CHAMBER MUSIC WITH DOUBLE BASS: A NEW APPROACH
TO FUNCTION AND PEDAGOGY

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
December 2009

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The first part of the paper states the problem of the double bass not being incorporated into the chamber music program at many universities and the resulting lack of skills that can only be developed through this discipline. The double bass is trying to catch up with the other string instruments as it has been historically ignored, misunderstood and not as developed musically and technically. The historical background and current state of research are being examined to understand why this problem occurred in the first place, noting the vast amount of chamber music repertoire that is unknown and identifying some important but underperformed works. Further the pedagogical benefits of playing chamber music are discussed in order to realize the vital importance of integrating the double bass into the curriculum at major universities. Specific examples from the four major style periods are discussed in detail to show the benefits of studying this repertoire. Finally an implementation process is suggested to help change the current state of chamber music neglect as it pertains to the double bass.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Chamber music as an integral part of the study of the double bass is a major area of neglect, as bassists focus predominantly on solo and orchestral repertoire. The bass is often not included in the chamber music curriculum at major universities in the U.S., partly due to a lack of historical information in the field, and a lack of awareness of much of the repertoire. The purpose of this paper is three-fold: 1. To examine the chamber music literature as a means to develop the bassist as a musician and artist; 2. To increase awareness of a historically informed approach to the repertoire and 3. To present an implementation process for incorporating the bass into the chamber music curriculum in schools.

There are two sides to this process: the historical aspect and the practical application. The historical approach includes learning about the role and function of the double bass throughout history and the stylistic conventions of the time, as well as shedding light on the chamber music repertoire thus far sidelined or forgotten. The practical application includes examining the role of the bass in the ensemble and the educational benefits of playing chamber music.

Murray Grodner¹ and Alfred Planyavsky’s² contributions in cataloging music, recordings and DVDs have been a major step in calling attention to the double bass chamber music repertoire. However, the three most often played chamber music works, by Schubert, Dvorak and Prokofiev, are only part of a large body of music that deserves to be performed. The extent of this repertoire is vast: there are 858 duos, 810 trios, 544 quartets, 860 quintets, 484 sextets,

332 septets, 368 octets and 303 nonets for violone/double bass. Of all these works there are many that deserve to be included in the more frequently studied and performed repertoire encompassing all levels of chamber music making.

Apart from making this music known to the musician and general public, playing the repertoire would be very beneficial to the developing bass player to learn important listening, musical and technical skills. These skills can be used in all aspects of music making including solo and orchestral bass playing. The sense of responsibility and awareness required by one player on a part in collaboration with other players is only developed to the greatest extent through chamber music. Primarily, the only platform the double bassist has in active participation with other instrumentalists is through playing in the orchestra. This is a good place to learn to match bowings, phrasing and articulations, but not nearly as effective and detailed as playing in smaller groups. A problem for young bassists, in particular, is that they are not challenged enough in the orchestra where they are often bored as they are given the easy parts. Sometimes they go into a “fog zone” the moment they take up their instrument.

Chamber music, therefore, should become a tool in schools to challenge the bassists to be involved in repertoire that will help them develop faster, both collaboratively and musically. It is the aim of this study to examine the repertoire and the pedagogical benefits of playing chamber music and the pressing need of integrating bassists into the chamber music curriculum.

\(^{3}\) These numbers were given to me by Planyavsky in Vienna, August 2008, as an update to the counts in *Geschichte des Kontrabasses*. 
CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND, SIGNIFICANCE AND STATE OF CURRENT RESEARCH

The double bass has a unique place in the history of chamber music. As chamber music developed into a dominant art form in the 19th century, the double bass retreated from a virtuoso role - playing concertos, chamber music and orchestral music - to a more supportive function that was delegated predominantly to the orchestra. As music moved from palaces and churches to the public concert hall, ensembles were expanded. String instruments were developed to accommodate larger spaces and to play with a more powerful sound. The double bass was altered from a five or six string instrument, with the characteristic thirds tuning D, F#, A on the top three strings to accommodate easier and faster playing, to a four string bass, tuned in fourths more suitable to orchestral bass playing. This change brought about a transition in its role within the larger musical context.

