The symphony “is rooted in the concept of Mahler’s song-cycle, Das Lied von der Erde—a work for voices and instruments in several movements that grows out of a unifying expressive theme,”37 and is “a work of anguish and pessimism, relieved occasionally by sardonic humor or pensive lyricism.”38

The instrumentation of the piece is unusual, consisting of nineteen strings, ten percussionists, and two solo voices: a soprano and a bass. The first double bass solo is found in the fourth movement, which is titled ‘The Suicide’, at three measures after 64. In this movement a solo cello has been the primary accompaniment to the soprano soloist. In these last measures of the movement, the double bass soloist takes over this role and replaces the cellist. It is crucial to the line of the solo that the double bassist has either an extension or a five-string bass to play the notes written in the contra-range. The large intervals found in ten and eleven after measure 64 can pose some problems to basses equipped with a fingered ‘C’ extension. They would be most easily performed on

a five-string instrument because one can play the bigger intervals across the lower two strings instead of having to make the large shifts required by the extension.

The second bass solo of the piece is in the seventh movement, titled ‘At the Santé Prison.’ After a four-measure espressivo duet between the solo double bass and the bass vocalist, the solo that follows for double bass forms part of a canon. The double basses start the pattern, with the tutti basses entering pizzicato, while the soloist doubles the same line col legno. The rest of the string sections enter in similar fashion.
Symphony 14, Op. 135

4.
The Suicide

Dmitri Shostakowitsch
1906-1975

64

Adagio $\frac{\text{3}}{4} \frac{\text{760}}{\text{160}}$

Solo

$\text{p}$
7.
At the Santé Jail

90  Adagio \( \frac{\text{d} \text{.72}}{} \)

91  col legno

92
JEAN SIBELIUS

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Minor, Op. 47

The first draft of the Violin Concerto by Jean Sibelius was completed in 1903. Sibelius never managed to get it performed by the virtuoso he had originally intended it for, Willy Burmester, and the work premiered by a lesser known violinist named Viktor Nováček, probably for reasons of finance (Nováček was available to perform it sooner than Burmester).\(^{39}\)

The revised edition was not completed until 1905, at which time Sibelius again overlooked Burmester for a violinist of lesser renown. The premier of the revised edition was given by Karl Halir, the concertmaster of the Berlin Orchestra, under the direction of Richard Strauss. At this point Burmester decided that Sibelius had treated him unfairly and vowed never to play the piece.\(^{40}\)

The third and final movement of the piece contains a great deal of solo work for the double bass. This music is not virtuosic material, but rather supporting material to highlight the flashy solo violin part by thinning the texture. The primary attributes a bassist needs to play the solo part in this movement are concentration and control. Even keeping track of where you are in the score can be a challenge, because of the large amount of repetition involved.

The *ricochet* style of bowing that Sibelius asks for in measure 79 requires a great deal of bow control, especially as it is written for an extended period of time. There are two variations of the *ricochet* technique in this movement. The first is the eighth-note


\(^{40}\) ibid., 278.
followed by the two sixteenth-notes, where the two sixteenth-notes are performed in one down-bow. The next example occurs in measure 45 where the pattern played by the double bass outlines a six-eight rhythmic grouping. The greatest challenge here for the bassist is negotiating the large string crossing involved between the octave ‘G’s while still maintaining control of the ricochet bowing. In measure 48, Sibelius facilitates this by adding the rest of the double bass section, who play pizzicato on the main beats, while the soloist plays off of the section with the off-beat pattern. In modern orchestras the bassist will often substitute the ricochet bowing that Sibelius indicates with the same figure played in separate bows. This enables the bassist to play more precisely in rhythm with the other instrumentalists playing the same repeating figure.

Throughout the movement the solo double bass is playing the same ricochet rhythmic figure with a reduced string section, with two players per section, and the tympani. This reduced orchestration creates a small chamber ensemble that is extended across the concert stage, playing a rhythmically driving, repeating figure together. Particular attention must be paid to this small group, making sure that precise articulation and ensemble are obtained.

At measure 206, the solo bass is called for again, this time playing melodic, legato material. The solo double bass is playing the same material as two violoncelli and a solo viola. These higher strings retain the ricochet technique while playing the passage.
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Minor, Op. 47

III.

