

Double Bass 101:

Foundations for Building Strong Players

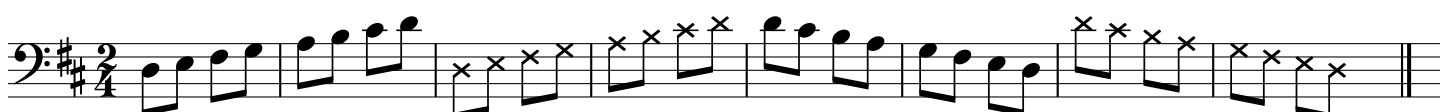
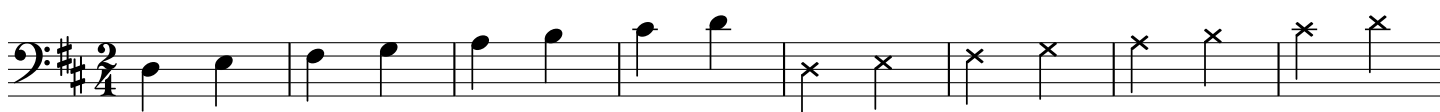
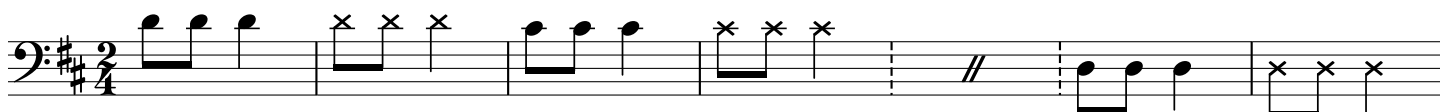
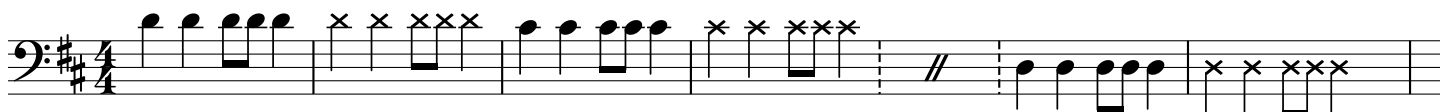
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Sizing	3/4 1/2 1/4	Nut should be between hair line and eyebrow Comfortably form a proper LH shape in first position
Strings	G D A E (A E B F#)	Highest to lowest (Tuned in 4ths) Solo strings are tuned a M2 higher
Left Hand	(1) Thumb in middle of neck (3) Rounded finger	(2) Bass "K" = space between 1 st and 2 nd (4) Straight wrist (elbow floating above heel)
Right Hand	(1) Thumb Bump (3) Squared Hand	(2) 2 nd and 3 rd split ferrule, almost 2 knuckles deep (4) Straight wrist, relaxed hand
Fingerings	1 ^ 2^(3)4	m2 between 1^2 and 2^4 = M2 between 1 – 4 3 rd finger used in thumb position Thumb used in place of 4 th finger in thumb position
Fingering Positions	General Notes	Thumb position starts on the middle harmonic Positions are generally anchored with 1 st finger placement Shift = move the 1 st finger/hand a m2 or more Pivot = roll the hand on the thumb to reach a m3
	Traditional	Location of the 1 st finger Built on natural minor scale for each string [Ex. G-string = I (A), II (Bb), III (C), IV (D), V (Eb)] 1/2 (Ab), II 1/2 (B), III 1/2 (C#), V 1/2 (E)]
	Rabbath/Vance	Anchors on the 1 st finger, but overall location of hand Based on the natural harmonics of the strings [Ex. G-string = I (A), II (C), III (D), IV (G)]
Pedagogical Decisions	Bow Posture Endpin Beginning Position	French or German Sitting or Standing Straight or Bent Block or 'Traditional' (lower positions = first and third)
Notation	Pitch Clefs	Sounds down an octave from written pitch Bass, Tenor, & Treble
Accessories		Rock Stop = keeps endpin from sliding Damp-it = prevents cracking & open seams Stool Soft Cloth C-extension = drops E-string down to a low C

Allen Beginning Class Warm-Up

This exercise should be performed pizzicato with focus on posture and left hand technique.
Teacher and student(s) alternate measures.



