

A MASTER'S RECITAL IN DOUBLE BASS

An Abstract

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music

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University of Northern Iowa

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This Recital Abstract by: Dmitriy Vasilistov

Entitled: A MASTER'S RECITAL ABSTRACT

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Jonathan Chenoweth, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date

Dr. Julia Bullard, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Michael J. Licari, Dean, Graduate

This Recital Performance by: Dmitriy Vasilistov

Entitled: A MASTER'S RECITAL

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has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music

Date Dr. Jonathan Chenoweth, Chair, Recital Committee

Date Dr. Julia Bullard, Recital Committee Member

Date Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, Recital Committee Member

Date Dr. Michael J. Licari, Dean, Graduate

ABSTRACT

On October 11, 2013 at 6:00 pm, Dmitriy Vasilistov presented a recital in Davis Hall at the University of Northern Iowa. The recital was presented in partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree in double bass performance. The program consisted of J. S. Bach's Suite No.1 in G major for Cello solo, BWV 1007, Giovanni Bottesini's Concerto for Double Bass and Orchestra No. 2 in B minor, Sonata for Double Bass and Piano No. 2 in E minor Op. 6, by Adolf Misesek, and Teppo Hauta-Aho's *Kadenza* for Double Bass. Assistance was provided with faculty pianist Polina Khatsko who collaborated in the performance of both the concerto and sonata.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Suite No. 1 in G major for Cello solo, BWV 1007

This composition is one of the most famous from the cycle of six suites for cello solo. Although this cycle was originally conceived for cello solo without figured bass, it became a staple of the double bass repertoire during the twentieth century. In the 1920s, Paris Conservatory professor Edouard Nanny made bass transcriptions of several Bach's cello suites, which were published by Leduc. Later, in 1957 Peters Edition published the six suites transcribed by Samuel Sterling. François Rabbath must be mentioned as a pioneer of the recording and concert performing of these pieces. Rabbath, a French double bass performer, composer and creator of the new approach to double bass technique, made the first recording of the first cello suite in G major in 1968, a moment

that can serve as a point of reference for including this cycle into the double bass repertoire.

These suites are associated with Bach's Cöthen period, which fell between 1717-1723. As a Kapellmeister for the royal court, he wrote compositions for the orchestra and for the ensemble's soloists as well. Among them were the cellist Carl Bernhard Lienicke, and the viola da gamba player Christian Ferdinand Abel. It is possible that these two performers were involved in the creation of this cycle, and probably they were the first performers of these suites, although we do not have any documentary evidence.¹

The suite is the most common genre of the instrumental music during the Baroque. The term "suite" translates from French as a "following." According to Grove Dictionary the genre of suite is defined as a "piece of instrumental music in several movements, usually in dance style."² Historically, it was among the most common and important genres of the Baroque period. The typical suite included some basic dances such as allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue, which were interpolated with minuet, gavotte, passepied, *bourée*, musette, and rigaudon.³ Despite the distinctive nature of each dance, the cycle is unified throughout by a common tonal center. Each dance is constructed in binary form, with each section repeated. The tonal plan of each movement is built with coherence between tonic and dominant functions, and their development is

¹ Allen Winold, *Bach's Cello Suites: Analysis and Exploration* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 3.

² David Fuller, "Suite," *Grove Online Dictionary* (2007-2013), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27091?q=suite&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (date of access August 25, 2013).

³ *Ibid.*

reflected into binary form.

The first suite in G major is built on this formal plan with five movements encompassing the following order of dances: allemande, courante, sarabande, minuets 1 and 2, and gigue. Each dance has its own character, but “one or more movements of a suite may represent obvious or subtle variants of preceding movements,”⁴ and the prelude, which opens the suite, may be that key movement. Also, the meaning of the word *prelude* in French comes from Latin *prae* (before) and *ludus* (play); therefore it can be interpreted as a preparatory piece for the listener. Baroque composers borrowed from the prelude of the church service, and used this form in the instrumental suites with the same functionality as a preliminary piece. In Bach’s suites, the prelude carries the main idea and atmosphere of the suite.

The texture of the first section of the prelude is reminiscent of the arpeggiated chords of lute playing, and is also similar to the texture of his earlier Prelude in C-major from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. As the main principles organizing the texture of the first section of the prelude, Bach activated two elements of compositional technique: arpeggiated chord progression and simple melody. The resulting texture is not monophony but polyphony, and the composer created the illusion of the instrument playing multiple voices. The bass voice pedal carries the harmony function, and at the same time the line of the main theme is in the middle voice, which placed on the second sixteenth note of each half-note beat. This melody line (D-E-F#-G) may be a reference to

⁴ Allen Winold, *Bach's Cello Suites: Analysis and Exploration*, 8.

the first line from Bach's choral "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan"⁵ in a different key, which can be translated as "What God does, is well done."⁶ The top voice has the escape tones, and these non-chord tones "connect one chord member to another and introduce variety into a melody."⁷

In the second section of the prelude (measures 22-29) Bach provides contrast through different approaches and compositional techniques. Here the melody line is built with step-wise motion, and scales. The polyphony is not obvious, but the dialog structure between two different voices can be identified. The coda section (measures 29- 42) creates the effect of the bell, with an expansion of the instrumental range and a return to the arpeggio technique, but with the dominant pedal D in the bottom voice, which resolves in a G major chord. Thereby, the main idea of the prelude recurs.

