

# Teaching Jazz double bass in the 21st century

Methods for teaching Jazz bass researched

By Tony Overwater



We can only show you the door,  
you're the one who has to walk through it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Neo in 'the Matrix'

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## Introduction

*The modern music student today is a privileged person. He has at his fingertips the experience, advice and empirical guidance of men who are his personal idols, who in their own developmental years had no such help to rely on.*

**LEONARD FEATHER (1963)<sup>2</sup>**

When I started out with this research, I had a clear plan in mind. I wanted to do research and catalogue the available existing methods for Jazz bass education. But during the process I realized that matters were more complex than I had foreseen. The original concept for methodic music education was mostly developed for classical music practise. That goal is to methodically teach a musician who has a clear and uniform background and who is heading towards a clear destination; becoming a musician in an orchestra or ensemble, either as an orchestra musician or soloist. The students are to reproduce as faithfully as possible what others put in front of them. The room for self-expression is within the limits of the material at hand. This is, of course, a simplification of reality since classical music education has also been developing in many ways over the years. When Jazz education was starting to be institutionalized, educators tried to copy the education methods of classical music to teach Jazz but the essence of the music practice of a Jazz musician is a very different one. The skillset needed to become a successful Jazz musician is of a different order than for a classical musician. It is not a process of reproduction but of creation and re-creation. The essence is improvisation and interplay.

*The term "interplay" can have various meanings. We may say there is always a degree of interplay in any ensemble music, given that the end result depends on the relation established between all the instruments involved.*

*In the sphere of Jazz, however, it has always referred to a precise musical concept whereby the "roles" of the instruments give way to a work of reciprocal exchange, in which each player influences the other. By "role" we mean the traditional function assigned to each instrument, consolidated over time. This is most true of instruments such as the bass and drums, which have traditionally been relegated to an accompanying role.<sup>3</sup>*

In addition, there were other factors that complicated matters for researching Jazz double bass methods. Paper books are from the 20th century and before. As the internet was developed near the end of the 20th century and came to full bloom in the 21st century, this radically changed the way we learn and the way we teach. Before the influence of the internet, in the early 20th century, the invention of music recording techniques had a big impact as well. Not only did this transform the way we consume music but also the way we learn to play music. This is especially the case for Jazz, an art form that arguably owes a big part of its development to the gramophone.

So, with this in mind, I widened the scope of my research and started to look at Jazz double bass teaching in the 21st century in a broader context than just researching method books.

Besides the books and methods that are already well-known, I found both old and new material that is rarely being used. Also I found online courses and interesting research papers on specific topics that are of great interest for both students and teachers. In order to give both of them insights into this available material, I set up a data base (aptly named 'Jazz Data Bass').

In order to set up a way to compare and value these methods I set up practice based research. Using my own experience and the experience of other teachers and students, I

<sup>2</sup> Brown, R. (1963). *Ray Browns bass method* (Vol. 1). Hollywood, Cal: Ray Brown Music Co.

<sup>3</sup> Cittadini, C. (n.d.). INTERPLAY. Retrieved March 18, 2020, from <http://www.carlocittadini.it/Pagina3i.html>



researched the definition of an educational method and I analyzed which elements need to be taught in order to teach a Jazz double bass student. I designed a graphical theoretical framework showing the complexity and wide variety of topics needed. With this in mind I analyzed the educational methods found and discussed the advantages and challenges of the different method styles. In order to make these methods easier accessible for both students and teachers I developed an online data base, the Jazz Data Bass.

Following my findings during the start of my research I refined my question to 'How to teach Jazz double bass in the 21st century?'. By researching available traditional methods and newly developed methods both online and on paper and looking at new developments like apps and internet applications, I hope to give an overview to both teachers and students of the available tools to effectively learn to play Jazz double bass in the 21st century.

## Historic perspective on Jazz bass education

In order to get a good view on how Jazz education developed (in our case Jazz double bass education), we also need to look at the history of Jazz itself. This art form has a very specific historic development which also influences the way we teach and learn Jazz.

Jazz is a merging of at least two different cultures.<sup>4</sup> African (former) slaves living in America started playing the instruments the Europeans brought from Europe and developed a new kind of music mixing harmony and melody from European music with African rhythmic elements and improvisation. Most musicians taught each other using an apprenticeship approach.<sup>5</sup>

*'This educational form was dependent on aural skills. This style of pedagogy was prevalent in an era where the music relied heavily on group improvisation.'*<sup>6</sup>

*'Jam sessions were also a pivotal forum for the development of Jazz improvisation. Jam sessions were home to the exploration of and self-education in improvisation. Musicians used these sessions as a way to learn from fellow musicians to improve their own skills.'*<sup>7</sup>

An important role in the development of Jazz was the invention of music recording techniques. For the first time in history, music could be reproduced and the invention of the gramophone made music available for a large audience. Now people could listen to music anywhere and could even listen back to recorded improvisation. Where classical music was notated and could be reproduced, improvised music *'would disappear in thin air at the very moment it came into being.'*<sup>8</sup> For Jazz musicians this was a unique opportunity to patiently replay the albums and copy the playing styles of the masters. Until now, transcribing music from recordings is assumed to be essential for learning to play Jazz<sup>9</sup>. The gramophone also led to a wider geographical spread of Jazz, Jazz musicians were no longer dependent on local teachers to learn to play Jazz. The new medium 'gramophone' became a source of inspiration around the globe creating Jazz communities in Europe, Japan and South America. Each contributing their own flavors to the new developing art style.

*This was particularly true of Jazz an art form that was arguably invented by the phonograph. Previously musicians learned a new form by hearing it live. But with Jazz new artists often reported learning the complex new genre by buying Jazz records—then replaying them over and over studying songs until they'd mastered them. They'd also do something uniquely modern: slowing the record down to pick apart a complex riff.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Schuller, G. (2020, March 11). Jazz. Retrieved March 18, 2020, from <https://www.britannica.com/art/jazz>

<sup>5</sup> Jazz education. (2020, February 1). Retrieved March 18, 2020, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz_education)

<sup>6</sup> Gridley, M. C. (1988). *Jazz styles: history & analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

<sup>7</sup> Gioia, T. (2011). *The history of jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>8</sup> W., V. W. M. (2018). *American literature in transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Marcus, A. (1970, January 1). The role of transcription in jazz improvisation : examining the aural-imitative approach in jazz pedagogy. Retrieved March 18, 2020, from <http://cardinalsolar.b-su.edu/handle/handle/179949>

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, C. (2016, January 1). How the Phonograph Changed Music Forever. Retrieved March 18, 2020, from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/phonograph-changed-music-forever-180957677/#DH87ZsqWzzbTC1io.99>

As mentioned before, Jazz can be determined as a mixture of African rhythmic and improvisational traditions combined with harmonic development of the European tradition. Although this is a simplification that needs more nuance it does reflect the multicultural background of Jazz. African slaves that were parted from their original traditional instruments started to build musical instruments using materials at hand, creating new percussion and string instruments. New instruments with African origin were invented and became important in Jazz like the banjo, which originated from the west African akonting<sup>11</sup> and the washtub bass.

*The **washtub bass** or **gutbucket** is a stringed instrument used in American folk music that uses a metal washtub as a resonator. Although it is possible for a washtub bass to have four or more strings and tuning pegs traditional washtub basses have a single string whose pitch is adjusted by pushing or pulling on a staff or stick to change the tension. The washtub bass was used in jug bands that were popular in some African American communities in the early 1900s.*<sup>12</sup>

Besides building their own musical instruments the African Americans also started using the instruments brought along by the Europeans like the piano, guitar, tuba, snare drum, double bass, trumpet and others.

Early Jazz was based on work songs and blues. Later, when it became more popular by the Americans from European backgrounds, the music also incorporated more western harmony and was made popular by the musicals and films of the 40's and 50s.

### **Bass in Jazz**

Early bass players in Jazz played either tuba or string bass or both. The marching bands mainly used tuba. Later when music was played in night clubs and theaters the double bass became more common.

Bass players developed a skill of playing improvised bass lines on given harmonic structures. Starting with a two beat (playing a note on the 1st and 3rd beat of a 4/4 bar) and, later on, a walking bass style using all 4 quarter of the bar and constructing a stepwise accompaniment for the harmonic structure.

These improvised bass lines were new in history, but they do show clear similarities with the figured bass from early music. Although these early music bass lines are precomposed and the variational style is left to the keyboard and lute players.

Most musicians that started playing Jazz in the 50s and 60s had no formal Jazz education possibilities, of course. The music was being invented as they played it. Most musicians were self-taught or had a classical training, they learned to play Jazz by transcribing recordings and peer to peer learning with senior musicians. Only in the late 70s and early 80s did schools for Jazz appear. Early methods for Jazz improvisation started to occur in the 60s and were usually a combination of classical instrument technique, scales and chords exercises and transcriptions of famous and influential instrumentalists.

The first professional educators of Jazz double bass were usually students of the first generation of well-known bass players. John Clayton, for example, was a student of Ray Brown and was also classically trained. He played in the Count Basie Orchestra, with Monty Alexander and was principle bass player of the Amsterdam Philharmonic Orchestra<sup>13</sup> Another important educator, Rufus

<sup>11</sup> Linford, S. V. (2014, July 27). Historical Narratives of the Akonting and Banjo. Retrieved March 18, 2020, from [https://www.ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/content/akonting-history#\\_ftn1](https://www.ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/content/akonting-history#_ftn1)

<sup>12</sup> "Washtub Bass." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 29 Jan. 2020, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washtub\\_bass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washtub_bass).

<sup>13</sup> Clayton, John. "John Clayton Biography." *John Clayton Jazz*, [www.johnclaytonjazz.com/john-clayton-2-bio/](http://www.johnclaytonjazz.com/john-clayton-2-bio/).

Reid, who wrote one of the first well known methods for double bass 'the Evolving Bassist', was also classically trained and plays both classical and Jazz.<sup>14</sup>

In Europe, Dutch bass player Hein van de Geyn who taught at the Royal Conservatoire for some years, created his own method book which became popular world-wide. It's the most comprehensive bass method in a book form till date.<sup>15</sup>

In recent years some interesting developments arose using the internet as a source for information and teaching. Later I will describe in more depth the on-line Jazz bass methods of internationally acclaimed bass players such as Christian McBride and John Patitucci.

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<sup>14</sup> "Biography." *Rufus Reid*, [rufusreid.com/about/biography/](http://rufusreid.com/about/biography/).