Allegro, ma non tanto

Jean Sibelius
1865-1957
IGOR STRAVINSKY

Chant du Rossignal

Chant du Rossignal was composed in 1917 and first published in 1921. The piece received its premier on December 6, 1919 under the baton of Ernest Ansermet. The music is taken from Stravinsky's opera Le Rossignol, completed only in 1914, but begun in 1908 while Stravinsky was still studying with Rimsky-Korsakov. The opera is very short, lasting approximately forty-five minutes. Chant du Rossignal is a symphonic poem that is taken from the music of Acts II and III of the opera.

There are two solos for double bass in the piece. The first occurs near the beginning at number 13. The double bass and cello play pizzicato harmonics a perfect fifth apart on every other eighth-note beat. Two flutes emphasize the eighth-notes not being played by the low strings with more complicated, decorative figures. The passage does not present any technical problems to the performer.

The second solo is found at number 72 and originates from the beginning of the third act of the opera. This passage contains an interesting indication from the composer asking the performer to play the entire excerpt on the 'd'-string. To play the passage in this matter would necessitate a great deal of movement of the left hand up and down the fingerboard, with both the musical effect of shifting sounds or glissandi occurring between the notes, and a greater probability of intonation problems as the double bassist shifts for the 'f' in fourth position. If the performer plays all of the notes except for the 'f'1's that occur on the 'd'-string, and play the 'f'1's on the 'g'-string, the passage will sound much more facile. A note should be made that there is a performance tradition of following Stravinsky's indication, and playing the entire passage on the 'd'-string. At the
point in the music where this solo occurs, the solo double bass is entirely alone for the first measure, being joined by the bass section and then by the celli in the following measure.
Chant du Rossignol

Igor Stravinsky
1882-1971

13
Andantino  \( \frac{7}{8} \)
Solo
\( \text{pizz} \)

14

72
Molto ritmico  \( \frac{7}{8} \)
Sul Ré

\( \text{mp} \)
Pulcinella Suite

Pulcinella originated as a ballet written for Sergey Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes. It was written between 1919 and 1920 and was premiered by the Ballet Russes at the Paris Opera House on May 15, 1920. The conductor for the premier was Ernest Ansermet. The music for the piece is taken from several pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi (1710-1736), and reworked in a modern setting. The following excerpt describes the origin of the work:

The suggestion that lead to Pulcinella came from Diaghilev one spring afternoon while we were walking together in the Place de la Concord: “Don’t protest at what I am about to say, I know you are much taken by your Alpine colleagues”—this was said with withering contempt—“but I have an idea that I think will amuse you more than anything they can propose. I want you to look at some delightful eighteenth-century music with the idea of orchestrating it for a ballet.” When he said that the composer was Pergolesi, I thought he must be deranged. I knew Pergolesi only by the Stabat Mater and La Serva Padrona, and though I had just seen a production of this latter in Barcelona, Diaghilev knew I wasn’t in the least excited by it. I did promise to look, however, and to give him my opinion. I looked, and I fell in love...The final construction of the plot and ordering of the dance numbers was the work of Diaghilev, Leonid Massine, and myself, all three of us working together... Pulcinella was the swan song of my Swiss years...I began by composing on the Pergolesi manuscripts themselves, as though I were correcting an old work of my own. I began without preconceptions or aesthetic attitudes, and I could not have predicted anything about the result. I knew that I could not produce a “forgery” of Pergolesi because my motor habits are so different; at best, I could repeat him in my own accent...

Pulcinella was my discovery of the past, the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible.\footnote{Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, Expositions and Developments (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962), 126-129.}

The concert suite from the ballet was written circa 1922. The first performance of the suite was on December 22, 1922 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra with Pierre
Monteux conducting. This concert suite was later revised in 1947 with few changes from the original suite.\textsuperscript{42}

The seventh movement features a prominent double bass solo and is marked as a ‘duetto’ between the solo bass and trombone. Although a virtuosic solo, Stravinsky does not extend the tessitura of the double bass beyond ‘c\textsuperscript{2\#}’ which is not considered out of the range of the orchestral player. Much of the solo is written to be played marcato, to add accent to the music and to attempt to minimize balance problems between the double bass and the trombone. In measure 46, a contrasting musical section occurs where the double bass is marked dolce. Here the orchestration is cut back to a light texture of only strings to avoid overbalancing the solo bass.

The technical difficulties associated with the piece lie primarily in observing the articulations that are called for, and in negotiating the changes in register that happen throughout the solo. There are fast scalar passages, such as the one in measure 24, which encompass an octave and one half within the space of one measure. Much of the piece is also located near the breaking point on the instrument, near the second partial (the open string being the first partial), between the third and fourth positions. The dolce passage at measure 46 is an example of a place where the player has to continually switch between these lower and upper positions.