Vance Finger Pattern Exercise

This exercise reinforces proper left hand shape and aural skills. Focus should be given to left technique and intonation. If desired, start in $\frac{1}{2}$ position and work up to V position (and beyond).
Repeat on D, A, and E strings.

The Vance Finger Pattern Exercise is presented in five staves of bass clef notation. The first staff contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 1, b2, 4, b2, 1, 4, b2, 4, followed by three groups of four notes each, each group slurred together. The second staff contains four groups of four notes, each group slurred together. The third staff contains eight groups of four notes, each group slurred together. The fourth staff shows a glissando from the first note to the second note, indicated by a horizontal line and the word "gliss.". The fifth staff contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: b1, 2, 4, 2, followed by a double bar line, then four groups of four notes, each group slurred together, and finally a whole note.

Bradetich Finger Replacement Exercise

Focus should be placed on making quick, smooth, and unnoticeable shifts.

The Bradetich Finger Replacement Exercise is presented in two staves of bass clef notation, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The first staff contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 0, 2, 1, 4, 2, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2, 3. The second staff contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 3, 2, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2, 4, 1, 2, 0.

Karr Vomits

This is a shifting drill that is used to reinforce left hand technique, right hand technique, and aural skills. It is useful if the student(s) tell you what technique they are aiming to reinforce when performing (e.g. straight bows, rounded fingers, etc). Shifts should be slow-ish and deliberate. Repeat using different strings and finger combinations: 1-1, 1-2, 1-4, 2-1, 2-2, 2-4, 4-1, 4-2, 4-4.

The 'Karr Vomits' drill is presented in two staves of music. Both staves are in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note pairs, each with an upward bow and a slur. The second staff contains four measures of eighth-note pairs, each with a downward bow and a slur, ending with a whole note.

Dry Heaves

The 'Dry Heaves' drill is presented in three staves of music. All staves are in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note pairs, each with an upward bow and a slur. The second staff contains four measures of eighth-note pairs, each with a downward bow and a slur. The third staff contains four measures of eighth-note pairs, each with a downward bow and a slur, ending with a whole note.

More advanced variations go one- and two-octaves. In these versions, all 4th fingers are replaced with the thumb when performing in thumb position.

Thumb Position

The following examples display several thumb position finger patterns. It is important that you form a proper, relaxed position so that you can quickly adjust between patterns.

1. The 3 finger can be substituted with a H2. Practice both ways so that you are capable of doing each, even though you may prefer one over the other.

Musical notation for exercise 1, showing two fingerings for a scale. The first fingering uses a thumb (marked with a cross), index (1), (H2) (half second), and 3. The second fingering uses a thumb (marked with a cross), index (1), and 3. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

2. The following fingering has 1, 2, & 3 all a half step apart.

Musical notation for exercise 2, showing a fingering with a thumb (marked with a cross), 1, L2 (left second), and 3. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

3. This fingering shows how to play up to a C using a H2 & 3.

Musical notation for exercise 3, showing a fingering with a thumb (marked with a cross), 1, H2 (half second), and 3. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

4. A finger pattern using a L1.

Musical notation for exercise 4, showing a fingering with a thumb (marked with a cross), L1 (left first), 2, and 3. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

5. Chromatic scale in thumb position.

Musical notation for exercise 5, showing a chromatic scale in thumb position. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The fingering is: thumb (marked with a cross), L1, 1, L2, H2, 3.

Musical notation for exercise 5, showing a chromatic scale in thumb position. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The fingering is: thumb (marked with a cross), L1, 1, L2, H2, 3.