The most in-depth documentation of this transformation is by Alfred Planyavsky in Geschichte des Kontrabasses.\textsuperscript{4} Planyavsky traced the early forms of bass instruments in the 16th century and documented the use of the violone in early ensemble music. However, it seems to be a difficult task to reconstruct the development that took place in the 16th and early 17th centuries as we have mainly iconographic sources to draw upon. Even today, bass instruments in all types of early ensemble settings raise questions about the type of instrument used for the lowest part. There remains disagreement among some of the foremost scholars in this area of musicological research. Several factors have contributed to this disagreement. The specification of basso as the most common designation for the lowest part in all ensemble music creates confusion, because every instrumental family had its own bass instruments in either 8’ or 16’ range, whether

\textsuperscript{4} Alfred Planyavsky, Ibid., 181-403.
it was the *gamba*, violin, or lute family. The double bass, therefore, appeared in all kinds of forms and to this day is the instrument with the greatest variations in size, shape and tuning within the string family.\(^5\) There is no other string instrument that has gone through as many changes and adjustments over the centuries as the double bass. The iconography of the 16\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\) century shows human size instruments in various ensembles, ranging from small settings such as duos and trios to larger ensembles, where the double bass appears in conjunction with various other bass instruments. In the 16\(^{th}\) century, Banchieri (1609) distinguished between the *Violone da Gamba* tuned G C F a d g and the *Violone in Contrabasso* tuned D G C E a d g. Praetorius in *Syntagma Musicum* (1619)\(^6\) showed a number of bass instruments that he gave various names: *Gross Contra-Bas-Geig*, which is a five string instrument in his table, *Gross Viol da Gamba bass*, which is a six string bass. Bismatova (1694) called it the *Contrabasso o Violone grande* with four strings G A D G.\(^7\)

Example 2.1. Praetorius: *Syntagma Musicum*

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The designation *basso* for the bass part goes as far back as the Renaissance, where the early string consorts were divided after their vocal models into soprano, alto, tenor and bass. The *basso* did not imply a specific instrument, but rather the function of the instrument, thus in renaissance, baroque and early classical music a specific instrumentation was not always indicated. The determining guidelines often had to do with the range of the part and what kind of sound was desired, as well as how many instruments were available and the performance setting.⁸

With the development of instrumental music in the Baroque, and the expansion of ensembles and venues, the violin family gradually started replacing the *gamba* family. The cello became the preferred instrument to the smaller *gamba* and the *violone* survived in its function as a doubling bass instrument. At this time the bass line was often doubled an octave below, especially in operas and dramatic works to increase the dramatic effect. This doubling did not occur in all music though, especially not in smaller ensembles.⁹ The unity of organ and double bass, particularly in church music, and cello, double bass and harpsichord (sometimes bassoon) in secular music slowly developed into one of the most common continuo combinations. The double bassist had to know when to play and when to stay discretely in the background. This practice continued into the 18th century as the double bass became one of the most regular continuo instruments at the time. It is not always clear when the double bass was used in conjunction with organ or harpsichord, if it was played with or without cello, or whether it was part of the group at all.

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⁹ Joelle Morton, Ibid., 3.
The meaning of the term *violone* in much early music causes further confusion; it is uncertain whether the term *violone* consistently referred to a bass type or to a cello or *gamba* type instrument. Stephen Bonta, among others, has done extensive research in this field and has documented the development of the cello and its early role and function, stating that the term *violone* sometimes referred to the cello.\(^\text{10}\) Discussions in the area of early bass usage are very complex and have resulted in a lack of consensus about the exact function and role of either cello or double bass instruments.

The treatment of the double bass in chamber music seems to remain unclear into the early classical period, unless composers especially notated the bass part as the *violone* or double bass instrument. Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745) was the first double bass player and composer who wrote chamber music including the double bass. Around 1721 or 1722 he wrote six pieces, which later became known as trio sonatas.\(^\text{11}\) These trio or “quadro” sonatas were first published by Camillo Schoenbaum and sparked the “Zelenka renaissance” a few decades ago.\(^\text{12}\) Zelenka’s Sonatas for Two Treble Instruments, Bassoon and Basso Continuo provide an ideal opportunity to explore chamber music of this time. Two other early examples utilizing the bass include: Biber, H.I.F. (1644-1704) Sonatas à 3,5,6 and Buxtehude, D. (1637-1707) Sonata for viola da gamba, violine and continuo.\(^\text{13}\)

In the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century the double bass was the foundation in many chamber ensemble pieces as the sole bass instrument and/or in combination with the cello, particularly in divertimentos,

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\(^{11}\) Wolfgang Reich, Preface to Sonata V, F major for two Oboes Bassoon and Basso Continuo, ZWV 181,5 Bärenreiter Kassel, 1992.

