

Developing Vocal Techniques in Contemporary Solo Double Bass Repertoire

*A pedagogical approach to developing
vocal techniques and coordination in
Western classical-contemporary
solo double bass repertoire*

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Introduction

The double bass has occasionally appeared as a virtuosic instrument paired with the human voice throughout the history of western classical music. Consider three relatively well known pieces for example, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Per Questa Bella Mano, K. 612" for solo bass, obbligato double bass, and orchestra and Giovanni Bottesini's "Une Bouche Aimee" and "Tutto che il Mondo Serra" both for soprano, double bass, and piano. These pieces demonstrate the double bass's early potential as a soloistic instrument in musical works involving the human voice. However, it was not until the 1940's when a double bassist combined their playing with the simultaneous use of his voice. According to Bertram Turetzky in The Contemporary Contrabass, Leroy "Slam" Stewart, jazz bassist with the Benny Goodman sextet, made famous this new technique by singing in octaves with his instrument.¹

This technique eventually made its way into the Western classical-contemporary repertoire in Mauricio Kagel's Sonant for guitar, harp, double bass, and skin instruments composed in 1960. In this piece, Kagel instructs the performer, "Pizzicatolike sounds, made with a closed mouth, are to be added ad libitum. The pitch and intensity should be almost that of the instrumental sound."² In 1969, American composer Jacob Druckman composed Valentine for Solo Contrabass which may arguably be the first major piece for solo contrabass requiring the performer to incorporate vocal sounds, among several other extended techniques, into performance. Since then, the Western classical-contemporary solo double bass repertoire, that which involves the simultaneous use of the bassist's voice and their playing, has grown significantly and now includes works such as Tom Johnson's Failing: A Very Difficult Piece for Solo String Bass and Jon Deak's B.B. Wolf: An Apologia. For the sake of brevity throughout this paper, this repertoire and technique will be referred to as double bass-voice repertoire and technique.

¹ Turetzky, Bertram. The Contemporary Contrabass. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1974. 44. print

² Turetzky, Bertram. The Contemporary Contrabass. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1974. 48. print

Research Questions

Main Research Question

- How can double bassists efficiently learn contemporary solo double bass repertoire requiring the simultaneous use of their voice and playing their instrument?

Research Sub-Questions

- Which techniques are most commonly found in the Western classical-contemporary solo double bass-voice repertoire?
- What information is required for only Western classical-contemporary double bassists to develop the necessary technique and coordination to prepare and perform this repertoire?
- How much information is neither too much nor too little in order to efficiently prepare this repertoire?

My first encounter with this unique solo repertoire was watching my first private instructor Bryan Hieronymus perform B.B. Wolf: An Apologia when I was fifteen years of age. After the performance, my young mind was overcome with intense curiosity as to how one person could verbally tell a story while musically accompanying themselves with such acrobatic and virtuosic lines, percussive grooves, and other sound effects. It was not long after the performance when I purchased my own score of this work. Being an ambitious child, I opened the score only to be instantly discouraged by three separate lines of music, one for text and two for music, all to be performed at the same time. I did not know where to begin. Although I did eventually conquer the music and develop the coordination in speaking and playing, I felt as though there was a more efficient approach to learning the piece. I have performed several other works for double bass and voice since learning B.B. Wolf: An Apologia, but every time I begin studying a new piece, I still find myself starting anew and relearning the required vocal technique and coordination. This has led me to ask the question, “How can double bassists efficiently learn contemporary solo double bass repertoire requiring the simultaneous use of their voice and playing their instrument?”

In most circumstances, the simple answer to this question is to consult pedagogical resources and seek advice from both masters of the instrument and of the voice, but with regard to the specific double bass-voice technique, no pedagogical resources, method books, or any written information currently exists. Despite the rise in the number and popularity of compositions employing this nontraditional technique and considering how long this repertoire has been around, we double bassists only have performance instructions, when we are fortunate enough, to develop the coordination and technique necessary to incorporate our voice into performing these pieces. Due to this fact, I have chosen to create a method book entitled The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide focusing specifically on the double bass-voice techniques found in Western classical-contemporary solo double bass repertoire.

For the sake of elaborating on the specificity of my research, it was necessary to ask the aforementioned sub-questions regarding which techniques are most commonly found in this repertoire, which information is necessary, and how much information is the optimal amount for effectively preparing double bass-voice repertoire. I specify information “for only Western classical-contemporary double bassists” in order to clarify that I only intend to focus on methods for this particular genre. Singing and playing the double bass is possible for jazz, folk, singer-songwriter, and many other styles, but these styles are of no significant concern in this research paper. Although my book may potentially assist musicians from these other genres, I will focus on Western classical-contemporary double bass-voice technique. I also ask about the amount of information necessary for two main reasons. The first reason is that my method book will not teach double bassists how to become a professional opera singer or actor. I include only enough information for a double bassist to give an effective performance of a double bass-voice piece. The second reason is that every musician learns differently, and I want to avoid enforcing a definite approach. The pedagogical results of this research will provide bassists with a foundation to approaching this repertoire, but it will serve them more as a guide rather than an instruction manual. This being said, as much essential information as possible is still needed to make my work purposeful.

