Collaborative Contrabass: Exploring the Role of the Double Bass in Chamber Music Through Performance

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

October, 2017
Abstract

The Collaborative Contrabass project is a multi-faceted exploration of double bass chamber music encompassing musicological research, performance and reflexive practice. The intention of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of the role that the double bass has played in chamber music since the eighteenth century and the challenges this repertoire presents for the performer. Its wider aim is to promote the double bass as a collaborative instrument and encourage the double bass community to embrace a wider range of chamber music repertoire. The research holds particular relevance to double bassists but should also be pertinent to all chamber music practitioners and enthusiasts.

An examination of creative practice has been at the centre of the research, in the form of four public recitals of chamber music. The repertoire for each recital programme was informed by musicological research, drawing from the diverse core of existing literature for the instrument. The rehearsal and recital processes were deeply examined through reflexive research to allow a thorough exploration of collaborative practice. To reflect the central role of artistic practice in the project this exegesis is supported by edited sound and video recordings of four recital performances and is also interspersed with short video excerpts and score examples.

Each Collaborative Contrabass recital programme represents a specific research focus and offers different insights into collaborative practice. The first programme explores the Viennese tuning system introduced for double bass during the second half of the eighteenth century and the repertoire it inspired. Selected duos, trios and quartets by Mozart, Sperger,
Dittersdorf, Vanhal, Hoffmeister and Michael and Franz Joseph Haydn were prepared and performed firstly with standard tuning and a second time with Viennese tuning to allow a practical exploration and comparison of both tuning systems. The second recital programme, titled *Anything but the ‘Trout’*, investigates the development of the piano quintet throughout the nineteenth century and the changing role of the double bass within this genre. It included selected movements from Romantic piano quintets with double bass by Hummel, Ries, Farrenc, Onslow, Goetz and Vaughan Williams. The final recital programme showcases duets composed within the last three decades by John Tartaglia, Andrea Clearfield, Andrew Ford, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Cathy Milliken, Behzad Ranjbaran and Edgar Meyer. This programme celebrates and examines the influence of virtuoso double bassists on composers and explores contemporary and extended techniques on the double bass.

The Collaborative Contrabass project brings exposure to rarely performed works of chamber music for double bass from four centuries. It examines these works from both historical and practical perspectives and offers insight into collaborative practice from the perspective of the double bassist. This practice-led research provides double bassists and the wider musical community a wealth of insights into collaborative repertoire, alongside research to historically contextualise these works and promote a high level of artistic practice.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Emma Sullivan
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who contributed to the Collaborative Contrabass project.

This project was a celebration of collaboration so I would like to firstly acknowledge all of the talented musicians who helped me to bring each recital programme to life - Caroline Hopson, Rebecca Seymour, Charlotte Burbrook de Vere, Tara Houghton, Katherine Philp, Kathy Sander, Daniel Smerdon, Rachael Beesley, Francesca Hiew, Merewyn Bramble, Matthew Laing, Michael Dahlenburg, Leigh Harrold, Nick Dinopoulos, Therese Milanovic, Stewart Kelly, Lucy Warren, Beatrix Pickett, Jenny Khafagi and Cathy Milliken. It was such a privilege to play with and learn from all of you.

Thanks to Edward Whiting, Jason Whiting, Matthew Crawford, Tilman Robinson, David Spearritt and Aidan Barrett for recording and editing the performances. Thanks also to Ken Poggioli, Steve Reeves, Matthew Hoy, Les Dickinson, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, Australian National Academy of Music and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for making instruments and venues available for recitals.

Receiving advice and information from experts first-hand was one of the highlights of this project. Thank you to John Tartaglia, Andrea Clearfield, Andrew Ford, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Cathy Milliken and Behzad Ranjbaran for composing engaging and challenging new repertoire for the double bass and for their willingness to share insights into these works. Thanks to John Feeney for sharing his enthusiasm and knowledge on the chamber works of Domenico Dragonetti; Michael O’Loghlin, Dane Roberts and Damien Eckersley for their advice on Viennese tuning and David Heyes, Michael Morgan, Jeff Bradetich and Thierry Barbé for their insights into double bass history, repertoire and technique.
I would like to give particular thanks to my supervisors Dr Stephen Emmerson and Professor Peter Roennfeldt for their support, generosity and knowledge.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends for their support and encouragement, particularly Tom, Maree, Rebecca and Catherine Sullivan, Tony Park, and Gwendolen Warnick.
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Collaborative Contrabass Recitals

Each of the four Collaborative Contrabass recitals is available to watch through unlisted YouTube videos via the links below. These recitals are also available to examiners on the provided USB.