\(^{12}\) Wolfgang Reich, Ibid.,

\(^{13}\) Planyavsky, Ibid., 731-732.
cassations and nocturnes. As the separation of the cello and double bass lines evolved, primarily in orchestral writing, and with a more widespread usage of the cello and double bass designations, the function of the two instruments became more clearly delineated.

Starting with the early Haydn String Quartets the designation of cello became standard and it became the most common bass instrument in chamber music. In an independent development, the double bass experienced an unrivalled period of interest during the Viennese Classical Period and it received some of its finest works during this time. The repertoire from this period includes hundreds of works for the double bass including many concertos, duos, trios, quartets and larger chamber ensembles. Planyavsky, in his research in conjunction with the Wiener Bassarchiv, has made a concerted effort to draw attention to this music, to catalogue the repertoire, and to perform many of these works in the Wiener Musik Verein.

During the 19th century and early 20th century, there is a dearth of solo double bass literature. In the span of 125 years (1824-1949), little solo repertoire was written for the instrument, and none by a major composer. However, three of the most important chamber music pieces that include the double bass were written during this time: Schubert’s Trout Quintet Opus 114, Dvorak’s String Quintet Opus 77, and Prokofiev’s Quintet for violin, viola, double bass, oboe and clarinet, Opus 39. These three works are a staple of the repertoire and have been analyzed and discussed by many authors. Many other chamber music works including the double bass were also written during this period, but they have received little or no attention.

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15 The archive is housed in the Music Collection of the Austrian National Library and is also under the auspices of the Institute for Austrian Music Documentation. The address is: Wiener Kontrabassarchiv, Musiksammlung der ÖNB, Augustinerstr. 1, A-1010.

16 Wiener Musikverein at http://www.musikverein.at/
In addition to focusing on these lesser-known works, it is necessary to reestablish some of the *violone* repertoire to the bassist’s repertoire since cellists claimed this material during the 19th century. With the rise of historicism and an attempt to collect and catalogue music, a portion of the repertoire originally for *violone* was published for other instruments. An example of this misappropriation is Mozart’s *Per Questa Bella Mano*, originally written for baritone, double bass and piano or orchestra. In “Von Verschollenen Autographen und „verstimmten” Kontrabässen”, Tobias Gloeckler17 discussed how the manuscript was published in various versions, with the bass being replaced by the cello, interwoven into the piano part, or totally omitted. These different editions led to a performance tradition that often excluded the double bass and could only be rectified much later after the discovery of the original manuscript.

Haydn’s early symphonies are still very much chamber symphonies. The bass solos in Haydn’s early symphonies, although specified by Haydn for the *violone*, were often published with the designation cello instead of *violone* or double bass. To this day one can hear recordings with the cello playing the solo double bass part. A correction should be made to this and other false assumptions that have been perpetuated over the decades. It is therefore necessary to find a new approach to the historical development, which is already underway, but needs reinforcement especially in the area of chamber music.

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CHAPTER III

PEDAGOGICAL BENEFITS OF PLAYING CHAMBER MUSIC

The historical side of research and performance is one aspect of proof of a lack of awareness of the double bass chamber music repertoire. The other aspect, which contributes significantly to the current state of the disregard of this repertoire, is a lack of integration of the double bass into the chamber music curriculum. It has been an ongoing battle for the bass to catch up and find a place that is equal to its counterparts, the violin, viola and cello. It is therefore necessary for the continued development of the bass for students to learn about stylistic conventions in all periods through chamber music. This step is vital in the process of the integration of the double bass into the fabric of artist level string playing.