Research Methods

- Consult and study double bass and vocal pedagogical resources and musical scores, and organize my findings in a method book format
- Create a series of short and simple methods
- Reflect on past experiences in lessons, masterclasses, performances, and other musical collaborations

In order to practically organize all of the information I found essential, I chose to divide the body of my method book into four large sections excluding the introduction and appendices. These sections are “The Voice as a Practice Aid,” “Vocal Tools and Techniques,” “Exercises and Etudes,” and “Notation Examples.” Section one, “The Voice as a Practice Aid” discusses a multitude of possibilities on how to incorporate the voice into practicing scales and other technical exercises, solo, chamber, and orchestral repertoire. Section two, “Vocal Tools and Techniques” provides fundamental information on chronological practice methods, diction, posture, projection, and more. Section three, “Exercises and Etudes” contains a few short and simple etudes and exercises designed to provide a starting point in developing proper coordination and aural understanding of double bass-voice technique. Finally section four, “Notation Examples” showcases a variety of notation systems that different composers have used to include vocal parts into double bass-voice scores. Sections one, three, and four are also divided into the following subsections: “Speaking,” “Singing,” and “Phonetics;” however, section one does not contain a “Phonetics” subsection. My method book will also feature a current database of existing solo double bass-voice repertoire.

Compiling all of the material for the method book required me to consult and examine a wide variety of sources. It was my original intention to commence my research with a largely distributed six question questionnaire to double bassists with experience performing solo double bass-voice repertoire, but after a trail survey of five bassists, I found this approach fruitless for a few reasons. In some cases the information that I received was either previously attained or unhelpful. Two people preferred not to fill out the questionnaire but still chose to respond to my inquiry. One responded with hesitation on the research subject itself because each bassist will

approach the repertoire differently and that much of the effectiveness of performing double bass-voice pieces is due in part to the lack of advanced vocal training.

This failed trial of questionnaires led me to rely on double bass pedagogical resources, vocal pedagogical resources, musical scores, and previous personal preparing and performing these unique compositions. Almost all double bass pedagogical resources focus entirely on left and right hand technique and posture. However two resources, Diana Gannett's Pedagogy: Book 1 – A Lot of Lists and Pedagogy: Book 2 – Warm-Up Exercises, Scales, and Arpeggios provided some valuable information regarding using the voice as a practice tool. Information in these books also served as models for constructing practice processes for preparing double bass-voice pieces. Aside from composers' scores, Bertram Turetzky's The Contemporary Contrabass, is the only resource which mentions anything about the existence of vocal sounds in a large number of double bass pieces. Finally, Henri Portnoi's Creative Bass Technique served as inspiration for an etude in section three of my book since it relates the pronunciation of English words to bowed articulations which.

For the sake of fundamental vocal technique, I referred mostly to Elizabeth Blades-Zeller's A Spectrum of Voices: Prominent American Voice Teachers Discuss the Teaching of Singing and Esther Salaman's Unlocking Your Voice: Freedom to Sing. These books provided highly in depth information regarding the production of sound, human anatomy, realizing vocal vibrations in the body, and posture to list a few of the concepts. To maintain relevance for double bassists, I needed to extract only the information that would assist them with the fundamentals of posture, diction, projection, resonance, tone, and warming-up. The discoveries from these resources were for the most part incorporated into section two of my method book.

Many of resources found in the method book were heavily influenced by reflecting on my own previous personal experiences preparing and performing double bass-voice repertoire. These experiences include double bass lessons with my current and former instructors Diana Gannett, Gary Karr, and Quirijn van Regteren Altena as well as master class performances of Jacob Druckman's Valentine and Jon Deak's B.B. Wolf: An Apologia with double bassists including Robert Black, Dario Calderone, and David Murray. In addition to working with double bassists while a student at the University of Michigan, I regularly performed this repertoire for my colleague Matt Peckham who is now a freelance opera singer in the Chicago area. During our encounters, we would discuss the theatrics, projection, clarity, and stage

presence necessary for successful performances of these works. I also had the pleasure of collaborating with composer Benjamin Taylor on a new piece for solo double bass, voice, and electronics which provides an incredibly valuable perspective on the development of this repertoire.

Finally, I examined several scores and searched online sheet music stores to both facilitate building a database of double bass-voice works and to write section four of my method book. The scores used in “Notation Examples” are as follows (listed alphabetically by the composers’ surname):

- ZAB: ou la Passion Selon St. Nectaire by Philippe Boivin
- B.B. Wolf: An Apologia by Jon Deak
- Color Studies by John Deak
- Valentine for Solo Contrabass by Jacob Druckman
- Inside by Kenneth Gaburo
- Failing: A Very Difficult Piece for Solo Double Bass by Tom Johnson
- The Last Contrabass in Los Vegas by Eugene Kurtz
- Road to Hamelin by Paul Ramsier
- Pretty Polly by Jacob Richman
- Madam and the Minister by Betty Roe
- Possessed by John Steinmetz
- Digital Assistant by Benjamin Taylor
- Bass Trip by Pēteris Vasks

It is from these scores that I chose the most diverse and unique examples of double bass-voice notation used by composers. I have also examined and included some of the performance instructions which the composers consider valuable to the performer.