Music Marking

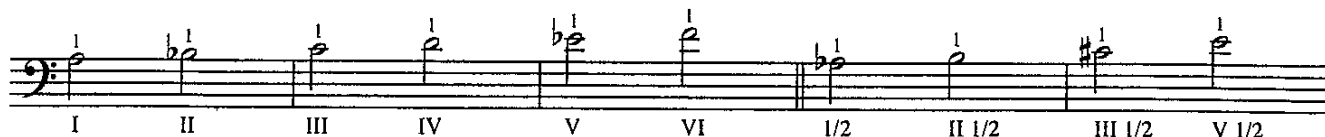
1. Shifting (-)

Some editors will angle the dash slightly upwards or downwards to give an extra indication of which way your hand should be moving. It is usually followed by the new finger being used and placed above the note.



2. Positions (III)

Positions to help tell you exactly where your hand should be on the neck. Notes on the G string not in Bb Major are given a 1/2 designation.



3. Half Steps (^)

This marking is very useful in fast and high passages because it is a quick visual telling you what finger pattern you should be using.



4. Harmonics ($\begin{smallmatrix} 3 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{smallmatrix} +$)

Harmonics are used frequently in upper positions, especially in thumb position. The common designation is to show the finger to be used on top of an "o" which stands for "open", or not depressing the string. A "+" sign stands for "thumb."



5. Sul D (---)

Often, a composer wants a particular tone from our instruments. Playing notes in a higher position on a lower string provides a darker and richer tone. A great example is Bach's *Air on the G String* which requires the violins to play almost exclusively on the G String providing a rich tone.



Progressive Solo Repertoire for the Double Bass

Built on New York's NYSSMA Manual

Grade 1

Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 1 <i>Reuben and Rachel</i> (pg. 18) <i>Fox and Goose</i> (pg. 18)	Vance, George
String Festival Solos, Vol. 1 Festival Performance Solos <i>Mummers Danse Grotesque</i> (pg. 23)	arr. Applebaum, Samuel pub. Carl Fischer

Grade 2

Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 1 <i>The Happy Farmer</i> (pg. 31)	Vance, George
Solo Time for Strings, Book 2 <i>The Brook</i> (pg. 9)	Etling, Forest
String Festival Solos, Vol. 2 <i>Rigaudon</i> (pg. 3)	arr. Applebaum, Samuel
Festival Performance Solos <i>Minuet in G Major</i> (pg. 22)	pub. Carl Fischer

Grade 3

String Festival Solos, Vol. 2 <i>Allegretto</i> (pg. 3)	arr. Applebaum, Samuel
Festival Performance Solos <i>The Jolly Dutchman</i> (pg. 16)	pub. Carl Fischer
Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 3 <i>The Elephant</i> (pg. 13) <i>Gavotte</i> (pg. 8)	Vance, George

Grade 4

Solo Time for Strings, Book 4 <i>Minuet</i> (pg. 5)	Etling, Forest
Festival Performance Solos <i>Gavotte in G minor</i> (pg. 15)	pub. Carl Fischer
Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 1 <i>Bagatelle</i> (pg. 36)	Vance, George
Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 2 <i>Song of the Volga Boatmen</i> (pg. 13)	Vance, George

Grade 5

Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 2 <i>Allegro & Flow Gently Sweet Afton</i> (pg. 30-31)	Vance, George
<i>Sonata in G minor</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Marcello, B. / tran. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Apres un Reve</i>	Faure, G. / tran. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Concerto in F Major</i> (mvt. 1)	Capuzzi, A. / ed. Baines, F

Grade 6

<i>Concert in G Major</i> (mvt. 3)	Cimbador, G. / ed. Slatford, R.
<i>Sonata in F Major</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Galliard, J. / ed. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Sonata No. 3 in A minor</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Vivaldi, A. / tran. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Sonata in G minor</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Eccles, H. / tran. Zimmerman, F.