Too often double bassists have been excluded from the benefits of learning about style, articulation and phrasing in the chamber music context, despite the fact that it is arguably the best venue to learn about almost every aspect of music making. Most universities only partially include the double bass in their chamber music curriculum. Occasional opportunities playing the standard repertoire occur, but the double bass is not routinely included in chamber music programs. The following benefits to the bass player in the study of chamber music will greatly enhance their training:

1. Develop important listening skills
2. Match articulation to other instrumentalists
3. Develop independent rhythm (no conductor, no section to hide in)
4. Learn about balance, color, timbre
5. Learn about different roles or functions of each part
6. Learn about decision making processes in phrasing and bowing
7. Heighten awareness of responsibility for pitch as the lowest member of the ensemble

8. Develop personal interrelationship skills through working in a group

9. Learn about style and performance practices in general

10. Broaden awareness of original bass repertoire
CHAPTER IV
THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE DOUBLE BASS IN FOUR DIFFERENT STYLE PERIODS

The Baroque Period

The Zelenka Trio Sonatas deserve a special place in the bassist’s chamber music library. Zelenka was the first known bass player/composer who wrote six chamber music works that show an important development of the continuo function. He titled the first sonata “Trio Sonata” and after that either labeled the pieces sonatas or not at all, which can give an indication to the different nature of these works. The standard trio sonata of two melodic instruments and supporting continuo is not really applicable to these pieces. Apart from the addition of the concertante bassoon part, the violone becomes gradually more important. The later works, especially, show a more independent treatment of the lower voices and a violone part that becomes an equal partner rather than having primarily a supportive continuo function.

The two original sources are the autograph scores housed at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden, Mus.2358-Q-1 and the parts to Sonata Nos. 2, 4 and 5, Mus. 2358-Q-3. The autograph scores of Sonatas Nos. 1 and 3 indicate the bassoon as the only bass line continuo instrument. Sonata No. 1 has an identical bassoon and violone part and there is no independence between the two voices at all. It is a traditional trio sonata. Sonata No. 2 has a more concertante bassoon part, becoming equal to the other melodic voices as it is technically demanding and soloistic in nature. This is developed further in Sonata No. 3. This work is a good example of the earlier sonatas where the violone still has a more supportive function. The violone commonly doubles the bassoon, outlines the fundamental structure, and lets the bassoon

18 Wolfgang Reich, Preface to Sonata III, B major for Oboe, Violin, Bassoon and Basso Continuo, ZWV 181,3 Bärenreiter Kassel, 1992.
elaborate most of the more melodic material. In the second movement, especially, the bassoon takes on a more soloistic and virtuosic role with an independent violone part underneath. Sonata No. 2 presents no separation of bassoon and violone in the autograph score; however, the separate parts show variants that are not indicated in the score. It can be assumed, therefore, that Sonata No. 3 had separate violone and bassoon parts. The editor of the revised Bärenreiter edition reconstructed and published independent parts for the two instruments for Sonata No. 3, with a fifth stave below for the thorough-bass realization.  

Example 4.1. Zelenka: Sonata No. III, Movement 1, mm.1-6

In Sonata Nos. 4, 5, and 6, the independence of the two parts, violone and bassoon, is evident in the scores.

Sonatas Nos. 4 and 5 were written for violone o tiorba. The o should be understood as meaning violone and theorbo. Sonata No. 5 presents the violone in partnership with the other

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19 Wolfgang Reich, Ibid.,

20 Wolfgang Reich, Ibid., preface to Sonata V, F major
instruments. The opening is a unison passage in all instruments that requires the same articulation, timbre and style of phrasing. For twenty-one measures all instruments move together, which gives the violone player a great opportunity to work with woodwinds and violin, and to experience the challenge of matching their articulation and sound.

Example 4.2. Zelenka: Sonata No. V, Movement 1, mm.1-23

Both bass line instruments have melodic fragments, although the bassoon is still used more frequently as a melodic instrument in concertante style. The unison passage keeps returning, however, and equality amongst the instruments is reestablished at various points in the work.

Sonata No. 6 treats the violone and bassoon as equal partners and most of the time gives them melodic material in unison. The third movement is of particular interest because the violone has independent fugal entries and is used contrapuntally with the other voices.
These sonatas provide a unique opportunity for bass players to perform works by a baroque composer who played bass, and they are rewarding early original repertoire. These pieces also give room for experimentation; for example, the bass player could substitute for the bassoon and play some or even whole bassoon parts. The substitution was not originally intended but would give the bass player a chance to play, musically and technically, very demanding parts, fulfilling the same function as the *concertante* bassoon.

