

String Bass-ics

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Topics Discussed

1. Posture, Standing and Sitting
2. Left Hand Technique
3. Right Hand Technique
4. Common Corrections
5. Recommended Instruments and Gear for Schools
6. Shop Suggestions
7. Bass Education Resources
8. Recommended Repertoire
9. Questions

If you have any questions, would like a digital version of these handouts, or a copy of this slide show, please send me an email.

Posture

Nut should be at eyebrow height
Player should be able to reach bridge with right hand
Back Rib of bass touches your center line, around belly button

German Bow

Bow placed in fulcrum, thumb comes down naturally
1st finger on top near edge
2nd finger on side of stick, stabilizing trajectory
3rd finger goes where it falls
4th finger touches ferrule with tip.

French Bow

Thumb is pointed, touching where frog meets grip
1st finger grabs with big joint on the grip
2nd finger touches hair where it meets the ferrule
3rd finger goes where it falls
4th finger goes on (or close to) eye of the frog

Scales for Bass

The X'd noteheads represent where the finger stays as an anchor or moves to preemptively during an open string. It is ok to practice with weight on both fingers, but eventually the X'd note should not have weight into the string.

1

1 4 0 1 4 0 2 4 2 0 4 1 0 4 1

4 4 4 4 4 4

5

1 4 0 1 4 0 2 4 2 0 4 2 0 4 1

4 4 4 4 4 4

9

2 0 1 2 0 1 4 0 4 1 0 2 1 0 2

2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2

13

0 1 4 0 2 4 1 1 4 1 2 1 4 2 4 2

4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

17

4 1 2 1 4 1 1 4 1 0 4 1 0

4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

Bow Grips

German Bow



- Thumb goes over stick
 - First finger on top edge of stick
 - Second finger stabilizes side of stick
 - Third finger goes where it falls
 - Tip of pinky touches ferrule (metal)
- Option 2
 - Thumb goes over stick
 - First finger stabilizes on side of stick
 - Second goes where it falls
 - Third finger goes where it falls
 - Tip of pinky touches ferrule (metal)

French Bow



- Thumb pointed and touching between frog and grip (same as cello)
- First finger grabs grip with second joint
- Second finger touches where the hair meets the ferrule (metal)
- Third finger goes where it naturally falls
- Pinky touches frog approximately at eye of frog (depends on hand size)

Recommended Bass Supplies For School Programs

Instruments

- Eastman (plywood or hybrid)
- Erich Pfretzschner (plywood)
- CA Music Bass/Century Strings
- Shen
- Lemur

Middle schools should have 1/2, 5/8, and 3/4 sizes. High schools probably won't need 1/2 size, but a 5/8 might be necessary for a smaller student. By high school, most students will be able to handle a 3/4 that has a 40-41.5 inch string length. I do **not** recommend a 7/8 bass or a bass with a larger than 41.5 inch string length for a school.

Always buy instruments from a luthier if possible. The instruments will come set up with new strings and not needing of any additional repair. Often times instruments bought online will arrive needing hundreds of dollars worth of set up work as well as new strings to become playable.

Bows

- Glasser - These are inexpensive fiberglass bows. They work well for beginners, and are a good option as a school bow until they can get their own.
- Coda - These are carbon fiber bows. They are often used by professionals for outdoor shows or as a backup. They are recommended for high school if your program can afford them

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Pernambuco is the wood that bows are traditionally made of, but there have been quality bows made of brazil wood, snakewood, and bloodwood. If you go the wooden bow route, just know that each bow will be different and it will take trying a lot of bows to find a quality one. If you do get a wooden bow, get one that costs enough for a rehair to be worth it.

Hair

- I recommend white hair for schools. Darker hair is courser and used to get a rougher sound. Professionals who use darker hair usually have big, dark sounding basses with a quality bow. Black hair can get dusty when not maintained.

Strings

Most strings last 2-3 years before they need to be replaced. Spirocore can last until they break or you retire.