For the purpose of this paper, it should be noted that the results and findings of my research are presented in a method book format and that the entire book is added as supplementary material in an appendix to this paper. With regard to the sources cited, referenced, and studied, both the method book and research paper will contain a bibliography.

Most of the visual examples necessary to accompany my explanations in this paper are found in the book and are referenced by figure and page numbers throughout this paper's text.

The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide

I. Using the Voice as a Practice Aid

Section one, "Using the Voice as a Practice Aid" demonstrates numerous approaches to incorporating the voice early on in the practice room before the double bassist may even see a composition requiring them to vocalize and play simultaneously. Although this section is modeled almost entirely after the many ways Diana Gannett suggests how the voice can enhance one's practice, I have compiled every mention of using the voice from her pedagogy books and expanded upon them with more in-depth explanations, musical examples, and benefits of use.³ This section is divided into two subsections, "Speaking" and "Singing." I chose to leave out "Phonetics" because they have no practical applications while practicing traditional repertoire.

The subsection "Speaking" has been broken down into the following musical concepts:

- Rhythm
- Note Names
- Chord Names and Functions
- Dynamics
- Character, Emotion, and Mood
- Formal Sections
- Props⁴

I find that vocalizing the rhythm to be the most significant and valuable tool in this subsection, and so it is discussed first. Rhythm is also the first element in Professor Gannett's book where she mentions a vocal approach while practicing. In her book, she writes:

³ Diana Gannett mentions using the voice throughout both Pedagogy: Book 1 – A Lot of Lists and Pedagogy: Book 2 – Warm-Up Exercises, Scales, and Arpeggios. These books have no page numbers.

⁴ Even though props is not a musical concept, there was sufficient information allowing in onto this list.

COUNT OUT LOUD (speak, don't sing) from internal to external durations to:

reinforce evenness and control at subdivision levels (if you can count to 4 and 6,
you have it made)

recognize and establish “large measure” durations generated by phrase structure

recognize durational aspects of composition

create organic rubati remembering (speeding up and slowing down have to even
each other out)⁵

This may be the most detailed description of vocalizing in the practice room found in both of her books. A few pages prior, she also provides a list of rhythm syllables by Ed Gordon. These are very similar to the Takadimi and Kodály Method rhythm syllables I have chosen to reference in figures 1.1.c⁶ on page 2 and 1.1.d⁷ on page 3 in my book. In The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide, I begin with a simple demonstration of counting quarter notes in common time aloud while playing a one octave scale in the same fashion (page 1, figure 1.1.a). My next rhythm example in figure 1.1.b on page 1 showcases the possibilities of vocalizing different layers of rhythmic hierarchy from small subdivisions to larger hyper measures. I then encourage counting on off-beats and in polyrhythm in order to fully solidify one's rhythmic internalization.

For the purpose of this paper, “Note Names” and “Chord Names and Functions” may be grouped together as they focus around pitches played on the instrument. Several instances occur throughout both of Prof. Gannett's books where she encourages the student to speak the note names aloud. During private lessons, this generally referred to alphabetic nomenclature (e.g. A, B, C, etc.). However, I encourage double bassists to chose between alphabetic (A, B, C), numeric (1, 2, 3), and solfège (Do, Re, Mi) beginning with whichever is most comfortable for them and then exploring the other two options. Shown in figure 1.1.e on page 4 of the method book, I demonstrate this application once again with a C major scale in common time. Figure 1.1.f on page 4 shows a slight variation on this exercise where the superceding note name is

⁵ from the page marked “Practice Modes in Pedagogy: Book 1 – A Lot of Lists

⁶ Hoffman, Richard. “The Short Guide.” Takedimi. Richard Hoffman, 2011. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

< www.takadimi.net/documents/Takadimi%20short%20guide%20for%20Web.pdf>

⁷ “Rhythm Syllables Guide.” Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia, 2003. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

< <http://www.kodaly.org.au/assets/rhythmguide.pdf>>

spoken while playing the current note. “Chord Names and Functions” refers to announcing chord names (e.g. A major, B minor, E dominant seven, etc.) as they occur while practicing scale sequences demonstrated in figure 1.1.g on page 5 or passages with harmonic movement as demonstrated in figure 1.1.h also on page 5. The chord names may be replaced with their functions (e.g. I, IV, V or tonic, sub-dominant, dominant).