Bach follows the prelude with the allemande, a common practice of the Baroque period. Bach ordered the dances to create contrasts in tempo between successive movements. The allemande and sarabande can be interpreted as slow dances, and the courante and gigue are fast dances. This allemande is typically in quadruple or duple meter, and the choice of the meter defines the character of the dance. The character of this allemande is flowing and light because Bach indicates the meter as *alla breve* and makes only sparing use of chords. The melodic material of this allemande is based on the second section of the prelude with hidden polyphony and scale-like melody. In

⁵ Vera Nosina, *The Symbols in the Music of Bach* (Moscow, RU: Klassik-XXI, 2004), 39.

⁶ See appendix of musical examples 1, 2.

⁷ Allen Winold, *Bach's Cello Suites: Analysis and Exploration*, 16.

comparison with the prelude, the allemande has enough space to accommodate embellishments such as trills and melismas, which make the melody more subtle and delicate. Also, some trills help to draw attention to leading tones in the modulation sections.

The courante of the first suite is characterized as an Italian *corrente*, a “lively dance in simple triple meter and has many passages of running sixteenth notes.”⁸ In this movement Bach builds a texture from the contrast of arpeggios and mordent-like gestures that remind us of the material used in the first section of the prelude. The ostinato sections create a motor-like motion and build the octave-range sound, which echoes the coda of the prelude.

The sarabande is the second slow movement of the traditional instrumental suite. One of the special features of the dance is its metrical structure. As a rule, a sarabande emphasizes the second beat of each measure. Bach achieves this with both harmony and texture (three- or four-voice chords, trills, dissonant intervals). Throughout the first two measures, we can easily follow the motive D-E-F#-G from the chorale “Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan” which was used in the prelude.

The minuet was a dance born in French aristocratic court,⁹ there are two recognized types of this dance. The first of them was “composed as dance

⁸ Allen Winold, *Bach's Cello Suites: Analysis and Exploration*, 45.

⁹ Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 62.

accompaniment for ballets and other stage works.”¹⁰ The second type was a stylized minuet that “frequently was heard in aristocratic solo and ensemble music,”¹¹ and was used as a part of the symphonic works by the composers of the Classic period. Bach followed the second tradition to write the minuet as a stylized piece. That movement has two contrasting parts in major and minor keys, which demonstrate Bach’s tendency of using contrasting tonalities in one movement. Although in previous movements such as the allemande, courante and sarabande the composer inserts into the second section of the piece only a few minor key modulations, for this minuet he writes an entirely a distinct second minuet in the parallel minor key. Bach followed the tradition of paired contrasting “gallant” dances throughout the cycle of six suites, and applied this technique for dances such as the gavotte and *bourrée*.

The gigue is used to conclude each of the cello suites as was typical for Baroque instrumental music. The character of the dance derives from the folk music of Italy, and is related to dances such as the tarantella or saltarello which in a circular motion. The cycling of triplet rhythms of the compound duple meter creates an energetic and lively finale.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 63.

Giovanni Battista Bottesini (1821-1889) Concerto for Double Bass and Orchestra No. 2 in B minor

Giovanni Battista Bottesini was one of the most prolific Italian composers and virtuosic performers in double bass history. His musical life was connected with Italian opera, and especially with the *bel canto* style. Being a famous opera conductor, his double bass compositions were heavily influenced by those of contemporary opera composers. It is well known that Bottesini performed his own double bass works, including fantasies and variations on famous opera arias, between the acts of opera performances he was also conducting. His works in this style include: Variations on “Nel cor piu non mi sento” from Paisiello’s *La Molinara*, and Fantasia on *La Sonnambula* and *Norma* by Vincenzo Bellini. His contemporaries named Giovanni Bottesini the “Paganini of the double bass” because of his “extraordinary agility, purity of tone, intonation and exquisite phrasing.”¹² In addition to writing in solo genres, Bottesini also worked in large genres such as instrumental concerti, symphonies, oratorios and operas.