<sup>15</sup> "Hein Van De Geyn." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 7 Feb. 2020, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hein\\_van\\_de\\_Geyn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hein_van_de_Geyn).

## Defining a method

During my research and reflecting on my own teaching and the way I was taught, I realized that the concept of a method book was too limiting for my final goal; how to teach Jazz double bass in the 21st century. So therefore, I first explored the definition of the concept 'music method' and I found some definitions that helped me form an idea of the basic purpose of my research.

First, I looked up the traditional definition of a music method:

### *Method (music)*

*In music a method is a kind of textbook for a specified musical instrument or a selected problem of playing a certain instrument.*

*A method usually contains fingering charts or tablatures etc. scales and numerous different exercises sometimes also simple etudes in different keys in ascending order as to difficulty (= in methodical progression) or with a focus on isolated aspects like fluency rhythm dynamics articulation and the like. Sometimes there are even recital pieces also with accompaniment. Such methods differ from etude books in that they are meant as a linear course for a student to follow with consistent guidance whereas volumes of etudes are not as comprehensive.*

*As typical instrumental methods are meant to function as textbooks supporting an instrumental teacher (rather than to facilitate self-teaching) usually no basic or special playing techniques are covered in any depth. Detailed instructions in this respect are only found in special autodidactical methods.*

*Some methods are especially tailored for students on certain skill levels or stages of psychosocial development. In contrast a 'complete' method (sometimes in multiple volumes) is meant to accompany the student until he or she becomes an advanced player.*

*Methods of certain authors or editors have achieved the status of standard works (reflecting regional and cultural differences) and are published or reissued by different publishing companies and in divers (new) arrangements. The Suzuki Method is probably the most well-known example of this.<sup>16</sup>*

This is a description of the traditional classical method books. An elaborate exercise book that takes a student through a linear process of learning.

A more abstract definition, explaining the difference between method and methodology is found in this quote (translated from Dutch):

### *Methodology*

#### **MEANING & DEFINITION**

*The concept of methodology refers to the set of theories that are used to achieve a certain goal.*

*Methodologies do not consist of one way of doing things (such as a method) but are a combination of different ways. Methods are often confused with methodology. However, a method is a separate part of a methodology. The boundary between methods and methodologies is sometimes difficult to draw as no method is completely out of the blue - i.e. completely independent. Methods just like methodologies are also theoretically founded. Whether a particular approach is a method or a methodology therefore largely depends on the context and the way in which the user himself looks at it. Methodologies are often created by the emergence of certain problems through an overly one-sided approach. The method used is then extended with other theoretically proven methods that together effectively solve the problem that has arisen. When an effective mix of methods has been found*

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<sup>16</sup> "Method (Music)." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 23 June 2019, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Method\\_\(music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Method_(music)).

*a new methodology can be created. Methods are used in all conceivable disciplines. Examples are education research and care.<sup>17</sup>*

This definition opens up to my idea of a more modular approach of teaching. Serving the different kind of students.

Looking at the definition of a teaching method (as opposed to a music method) this next definition of Wikipedia confirms my direction of this modular, tailored to the student's individual needs, approach.

#### *Teaching method*

*A teaching method comprises the principles and methods used by teachers to enable student learning. These strategies are determined partly on subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature of the learner. For a particular teaching method to be appropriate and efficient it has to be in relation with the characteristic of the learner and the type of learning it is supposed to bring about. Suggestions are there to design and selection of teaching methods must take into account not only the nature of the subject matter but also how students learn. In today's school the trend is that it encourages a lot of creativity. It is a known fact that human advancement comes through reasoning. This reasoning and original thought enhances creativity.<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>17</sup> Originally in Dutch:

Methodiek

BETEKENIS & DEFINITIE

Het begrip methodiek verwijst naar het geheel van op theorieën gebaseerde wijzen dat wordt gebruikt om een bepaald doel te bereiken.

Methodieken bestaan niet uit één wijze van doen (zoals een methode) maar zijn een combinatie van verschillende wijzen. Vaak worden methode en methodiek met elkaar verward. Een methode is echter een opzichzelfstaand onderdeel van een methodiek. De grens tussen methoden en methodieken is soms moeilijk te trekken aangezien geen enkele methode volledig uit de lucht gegrepen - dus op volledig opzichzelfstaand - is. Methoden zijn net als methodieken ook theoretisch onderbouwd. Of een bepaalde aanpak een methode of een methodiek is hangt daarom grotendeels af van de context en de manier waarop de gebruiker er zelf naar kijkt. Methodieken komen vaak tot stand door het ontstaan van bepaalde problemen door een te eenzijdige benadering. De gebruikte methode wordt dan uitgebreid met andere theoretisch gestaafe werkwijzen die gezamenlijk het ontstane probleem effectief oplossen. Wanneer een doeltreffende mix van methoden is gevonden kan een nieuwe methodiek ontstaan. Methodieken worden gebruikt in alle denkbare disciplines. Te denken valt bijvoorbeeld aan het onderwijs het onderzoeksveld en de zorg.

Ensie. "Methodiek - De Betekenis Volgens Redactie Ensie." *Methodiek - De Betekenis Volgens Redactie Ensie*, 12 Apr. 2015, [www.ensie.nl/redactie-ensie/methodiek](http://www.ensie.nl/redactie-ensie/methodiek).

<sup>18</sup> "Teaching Method." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 14 Mar. 2020, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching\\_method](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching_method).

## Different types of students

One of the things that struck me from the music method definition is that it assumes a linear approach. As a Jazz bass teacher, I noticed that a linear approach seldom works for the majority of the students. Jazz double bass players typically come from many different backgrounds (which is more often the case for the double bass than for other instruments), as one seldom starts to play the double bass at a young age, without any prior knowledge of music. More often than not, bass students have played different instruments and or styles before they started to play Jazz double bass. So, there is not such a thing as a 'standard bass student'. In my opinion a modular approach to teaching Jazz double bass is more effective. I defined three main categories to illustrate this.

### Classical background

Students with a background in classical music are usually have a background of classical double bass, cello or another bowed string instrument. They already have a good control of their instrument. Intonation, scales and bowing techniques are on a high level. They are being challenged in improvisation, rhythm and knowledge of harmony and other more typical Jazz skills.

Students with classical background	
Qualities	Challenges
- Good reading skills	- Improvisation
- Good bowing technique	- Rhythm
- Good intonation	- Harmony
- Basic scale knowledge	- Repertoire
	- Pizzicato technique

### Rock background

Students with a pop/rock/blues/funk background usually started playing bass guitar or (electric) guitar and their interest for the double bass developed from their wish to play Jazz. They need to learn to play the double bass from scratch as the double bass is more related to the violin family, like the bass guitar is part of the guitar family. They have a good sense of rhythm and a basic sense of harmony.

Students with Rock background	
Qualities	Challenges
- Good rhythm	- Control of instrument
- Basic improvisation	- Sight reading
- Good band playing	- Complex Jazz harmony
- Basic understanding of harmony	- Bowing
	- Pizzicato

**Jazz Background**

It is rare but there are students that start with double bass Jazz straight away. In this group I also include the people that changed to the bass soon after they started playing music. Usually they are young adults or adults, fans of Jazz. Usually they have good sense of the double bass.

Students with Jazz background	
Qualities	Challenges
- Good control of the instrument	- Bowing
- Good pizzicato	- Sight reading
- Good knowledge of harmony	- Odd meter
- Good knowledge of repertoire	



## Topics of Jazz double bass education

Following my experiences as a teacher, talking to colleagues from the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, interviewing other teachers and writers of method books and talking to students, I analysed the different topics that a Jazz double bass player will have to learn in order to become a complete and versatile Jazz bass player. I designed a graphical theoretical framework to visually organize the different topics. This assisted me in maintaining an overview while researching existing methods.<sup>19</sup>

The 11 main topics to consider are:

- Jazz bass skills
- Technique
- Theory
- Rhythm
- Musicianship skills
- Repertoire
- Ensemble playing
- Improvisation
- Artistry
- Historic awareness
- Meta skills



<sup>19</sup> I discussed my graphical theoretical framework with the following people: Gulli Gudmundson (Jazz double bass teacher at the KC (Royal conservatoire The Hague)), Mark Haanstra (bass guitar teacher at KC), Quirijn van Regteren Altena (Classical double bass teacher at KC), Marc van Rooij (bass teacher and head of the Jazz department of Tilburg Conservatory), Tineke Steenbrink (harpsichord teacher at the KC) and other teachers and professionals on more informal basis. During our BassBook meeting (every three months all bass students from KC, early music, classical and Jazz, meet for a day of workshops and masterclasses) I discussed the framework with the students and received their feedback.

I used this graphical theoretical model to study and review the chosen methods and to make a graphic representation of which topics were covered by a particular method.

The 11 main topics to consider are:

- **Jazz bass skills** (walking bass, comping, soloing, melodies)

This is the skillset Jazz double bass players need in their daily practice. Playing walking bass lines, other forms of accompaniment in other styles than standard Jazz, soloing/improvising over chord changes and playing melodies.

These elements form the core of most bass lessons and are, to some extent, covered in most books, although the element of playing melodies is often neglected.

- **Technique** (instrumental techniques, posture, body awareness)

This covers all technical aspects of bass playing, from physical aspects like posture, fingering, left and right hand, musical aspects like scales and arpeggios and sound, but also instrument technical aspects of the construction of the bass and the set-up of strings.

Many books focus on scales, intervals, arpeggios and other scale and harmony related exercises. Less attention is given to posture, sound and intonation. In video lessons this has much more focus as this medium is also more suited to address these skills.

- **Theory** (harmony, analysis, scales...)

Jazz music is based on relatively complex harmonies. As Jazz musicians have to improvise using these harmonies, they need to have a well-developed sense of music theory. Bass players have to be able to analyse chord changes, have a good sense of harmony and knowledge of scales and modes.

In general, most methods discuss the basics of harmony and theory. In a music school/conservatoire environment these skills are trained in separate theory classes but also are addressed in the individual bass lessons.

- **Rhythm** (groove, timing, meter, phrasing)

Another important ingredient of Jazz is rhythm which can be divided in groove, timing, meter and phrasing. Groove is a term used to describe propulsive rhythm or sense of "swing" used in Jazz accompaniment.<sup>20</sup> Jazz timing is the way eight notes are played, somewhere between straight eight notes and a triplet feel, depending on the tempo and style. This is something that cannot be notated precisely and has to be learned by copying and transcription of historical recordings. Jazz uses a lot of rhythmical metric variations, odd meter, additional and divisive rhythms<sup>21</sup> that can be developed by practicing a wide array of rhythmical skills from different related cultures (African, South American, Indian, European). Phrasing is the way Jazz musicians take the liberty to vary the timing of the written melody and the way improvisational phrases are played.

