

Introduction

This presentation will talk about how double bass has been in the spotlight in the past and how we can promote the double bass in a classical context for future generations. The presentation will shortly introduce the bass as a solo instrument and talk about some of the important people for double bass. After this we will discuss how arrangements have influenced the repertoire of the bass. Following this we will view some examples of important roles for the double bass in small and large ensembles. Then we will view how social media has influenced the bass world and shifted what is necessary to become a successful player. At last we will conclude the presentation by talking about how we can make sure that the stays popular for many year to come.

Introduction

Until the 18th century very little solo music was written for the double bass or similar historical instruments. This, however, changed around the 1760s when Haydn started including some impressive solo parts in his symphonies. After this in the 4 years after 1765 28 concertos were written for the double bass (mostly in Viennese tuning) by people like Vanhal, Sperger and Dittersdorf, names that are still very familiar to this day. Skipping through time the double bass has a lot of repertoire because bassists became friends with composers, this is a trend we can see over and over. For example, Mozart wrote an aria (*Per questa bella mano*) for bass and bassist specifically for Friedrich Pischelberger who he got to know during the production of "The Magic Flute". We will look at some other examples of the phenomenon later. Something that is very important in the musical scene is financial security. Very interesting is that Dragonetti earned more than some soloists while playing in an orchestra. This goes to show how valuable a good bass player is his. Curious is that, while we often see Bottesini as one of the greatest players of all time, he, unlike Dragonetti did not become rich through only bass playing, but also through conducting. He was a very influential conductor and even conducted the premiere of the opera *Aida*.

Inspiration through arrangements

Bassists always like to complain about the lack of classical bass pieces (this of course excludes a lot of contemporary work). Possibly because of this, but also possibly because they enjoyed other people's music bassists often enjoyed arranging pieces originally meant for other instruments. Take for example Dragonetti, he reportedly played sonatas by Corelli and Handel. Or take Bottesini, who also arranged certain arias for double bass, though it is interesting that Bottesini released his arrangements under a different name than the original. This may be seen as plagiarism nowadays, but at the time the pieces he arranged were so popular that the new names can be viewed as a bit of creative liberty. While all these arrangements sounds amazing we do not have any recordings of the arrangers. One exception to this is Koussevitzky. We will now listen to his own recording of his own arrangement of the "Sonata in g minor" by Henry Eccles.

Appreciation in ensembles

The double bass is these days appreciated as vital part of the orchestra which provides much needed depth to the string section and can function as an independent. This, of course, was not always this way. For a long time the bass would simply copy what the celli were playing, but an octave lower. The first major composer to change this tradition is Beethoven. While the bass parts in some of his piece are still together with the celli, he does allow the basses to play a lot more virtuosic parts than nearly any composer before him. Here is a short recording of the trio from Beethoven's 5th symphony. It is also very important not to forget contemporary composers. They have shown a lot of love for the bass and the less typical colors it is able to produce in an orchestra.

In chamber music the bass also has made a name for itself, for example in the 'Trout' quintet by Schubert. While this is just one piece, there are many more. American bassist Paul Nemeth has published a database with all the chamber music pieces for double bass he could find (over 4000). These are both classical and contemporary and show how big the double bass chamber music community is. A piece that again illustrates the importance of friendship between composers is the string quintet no.20 by Onslow. Onslow was at a certain point in time a very famous composer who wrote a lot of chamber music for the string quintet. During the premier of his tenth quintet the second cellist did not show up, so he had to find a replacement at the last minute. He, sadly, could not find a cellist so Dragonetti, who was in the hall, suggested that he could play the part. Onslow refused and tried to play the part himself. After failing a hard passage in the first movement he gave up and let Dragonetti play. Dragonetti then sight-read the piece so beautifully that Onslow changed all of his string quintet so that a bass could replace the second cello or so that there was only a bass part. The twentieth quintet is especially nice because it start with a bass solo.

Bass on social media

In our current musical landscape social media has become very import for all musicians, bassists included. Some examples clearly show this. Very interesting is that all of these examples strongly play into the looks of the player, next to the skill. The funny thing is that, while the looks are important the more musical and classical performances get a lot more views. There is a clear difference to the more poppy performance with a singer and a classical performance of the Koussevitzky concerto. Looking at the comments we can see that this is a very important source of inspiration for many young people.

Conclusion

Rounding up, how can boost popularity of the bass? There are a few important factors. Social media is clearly very important, and offers a great deal of exposure to people who normally would not listen to the double bass. It is a pity that looks (and luck) play a big factor here so it is not totally reliable. Things like festivals and performances which can be promoted in public places might prove more reliable than trusting the algorithm. For people surrounded by other music enthusiasts it is different. The biggest piece of advice for conservatoire students is: ask anyone you know to listen to your playing. History teaches us that composer only realize the potential of the instruments when they listen to it. By doing these thing the future shines bright on the potential of the double bass.