The Classical Period

The Classical period is of particular interest for the double bassist. This is the most important period in the history of the instrument other than the late 20th century and early 21st century. Many solo and chamber music pieces were written for the double bass and the instrument received much attention especially in and around Vienna. Several factors affected this transformation. Viennese tuning facilitated the soloistic and virtuosic potential of the instrument. The beginning of this tuning lies in 17th century Vienna, where the unique five string
tuning asserted itself over the more common six string *gamba* tuning of Germany and the three and four string tuning of Italy. Between 1729 and 1830 Viennese basses were made in a particular shape, size and tuning that influenced the writing and playing in Vienna and the surrounding area.\(^{21}\) Viennese basses all have the shape of a *gamba*, the back is flat and slanted towards the top, viol corners, five strings, a relatively flat fingerboard, a low arched bridge. What particularly distinguishes this bass from other basses is its unique pegbox and a wooden knob between the lower bout and the back and occasionally an iron thorn for further support.\(^{22}\)

Example 4.4. Viennese scroll and bass

Viennese basses were five string basses tuned F A D F# A. This tuning focuses on D major as its central key and facilitates playing in this and closely related keys such as A and G major and b, f# and e minor. The triadic tuning made it easy to play broken chords and arpeggiated figures. Passages that were more harmonically conceived sounded better with the

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sympathetically vibrating strings. The sound produced by using the open strings was still the ideal of the early classical period that had transpired from the baroque: to create a pure and open resonating sound with open strings, harmonics and chord progressions.

Another aspect worthy of consideration is that many composers in and around Vienna had the dual role of conducting and writing music for a court orchestra or ensemble. This dual role allowed them to be in close contact with musicians and experience the scope and possibilities of the different instruments. The composer could explore different technical and expressive avenues and combinations of instruments. Haydn, for example, had a very good group of bass players and came into close contact with Josef Kämpfer (1735-1796), the first traveling bass virtuoso. The association with Kämpfer provided him the opportunity to see the capabilities of the bass and probably explains some of the difficult orchestral bass solo and tutti parts in Haydn’s music.

Some of the earlier forms of chamber music with bass were divertimentos, cassations and nocturnes as well as partitas, serenades and sonatas. Adolf Meier states that the violone was primarily used for the basso part in church serenades and chamber music.\(^\text{23}\) It has been documented that the church music of Michael Haydn (1737-1806) and George Albrechtsberger (1736-1809) are examples of the dominant role of the bass in this repertoire.\(^\text{24}\) Albrechtsberger, who was a student of Fux, had learned from the extensive trio sonata repertoire of Fux and developed it further into the three voice divertimento. He wrote seven string quartets, six string quintets and six string sextets all with double bass. Michael Haydn wrote four trios, seven string

\(^{23}\) The term was still used in the early 18th century to designate the bass voice, a practice that was continued from the baroque period.

quartets, five quintets and two sextets with double bass that have been preserved.²⁵

Mozart used the same instrumentation as Michael Haydn in his church trios and included
the bass in many of his early divertimentos and serenades. The combination of cello and bass
and its specification in the score appears, for instance, in Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. His serenades
sometimes specify double bass, like the Serenate Notturna KV 239 where Mozart chose the bass
for the concertino group. There are several other serenades that may have been written for the
bass even though the designation in the part was still the generic basso. The part writing and the
range confirm the use of the Viennese tuned violone.²⁶ Many of the cassations, nocturnes and
serenades of various composers were written for the violone as the bass voice, or in conjunction
with the cello. James Webster has shown how the early string quartets of Haydn were composed
with a cello in mind, but does not rule out that the bass might have participated or replaced the
cello in other genres.²⁷

It is in works that specify the double bass that we can best trace its development from a
continuo instrument to an equal solo voice in the chamber music of the classical period.
Compositions by Albrechtsberger (1736-1809), Dittersdorf (1739-1799), Hoffmeister (1754-
1812) and Sperger (1750-1812) can demonstrate the development of more independent and
idiomatic bass parts, leading to the bass quartets by Sperger and solo quartets by Hoffmeister,
culminating in the concertante writing of the Viennese solo concertos. These works were all
written specifically for the double bass in Viennese tuning. It is this element, which distinguished

²⁵ Alfred Planyavsky, Ibid., 5.
²⁶ Adolf Meier, Ibid., 49.
²⁷ Webster, “Violoncello and Double Bass in the Chamber Music of Haydn and his Viennese Contemporaries 1750-
them and caused the flowering of the double bass as a solo instrument and as an important chamber music partner.