Because of the notation issue most written methods put less focus on these elements. In video lessons this is much more discussed. In one of one lessons this is often discussed topic.

- **Musicianship skills** (reading music, play piano, ear training)

This is a selection of skills that are not necessarily bass related but are to be trained in order to develop as a complete player. These are skills all musicians will need to develop.

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<sup>20</sup> In music, groove is the sense of an effect ("feel") of changing pattern in a propulsive rhythm or sense of "swing". In jazz, it can be felt as a quality of persistently repeated rhythmic units, created by the interaction of the music played by a band's rhythm section (e.g. drums, electric bass or double bass, guitar, and keyboards).

"Groove (Music)." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 3 Jan. 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groove\_(music).

<sup>21</sup> more on additive and divisive rhythm - "Additive Rhythm and Divisive Rhythm." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 23 July 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Additive\_rhythm\_and\_divisive\_rhythm.

In a music school/conservatoire environment these skills are trained in separate classes but also are addressed in the individual bass lessons. In some of the more elaborate methods (books and on line) some attention is given to these topics.

- **Repertoire** (Jazz standards and related styles)

In its relative short history of approximately one hundred years, Jazz has been developing in many styles and variations. Different time periods and different geographical areas have contributed to a rich and varied repertoire. A good bass player knows how to adapt to the different styles and adjust his playing style accordingly.

This was one of the things that struck me most from my research, that the majority of the methods give little attention to repertoire and styles. Luckily, some methods are putting their main focus on this. In one on one lessons this is a topic that is unusually very important.

- **Ensemble playing** (playing in different settings, different styles)

One of the most essential ways to learn to play Jazz is in playing together with other musicians. Hein van de Geyn stated in his interview that it is like playing soccer<sup>22</sup>. You can practice playing the ball at home as much as you want, the real goal is playing in a team. A good bass player can play in different settings, like piano trio, big band, Jazz quintet and knows how to accompany accordingly.

This is a topic that is less suitable for method books but is addressed in some online methods and is often addressed in school situations.

- **Improvisation** (melodic, harmonic, modal, non-western)

Improvisation is, of course, an important aspect, if not the most important aspect of Jazz. In fact, Jazz is a certain style of improvisation. But it is also important to understand other ways of musical improvisation. Jazz often merges with other style forms and cultures like modal music, Afro-Cuban, Indian music and Arabic/Persian music.

- **Artistry** (artistic development, improvisation)

Creativity is crucial part of the development of the student but often ignored in method books, and maybe rightfully so. This might not be a topic that can be taught in a methodic approach. It is a personal learning process. Some books, Like Hein van de Geyn's method, do attempt to make a start with this by addressing also more philosophical issues.

- **Historic awareness** (instrumental, Jazz history, playing styles)

The history of Jazz is relatively short but in that brief history many developments have occurred, and many different playing styles have developed.

To my surprise most method books pay very little attention to Jazz history. Only a few books use a historical approach, like the book of Jazz Bass Book by John Goldsby. In my interview with Tineke Steenbrink, an early music specialist and harpsichord teacher, she confirmed that most methods written in the time of early music and Baroque were also not referring to its historical context. While one is part of a certain era and style the historic relevance seems to be of less importance. It might be overlooked because most elements of the music are so embedded in the culture of the era and they are taken for granted.

- **Meta skills** (organisational skills, learning process, reflection, practice skills)

This topic covers all the extra-musical skills that are needed to be a successful, self-learning student. This topic is addressed in very few methods, like Hein van de Geyn's Comprehensive Bass Method and John Patitucci's online bass method.

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<sup>22</sup> You see, playing Jazz is really like playing soccer; you can't go into a gym with a great and experienced player every week, and expect to be a good soccer player after a few years of doing that. It really is the same with playing Jazz. You learn to play by playing! All the details that are impossible to intellectualize like listening, feeling the drums, using your intuition, trusting your body to do the right thing - having a "feel" for the complete process. All this can only be developed on the field. Hein van de Geyn During his interview with me.

Using the graphical theoretical framework gave me an insight in the similarities and differences between the methods I researched. For example, it was interesting to see that almost all of the methods were focusing on the technical aspects and at playing walking bass lines and many of these methods also discussed music theory but much less of a focus was placed on rhythm, history, and creativity. By the nature of the one directional aspect of most methods there was hardly any focus on ensemble playing and interplay.

## Historic overview of Jazz double bass methods

As I mentioned before, Jazz double bass methods have a relatively short history. The earliest method I found was from 1962 called *Jazz Bass Facing*<sup>23</sup> by Oscar Pettiford and Danish bass player Erik Moseholm. This book is fairly unknown but very interesting for beginner students. The exercises are musically interesting and the buildup is very decent.

In 1963, world renowned bass player Ray Brown published his method simply called *Ray Brown's Bass Method*<sup>24</sup>. This book is in fact quite rudimental. It presents a few pictures of the right posture, many exercises in scales and intervals, some basic harmony, chord arpeggios and melodic patterns. It also contains some examples of blues lines and some exercises/etudes.

In 1974, Rufus Reid writes the first comprehensive bass method 'The Evolving Bassist' where he attempts to cover all important subjects. From posture to hand positions, scales, chords, theory etudes to even tips for transporting a bass in the plane.

In 1998, Ron Carter writes his method *Building Jazz Bass Lines*. A systematic approach to building bass lines, using diagrams of chords to connect notes. It contains many examples of blues bass lines in different keys.

In 2002, John Goldsby writes a method (*The Jazz Bass Book*) with a radically different approach. He focusses mainly on the historic development of the Jazz bass tradition. Describing key bassists throughout the Jazz history and analyzing their playing style. Only in the back of the book he talks about the technique of playing the bass and gives exercises and music theory. This book seems to focus more on advanced students.

In 2007, Hein van de Geyn published what is until now the most elaborate Jazz double bass method called 'comprehensive bass method'. In this book van de Geyn attempts to cover all possible aspects. The first book is later followed by a part two with written-out exercises.

Some important Jazz double bass educators like John Clayton and John Patitucci decided not to create a bass method in the shape of a book. Each in their own way, they created a more modular approach using the possibilities of the internet. Since 2012 John Clayton started recording short YouTube videos about specific topics of playing the bass that accompany his regular teaching and masterclasses he gives worldwide.

John Patitucci, a world renowned player with a very busy schedule that doesn't allow him to teach often, has created a very thorough online method at the website of [artistsworks.com](http://artistsworks.com) which was also launched in 2012. In hundreds of lessons for beginner, intermediate and advanced level he goes through all possible aspects of Jazz double bass teaching.

In 2017 another world class bass player, Christian McBride recorded an online course. Although inspirational to hear him speak and play it doesn't seem to be very well thought through. On the other hand, it gives a good insight in how he developed as a musician and will give intermediate and advanced students a lot think about.

In my research I found quite a few more books and methods but mostly they are a repetition of what has been made before and seem to be made more for commercial reasons than for educational purposes. I included some in my *Jazz Data Bass* but I don't consider them interesting to this research.

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<sup>23</sup> Pettiford, Oscar. *Jazz Bass Facing*. Hal Leonard, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, R. (1963). *Ray Browns bass method* (Vol. 1). Hollywood, Cal: Ray Brown Music Co.

## Jazz Data Bass

While researching the available traditional and newly developed methods, I realised there was such a wealth of material available but it was difficult to get a good overview. Both students and teachers could benefit from all this educational material if it was more structurally available and searchable. Not only did I find the comprehensive methods like the ones by Hein van de Geyn and Rufus Reid but also many more specific methods on certain topics and other forms of methods like the master research by Linda Oh; 'The New method of rhythmic improvisation for the Jazz bassist'. Published online by the Edith Cowan University. A large part of the new methods is now moving away from paper books and become available as online tutorials at websites, like Artistsworks.com with prominent teachers Among which John Patitucci, Christian McBride and many others.

So, I decided to create an online overview of the available methods. A user driven format where teachers and students can find the available methods and can contribute new methods under the surveillance of a webmaster. I started out with collecting the most important and influential methods and some more obscure but worthwhile ones. In future I will continue to add new found material and I hope others will add their contributions as well.

With this database I hope to offer information to both students and teachers in their search for effective study material. I added the table of contents of each method which provides a good insight in the content of the method. I added the description by the author and in many cases I wrote a short review.

I designed the following format of entries:

- Title
- Author
- Description by author
- Year
- Format (Book, PDF, website)
- Table of contents
- URL
- Style (eg. Jazz, Big band, bebop)
- ISBN
- Attachments
- Focus (technique, bass lines, history)
- Level (beginner, intermediate, advanced)
- Review
- Last date of access
- Price

<http://tonyoverwater.com/index.php/jazz-data-bass>

## Review of 5 different methods

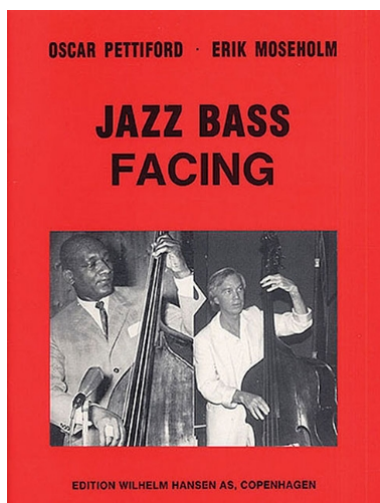
I reviewed and analysed several methods by using my graphical theoretical framework. This helped me to visualise which topics were covered with the method at hand. I chose to review 5 different types of methods in order to get a good overview of the variety of the methods. The earliest developed method of Oscar Pettiford, which is a good representation of the many of the early method books. The Comprehensive Bass Method from Hein van de Geyn, which covers the widest array of topics. Jazz Bass Lines by Mike Downess, which specialises in a specific topic, the online method of John Patitucci at [artistsworks.com](http://artistsworks.com) which uses all the benefits for internet learning. And finally, the thesis from Linda Oh about Dave Holland's rhythmical playing style, a good example of interesting study material that is freely available but not known to most students and teachers.

Each review is accompanied by a graphical theoretical framework, colouring in the topics that are being addressed in the method at hand. The intensity of the colour represents the focus on a certain topic.