“Formal Sections” and “Dynamics” may be explained alongside “Character, Emotions, and Mood” as all three of their applications in the practice room are similar. “Formal Sections” encourages the reader to announce key structural elements (e.g. exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda) when playing a passage or entire piece of music. Figure 1.1.i on page 6 exemplifies how the first movement of Jean-Baptiste Vanhal’s concerto for double bass can be practiced in this manner. In Pedagogy: Book 1 – A Lot of Lists on the page marked “Practice Modes,” Professor Gannett encourages the reader to “incorporate dynamics into counting (shout or whisper where indicated)” and to “announce/evoke mood.” With regard to dynamics, this means that the bassist should whisper while counting passages marked piano or softer, shout while counting passages marked forte or louder, and speak in a normal speaking voice while counting passages marked mezzo piano and mezzo forte. Of course, the approach in “Dynamics” may also be combined with the aforementioned “Note Names,” “Chord Names and Functions,” and “Rhythm.” With regards to character, emotion, and mood, many times performers will write these into their music, but much less frequently will they exercise them verbally. This can be practiced in the same manner as “Dynamics.” Vocalizing the volume and characters of the music will not only allow the reader to internalize these qualities but to also provide an opportunity to demonstrate how much exaggeration of the qualities is necessary to portray a convincing performance to the audience. The double bass solo from Act IV of Giuseppe Verdi’s Otello is used to demonstrate examples of vocalizing dynamics (figure 1.1.j on page 7) and character, emotion, and mood (figure 1.1.k on page 8).⁸

Finally, the use of props is only partially a vocal tool for the practice room. Professor Gannett mentions using a “mirror... to look yourself in the eye while you’re playing a passage”

⁸ Verdi, Guiseppe. “Act IV (Reh. U until 7m after Reh. X).” Otello. Musical score. Michael O’Gieblyn. Double Bass Excerpts. Double Bass Excerpts, N.D. Web. 22 Feb. 2016.
<<http://www.doublebassexcerpts.com/verdi-othello-act-iv-reh-u-until-7m-after-reh-x/>>

and to “play a memorized program while... reading a magazine out loud.”⁹ To elaborate on the vocal benefits of using a mirror and magazine while practicing, I encourage making ridiculous faces at oneself while looking into one’s eye in the mirror. This will help keep tension out of the jaw and other facial muscles necessary when performing double bass-voice repertoire. Reading a magazine out loud while playing is the ultimate test of coordinating one’s voice with one’s playing as it requires the music to be fully internalized.

II. Vocal Tools and Techniques

Section two, “Vocal Tools and Techniques” discusses a variety of concepts mostly in text based format and is divided into the subsections “Chronology of Preparation,” “Diction,” “Posture,” “Projection, Resonance, and Tone,” and “Warm-Ups.” This section contains information regarding fundamental vocal technique necessary only for music found in Western classical-contemporary double bass-voice repertoire. It is not designed to prepare the double bassist for professional singing and theater roles; although it may serve as a starting point for those with such aspirations. The technique necessary for this specific repertoire is difficult and demanding, but it does not require highly advanced levels of vocal training, hence this section’s elementary approach.

“Chronology of Preparation” is included as the first subsection due to its level of significance as well as how easy it is to disregard when approaching a new piece. These lists are inspired and adapted from Diana Gannett’s “Process for Learning a New Work” found in her Pedagogy: Book 1 – A Lot of Lists. In my book, I have written separate though similar lists for compositions involving speaking and those involving singing. The chronological list without detailed explanations for speaking pieces is:¹⁰

⁹ from the page marked “Practice Modes” in Pedagogy: Book 1 – A Lot of Lists

¹⁰ For the detailed list, please refer to pages 10 of The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide

1. Memorize the text
2. Breaths
3. Diction
4. Internalize the vocal rhythm
5. Theatrical aspects
6. Learn the instrumental part as you would a traditional piece
7. Build tempo of simultaneous parts

I have also included a practice note underneath this list based on advice I received from Gary Karr during a lesson several years ago. On page fifteen of the method book, I note that one should “always practice as you would perform.” The volume, diction, and theatrics of the vocal line should always be practiced the exact same as how it would be performed. The only differences between the processes of learning a spoken piece versus learning a singing piece is that breaths are approached slightly differently and “internalizing the vocal rhythm” becomes “internalizing the vocal line.” This is because pitches and vocal register changes are added which affect diction, inflection, volume, and theatrical aspects.

The next subsection, “Diction” focuses on the articulation of words and sounds so that clarity is projected into the musical venue. The most significant aspect to this subsection is the International Phonetic Alphabet, or IPA, chart. Figure 2.2.a on page 18 shows a chart from the International Phonetic Association’s website.¹¹ This version of this IPA chart contains more information than is really necessary, but I believe the level of detail in how specific vowel and consonant sounds produced can be beneficial. In order to portray effective diction on stage, extreme over-exaggeration of consonants and vowels is necessary. This means prolonging vowels with a more exaggerated embouchure and attacking hard consonants to the point where spit may fly out of the performers’ mouths. Consonants at the beginning and end of words should be especially emphasized. Even though this may feel over-the-top from the performers’ perspectives, it is usually perceived as an appropriate level of clarity in the audience. Clarity in

¹¹ “IPA Chart.” Available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 3.0 Unported License. International Phonetic Association, 2015. PDF. “Full IPA Chart.” International Phonetic Association. International Phonetic Association, N.D. Web. 21 Feb. 2016. <http://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/content/ipa-chart>

vocalizing is the same as clarity in instrumental playing in the sense that every detail should be comprehensible to the audience in the back of the hall.