Pulcinella Suite

Igor Stravinsky
1882-1971
$ff$ risoluto energico
The ballet *Agon* was begun in 1953, and due to a series of interruptions, was not completed until 1957. The premier of the concert version was on June 17, 1957 in Los Angeles under the direction of Robert Craft. The New York City Ballet gave the first staged performance on December 1, 1957. Stravinsky used examples of French Court dances that he found in the book *Apologie de Danse* by de Lauzes written in 1623 as models for the dances he wrote in the ballet.43

Over the time that Stravinsky wrote the piece, his own musical style and technique changed. Because of the interruptions in the ballet’s composition, Stravinsky later went back and changed his earlier work on the piece to keep the music current with the serialist style of writing he was using by the ballet’s completion.

In all of the passages marked for ‘double bass soli’ except the first one, which is found at measure 81, Stravinsky explores the extreme high register harmonics of the instrument. The first solo is also written in the upper range of the instrument, but with no indication to play them as harmonics. Stravinsky uses two designations to indicate which octave register to play the harmonic passages in. The one used most often is “*suoni reali*”. This is an indication that the pitch written on the page is what is to be heard; therefore the double bassist must perform the harmonics one octave higher than written. There are also directions to play the harmonics on the bass as written, such as in measure 172 of the Galliarde, where Stravinsky writes “Harm. Sounds 8va bassa”.

Agon
Ballet for twelve dancers
Double Pas-de-Quatre

Igor Stravinsky

Cb. I
\[ \text{sempre tenuto} \]

\[ \text{arco suoni reali} \]

\[ \text{fp suoni reali} \]

\[ \text{arco real pitch} \]

\[ \text{fp suoni reali} \]

\[ \text{arco real pitch} \]

\[ \text{fp suoni reali} \]

\[ \text{fp suoni reali} \]
Galliarde
(Two female dancers)

\[ \text{fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \]

\[ \text{fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \]

\[ \text{fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \]

\[ \text{fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \text{ fp} \]

\[ \text{sempre fp} \text{ ben tenuto} \]

harm.-real pitch-suoni reali

harm.-real pitch-suoni reali

166

166

169

172

harm. sounds 8va bassa
COMPARISONS, REFLECTIONS, AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

The thirty-two pieces that have been studied in this document contain solos for the double bass section or for a double bass soloist. Looking at these solos or soli passages one can easily place them in one of two categories to identify their musical context.

The first category is a solo that consists of music that is of primarily melodic importance. These solos take advantage of the acoustic and expressive possibilities of the double bass and use those devices to convey the principal melodic message of the music. Of the thirty-two solos listed in this document, sixteen of them are of the melodic or expressive type. The solos in this category are:

- BARTOK: *Divertimento for Strings*
- BERG: *Violinkonzert*
- BRITTEN: *Peter Grimes*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- GINASTERA: *Variaciones Concertantes*, *Concerto per Corde*
- GORECKI: *Symphony No. 3*
- MAHLER: *Symphonies Nos. 4*, *Symphony No. 7*
- MILAUD: *La Creation du Monde*
- PROKOFIEV: *Symphony No. 3*, *Lieutenant Kije*, *Romeo and Juliet, Suite 2, No. 5*, *Ivan the Terrible*
- RAVEL: *L'enfante et les sortileges*
- STRAVINSKY: *Pulcinella Suite*

The second category is one in which the double bass solo is not used for melodic expression, but for textural or orchestral purposes. This type of solo usually occurs
in a section of music where the composer would like to thin the texture, and it often happens when other members of the string family are marked solo as well. Twelve of the solos found in this document are examples of textural double bass solos. The solos in this category are:

**COLGRASS**  
*As Quiet As*

**HENZE**  
*Aria de la Folia Espanola*

**KODALY**  
*Dances of Morossezk*  
*Variations on a Hungarian Folksong (The Peacock)*

**PENDERECKI**  
*The Passion of St. Luke*

**PROKOFIEV**  
*Violin Concerto No. 2*  
*Symphony No. 5*

**SCHOENBERG**  
*Verklarte Nacht*  
*Five Pieces for Orchestra*

**SHOSTAKOVICH**  
*Symphony No. 14*

**SIBELIUS**  
*Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*

**STRAVINSKY**  
*Agon*

Three of the solos found in this document belong in both categories. These are pieces where the composer has used more than one solo for the double bass, and at least one solo in the piece fits into each of the two categories a primarily melodic solo and a textural solo. The solos that fall in this category are:

**BRITTEN**  
*The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*

**HENZE**  
*Concerto for Oboe, Harp, and Strings*

**STRAVINSKY**  
*Chant du Rossignal*

Comparing the music written for solo double bass in the twentieth century to the solo music written prior to the twentieth century, one discovers that the differences in the music written for the instrument, not surprisingly, mirror many of the musical and
compositional techniques that were current at the time they were written. Idiomatic twentieth century instrumental techniques are used in many of the solos that have been presented in this document, including: harmonics, glissandi, *col legno*, jazz styles, and the extended high range of the instrument. The techniques in this list were not commonly used in the musical eras prior to the twentieth-century. Although some of these instrumental techniques were thought of and used by composers and double bassists in earlier times—particularly the use of harmonics and the upper range of the instrument—they are not commonly used and found in the orchestral music of their era.

After reflecting on these points, an interesting question comes to mind: do the orchestral solos for double bass written in the twentieth century reflect the changes and developments the instrument has undergone during that time? Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to look at the music written for the double bass concert artist or recitalist during this time period. The music of Serge Koussevitzky, Hans Werner Henze, Frank Proto, François Rabbath, Paul Ramsier, David Anderson, Paul Hindemith, Gunther Schuller, and a host of other composers are usually written at a level that greatly exceeds in complexity and expressive content the solos that are written for the instrument in an orchestral context (with the notable exception of Ginastera’s orchestral solos, which are written at the musical and technical level of many of the recital and concert works of the time). The solo concert music has mirrored very closely the development and growth of the double bass during the twentieth century. Because the solos that are written for the double bass in the orchestral literature for the most part do not nearly approach the musical and technical requirements of the solo concert bassist, it appears that the
twentieth-century composers of orchestral music have not kept pace with the progress
that the double bass has made.

There are a number of reasons for this situation. There are many limitations, both
real and perceived, of the double bass that have kept the instrument from being written
for to its greatest potential in twentieth-century orchestral solos. Perhaps the greatest
stigma the double bass has yet to overcome is that it is not an expressive, melodic
instrument. The perceived limits of the double bass can be seen by reading about the
properties of the double bass in an orchestration book. One is given a pitch range that is
well below what a capable double bassist can attain on the instrument. Furthermore,
there are passages which unreasonably discourage the composer from writing
adventurous music for the instrument, such as:

[The double bass] is not an agile instrument, requiring considerable
strength to play. Leaps of wide intervals, particularly in the upper range,
present technical difficulties...A few double stops are possible, but
dividing the section is more reasonable...Only natural harmonics are
practical for the double bass.\textsuperscript{44}

Another possible limiting factor is that the double bass has, perhaps more than
other instruments, experienced a wide range of levels in the skill of the performers who
play the instrument. A common adage about it is that the instrument is one of the easiest
instruments to play passably but one of the most difficult instruments to play really well.
The inconsistency in the level of double bass performers perhaps makes composers
reluctant to entrust music to the instrument that is considered too demanding.

An additional reason for the disparity between the solo concert music written for
the double bass and the solos written for the instrument in an orchestral context is the fact

\textsuperscript{44} Brad Hansen, \textit{The Essentials of Instrumentation} (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing
that a recitalist and an orchestral double bassist often play instruments with many different features. A solo double bassist will generally play a smaller instrument with thinner strings that are close to the fingerboard. This smaller instrument offers many advantages in terms of its playability and projection. The orchestral bassist is expected to play a larger instrument with thicker strings that produces a darker tone than the soloists’ double bass. Therefore asking a bassist to play virtuosic music on the same instrument on which he has to perform his standard orchestral function can often create many problems. The primary purpose of the orchestral bass is to provide a strong, driving rhythmic and harmonic foundation for the orchestra, and in many ways that instrument is not an ideal one for playing technically complex recital and concert music.

If one were to look at the orchestral solos written for the violin during the twentieth century, one would find that not only are there a greater number of solos written for the instrument, but that the requirements of the solo violinist in the orchestra are far more similar to the requirements of the recitalist than in the comparison of the solo and orchestral double bassist. The violin is an instrument that was conceived to play melodies and approximate the human voice, while the double bass’ role is usually considered to be one of accompaniment.

Despite this situation, the level of double bass playing is getting higher and higher, as the possibilities of the instrument are further explored. As the double bass is more often seen in the light created by talented and capable bassists, the standard of what is expected of the instrument and its players should also rise. This may well be reflected in the orchestral bass solos composed in the twenty first century.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