White - no or very little focus

light blue - some focus

dark blue - focus



## Jazz Bass Facing

Authors: Oscar Pettiford and Erik Moseholm

Year: 1962

Format: book

Level: beginners

### Highlights:

- Melodic approach in even the simplest position exercises
- For its time a complete method including posture and theory
- Focus on beginners

### Comments:

- Limited to blues forms and some harmonic cadences
- Hard to find

For me personally this book was actually one of the great finds during my master research. Jazz Bass Facing is the earliest method for Jazz double bass that I could find. Written by one of the early pioneers of Jazz, Oscar Pettiford, together with Danish bass player Erik Moseholm. Actually, Moseholm finished the book after Pettiford's untimely death in 1960. The book is fairly unknown and overshadowed by Ray Brown's method that was published one year later. But this book is, in my opinion, a much better set up method than Ray Brown's version. Where the biggest part of Ray Brown's method is filled with scales and arpeggio's and some written out Jazz bass lines, this book has a much more methodical approach and even more surprising; musically interesting etudes for the starting bass player. Pettiford is known to be a melodic player and you can clearly see this in his etudes. Even the simple half position exercises have nice melodic twists and are obviously made with love and attention to detail.

The method is mainly suitable for a beginner's level. The methodic approach of building bass lines are simple but effective and the student is encouraged to create his own bass lines. Concerning walking bass lines, the method is limited to a blues and some harmonic cadences. There are no instructions for rhythm changes or Jazz standards. Being written in the late 50s and early 60's the book gives a nice insight in the way blues was played in the early Jazz tradition. The use of a major (or maj6) chord is much more common on the first and 4th degree than often presumed. The general opinion is that a Jazz blues starts at a dominant seventh chord of the root (Blues in F starts with F7). In Pettiford's bass lines and solos you can clearly see that he considers the root chord to contain either a major six or a major seven, except in the fourth bar where the dominant root chord prepares the fourth degree.

III PIZZICATO

There are many ways of playing pizzicato. The method discussed here is the one most used by jazz bassists. The thumb of the right hand is placed on the edge of the fingerboard and the pizzicato "sting error" is accomplished by the index finger which, with the outermost joint, pulls the string down against the fingerboard. Just before the string touches the fingerboard, snap the string and the tone will be produced.

fig. 5a

fig. 5b

fig. 4

Pull the string in this direction

Place the thumb here

If the tone is to be soft, pizzicato just under the middle of the fingerboard. Jazz bassists prefer to pizzicato further down by which means the tone becomes harder.

fig. 5 Classical Pizzicato

fig. 6 Jazz Pizzicato

If the index finger's outermost joint bends too much the finger clings firmly to the string and the rhythm becomes uneven. This will also happen if the thumb is held tightly to the fingerboard or if the player is too tense. It is of utmost importance to relax while playing.

WH 1960 A - JAZZ BASS FACING

XIX BLUES HARMONIES IN B $\flat$  MAJOR

Following the method on page 20 construct the chords to a blues in B $\flat$  major.

Create your own bass patterns over this harmonic sequence. The harmonic series can be expanded, for example:

Blues in B $\flat$

fig. 81

If a blues is to be repeated, change the last two bars to a chord sequence similar to the first two bars of a "chorus" sequence (see the method on page 21). The last two bars in a B $\flat$  major blues are therefore changed to: B $\flat$ 7 // Cmaj7 / F7 //

Cmaj = C = Cm

fig. 82

Cmaj6 = Cm6 = C-6

fig. 83

Cmaj7 = Cm7 = C-7

fig. 84

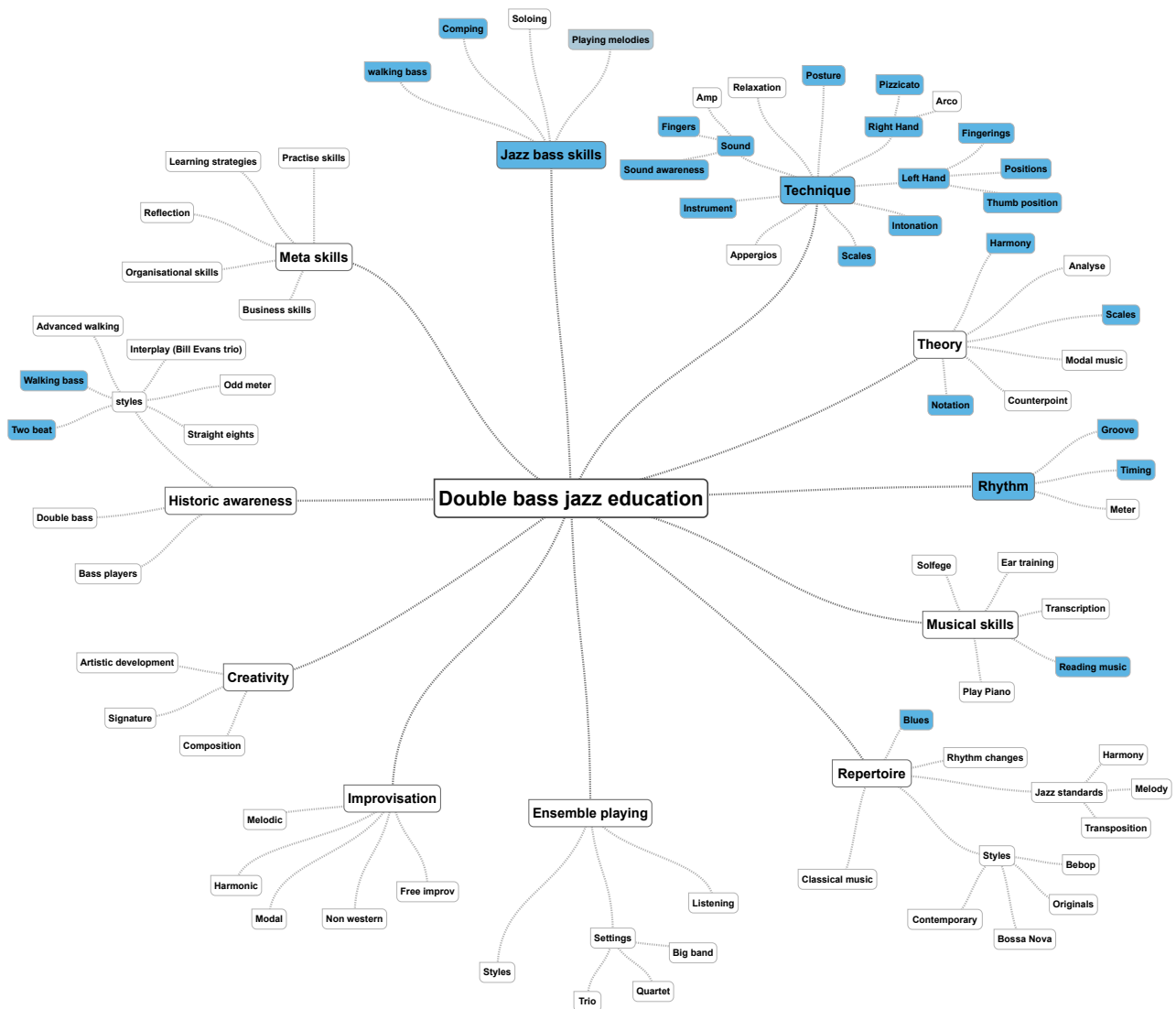
Create your own bass patterns to blues harmonies in B $\flat$ , C, G and F major with the last two bars altered to vamp harmonies.

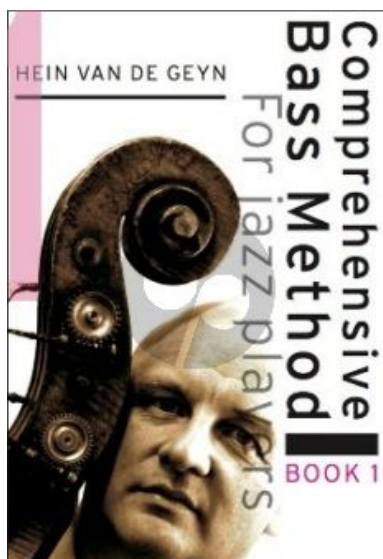
XX VAMP HARMONIES IN B FLAT MAJOR (Compare the method on page 21)

fig. 85

WH 1960 A - JAZZ BASS FACING







## Comprehensive Bass Method

Author: Hein van de Geyn

Year: 2007

Format: book

Level: beginners, intermediate, advanced

### Highlights:

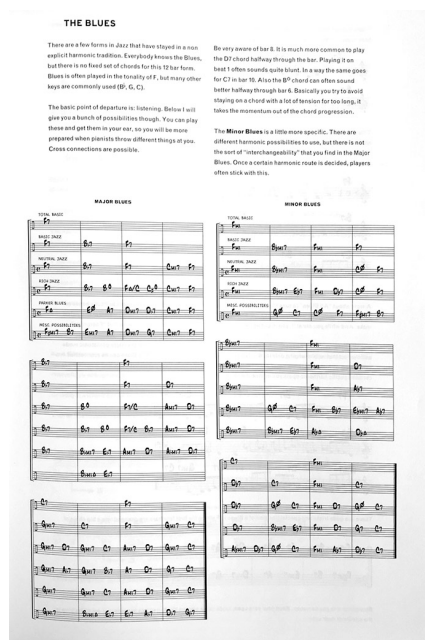
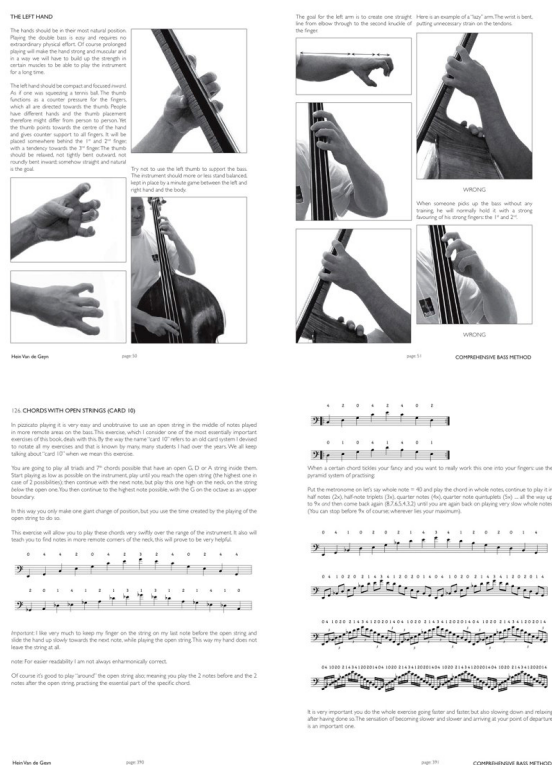
- Very thorough overview of all aspects of Jazz bass playing
- Well-structured and thought out exercises on all possible technical aspects of bass playing
- Includes chapters on the learning process and learning skills
- It offers nice philosophical insights from the author