The subsection on “Posture” consists of three different lists. The first and most detailed list is a type of proprioception check-list. It focuses on body awareness and alignment necessary to optimize vocalization with the double bass, whether the bassist stands or sits. From the floor up, the list discusses factors to consider regarding the relationship between:

1. Feet
2. Knees
3. Hips / Pelvis
4. Spine
5. Ribs
6. Shoulders
7. Head¹²

The next list simply mentions non-musical activities that can help musicians develop good posture and posture awareness. These activities include Alexander Technique, dance, martial arts, meditation, pilates, Thai Chi, visualizing, and yoga. The final list consists of qualities and characteristics to focus on while practicing good posture. When focusing on posture, I encourage the readers to ask themselves, “Is my body:

- Aligned
- Balanced
- Comfortable
- Elastic
- Flexible
- Looking good (yes, this is important as a performer)
- Maintainable for a long period of time
- Natural
- Not rigid / military-like / stiff
- Not too relaxed
- Permitting free movement

¹² for the detailed list please refer to pages 18-19 of [The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide](#)

- Resilient
- Without tension

Because the mind can only fully focus on a few things simultaneously, only one to three characteristics should be considered at a time. This section ends with a practice tip encouraging double bassists in the practice room to set their music stand at eye level to keep their heads up, eyes looking forward, and spine straight.

“Projection, Resonance, and Tone” groups these three concepts together because one cannot develop independently of the other two. This section begins with original definitions of each concept in order to distinguish their subtle differences. Projection is defined as “the production of sound in order to be heard by an audience.” Resonance is defined as “the amplification and enhancement of sound set forth by a primary source of vibration.” Finally, tone is defined solely as “the quality of sound.” A quote by American vocal instructor Joan Wall from Elizabeth Blades-Zeller’s *A Spectrum of Voices: Prominent American Voice Teachers Discuss the Teaching of Singing* is added beneath the definition of resonance in order to elaborate on resonance in the voice. It states:

“Resonance is the amplification and modification of a sound that occurs when a sound passes through a resonator. The sound from the larynx is amplified and modified as it passes through the vocal resonator, which is composed of the throat, the mouth, and the nose.”¹³

Following these definitions are descriptions of the three main vocal registers of every voice type, plus falsetto in male voices. These three vocal registers are chest voice, middle voice, and head voice. The main differences between these registers are their tonal characteristics and where the majority of vibrations are sensed in the body.¹⁴ The remainder of this subsection discusses realizing one’s optimal resonance. Since this is both incredibly personal and advanced in vocal studies, the discussion only goes so far as suggesting how to become aware of vocal resonance. The reader is instructed to begin in their middle register on pure vowels and become aware of

¹³ Blades-Zeller, Elizabeth. *A Spectrum of Voices: Prominent American Voice Teachers Discuss the Teaching of Singing*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002. 34. Print

¹⁴ For full explanations of these voice types, refer to p. 21 of *The Double Bass Voice: A How-To Guide*.

where in their head they feel the vibrations. Once this sensation becomes familiar, they may very gradually expand their pitch spectrum in both higher and lower directions.

The final concept discussed in section two is “Warm-Ups.” These are relatively easy to learn warm-ups commonly used by professional vocals. The warm-ups discussed are the siren, lip trills, humming, and tongue twisters. The siren exercise involves a low to high to low pitch sweep on the nasal sound “ng,” “mmm,” or “nnn” and is used to develop transitioning between registers and sensing resonance vibrations throughout the body. The lip trill is a rapid vibration of pursed lips on any pitch or arpeggio and is used to develop breath control and stimulating the lips and mouth. Humming using one of the aforementioned nasal syllables over diatonic scales is used to realize the facial locations where resonance vibrations occur. Reciting tongue twisters is an excellent way to warm-up vocal articulation as well as to loosen muscles in the face. My book mentions three different tongue twisters; however, many more may be found in books and online.

III. Exercises and Etudes

Section three, “Exercises and Etudes” introduces the double bass-voice in a more musical context than what is seen in the previous sections. The musical selections provided here are rather simple etudes; one may even consider them or semi-etudes or etudettes. Some of them are not even full pieces but rather, repetitive exercises designed to develop rhythmic coordination between the voice and bass playing. They are intended to serve as simple introductions to the technique found in performance pieces. It does not make sense to write etudes that are more difficult to play than the double bass-voice repertoire in existence. “Exercises and Etudes” is divided into three subsections: “Speaking,” “Singing,” and “Phonetics.”

The first subsection, “Speaking” consists entirely of tongue twisters set to relatively simple double bass accompaniments. Tongue twisters are organized into The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide in a way so that section two introduces them as warm-ups and diction exercises, and section three adds musical context intended to build coordination between the playing and the speaking. The first two tongue twisters used in this section are “Red Leather,

Yellow Leather”¹⁵ and “Unique New York,”¹⁶ both found on page 24. Similar to those found in section two, these are also common tongue twisters used amongst actors. Regarding “Red Leather, Yellow Leather” in figure 3.1.a of my method book, the double bass plays eighth notes while the voice speaks quarter notes and vice versa. Regarding “Unique New York” in figure 3.1.b, the double bass rearticulates the given pitch on the non-emphasized spoken syllables “U” and “New.” These two simple and short exercises can help build rhythmic independence of instrumental playing and spoken text.