Bottesini’s Concerto No. 2 in B minor is one of the most commonly performed works in the double bass repertoire. This concerto is a required piece for many solo competitions, orchestra auditions and advanced performance degrees. Also, this concerto is often featured on concert programs of world-famous performers such as Edgar Meyer, Thomas Martin, Rinat Ibragimov, and Catolin Rotaru. This concerto was written in 1845,

¹² Rodney Slatford, “Giovanni Bottesini,” *Grove Online Dictionary* (2007-2013), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/03691?q=giovanni+bottesini&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (date of access August 26, 2013).

while Bottesini was principal bass at the Teatro San Benedetto in Venice.¹³ However, Bottesini wrote the first version of the piece while he was a student at the Milan Conservatory. In the 1845 version Bottesini retained the original solo part, but expanded the orchestration to include woodwinds and brass.

The concerto is composed with the concerto principles of the Romantic period in which the solo and orchestra parts are equal participants and provide both supportive and primary functions. The first movement of the concerto is marked *Allegro moderato*, and has very short orchestral introduction. The solo double bass part is based on the Italian lyric vocal style, known as *bel canto*, with specific details such as embellishments, big leaps in the high register, and long beautiful melodic lines. Bottesini explores the coloristic and timbral capacities of the double bass and, like Paganini, used the whole range of his instrument. Bottesini's bass writing emulates the human voice, both soprano and bass. The dramatic climax of the movement is the cadenza, which displays all the technical skills of the player: double stops, sequences of chords, harmonics, and virtuosic passagework.

The second movement, *Andante*, is in the style of a beautiful Italian aria or song, which, draws upon dramatic traditions from Italian opera such as *bel canto* and *lament* styles. The drama is created by unexpected dynamic changes, modulatory sequences, and extreme leaps from high to low registers.

The third movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, is a bravura dance. The orchestral introduction represents the main character of the movement and prepares the double bass

¹³ Ibid.

entrance. An energetic temperament is communicated with the movement's *alla breve* meter and motivic quarter note plus two eighth notes rhythm. Bottesini represents the drama in the development section with a set of chromatically descending sequences.¹⁴ Also, the frequent and strong interjections of the orchestra enhance the idea of a competition between it and the soloist. This concerto is a perfect example of the Romantic instrumental concerto, because of the developed structure of the concerto genre, and the musical language, which is sensitive and emotional.

Adolf Misek (1875-1955) Sonata for Double Bass and Piano No. 2 in E minor

Op. 6

This sonata for double bass and piano is the second of Misek's three works in this genre. Written in 1919, the features of this piece exemplify the post-romantic style. The quality of writing for both the double bass and piano places this sonata into the category of chamber music. We can compare this sonata with Brahms's violin or cello sonatas, because Misek followed the same four-movement structure of composition and principles of developing the material. The four movements are: *Con fuoco*, *Andante cantabile*, *Furiant- Allegro energico*, and *Finale- Allegro appassionato*. It is interesting to note that the composer used the national Czech dance *Furiant* instead of the more traditional scherzo or minuet.

The first movement expands on the traditional sonata form model by including three themes. Each of these themes carries a different character, defined with distinct

¹⁴ See appendix, ex. 3.

tempo markings. The main theme opens the movement without the introduction, and establishes an energetic and dramatic character for the entire cycle. Following tradition, the second theme provides a contrast to the main character and captures a lyrical and *dolce* mood. Before the development, Misek introduces a third theme, which creates an agitated motion and anxious character in contrast to the first two themes.

The second movement is written in ternary form (A-B-A'), which offers "a broad spectrum of formal and expressive possibilities."¹⁵ The romance-like character of this movement is poetic and expressive. The musical language is full of chromatic sequences in both the piano and bass lines, and both these lines follow each other to create an imitative texture. The middle section changes to a different atmosphere, with the tempo and meter changing, as well. The light and elegant *valse* in 12/8 is more animated and carefree.

The third movement, *Furiant*, is a Czech folk dance in triple meter characterized by its use of asymmetrical accents. The first three measures capture the momentum of the furious dance. Misek creates a powerful effect by writing the opening theme in unison between two voices. This theme is built on a g-minor ascending arpeggio in *forte* dynamic with strong accents.¹⁶ Following tradition, the third movement has a middle section or trio, which contrasts the character of the *furiant*. In this trio, the composer changes the mode from minor to major and the character marking from *energico* to *dolce*

¹⁵ Sandra Mangsen, "Sonata," *Grove Online Dictionary* (2007-2013), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26191?q=sonata&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (date of access August 29, 2013).

¹⁶ See appendix, ex. 4.

and *tranquillo*, and it is remarkable that the *dolce* character will also be used for the coda.