### Comments:

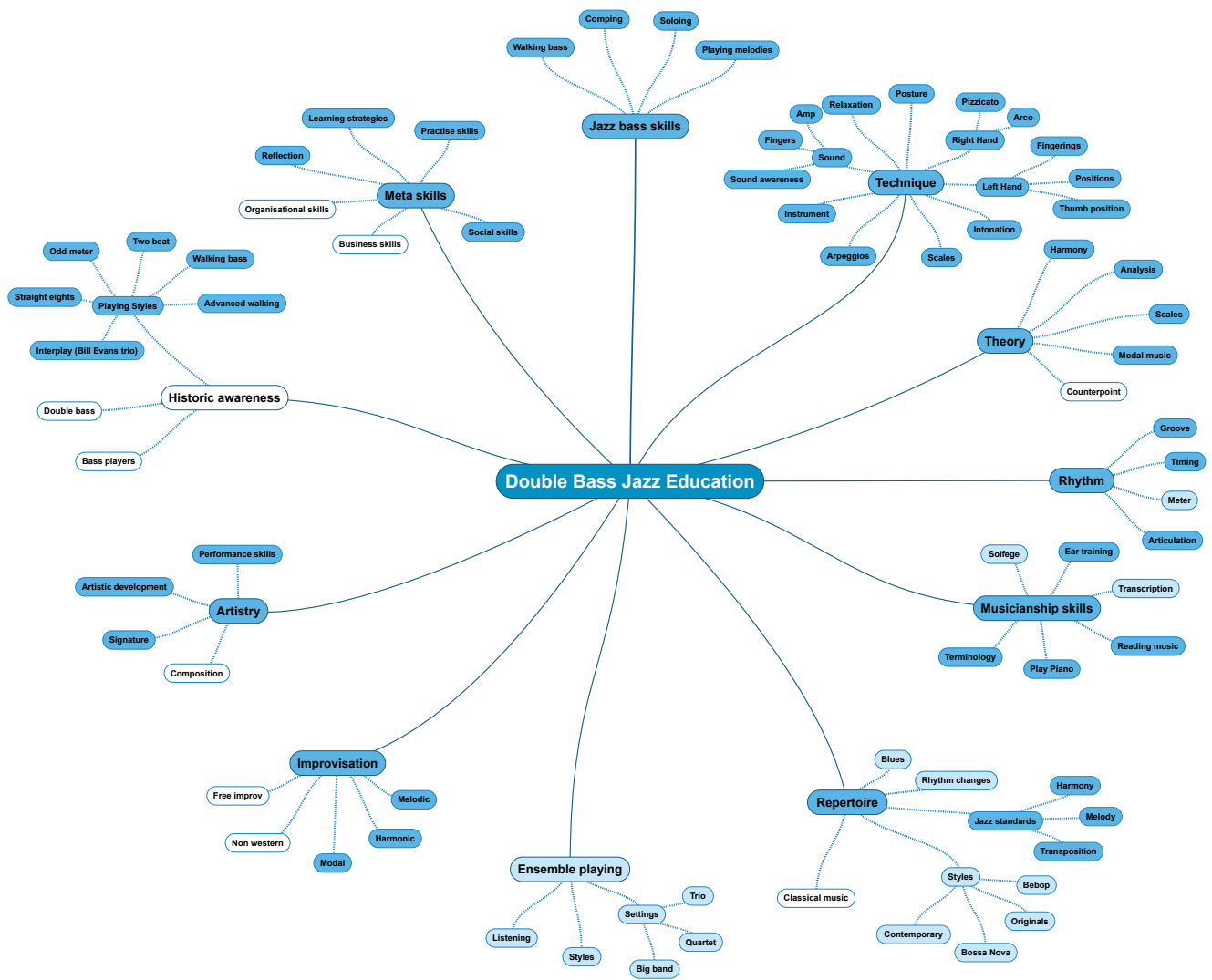
- It covers so many topics that it might be overwhelming
- Little attention to the historical context of bass playing

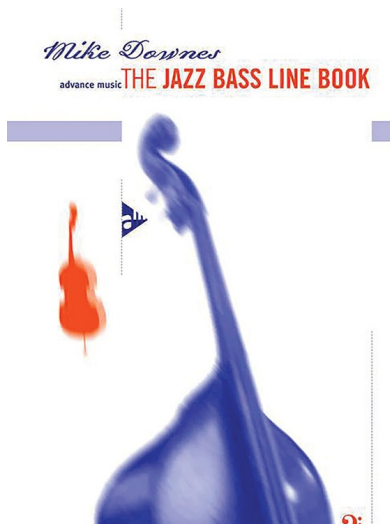
In 2007 Hein van de Geyn, a Dutch bass player and educator, published his 'Comprehensive Bass Method'. This is by far the most elaborate method in book form. Although, he doesn't consider it a method as such.<sup>25</sup> Van de Geyn looks at it as a way to practice the physical side of Jazz bass playing. But his book offers much more than that. As you can see in the diagram, it covers a wide array of topics and it is the most complete method book so far. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The mere size of the book (and the sequel with even more written out exercises and other musical examples) is so impressive that it overwhelms the student with exercises, ideas, advice and theory. As a source it works very well. You can find exercises and advice for almost all thinkable topics.

It is remarkably that there is relatively little to no attention to the historical context and no examples of other bass players from Jazz history. The book is very elaborate in many ways but at the same time it represents a very personal perspective of the author with many examples of his own playing.



<sup>25</sup> read the interview with Hein van de Geyn at the end of this master research.





## Jazz Bass Lines

Author: Mike Downes

Year: 2000

Format: book

Level: beginners, intermediate, advanced

### Highlights:

- Step by step approach teaching walking bass
- Historical comparison of 8 different bass players playing a blues bass-line

### Comments:

- Mainly focussing on blues and rhythm changes. For a next edition it might be nice to add some standards
- Putting some attention to how the bass line relates to the other instruments might add value to the method. (counterpoint?)

This is one of the gems I found while doing my master research. A thoroughly methodic book for learning to play Jazz bass lines by a fairly unknown bass player. The book leads the student step by step through building bass lines. First by constructing a walking bass line on a twelve bar blues by playing only chord notes (chordal bass lines), carefully adding inversions and sevenths and teaching fundamentals of voice leading.

*Chordal Bass Lines*

**MOTION DOWN A FIFTH**

When chord roots resolve down a perfect fifth (or up a perfect fourth), the *v* to *i* motion in the bass is very strong. Here is an example of a bass line using seventh chords and motion down a fifth on beat 4:

**VOICE LEADING**

To avoid "choppy" bass lines, and to construct lines with logical motion, it is helpful to view harmony horizontally rather than vertically. For example, instead of thinking of the first two chords this way:

think of them this way:

Notice especially the 7th to 3rd motion (Bb of F7 resolving to D of Bb7). Here is a bass line using 7th to 3rd motion on chords which move down a fifth:

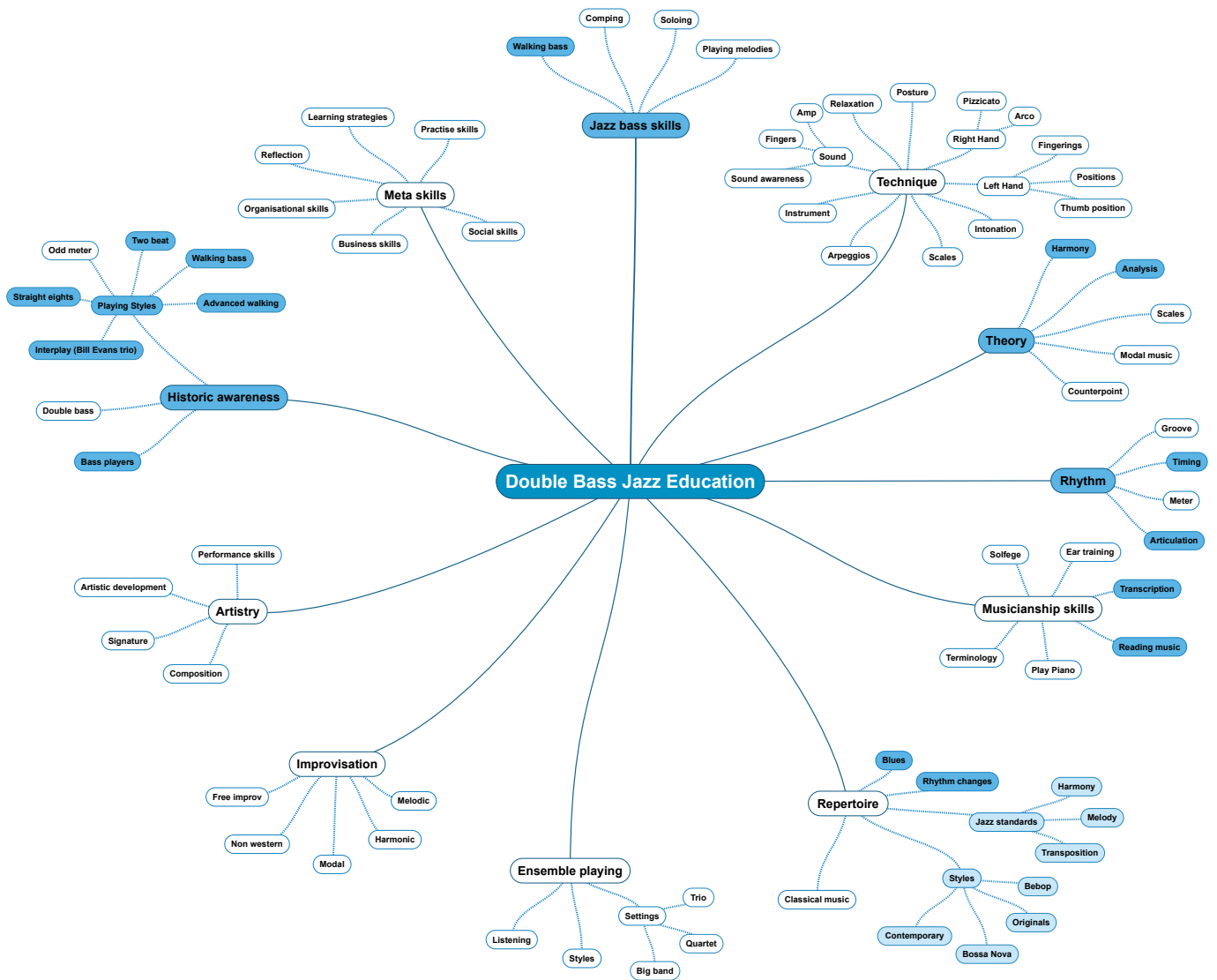
CHAPTER 01-6

**BLUES TRANSCRIPTIONS (COMPARISON VIEW)**

These transcriptions allow you to see and hear what each of these bass players played on two choruses of the 12 bar blues form, measure by measure. The basic changes are above, but note that there are some variations from the basic harmony.