The next etude example from “Speaking” is a slightly longer theater warm-up known as “Mother Pheasant Plucker” set to original music. The full text is as follows:

I'm a mother pheasant plucker,
 I pluck mother pheasants.
 I'm the most pleasant mother pheasant plucker,
 to ever pluck a mother pheasant. Actually, ...
 I'm not the pheasant plucker,
 I'm the pheasant plucker's son.
 But I'll stay and pluck the pheasants
 Till the pheasant plucking 's done!¹⁷

As seen in figure 3.1.c on page 26, the text is set mostly to pizzicatos when any variation of “pluck” is spoken with the addition of a few long tones. The final speaking etude is the text of “Grip Top Sock” from William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan’s The Mikado. The text is significantly more challenging, and the music is relatively more difficult, though still feasible when played without the voice. The text to “Grip Top Sock” is as follows:

¹⁵ Reck, Dr. Renate. “English Tongue Twisters.” 1st International Collection of Tongue Twisters. Übersetzungen, 18 May 2015. No. 271. Web. 2 March 2016. www.uebersetzung.at/twister/en.htm

¹⁶ Reck, Dr. Renate. “English Tongue Twisters.” 1st International Collection of Tongue Twisters. Übersetzungen, 18 May 2015. No. 313. Web. 2 March 2016. www.uebersetzung.at/twister/en.htm

¹⁷ Reck, Dr. Renate. “English Tongue Twisters.” 1st International Collection of Tongue Twisters. Übersetzungen, 18 May 2015. No. 376. Web. 2 March 2016. www.uebersetzung.at/twister/en.htm

Give me the gift of a grip top sock,
 A clip drape shipshape tip top sock.
 Not your spinslick slapstick slipshod stock,
 But a plastic, elastic grip-top sock.
 None of your fantastic slack swap slop
 From a slap dash flash cash haberdash shop.
 Not a knick knack knitlock knockneed knickerboxers sock
 With a mock-shot blob-mottled trick-ticker top clock.
 Not a supersheet seersucker rucksack sock,
 Not a spot-speckled frog-freckled cheap sheik's sock
 Off a hodge-podge moss-blotched scotch-botched block.
 Nothing slipshod drip drop flip flop or glip glop
 Tip me to a tip top grip top sock.¹⁸

Since the text is difficult and is derived from an operetta, this etude should encourage the bassist to follow the “Chronology of Preparation” as outlined in “Vocal Tools and Techniques.” The full etude is shown in figure 3.1.d on page 27 in the method book.

The etudes found in the “Singing” subsection are designed more as examples rather than etudes. In this section, I encourage the double bassist to use the etudes as templates for practicing singing pop and folk songs while accompanying themselves on double bass. Figure 3.2.a on page 28 shows “Twinkle Twinkle ABC’s” which is the melody and lyrics of the traditional songs “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” and “The ABCs” set to long tone roots of the harmonic movement. “Happy Birthday” is used in figure 3.2.b on page 29, but instead of long tones, the harmony is filled out with thirds and fifths in a waltz-like “oom-pah-pah” accompaniment. I chose some of the most popular melodies and lyrics for these etudes so that the reader would not need to spend any time on the vocal line alone because of the probability that they have sung these songs numerous times throughout their lives and thus, have them well internalized. Countless other well known songs, whether pop, rock, folk, etc., can be found online or in easily accessible song books and usually include the melody, lyrics, and chord progression. The performer should be creative and find simple songs that motivate them to develop this technique in musical contexts.

¹⁸ Gilbert, William S. and Arthur Sullivan. “Grip Top Sock.” *The Mikado*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1940.
Print

The final subsection “Phonetics” contains only one etude. This etude is adapted from a discussion of bowed articulations found in Henri Portnoi’s Creative Bass Technique. Mr. Portnoi associates eight different articulations with English words and their consonant sounds. The articulations and their verbal associations are listed below:

wayward	–	slur
minimum	–	legato
dado	–	detaché
ha ha	–	portato
Peter piper	–	spicatto
tartar	–	marcato
cacao	–	martelé
K	–	sforzando ¹⁹

The etude, found in figure 3.3.a on page 30 in The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide, begins with slurs in the double bass and repeating “wayward” in the voice and transitions from the smoother articulations (i.e. legato) to shorter and more aggressive articulations (i.e. martelé and sforzando). This etude also incorporates the double bass solo from Gustav Mahler’s first symphony transposed up a whole tone as brief cannon with the voice in the beginning. It is also set up so that the voice speaks the words prior to the entrance of their associated articulations. Even though this etude contains singing and speaking, it is included under “Phonetics” due to its emphasis on consonant sounds and their correlations in double bass articulation.