F.A. Hoffmeister’s Solo Quartet in D major exemplifies characteristics of this time. The key of D major makes it a very accessible piece in Viennese tuning. A bassist interested in performance practice could gain a great deal from playing some of the large body of repertoire that was composed for this instrument in its original tuning. The experience of playing on a Viennese tuned bass, with its open resonance, is invaluable. The Hoffmeister Solo Quartet lies well enough on a bass tuned in fourths, but loses some of the ease of execution and open sound. Many of the technical difficulties in this work arise from the fact that it is played in a different tuning. The thirds in measures 12-16 are much easier to play on a Viennese tuned bass.

Example 4.5. Hoffmeister: Solo Quartet No. 2, Movement 1, mm.12-19

In the original tuning, many of the runs in higher position can be played across the string without shifting. Harmonics occur more on key notes that facilitate getting from one position to the next. The second movement with its many arpeggiated figures is more open and more resonant sounding.
Example 4.6. Hoffmeister: Solo Quartet No. 2, Movement 2, mm. 51-62

Technically, this movement is a lot easier to play on a Viennese tuned bass as much of the across-the-string playing lies better under the hand and the arpeggios use more open strings. The slow movement requires extensive shifting on a modern bass to accomplish a very lyrical sound. Again, some of this is avoided on a Viennese instrument by playing more smoothly across the string in a thirds tuning.

The Romantic Period

With the development from a five string virtuosic instrument of the classical era to the four string instrument whose primary function was relegated to the orchestra, solo and chamber music repertoire is sparse. Nevertheless, in addition to the three previously mentioned standard works, there is repertoire written by composers such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Gounod, Glinka, Saint-Saens and Tchaikovsky. These works were composed primarily for larger ensembles. The role of the bass was mainly supportive in function.

In the Romantic period two works will be examined that exemplify different functions within the chamber music context. 1. Franz Schubert’s Trout Quintet in A, D. 667, is a traditional chamber music work where the bass plays a supportive role. 2. Giovanni Bottesini’s
aria *Tutto che il Mondo Serra*, is a trio for soprano, double bass and piano, based on Chopin’s Etude Opus 25, No. 7, which treats the bass as an equal partner to the voice.

Schubert’s quintet is a frequently performed work and is an excellent example of a standard chamber work including the double bass. The five movements give copious material for discussion on matching of bowings, articulation, timbre, expression, pitch and ensemble. It is an ongoing conversation with the other instruments that exemplifies chamber music in its highest form. The bassist has to be particularly aware of the cellist as they have similar material and very often need to match articulations and bowings.

The *Trout* is one of the most lighthearted and spirited pieces Schubert wrote. The different movements are contrasting in nature but no overall dramatic progression seems to be intended in this music.\(^{28}\) It is the humor of this piece that shines through again and again and needs to be communicated by all participants, but is largely due to a sparkling piano part that is written predominantly in the upper range sonorities of the instrument. The bass frees the piano and cello and gives them the opportunity to play in the upper registers. While the bass performs the bass line, the cello and piano are free to take over much of the melodic material. This is very often the case in chamber music involving the bass, that it allows the other instruments to become freer and more soloistic.

In the *Trout*, the function of the bass is the foundation and provides the backbone of the group. The bass player has an increased responsibility in terms of pitch, rhythm, movement and knowing when to bring out the bass line when no other instrument shares it. Equally, the pianist needs to be aware when it does share the bass line with the double bass to make way for the line to come through. At the opening this relationship becomes apparent: The bass sustains the

fundament of the chord, while the piano rises above with bubbling arpeggiated figures and remains in the upper sonorities for the first 18 measures before it starts descending into midrange.

Example 4.7. Schubert: “Trout” Quintet, Movement 1, mm.1-18

In the next section (measures 20-50) the bass has much rhythmic responsibility and needs to keep the tempo, while being aware of freedom in the first violin part. At measure 64 the bass takes on only a supportive function giving room to the cello to blossom in a tender solo. At measure 149 the bass needs to blend in completely rhythmically and in timbre with the cello and viola, which have been establishing this figure for two measures before the bass joins.
Example 4.8. Schubert: “Trout” Quintet, Movement 1, mm. 149-157

At measure 165 the bass momentarily steps out and is heard in a bass line solo. Measure 237 illustrates where the bassist needs to match the cello in articulation and move into the foreground. The challenge is to be just as articulate in the lower register by moving thick strings as fast as required.