Then progressing to scalar bass lines, melodic and harmonic approach. Rounded off with examples of walking bass lines on a blues by 8 different bass players throughout Jazz history. From Pops Foster to Gary Peacock. Presented simultaneously on 8 staves. Very insightful and practical. It develops to other musical forms like rhythm changes and common harmonic progressions. And it offers different solutions for different styles.

Although this book is not a complete method, it does offer a great approach to learning bass lines. I definitely recommend it for all students, starting to play bass and for those who need extra support in playing walking bass lines.





## Jazz Bass with John Patitucci ([artistsworks.com](http://artistsworks.com))

Author: John Patitucci

Year: 2012

Format: website

Level: beginners, intermediate, advanced

### Highlights

- Well organized beginners exercises
- Musical, contemporary etudes
- Interesting method for teaching Jazz rhythm
- Use of call and response method
- Ear training and solfege exercises

### Comments

- A lot of verbal instruction
- Very little focus on constructing bass lines
- Little focus on repertoire and history
- Quite expensive: 250 dollars per year

World renowned bass player John Patitucci and the people at [artistsworks.com](http://artistsworks.com) have done an impressive achievement presenting this online method for Jazz double bass. In total over 200 lessons were filmed. The lessons are accompanied by PDF documents and audio recordings to play along. It encourages the student to send in his own video recordings which are all answered with a video response from John Patitucci. The beginner's section is the most elaborate and has 160 lessons. The intermediate section has 32 lessons and the advanced has 25 lessons. John Patitucci is explaining elaborately and into great detail. This makes the lesson also a little tiresome at some point. There is so much verbal instruction needed to explain it to all types of students. This is showing us some of the bigger challenges of video lessons. As a teacher you don't know the level or personal challenges of the student watching the video. This makes the lessons a little overwhelming for most students as a lot of the instruction is not applicable for that specific student. This way a teacher can't respond to the individual needs of the student. On the other side, the advantage is that video is very patient and the student can watch it over and over again. As a practice companion, this can be very practical.

One of the more interesting lessons is about rhythm. Patitucci explains Jazz rhythm from the African Abakua 6/8 rhythm. He uses physical exercises to teach this. (lesson 130: beginners) Another interesting approach and also an advantage of video lessons over books is the use of call and response teaching methods. John Patitucci plays an example which the student either has to copy or to respond to. This helps the student to 'feel' the music. Surprisingly, he spends only few lessons on developing walking bass lines, especially compared to all the lessons with scale and arpeggio exercises. He uses a method of melodic cells for walking bass. Also it's remarkable that these lessons only start in the intermediate section. In general John Patitucci emphasises the importance of solfege, ear training, harmony and theory. He uses this in many of his lessons, for example by singing intervals to bass tones, and teaching harmony lessons on a keyboard. The method has a separate section for theory.

**Basic Etudes in all 12 Keys**  
D minor and G minor

John Patitucci

String Bass

17 Gm7 Ebm7 Cm7 Gm7 Fm7 Bb7 Ebm7 D7-9

22 Gm7 Bb7 A7(b9) D7-9 Gm7 Ebm7 Dm7 Gm7

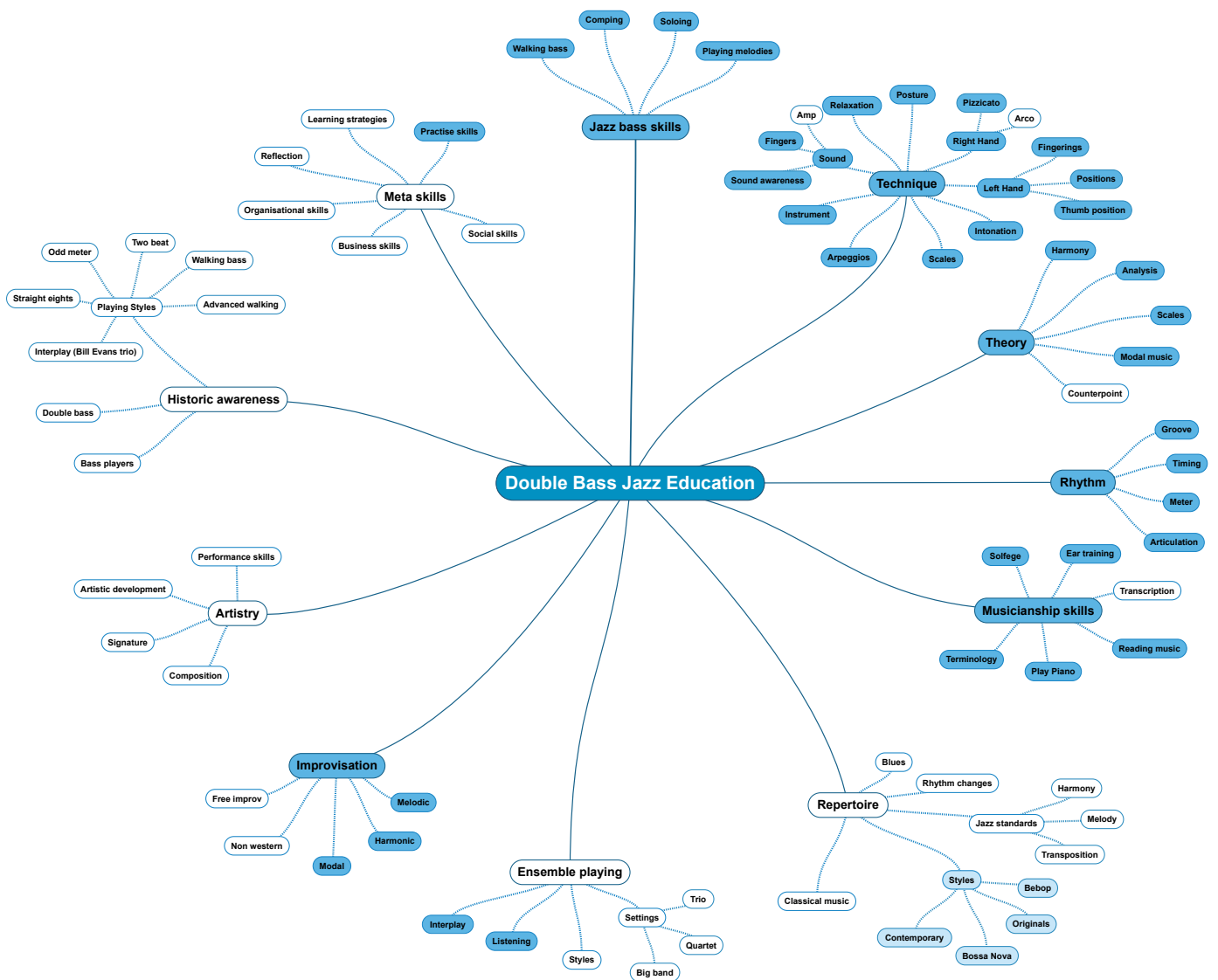
**One Bar Melodic Walking Patterns**  
24 Cells based on scale degrees/ chord tones

F7

John Patitucci

String Bass

Student fills in the rest





2005

New method of rhythmic improvisation for the jazz bassist : An interdisciplinary study of Dave Holland's rhythmic approach to bass improvisation and North Indian rhythmic patterns

Linda M. Oh  
Edith Cowan University

## New method of rhythmic improvisation for the Jazz bassist

Author: Linda Oh

Year: 2005

Format: PDF

Level: intermediate, advanced

### Highlights

- Well-structured analysis of the playing of Dave Holland
- Introduction in North Indian rhythms
- Interesting exercises

### Comments

- Not easy to find

One of the virtues of internet is the ability to search in an ever-expanding library. For example, many interesting master researches and thesis can be found that cover a wide array of topics. One of them, written by bass player Linda Oh is a good example of a research paper that can serve as a method as well. Linda Oh describes the playing of Dave Holland, a bass player known for his use of odd meter time signatures. She compares these rhythms to the North Indian rhythmic patterns and offers many examples and exercises. A wealth of information for the more advanced student that wants to develop his rhythmic playing. These kind of research papers are freely available for anyone interested in it. It is available as a PDF which makes it very easily accessible to students. The research catalogue as it is set up now, which requires the online use of a web browser, is much less accessible and usable for students and teachers. Something to consider when publishing research material.

#### Rhythmic Patterns in Holland's Solo

This dissertation will now explore the rhythmic patterns used by Holland within his bass solo (see Appendix A, Track 1: 4min,30secs.)

##### Syncopation

Within Holland's solo, syncopation can be found in the following bars: 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, and 18.



Below is a modified Nattiez chart presenting the various ways Holland has used syncopation in his solo on Global Citizen.



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#### Tabla Quaida Two: The Quaida

(see Appendix II)

##### Theme Line



In this theme line two bars are divided into four groups of three eighth-notes, followed by a group of four eighth-notes (3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4). This emphasizes weak beats of the bar and implies a 3/8 meter of the 4/4. A similar technique is used by Holland in his solo in *The Balance*.

##### Palta One



Here the first bar of the theme line is played three times. In the rules of this particular quaida bars four and eight must consist of 'ti te da ge tin na ge na' and 'ti te da ge din na ge na' respectively.