IV. Notation Examples

Section four, “Notation Examples” is intended to provide double bassists with as many diverse examples of double bass-voice notation methods as possible. The motivation to include this section derives from the format of Bertram Turetzky’s book The Contemporary Contrabass. Unlike Mr. Turetzky’s book, “Notation Examples” includes much more recent works and maintains a bit more structure. Like section three, this section is also divided into subsections “Speaking,” “Singing,” and “Phonetics” with Jacob Druckman’s Valentine for Solo Contrabass appearing in all three subsections. When applicable, I have also included the composers’ performance notes regarding the vocal parts.

The repertoire chosen for “Speaking” is as follows: Jacob Druckman’s Valentine for Solo Contrabass, Jon Deak’s B.B. Wolf: An Apologia, John Steinmetz’s Possessed, Benjamin

¹⁹ Portnoi, Henri. Creative Bass Technique. Fairfax, VA: Published by arrangement with the American String Teachers Association, 1978. 8. Print

Taylor's Digital Assistant, Paul Ramsier's Road to Hamelin, and Tom Johnson's Failing: A Very Difficult Piece for Solo Double Bass. Beginning with Valentine for Solo Contrabass, I listed Druckman's performance instructions in figure 4.1.a on page 31 which include specific vocal sounds in figure (e.g. inhalations, glottal stops, falsetto, etc.) as well as a miniature table of vowels and consonants derived from the International Phonetic Alphabet as mentioned in section two of my book. The musical example that supersedes these instructions in figure 4.1.b on page 32 shows freely spoken whispered text written above the staff punctuated by percussive sound effects on the double bass. The example from Jon Deak's B.B. Wolf: An Apologia in figure 4.1.c on page 32, is already quite different in that it shows a vocal line in strict rhythm written in a separate staff. This poses a problem to the performer because although the pacing of the text is clearly defined, maintaining the natural inflection of the words becomes increasingly difficult. Possessed, adapted for double bass from cello by the composer includes performance instructions with regard to acting as shown in fig. 4.1.e on page 33. He provides the performer with a great deal of freedom with the text by writing, "You don't have to be an actor. Apply your musical skills and intuition to figure out how to perform the words."²⁰ In the musical example of this piece demonstrated in figure 4.1.d on page 33, one can see freely spoken text written above the staff in this case, during fermatas. In figure 4.1.f on page 34, Benjamin Taylors Digital Assistant is unique in that the majority of the text is written like an actor's script with fragments of music added in when necessary and due to the fact that the piece requires a dialogue with a prerecorded voice. Ramsier's Road to Hamelin was originally written for separate narrator and double bass, but double bass virtuoso Gary Karr performed both parts together as a solo performer with orchestral accompaniment. The musical example for this piece in figure 4.1.g on page 35 shows script like text in the style of Digital Assistant, freely spoken text during measures of rest, and two measures worth of text spoken in strict rhythm. Finally, Tom Johnson's Failing: A Very Difficult Piece for Solo Double Bass is arguably the most well known and frequently performed double bass-voice piece. The piece requires the performer "to read a long text with music written above the text."²¹ The text spoken during performance, also serves as the instructions for the vocal line of the piece. Figure 4.1.h on page 36 of my book

²⁰ Steinmetz, John. Possessed. Los Angeles: Ludwin Music, 1989. musical score

²¹ Johnson, Tom. Failing: A Very Difficult Piece for Solo Double Bass. Ed. Jon Deak. New York: Two-eighteen press, 1975. musical score

shows a very unique moment in double bass-voice repertoire in that, the composer has continued the instrumental line but requires the performer to improvise the rest of the text.

For the “Singing” notation examples, Valentine, Jacob Richman’s Pretty Polly, Betty Roe’s Madam and the Minister, and Pēteris Vasks’s Bass Trip is examined. In Valentine, two different methods of singing are used. In the ten second example provided in figure 4.2.a on page 36 of The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide, Druckman employs both a falsetto humming and an overtone sweep. He notates the falsetto humming in a vocal staff above the double bass staff with fairly standard notation with the pianissimo humming sneaking in from the resonance after a col legno attack on the double bass. The overtone sweep is notated by indicating a gradual shift in nasal sounding vowels from *e* as in **bet** to *ee* as in **beet** to *o* as in **boat**. This is performed starting niente with a crescendo to forte and a diminuendo back to niente. He highlights this vocal overtone sweep with a bowed overtone sweep by gradually shifting from ordinario to ponticello and back to ordinario. Pretty Polly demonstrates traditional singing, but in a quasi blues and folk style. Richman uses practical notation by writing a clear vocal line on the upper staff and the double bass part on the staff below as exemplified in figure 4.2.c on page 37. In his performance notes seen in figure 4.2.b on page 37, he only feels the need to clarify the placement of grace notes on the beat as the rest of his vocal notation is straightforward throughout the score. As seen in figure 4.2.d on page 38, Madam and the Minister is notated in almost the exact same way as Pretty Polly. Taking a look at figure 4.2.e on page 38, even though Pēteris Vasks notates whistling in the coda section of Bass Trip, it feels appropriate to include this example in the “Singing” subsection. This is because for those unable to whistle, the performer has the option to sing the vocal melody instead.