Example 4.9. Schubert: “Trout” Quintet, Movement 1, mm. 237

The previous examples show how the bassist has to be constantly alert and change roles in the course of the first movement. Similar discussions could take place for all movements, but it remains up to the bassist to learn how to play with the other chamber music partners and to discern the continuously changing role. It is an ideal piece to learn about chamber music, to
converse with others through music and to learn about all aspects of playing that are only possible in this context.

In Bottesini’s *Tutto che il Mondo Serra* the bass part is directly borrowed from Chopin’s Etude Opus 25, No. 7. Bottesini does not change the piano right hand part, but gives it to the double bass, composing a soprano voice part over it and giving the original piano left hand in a fuller version to the piano. The bassist therefore needs to know about the piano style of Chopin in order to play the bass part appropriately. Chopin’s piano music can be characterized by the romantic notion of *tempo rubato*, which essentially is based on the idea of borrowing time and giving it back, without affecting the overall tempo of the piece. In Chopin’s piano music, the left hand often keeps a steady beat and the right hand plays a free melodic line that allows itself to give and take without disturbing the temporal relationships established by the left hand. Apart from staying with the consistent eighth-note rhythm of the piano and shaping the melodic line above it in a *rubato* style, the bassist is also challenged with being aware of the voice part and, if possible, becoming one with the voice. Although the voice is a relatively slow moving melodic line, the bass player needs to accommodate the soprano’s expression and the declamatory implications of the text. Further, the performer must become aware of the singer’s breathing and needs to take time at ends of phrases, at high notes, and during tonal inflections.

In working with the singer the bassist can realize the importance of the text and how it affects articulation, slurring, dynamics and the overall expression. In this piece there are many rhythmic figures that the two voices play or sing together. An example of this is the dotted eighth note-sixteenth note rhythm that the soprano and bass articulate together again and again. Bottesini generally slurs the bass part when the singer is singing one syllable, or within a word without a stress, on a second syllable. There are exceptions, however, to accommodate big leaps
in the bass part, where it would be tempting to overly pronounce the little note, but in the context of the text, the sixteenth note should almost sound as if slurred (see Musical example No. 1 measure 28).

It is easy to focus on the technical challenges of this piece rather than staying with the singer all the time, accommodating the phrasing, breathing and expression of the text. Further, the singer, when sustaining over bar lines, needs to know at certain points where the next downbeat is going to fall and requires the bass player to pronounce preparatory notes that lead into downbeats and other important junctures.

Example 4.10. Bottesini: *Tutto che il Mondo Serra*, mm. 24-28

In measure 24 the bass begins a countermelody to the soprano and needs to make sure it corresponds exactly with the ornamental figure of the singer leading into beat three. In measures 25 and 27 the bass must finish the gesture with the soprano on beat two, then move forward with a little freedom before the downbeat of measures 26 and 28 respectively, to coincide with the voice and piano. This moment in the music requires musical and technical control as well as feeling the *tempo rubato* in a very subtle way. The bass player is further challenged to match the intensity in a very fast moving run when the soprano reaches for the climax of the piece in
measure 29. Here the challenge is to line up exactly on the second beat of the measure, as the bass part requires a little time to reach up to the high G, before starting a descent to the end of the phrase.

Example 4.11. Bottesini: *Tutto che il Mondo Serra*, mm. 29-3

The 20th Century and Contemporary Music

In the twentieth century we see a renewed interest in the double bass that expresses itself in the extensive solo, chamber music, and more melodic orchestral bass writing. Collaboration between bassists and composers became a frequent occurrence, expanding the repertoire. The writing became much more idiomatic for the instrument and the bass is often featured in the pieces that use it. The soloistic characteristics of chamber music in the twentieth century can be illustrated in Astor Piazzolla’s *Contrabajeando* for solo bass and string quartet.
Piazzolla’s music holds a unique place in the twentieth century for its distinct tango style that offers many elements of Western music not otherwise found in the tango genre. The elements of jazz, counterpoint, extended harmonies and dissonances give his tangos an individual expression. Piazzolla’s *Contrabajeando* is a great work for the double bassist to experience this style of chamber music in a leadership role, rather than being the fundament of the tango band. The bass can be heard alone, in a leading position within the group, as part of the fabric, and as accompaniment. In this piece the bassist takes on the role of a first violinist and learns another function within the chamber music ensemble. The piece begins with the double bass in a solo cadenza, which establishes right away the more soloistic character of the piece. Piazzolla’s piano player composed this cadenza; here the player has the opportunity to extend it, add his own cadenza or take some time for improvisation.