89

#### Simple Exercises

3b: i)



3b: ii)



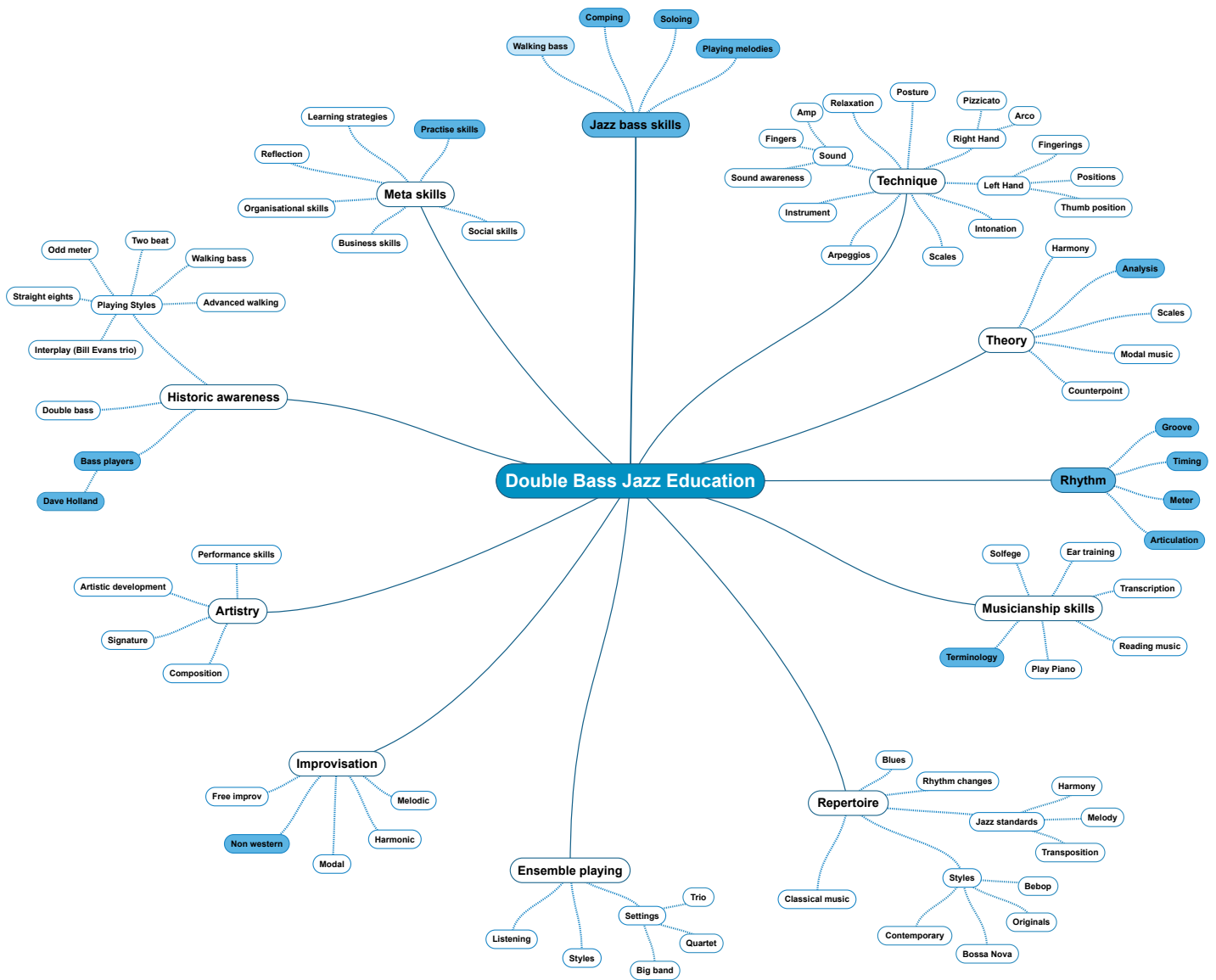
3b: iii) C major scale



- The exercise above can be transposed in all twelve keys and is good way to practise scales and the dotted technique at the same time.

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## New developments

Although it reaches beyond the scope of this research, I do want to address some issues that have a strong impact on development learning and teaching. I will not go into great detail, but I do want to sketch the influence this has on both teachers and students. Hopefully other research will continue on this path.

As we noticed before the development and the way of teaching Jazz was very much influenced by its time and the technical possibilities of that time, like the use of recorded music for educational purposes. Now the question is how the recent developments in society influence the way we learn and teach. Some of the most notable changes are, the development of internet, digital recording techniques and the use of computers, smartphones and tablets. These developments have changed the way we learn and teach dramatically. Or... at least they should do.

Actually, they offer both opportunities and challenges. These days, students have access to an enormous amount of information and digital tools. Most teachers, being taught in a time before the internet, have a hard time adjusting their teaching skills. Students seem to have access to all the information that we had hoped to share gradually with them through our books and lessons. But now it only takes seconds to find out facts about all possible topics through the use of the internet. So, more important than the actual facts we need to share as teachers, is the way we can put these facts in perspective for the student and how a student can use these for his or her own development. Most students lose perspective and get overwhelmed by the enormous amount of information. We can help them put it in the right perspective, guide them to self-development and stimulate them in making authentic and responsible choices.

## The World Wide Web

In the same way that the invention of recorded music has had an influence on the development of music, the invention of the internet also has a great impact on music and the education of music. Since internet became accessible to the mass, all kinds of music became available worldwide. This is not only the case for popular music, but the internet offers a great opportunity for the distribution of music that is being regarded to have less commercial value. All kinds of historic recordings, new recordings, obscure recordings and anything else you could imagine is more or less freely available across the globe. This also led to the creation of communities of certain interest groups that are not geographically bound to one location. So, even more than before, musicians have access to a wealth of new information and this offers many new opportunities to study and develop. The speed of this spreading of information for little to no costs, led to a new dynamic of availability and distribution of information. (although it must be mentioned that the wide availability of music is beneficial to the general audience and the popularity of certain artists, it hasn't resulted in more income, or a decent income for that matter, to the non commercial music forms.<sup>26</sup>)

The challenge is to deal with this information wealth. For some it creates too many distractions and procrastination has become a challenge to many. Another challenge is the verification of the information, which information is to be trusted and how does one verify this. The availability of all this information can stop some students from finding things out by themselves. For example, the availability of so many transcriptions will demotivate the student to make his own, where the process of doing your own research is so important to the development of the student.

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<sup>26</sup> What streaming does to musical work

By Nuné Nikoghisyan · Published 25/02/2019 · Updated 25/02/2019

University of Geneva

<https://wim.hypotheses.org/982>

### Online teaching programs

Since the beginning of internet in the 90s, online music schools have developed and have become quite popular. Students can follow lessons of a world-famous teachers and even receive personalised feedback, regardless of where they live and what level they have, for a relatively affordable price compared to regular lessons. Of course, this does not replace private or group lessons, but it is definitely a new tool that can be added to the way we teach now. It's not so much a replacement but an addition and we should treat it like that as well.

A good example is the website Discover Double Bass which presents many different teachers that offer affordable (99 dollar) packages of lessons on many different topics. Most teachers are not very well known for their musical careers, but they are excellent teachers. Renowned music schools, like Berklee school of music, also developed online programs and this is something European schools should also consider.

### Specialised websites

Many websites have been built since the appearance of internet with detailed information about specific topics. A good example is the site Maqam World, explaining the Arabic microtonal tonal system maqams in great detail.<sup>27</sup>

### Forums

There are online bass related forums like [talkbass.com](http://talkbass.com)<sup>28</sup> where bass players gather to exchange tips and ideas. On social media like Facebook there is also a lively communication at pages like Double Bass World<sup>29</sup>.

### Digital music

Streaming platforms like Spotify and Apple Music have also revolutionised the availability of music and have unlocked an enormous treasure of music recordings. Although the revenues for the artists are still very low, the outreach is enormous. Students and teachers can find any kind of music at any given moment, everywhere. This changes the way we process music radically.

### YouTube

YouTube, the biggest videostreaming platform at this moment, has had a great impact on musicians. YouTube offers a rich source for all kind of tutorials, historic documentation, instrument related articles (reviews, maintenance and repair tips), opinions, discussions, promotion, research and much more. Teaching after the rise of YouTube has changed fundamentally. Now we can watch historic Jazz recordings together with students. Students can find all kind of tutorials to learn to play their instruments, learn about harmony, theory, tuning and much more. It has, for a large part, replaced the library. Nowadays the teachers are not the ones that pass on information to the students, they become more of a guide and coach to help the student find the material that he or she needs.

Examples of YouTube use:

- Historic recordings
- Tutorials
- Band tracks
- Finding new artists
- Follow new musical developments
- Research related music sources (world music, African music, early music)
- Transcriptions
- Play along tracks

### Wikipedia

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<sup>27</sup> Farraj, Johnny. "Welcome to the New MaqamWorld." *Arabic Maqam World*, [www.maqam-world.com/](http://www.maqam-world.com/).

<sup>28</sup> "Double Bass Pedagogy [DB]." *TalkBass.com*, [www.talkbass.com/forums/double-bass-pedagogy-db.216/](http://www.talkbass.com/forums/double-bass-pedagogy-db.216/).

<sup>29</sup> "Double Bass World." *Double Bass World Public Group*, [www.facebook.com/groups/197758336914600/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/197758336914600/).

Like YouTube, Wikipedia has a big influence on how we gather information. A new way of sharing information, a fluent and democratic way where everybody can share and correct. Of course, this leads to unauthorised information that could be incorrect but by the sheer number of users and contributors it is now more accurate than most other sources like encyclopedia and books. The guidance of a good teacher will help the student to find and evaluate the information he is looking for.

## **Music related apps**

With the development of smart phones and tablets, new tools developed for both the teacher and the student. We can divide them in different categories.

### **Repertoire**

Apps like iReal are providing chord changes for Jazz standards and offers the possibility to add new songs. It can be used as a chart during rehearsal and concert or used as a playalong accompaniment for practise. Most musicians were either playing songs by heart or were dragging big books around called Fake or Real books. iReal doesn't offer melodies (yet) because of copyright reasons but are widely used by amateurs and professionals.

Score programs like ForScore, Newzik and Muscore are being used on tablets to replace printed music. They can hold thousands of pages and sometimes offer a library of music as well, including the Fake and Real books.

### **Training**

Many music training apps are available to offer support in ear training, rhythmic training, sight reading and music theory.

### **Rhythm**

The old mechanic metronomes are now replaced by digital metronome, drum machines and recordings of live played rhythms by master musicians, offering the student many tools for practicing. A good example is the app that I developed, Odd Metronome, it helps the musician to easily program and practice odd meter rhythms.

### **Tuning**

The early tuning apps offering basic instrument tuning are now followed by apps that can follow pitch and play along or offer a drone a predefined pitch. Also, the use of alternative tuning temperaments (early music, oriental music, experimental music) is much more accessible.

### **Transcription**

Transcription is an important part of learning to play Jazz. The process of transcription is now made a lot easier by apps that slow down recordings without changing the pitch. Whereas before transcriptions were made directly from gramophones or tape, which could be slowed down to half the speed, where the recording was sounding an octave lower.