Concluding with the “Phonetics” subsection of “Notation Examples,” the following pieces have been examined and discussed: Valentine, Kenneth Gaburo’s Inside, Philippe Boivin’s ZAB: ou la Passion Selon St. Nectaire, Jon Deak’s Color Studies, and Eugene Kurtz’s The Last Contrabass in Los Vegas. Jacob Druckman has incorporated many vocal effects throughout Valentine. The first “Phonetics” example given in figure 4.3.a on page 39 of The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide shows Druckman’s use of the International Phonetic Alphabet for notating specific sounds (e.g. z___ap and bi gi-di-gi-di-gi-di). Following this effect, the composer notates an inhalation adding an element of theater as well as extra color to the double bass col legno effect. In the last example from Valentine (figure 4.3.b on page 40),

vowels and consonances surrounded by glottal stops are speckled in with double bass pizzicato leading up to the literal climax of the piece and clearly expressing the sexual character of the piece, that is, when performed correctly. In the example showing Jon Deak's Surrealist Studies in figure 4.3.c on page 40, his incorporation of the repeated syllables "ya-ya-ya" and "woosh" shows how sound effects can be used to color other extended techniques on the double bass. In the performance notes for Inside seen in figure 4.3.e on page 41, Kenneth Gaburo lists the six phonemes derived from the word "inside" as well as explains the notation for tongue clicks, whistles, tongue rolls, sucking sounds, and kissing sounds. This all comes together in graphic score notation in figure 4.3.d on page 40, an excerpt of which can be seen following the performance instructions. The example in figure 4.3.g on page 42 is an excerpt from ZAB ou la Passion Salon St. Nectaire by Philippe Boivin. In this musical fragment, the composer notates variations on the human breath including coughs, audible inhalations, and panting. The composer's performance notes in figure 4.3.f on page 42 explain the notation and execution for these different forms of breath. Eugene Kurtz originally wrote The Last Contrabass in Los Vegas for separate narrator and double bassist, but once again, double bass virtuoso Gary Karr adapted it for solo performer. The example worth mentioning from this piece in figure 4.3.h on page 43 is the composer's instruction for producing the repeated syllable "wow" "to be sung like a small contented animal."²² In this instance, the composer includes a footnote in the score, leaving the performer to interpret this instruction relatively freely. This is immediately followed by the musical context of the instruction in figure 4.3.i on page 43

Applications of the Results

The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide contains sufficient information for double bassists to develop their vocal technique to an acceptable level for preparing Western Classical-Contemporary solo double bass-voice compositions. Of course more information and advanced training can be beneficial, this method book is able to introduce double bassists to effectively honing their skills necessary to simultaneously vocalize and play their instrument in performance. The knowledge and exercises found in this book can facilitate the learning process for double bass-voice works and is applicable to this entire specialized repertoire.

²² Kurtz, Eugene. The Last Contrabass in Los Vegas. Paris: Jobert, 1974. musical score

I hope this book will not only guide bassists in approaching this specialized repertoire but also to inspire them to take on the challenge. It is very easy, especially as a young musician, to become intimidated by such technically demanding works. Now that there is a method available to preparing these pieces and developing the required technique, this repertoire should become much more approachable.

Although created The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide with double bassists in mind, I discovered that some sections of the book may potentially be useful for other musicians as well. Section one, “The Voice as a Practice Aid” may assist other non-wind instrumentalists in the practice room whether they are intending on performing works with vocal incorporation or not. Many of the techniques provided serve as excellent tools providing a different perspective on the music as well as facilitating the process of internalizing and memorizing repertoire. After some slight changes and adaptations, these practice tools may also be utilized for learning music away from one’s instrument, such as on a long road trip.

Section four, “Notation Examples” was developed partially for composers. I found that knowing how the voice has been notated into works for the double bass is beneficial not only so that double bassists know what to expect, but also to show composers some of the many notational possibilities. Digital Assistant, one of the works listed in this section was written specifically for me only four years ago. I am hoping that these examples will help inspire and encourage composers to compose more with instrumentalists doubling on vocal lines.

Afterthoughts

My method book currently exists as a final educational draft meaning that currently, it may only be used for my own research and educational purposes. It contains all the information I deem fit, but several steps need to be completed before it becomes a final draft ready for commercial publication. Most significantly, I still need to contact the composers and publishers of all the musical works cited for examples for their permission to use their material for a commercially published book.

I am pleased with the level and quality of information provided, although it is possible that some necessary information was overlooked and some information was too advanced. I may decide to make minor alterations to some of the practice examples, exercises, and etudes. Also,

some sections will mostly likely be either expanded upon or reduced. Once permissions are granted and adjustments have been made, I need to contact music publishers in order to find one willing to publish the book. As soon as all these steps have been completed, I anticipate publishing The Double Bass-Voice: A How-To Guide and make it accessible to the double bass community and potentially the music world at large. Ideally, I would like to be published through a company that deals primary with double bass sheet music and pedagogical material such as the International Society of Bassists or Liben Music. Finally, I look forward to continue working out of this method book for my own personal development and am excited to see how it shapes me as a musician.

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**Note: The sources listed here are both sources used in this research paper as well as the supplementary method book.