The fourth movement, Finale, resumes the main musical ideas of the cycle. The composer uses the power and technical capacities of the double bass. A *grandioso* effect is achieved with extreme dynamic and character changes, huge phrase structures, and rich development sections. The movement is built according to the structure of sonata form with an exposition, development and recapitulation. As in the first movement, the exposition of the finale has three themes in three distinctive characters. Throughout the movement, these three main themes remain without changes, and Miesek uses the modulations as a main principle for the development. Before the coda section, the composer adds an episode reminiscent of the first movement doubled-stroke passages, which suggests an arch-like construction for the cycle.

Teppo Hauta-Aho (b. 1941) *Kadenza* for Double Bass

Teppo Hauta-Aho is a contemporary Finnish double bass player and composer. He has performed with the Helsinki and Finnish Opera orchestras, and he is well known in Europe as a recitalist of classical and jazz music. His list of compositions includes pieces written for chamber ensembles, orchestras, and for solo instruments.¹⁷

The *Kadenza* has quickly become part of the standard repertoire among double bass players, and “achieved cult-like status and [is] recognized universally.”¹⁸ This

¹⁷ David Heyes, “Teppo Hauta-Aho,” *Recital Music* (2009), <http://www.recitalmusic.net/spweb/creators.php?creatorid=30690> (date of access September 10, 2013)

¹⁸ David Heyes, “Teppo Hauta-Aho,” *Recital Music* (2009), <http://www.recitalmusic.net/spweb/creators.php?creatorid=30690> (date of access September 10, 2013)

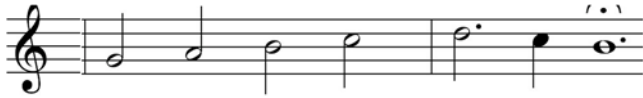
composition for the double bass solo was written in 1969 and later, in 1975, appeared in its revised version.¹⁹ *Kadenza* presents an exploration of different types of sound and technique for the double bass. The composer gives particular attention to the techniques of *pizzicato*, harmonics, and chords and has also transferred some jazz techniques to his academic music. In this instance, he utilizes a wide range of *pizzicato* techniques, including *pizzicato* tremolo, *pizzicato* chords with harmonics, and *pizzicato* with both hands. Also, the rhythm is challenging, with syncopations and *rubato* sections. Applying such modern techniques, the composer has achieved a new sound, and a new technical conception of the double bass.

The program for this recital was comprised of compositions created in the Baroque and Romantic eras, as well as the late twentieth century. Excluding the borrowing of Bach's cello suite, the works were composed by exceptional double bass performers, who each reflected the prevailing musical tendencies of their times and created new images of performance for the double bass.

¹⁹ Katinka Welz, "Walk on the wild side," *Double Bassist* (Winter, 2000), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1553299?accountid=14691> (date of access September 14, 2013).

APPENDIX: MUSICAL EXAMPLES

- 1) J. S. Bach, chorale “Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan”



- 2) J. S. Bach, Cello Suite No.1 G-major, Prelude



- 3) Giovanni Bottesini, Concerto for Double Bass and Orchestra No. 2 in B minor, 3rd mvt.

Musical notation for the third movement of the Concerto for Double Bass and Orchestra No. 2 in B minor by Giovanni Bottesini. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system shows the double bass line (bass clef) and the piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The second system continues the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the double bass line and piano accompaniment. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *cresc.* (crescendo), and *sf* (sforzando). The key signature is B minor and the time signature is 3/4.

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Dmitriy Vasilistov, double bass

with
Polina Khatsko, piano

**Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center
Friday, October 11, 2013 Davis Hall, 6:00 p.m.**

Program

Suite for violoncello solo in G major, BWV 1007
Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabanda
Minuets 1 and 2
Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Concerto no.2 for double bass and orchestra in B minor
arr. for double bass and piano

Giovanni Bottesini
(1821-1889)

Allegro
Andante
Allegro con fuoco

~brief intermission~

Sonata for double bass and piano no. 2 in E minor, op. 6

Adolf Misek
(1875-1955)

Con fuoco
Andante cantabile
Furiant. Allegro energico
Finale. Allegro appassionato

Kadenza for double bass solo

Teppo Hauto -Aho
(1941)

*Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music in Performance
From the studio of Adjunct of Professor Hunter Capoccioni*

I would like to say thank for all of you attending my recital this evening.
I appreciate to my professor Hunter Capoccioni for helping me to prepare this recital and improving my skills as a professional musician.
Also, I very thankful to Jonathan Chenoweth for his inspiring chamber music classes, and friendly support in my life events.

I appreciate to conductors Rebecca Burkhardt and Ronald W Johnson for exceptional experience of playing with them, and discovering new in the music world.

Next, I wish to say thank to my advisor Julia Bullard for her patient and support in work with international students.

Special thank for my friends, classmates and co-workers who find time to attend my concert and enjoy music with me.

I dedicate this concert to my family for their love, confidence, and relentless encouragement in every endeavor I have pursued ever since the beginning.

Sincerely, Dmitriy