### **Recording**

All phones and tablets offer recording functionality. Students are able to record lessons, record exercises and listen back their practice routine for correction.

### **Reference**

Finally, I would like to point out the apps (like some websites) that offer information about music theory, scales, chords, modes and even offer methodic training to develop these skills.

## **Social media**

Social media is often looked down on by the older generation as a way of sharing personal stories and a source of procrastination. But the contact between students, students and teachers and music colleagues is often taking place via social media. It is practical to create workgroups for certain topics and it has a binding effect on students and teachers. Participators don't have to be in the same city, country or time zone.



## Influences on my own teaching and playing

During the process of finalising this Master Research, society was confronted with a new challenge: the Corona or Covid-19 virus. Suddenly the world as we knew it stopped and we were confined to our house for at least two months. Not only does this have a big impact on our personal lives and on our practice and income as freelance musicians, it also confronts us with new challenges for us as teachers. We are teaching from home using all the possibilities that the internet has given us and much of this is already discussed in earlier chapters. Within days our conservatory changed its courses to an online environment and within a week, with the effort of all teachers, staff and students, we continued our program, with both individual lessons and classes. Luckily the school had already started with online teaching, evaluation and communication but now things were radically put in a high pressure cooker by the latest developments. As I write this conclusion we are now in the third week of a partial lockdown and we are doing our best to develop online teaching as fast as we can. zoom.us, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Google Hangouts and Jitsi are tested and used. Many of them are not very suitable for music. The voice compression used for these applications is not working for the transmission of live music. But we are learning new things everyday. Many of the themes from this research now come in handy and make it all the more relevant for my own practice.

So the impact of this research has prepared me to be a better teacher online and that is helpful now. But the research also helped me grow as a bass player and teacher. It structured my lessons and helped the students to new practise topics and a better overview on their development. And in the process, the things I found set me to practise a lot of these things myself too. Teaching and learning is a matter of repetition and not being afraid to go back to basics, keeping an overview on your own development and the developments of your students.

Teaching used to be more or less confined to the classroom where the teacher and the student would meet. The outside world is entering the classroom, and recently, the classroom is moving outside the schools and into peoples homes. Through internet, apps, online tutorials and all other new developments the teacher has to be prepared to make use of these new opportunities. The traditional teaching methods need to be reviewed and adapted.

The relationship between the student and the teacher is not about asking for knowledge and offering knowledge anymore. All information and knowledge are freely available. What is not freely available is guidance and supervision. Helping students to choose a direction in the vast amount of possibilities and offering cohesion and meaning to the development of the student. Of course, the teacher 'has to know it all' or at least needs to have it under his fingertips but more than anything the teacher need to show the doors of possibilities and let the student walk through them by themselves.

Tony Overwater  
Amsterdam, April 19th 2020

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## Interviews

I interviewed two Jazz bass teachers with apparently very different approaches. Hein van de Geyn who has written the most elaborate method available for Jazz double bass, and John Clayton, who has been teaching for over 40 years and is considered to be one of the best educators for bass (as is Hein van de Geyn) and never wrote a method of his own. For the interviews I selected some questions. During the interviews some question were already answered before I asked them, or they were of no added value to the interview. So, the summary of the interviews are not necessarily answering all of the question or not in the order of the question.

Even if the approaches seem to differ a lot at first sight, in the interviews it became apparent that they are both much more in agreement with each other than one would think. Hein van de Geyn stated that he doesn't consider his book a method but more like an exercise book. John Clayton had changed his opinion on method books over the years and found them a good resource of practice material.

### Questions

- How did you learn to play the bass?
- Which methods where used?
- What is your opinion about the available methods for Jazz double bass?
- Can you reflect on the changes in teaching over the past 50 years?
- Who do you consider to be important educators in the field of Jazz bass?
- Did you ever consider writing a method of your own?
- How do you value the influence on internet and online teaching?
- Which method and or methodology do you use in your teaching practice?
- How do you value the use of apps, YouTube, social media?
- What are the main learning topics for Jazz double bass education?

## John Clayton

### Questions

- How did you learn to play the bass?

My generation learned to play bass from the Simandl Method. A classical bass method. When I was sixteen I went to a workshop from bass player Ray Brown, who just released his own method a few years before.

- Which methods were used?

Next to the Simandl I also studied from method books like Storch/Hrabe and Rabbath. But for Jazz I mainly had to work it out myself.

- What is your opinion about the available methods for Jazz double bass?

I was always quite skeptical of methods for Jazz but I learned to embrace them over time. It is important that a method doesn't do any physical harm to the student. Many older methods are based on outdated views of posture and in some cases they hurt the student more than they help them. I changed my opinion over the years on how to stand with a bass and I think it is important to adjust our views over time. I value them to be good resource material for students, a possible tool for growth. I do think that any good method book needs to have at least accompanying audio material, preferably video material.

I was always against the use of Fake books until I learned from colleagues that for people that are living in places where they are not exposed to good live music and good musicians, that for those people the Fake books were a source of inspiration and discovery. A starting point for their own discoveries.

- Can you reflect on the changes in teaching over the past 50 years?

I see a lot of positive developments. There is a growth of approaches and interest in all kinds of different musical styles. I don't see that as a problem. That is old people's thinking. Students have so many things to choose from these days, there is so much more available. If they are hungry they will find the information they are looking for. I don't agree with the view that the younger generation doesn't know how to focus. They are open to all kinds of developments.

- Did you ever consider writing a method of your own?

Methods are like recordings as soon as we make them they are obsolete. I look at methods as resource material, as workbooks. Not as a complete method. The most important part of learning to play Jazz you can't capture in book or method. I consider transcription to be key for young students. There is so much you can learn from that, ear training, analysis, swing, groove, intonation, theory. The other aspect is the collective creation. Jazz is music you always do in dialogue with others. Even when you play by yourself. This is only developed by the experience of playing with others. And we as teachers, I actually don't see myself as a teacher but as coach, we have to ask the right questions. Stimulate their curiosity and intellect.

The important thing is to balance the development of the student. That he is exposed to the important facets of his development.

I always say; I never want to rob my students of the joy of discovery.

Also for me it is important to eliminate subjective topics like creativity and taste. The student should have the freedom to develop that for himself.

- How do you value the influence on internet and online teaching?

Internet is a blessing for the development of students. Before we only had recordings but being able to see musicians play and in what kind of setting helps tremendously. Recordings distort acoustic reality of music. I remember when I came to the Netherlands and I met Dutch Jazz musicians that had learned to play Jazz from the recordings of the 40s and 50s. The bass player, for example, Ray Brown was so prominently apparent in the recordings that they thought he played really loud. So they used to play with a very high string action in order to get as loud as possible. Consequently hurting themselves. But when they saw Ray Brown play live for the first time in the Netherlands they realized that he played very smoothly and with a much lower action.

So the internet offers all that and much more. You have so much choice to choose from and there are so many approaches towards bass playing.



- How do you value the use of apps, YouTube, social media?

I am more skeptical towards the tools that are available for phone apps. For example the tuning app stops the student from actually listening. The student uses his eyes for his intonation and tuning of his instrument. And considering the slow down apps. Yes, it's handy and you can use it when you already developed the skill of transcribing so you can work faster, but for beginning students it is not beneficial. For example, they now can transcribe a Charlie Parker solo by slowing it down so much that the solo is out context. If the student is level three he should not try to transcribe a solo of level ten. It brings down the level of, for example, Charlie Parker to the level of the student. It's better that the student finds a solo he can transcribe, at the speed that he is able to analyse and process. Later on he will be able to transcribe faster solos.

- What are the main learning topics for Jazz double bass education?

I agree with all the topics from your theocratical framework as far as it concerns the development of a learning bass player but for some of the topics I think that it should not be addressed by the teacher. All subjective topics, like artistic development and creativity, I would leave out of my teaching.

## Hein van de Geyn

Hein Van de Geyn (born 18 July 1956, Schijndel) is a Jazz bassist, composer and band leader from the Netherlands. He is a critically acclaimed artist and performer, as both as a sideman and solo. Van de Geyn won a North Sea Jazz award in 1998. He was also voted "Best European Acoustic Bass Player" in this year by a referendum by the Belgian radio stations RTBF and VRT. Van de Geyn is also an active teacher of bass and as well as music in general, and he is head of bass at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague.

In 2010 Van de Geyn decided to stop his career as a bassist and he moved with his family to South Africa to run a guest house, and dedicate his life to writing and education.

Van de Geyn has played as a sideman for well-known Jazz artists including Jean "Toots" Thielemans, Chet Baker, Lee Konitz, Tal Farlow and Dee Dee Bridgewater. He also has his own group, Baseline.

### Questions

- How did you learn to play the bass?

I started out as a violin player. In my teens I picked up the bass guitar. I did my entrance exam for violin at the conservatory but was admitted as a bass player at the Tilburg conservatory for school music.

- Which methods were used?

Besides the classical methods I learned for violin, I am mostly self-taught for Jazz double bass. Playing and jamming with others has been a big part of my development. At the end of my school time I went to New York to study there as well.

- What is your opinion about the available methods for Jazz double bass?

I don't consider the books for Jazz double bass to be methods. More like exercises book. Including my own 'method'. I consider my method to be focussing on the physical relationship with the bass.

- What are the main learning topics for Jazz double bass education?

Besides the topics you collected in your theoretical framework I would say ensemble playing is of the highest importance. That is where you learn to play Jazz. You see, playing Jazz is really like playing soccer; you can't go into a gym with a great and experienced player every week, and expect to be a good soccer player after a few years of doing that. It really is the same with playing Jazz. You learn to play by playing! All the details that are impossible to intellectualize like listening, feeling the drums, using your intuition, trusting your body to do the right thing - having a "feel" for the complete process. All this can only be developed on the field.

- Can you reflect on the changes in teaching over the past 30 years?

Students have lot of information available but find it hard to focus.

- How did you decide to write your own method?

I was dissatisfied with the exercises I found in most books and started collecting my own. I had an elaborate card system with all kind of exercises. I took a sabbatical for a year and wrote the book while I was in South Africa. I used some of my better students to improve my exercises and discuss different kinds of fingerings.

- What is a good teacher

A good teacher stands on the sideline and guides the student. He follows the interests of the student. Follows the student's path of development. A teacher should show the doors. I consider interplay to be one of the most important things to focus on. And the physical challenge of playing effortlessly. That your technique does not hinder you in your expression. I will make a study plan each year together with the student to decide where the student and I think the focus should be on.

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