Walking a bassline is a part of every bass players life. Bass players must have at least a familiarity with walking basslines and how they are constructed. In addition to improvising on their instrument, have students write out their own Blues Basslines using these ideas.

Start by getting form: Get the Groove of the root: 3 beats of root and then passing/chromatic tone on Beat 4 (half-step higher or lower than new chord).

Double Bass

Chords: Bb7, Bb7, Eb7

Chords: Bb7, F7, Eb7, Bb7, F7

Connect Roots using either of the above, add a passing/chromatic tone a 1/2 step away from the root on beat 4, before chord change:

Here are some more strict and basic rules...but remember: Rules are Made to be Broken!

Beat 1 & 3: Chord Tones **Beat 2 & 4:** Passing Tones & Chord Tones

Double Bass

Chords: Bb7, Bb7, Eb7

Chords: Bb7, F7, Eb7, Bb7, F7

Questions to Consider as you move on: You've got 4 beats to go from Bb to Eb...are you going up or down? how far is it up? how far down?

Talk about outlining the Chords: See the Chord Arpeggio sheet

Connect Roots using SCALE tones

Double Bass

Bb7 Bb7 Eb7

7 Bb7 F7 Eb7 Bb7 F7

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of music for Double Bass in 4/4 time, key of Bb. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: Bb2, Bb3, Bb4, Bb5, Bb6, Bb7, Eb2, Eb3, Eb4, Eb5, Eb6, Eb7, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7. Above the staff, the chords Bb7, Bb7, and Eb7 are indicated. The second staff starts with a fermata over the Bb7 chord, then continues with the same sequence of notes. Above the staff, the chords Bb7, F7, Eb7, Bb7, and F7 are indicated.

Connect Roots using only CHORD tones:

Double Bass

Bb7 Bb7 Eb7

7 Bb7 F7 Eb7 Bb7 F7

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of music for Double Bass in 4/4 time, key of Bb. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: Bb2, Bb3, Bb4, Bb5, Bb6, Bb7, Eb2, Eb3, Eb4, Eb5, Eb6, Eb7, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7. Above the staff, the chords Bb7, Bb7, and Eb7 are indicated. The second staff starts with a fermata over the Bb7 chord, then continues with the same sequence of notes. Above the staff, the chords Bb7, F7, Eb7, Bb7, and F7 are indicated.

Recommended Resources

- Applebaum, S. (Ed.). (1995). *String Festival Solos, Vol. 1 & 2*. Belwin Mills.
Close, J. P. (2012). *Early Start on the Double Bass, Books 1-3*. Barenreiter.
Etling, F. (1970). *Solo Time for Strings, Books 1-4*. Highland/Etling.
Fischer, C. (Ed.). (2002). *Festival Performance Solos*. Carl Fischer.
Green, B., & Neighbor, J. (1999). *The Popular Bass Method, Books 1-3*. Liben Music.
Rabbath, F. (1980). *New Technique for Double Bass*. Alphonse Leduc.
Simandl, F. (1984). Ed Lucas Drew. *New Method for the Double Bass*. Carl Fischer.
Vance, G. (2000). *Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Books 1-3*. Carl Fischer.

Young Double Bass Programs

Johnny Hamil (Kansas City)

<kcbassworkshop.com/?page_id=45>

Tracy Rowel (Baltimore)

<Peabody.jhu.edu/conservatory/strings/doublebass/bassworks/index.html>

Barry Green (San Francisco)

<www.goldengatebasscampsf.com/members/barry-green/>

Ithaca College Summer Music Academy (upstate New York)

<www.ithaca.edu/music/prepdivision/academy/>

THANKS!!!

Particularly to all of my double bass friends and teachers – Nicholas Walker, Patrick O’Connell, Tony Pinelli, Mark Foley, Nick Scales, Henry Neubert, and the list goes on...