

Double bass – why not?



Building the double bass section is often an uphill battle, mostly due to negative perceptions – some justified, some not. Even

with the advent of tiny-to-medium student instruments, the double bass is bulky, it needs a certain amount of strength to handle the bow and depress the strings, and transport in the family car can be an issue. But often the biggest hurdle is that specialist teachers are scarce, so the new AMEB double bass syllabus is a huge step forward in addressing this challenge. Introduced in 2014, the syllabus brings the double bass into line with the other bowed strings. The grades and levels correspond in most aspects, with only some slight difference in repertoire lists such as the choice of one List A and two contrasting List B pieces up to Grade 5, and the inclusion of orchestral excerpts in List C in higher grades. The technical work book is laid out in similar fashion to the cello book, and the expectations have been raised to a similar standard to that of the cello. There are helpful teaching hints in each grade book, and some repertoire specifically written for student bass players.

For specialists and non-specialists alike, the two webinars hosted by the AMEB and Simply Strings provide both written and audio-visual support for teachers. While Kees Boersma's presentation deals with the technical work, the repertoire presentation from Sylvia Hosking tackles a selection of pieces from all grades and is full of useful musical and technical hints which apply to all stringed instruments - well worth a look! The skill of shifting, which of course is necessary much earlier on the bass, is covered both verbally and visually, and fingering resources are mentioned in the Q and A section at the end of the webinar.

Give the double bass a chance!

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