

Instrumentation: Bass (with some pieces for bass and piano)

Composer: Francois Rabbath

Publisher: Alphonse Leduc

So let's work with *Progressive Repertoire* as a bridge to prepare for any and all methods raising your performance to a higher level. I am certainly not a Suzuki or Rabbath trained bassist; however I use these books and have found the music enjoyable and the techniques presented insightful. As always, everything is always worth my attempts. Like the rumors above, in the 70s, pivot shifting was muttered about and was akin to wearing sandals with socks—thought to be ridiculous and impractical. None of us had seen it used before, so we were sometimes unable to see the value in

this new way to problem-solve on the bass. After seeing people use this technique it made a lot of sense but past reservations and prior training still created roadblocks. A key thought is to try it out and see what works and what you can use to keep improving. The layout of the Vance books is very useful and easy to follow. A concept is introduced, there may or not be a warm-up technique, and the positions and goal is stated. The alternate position numbers can be confusing but like many things, you can learn to use multiple labels for the notes. Book 3 (Vol.2) continues with skills previewed in Volume 1 but challenges students to transition up the neck and includes longer selections, some with duet options too. My goal was to review this book and play everything

at tempo with a consistently better sound. Highlights in this volume are *Rigaudon*, *Impertinence*, and *Scherzo* among others.

Bassist Jason Heath's website, called double bass headquarters (<https://doublebasshq.com/>), is very helpful for diving deeper into this method and almost any topic about the double bass. I took time to learn some of the pieces from watching his performances. Because I am comfortable reading music, it is a nice change to spend time learning songs by ear before looking at the printed notes. This is just the step I am on at this time, but you may also benefit from developing multiple ways to learn new information. The front part of the volume usually has the song in the lower positions and these same melodies appear later in thumb position. I made it a practice to also transpose songs to a few different keys. Try this and see how you like another sound, and notice how it feels to play on thinner or thicker strings. Everything you spend time on will enrich your playing and help you feel successful. Working with these melodies allows you to step out of the background and feel more confident putting your sound out to an audience.

Capuzzi Bass Concerto

As George Vance states, his *Progressive Repertoire* is a bridge to more challenging pieces. The *Capuzzi Bass Concerto* is a standard starting piece and I want to include the second movement in this space. I find Lorraine Camper's version of this valuable as she has many changes to the published bowing that help bring out the cantabile style of this second movement. Noticing as a bass player over a period of time, finally many more editions are available to review and you can view many performances online.

In the opening phrase she decides to start down bow and breaks the slurs in measures 18 and 20 and especially in m.23 she will continue with a hooked bow and break slurs often during the middle of the measure. In this way, she moves to the other end of her bow and draws more sound out of the middle of the measure. Again the changes of slurs in m.26 and m.28 improve the string crossings and help create a clearer articulation. Lorraine's left hand fluctuates between a standard shifting approach as in m.23 and m.34 to keep all her fingers together and sometimes using the closest finger available as in m.60. I like how she changes the bowing on the arpeggios starting in m.41 by connecting the chord across

The image shows a page of musical notation for a solo double bass. The title is "Solo Double Bass". The score consists of seven staves of music, numbered 59, 63, 67, 71, 79, 82, and 87. Each staff has handwritten annotations below it, including fingering numbers (e.g., 4 1, 2 2 0 2 2, 1 0 2 0, 4 1-1 2, 1 2 4 1 2, 4 2 4 2-4-2, 2 1 2 4 1 2, -4, 1-1 4-1 4, 2 1, 2 1 a poco, 2 1 a poco, -1 4, 4 1-1, 2 4 1 4, 4 + 2-4-3, 0 (3) G, f 4-4 1, mf 0 4 0, 2 1 4, 0 4 1 4 0, 4 1 4-4 2, 4-2 1 0, mf, 4 1 1, 0 4 1, 0 1 0, f, 1 0 4 2, p, f). The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

the beats and using more *detaché* bowings in the middle of the gesture. I think of it as bowing that helps bring out the harmony as it accommodates the string crossings of arpeggios. The line here is the most important musical element and she brings this across throughout the movement.

Check out m.66–73 as a good example of changing the bowing for bow distribution and to bring out a crescendo. Finally starting in m.78, she often plays two slurred and two separate bows leaving alternate down beats on opposite bows. The ending is perfectly articulated with the up bow on m.93 and two up bows in m.94.

Capuzzi — Double Bass Concerto (F major), Played by Lorraine Campet, Double Bass. Part 2 of 3. https://youtu.be/eizUZoRErTI?si=46sV72p6x_eFQK5l

Quia, fecit mihi magna from Bach's *Magnificat*

Next, I have included #5 (*Quia, fecit mihi magna*) of the Bach *Magnificat in D major*. This is a bass vocal solo accompanied by the continuo, but it is very fun to play and could easily be added to your repertoire of things to promote the bass to the non-playing public. With both parts in the score try it as a duo for two basses or a bass and another bass clef instrument. Another great reason to play this piece is how it is placed in the whole piece as it follows a very intense section in F# minor. The return to A major is particularly relaxing and beautiful. Solo vocal pieces help us improve our phrasing and the interaction of the two “voices” is handled as only a master could. I try to remember to discover and include music

that is pleasing to hear and perform into my life! This recording is especially fun to hear with the Violone played by Nathaniel Chase. Period instruments ensembles strive to play music in ways resembling the era of conception so you may notice the key is lower for this performance and sounds in A flat +.05 cents. Listen to it for the feel and notice how the repeated notes grow as they help move the music forward. You can see the bowings throughout if you watch carefully—I included the opening phrase with the hooked up-bows that lead to the strong beats of the measure. This a common bowing for the whole song.

“*Quia fecit mihi magna*” | Johann Sebastian Bach | TENET Vocal Artists <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yR2rVJDw36g>

Stevie Wonder's *Sir Duke*

Stevie Wonder's *Sir Duke* is a very well-

known song with a very cool bass interlude that reoccurs in the song several times. This could be played on either electric bass or double bass. Once you accomplish the riff, spend some time learning the rest of the tune. *Sir Duke* is of course pianist/bandleader Duke Ellington with nods to jazz vocalist Ella Fitzgerald as well.

Stevie Wonder—*Sir Duke* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sljSNTS7Fs>

It's always great to see the up-and-coming bass stars! So here is one to go out with: 8-year-old Bassist RMG Artist Ellen plays to Stevie Wonder's *Sir Duke* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiyH6EVD8xc>

Tom Pieper teaches orchestra at Central Middle School in Wayzata and acoustic and electric bass at MacPhail Center for Music. †

Sir Duke — Stevie Wonder