- Spirocore (light gauge) - Slightly more expensive, but last just about forever. Good for orchestra and ideal for jazz.
- Kaplan (medium) orchestra only
- Belcanto (medium) orchestra only
- Flexocor Deluxe (medium) orchestra only

- Eva Pirazzi (light or medium) good for orchestra and jazz. They don't last as long as Spirocore, but they have a rounder tone.
- Helicore (medium) orchestra only
- Passione (medium) orchestra only

Common combo good for orchestra and jazz – G, D – Evah Pirazzi light A, E – Spirocore light. After a couple years if the G and D need to be replaced, you only have to replace two strings.

Gig Bags

- String Empirium Tuff Bag
- Mooradian (get them while you can!!)
- Lemur

Rosin

Most orchestral players in CA use sticky rosin since it provides faster response and articulation.

- Pops (order from bassrosin.com for a fresh cake)
- Wiedoeft
- Kolstein (soft)

Stool

K&K Performance Stool (model: 14044.000.55)

Pickup

- David Gage Realist
- Full Circle (needs professional installation, can't be transferred to other basses easily)

Bass Amp

- GK MB115 or 112
- Ampeg BA110
- Ampeg B-50-R

Shops

- Los Angeles Bass Works
- Lemur Music, Lemur North (they have an online store as well)
- String Emporium (online)
- Ifshin
- Steve Swan String Bass
- Email your local college/university bass professor. They are usually nice and can point you in the right direction.

Repertoire Guide

It should be noted that these pieces are not bass features. These are pieces that have a bass part that is active and engaging, contributing more than just simple accompaniment.

Grade 1 (VE)

Meyer, Dragonhunter
Meyer, At The Grasshopper Ball
Siennicki, Festive Dance
Siennicki, Frog in a Tree
O'Reilly, A Chanukah Festival

Grade 2 (E)

Meyer, Sahara Crossing
Meyer, Night Shift
Meyer, Sahara Crossing
Newbold, Country Hoedown
Del Borgo, Classic Sinfonia
Del Borgo, Sonata Vivant
Mozart/O'Reilly, Minuet and Rondo
O'Reilly, A Christmas Treat
Bryant, Fantasy on American Themes

Grade 3 (ME)

Meyer, Carpe Diem!
Meyer, Mantras
Meyer, Rosin Eating Zombies From Outer Space
Meyer, Curse of the Rosin Eating Zombies from Outer Space

Del Borgo, Sinfonia in D
Grieg/Monday, In The Hall of the Mountain King
Bach/Isaac, Brandenburg Concerto No. 3
Bach/Jasinski, Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 mvt. 3
Grainger/Dackow, Molly on the Shore

Grade 4+ (M, MA)

Williams/Lavender, Rey's Theme
Williams/Lavender, March of the Resistance
Beethoven/McCashin, Egmont Overture
Beethoven/Woolstenhulme, Coriolan Overture
Brahms/Monday, Allegro Giocoso from Symphony No. 4
Del Borgo, Arlington Sketches
Tchaikovsky, Serenade for Strings

College Auditions: Try to find repertoire that satisfies the criteria for multiple schools. For instance, if one school asks for a concerto movement, and another school asks for a classical work – prepare a classical concerto like Dittersdorf for both.

Classical – Dragonetti concerto (mvt 1), Dittersdorf Concerto (mvt 1), Vanhal Concerto (if very advanced)

Baroque – Bach Cello Suite No. 3 in G major, Bouree, Allemande or Gigue. Suite No. 1 in G Major, Prelude, Minuets, Courante, or Gigue. Suite No. 5 in A, G, or C minor, Gigue. Eccles Sonata Mvt. 1 or 2

Romantic – Koussevitzky Concerto (mvt. 1), Bottesini Concerto No. 2 (mvt. 1) if very advanced.

They usually ask for 2 excerpts (sometimes more) that represent different composers, tempi, and style. I recommend finding pieces from this list that match up with their specific requirements.

Mozart: Symphony No. 35, 1st mvt., Symphony No. 39, 1st mvt., Symphony No. 40, 1st or 4th movements.

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5, 3rd movement, Scherzo and Trio; Symphony No. 9, Recitative

Brahms: Symphony No. 1 mvt. 1; Symphony No. 2, 1st or 4th movements.

Strauss: Don Juan