The cadenza leads into a typical fast section at the beginning of the movement followed by a repeated pattern of alternating slow-fast sections. The fast sections are characterized by angular rhythms, sharp accents, off-beat patterns and gritty tango articulation, as well as some extended techniques and sound effects such as playing behind the bridge and slapping the top of the instrument.

Example 4.12. Piazzolla: *Contrabajeando*, mm. 16-21
The slower sections usually make use of more melodic flowing lines, which often have a melancholic character. The overall scheme is ABABC, a compositional structure Piazzolla used in many of his works. This structure poses a challenge to find the transitions from one tempo to the next and sometimes requires the bassist to lead or conduct the ensemble. The texture continually changes from a homophonic, and at times homorhythmic texture, to complex virtuosic contrapuntal writing, or as melody plus accompaniment. All string players, if not already familiar with the tango style, have to learn how to use their bow differently, add slides and match accents as the style demands techniques that require new skills. Generally, the bow is moved faster across the string, often adding a downward thrust to give it the slightly rough edge associated with the earthy tango sound.

Example 4.13. Piazzolla: *Contrabajeando*, mm. 55-59
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The purpose in exploring this topic has been to raise awareness regarding the importance of involvement in chamber music for the developing bassist. This study was written in the pursuit of encouraging chamber music education at all levels; from the beginning bassist to the advanced student, all should have the opportunity to gain the skills that are acquired in the process of actively participating in a chamber music ensemble. Educational institutions must foster the growth of the aspiring bassist by exposing the student to a vast body of repertoire that has been overlooked.

Every musical institution has its limitations and opportunities, therefore the following ideas need to be interpreted and integrated in a flexible and individual manner into the policies of the different programs.

1. Several required semesters of chamber music at collegiate level. Most universities require three full years of chamber music study for the violin, viola and cello in order for undergraduates to matriculate.

2. Bass quartet study to give the bass player the opportunity to learn different roles within the chamber music context, e.g. leadership, supportive, and contributor. Because of the recognized need for the other strings to study traditional string quartets, trios and piano chamber music, bass quartets give the younger bass students a similar experience of playing in a small ensemble.

3. Create performances of chamber music pieces including the double bass to raise awareness of the repertoire. Apart from regular concerts it would be very beneficial to use chamber music involving the bass for community outreach programs and school
concerts to foster interest at an early age. Chamber music as an educational tool can often find the support of a local musicians union or non-profit organizations.

4. Make music that is not under the copyright law available through a continually updated double bass web site.\textsuperscript{29}

5. Commissions of new works through collaboration of bass faculties throughout the U.S., and through international bass societies worldwide.

6. Draw attention to bass chamber music repertoire and the current state of bass chamber music at all levels through resources like ASTA, Chamber Music America, Bass World, \textit{The Strad} and \textit{Strings Magazine}. The more attention this area of neglect would receive, and the more concerted the effort, the greater the effect and the faster the changes could take place.

7. Find a way to allow college students to help introduce bass chamber music in the public schools and youth orchestras through organized volunteer efforts.

Through this document, the neglect of repertoire was illuminated. Reasons for this neglect included confusion as to the role of the bass in early chamber music and lack of knowledge as to the availability of a broad spectrum of repertoire that has been overlooked. The pedagogical importance of participation in small ensembles has been explored. Further study in this field could lead to a curriculum that would put bass playing on an even footing with the violin, viola and cello.

\textsuperscript{29} Some effort at public exposure of the repertoire already exists through initiatives like the Vienna Double Bass Archives. Viennese musicians have been performing numerous chamber music works from the Vienna Bass Archives of the classical era in the \textit{Wiener Musikverein}. 
BIBLIOGRAPHY