**Collaborative Contrabass Recital 1:** *Double Bass Chamber Music from the Classical Era*
https://youtu.be/lGHbjunUljo

Caroline Hopson & Rebecca Seymour – Violin
Charlotte Burbrook de Vere & Tara Houghton – Viola
Katherine Philp – Cello
Emma Sullivan – Double Bass
Kathy Sander – Piano
Daniel Smerdon – Bass Voice

Presented on Sunday, June 22nd, 2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)

**Collaborative Contrabass Recital 2:** *Double Bass Chamber Music from the Classical Era (Viennese Tuning)*
https://youtu.be/RPZCFJ5M2VA

Rachael Beesley & Francesca Hiew - Violin
Merewyn Bramble & Matthew Laing - Viola
Michael Dahlenburg - Cello
Emma Sullivan - Double Bass
Leigh Harrold - Piano
Nick Dinopoulos - Bass Voice

Presented on Friday, October 31st, 2014 at Australian National Academy of Music, South Melbourne Town Hall (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)

**Collaborative Contrabass Recital 3:** *Anything but the ‘Trout’ - Piano Quintets from the 19th and early 20th centuries*
Part 1: https://youtu.be/_8XwINn5I2U
Part 2: https://youtu.be/cA9aOzlKGGs

Stewart Kelly & Therese Milanovic - Piano
Lucy Warren - Violin
Beatrix Pickett - Viola
Katherine Philp - Cello
Emma Sullivan - Double Bass

Presented on Thursday, April 30th, 2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)

**Collaborative Contrabass Recital 4:** *Duets from the Modern Era*
https://youtu.be/m8emaT0qbxE

Jenny Khafagi – Violin
Tara Houghton – Viola
Cathy Milliken – Oboe
Emma Sullivan – Double Bass

Presented on Sunday September 27th, 2015 at Basil Jones Orchestral Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)
Chapter I

Rationale

For the last ten years, I have been a professional double bass performer and educator. I have worked with orchestras in America, New Zealand and Australia and, most recently, as the principal double bassist with Melbourne Chamber Orchestra. The diversity of my career has allowed me to experience playing as a soloist, in small ensembles, in both chamber and symphony orchestras and also for opera and ballet companies. While I enjoy all of these forms of music making, I find chamber music particularly rewarding. This is because it demands much from the performer, requiring technical proficiency, musicianship and ensemble skills at the highest level. It is a platform through which I often experience my most challenging, engaging and fulfilling musical experiences.

Unfortunately, the double bass is often excluded from chamber music practice. There is a wealth of chamber music repertoire available to double bassists that is rarely performed, let alone researched from historical and performance perspectives. This is certainly a research area worthy of further exploration. My doctoral project, entitled Collaborative Contrabass, has involved researching, performing and promoting chamber music for the double bass.

The Collaborative Contrabass project was centred around and driven by four public recitals of chamber music. These recitals featured repertoire from the Classical, Romantic and contemporary eras. Earlier common practice periods were not represented, as the double bass was not composed for specifically until the eighteenth century. There is ample chamber music repertoire from the Baroque period appropriate for double bass. However, these works include the instrument under the umbrella term of *continuo* and, as such, they were not written to exploit its idiomatic qualities. In his discussion of Baroque performance practice for double bass, Brun (2000) notes that independent writing for the double bass only emerged
in the latter decades of the eighteenth century and that double bassists often simplified the given bass line or improvised from figured bass throughout the Baroque period (pp. 69-76).

Each recital programme had a specific theme and research focus. The first recital highlighted the eighteenth century phenomenon of the Viennese bass and its impact on chamber music for the instrument. This programme was performed twice to explore the possibilities of two different tuning systems. Works for piano quintet with double bass from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were showcased for the second recital entitled *Anything but the ‘Trout’*. The final recital programme presented contemporary duets that employed double bass and explored a range of modern techniques. Every work presented in this programme was written with a specific professional double bassist in mind. In all recitals, one work of solo repertoire for the double bass was included. This allowed a comparison of collaborative and solo writing for the instrument from each featured musical period.

The recitals highlighted the breadth and diversity of chamber music available to the double bass and promoted the potential of the instrument as a collaborative partner. To do this, they featured major composers as well as composers who enjoyed success during their lifetime but are no longer well known. Although some familiar works were included, much of the selected repertoire is not performed widely and, in many cases, even the double bassists in the audience were hearing the works performed for the first time. The double bass fulfilled many different functions, ranging from performing a simple bass line to providing the leading voice, and the works also ranged in difficulty, with some repertoire being highly virtuosic.

Full programme details of the recitals are provided in Appendices I-IV (pages 278-281).

Through the Collaborative Contrabass project, I have been able to perform a significant body of chamber music repertoire for double bass informed by its historical
context, and reflect upon the processes involved. I have acquired a wider knowledge of chamber music repertoire for the double bass and have developed a much deeper understanding of not only my personal chamber music practice, but also my creative practice more generally. The process of preparing and performing each recital was thoroughly explored and documented, placing my creative practice at the centre of the research. This approach fits within the discipline of artistic research, the nature of which philosopher and music theorist Henk Borgdorff (2011) has described in the following terms:

Characteristic of artistic research is that art practice (the works of art, the artistic actions, the creative processes) is not just the motivating factor and the subject matter of research, but that this artistic practice – the practice of creating and performing in the atelier or studio – is central to the research process itself. Methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings and products come into being (pp. 45-46).
Artistic Research

The discipline of artistic research has grown vastly over the last decade. Publications by Nelson (2013) and Smith and Dean (2009), as well as the more recent *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Doğantan-Dack, 2015a) and *Perspectives on Artistic Research in Music* (Burke & Onsman, 2017) have significantly contributed to defining and exploring the possibilities of the field. Arguably the most persuasive and influential advocate for artistic research is Henk Borgdorff. In his seminal work, *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (2012), he articulates the aims and philosophical foundations of the discipline.

Borgdorff (2012) asserts that “art practice qualifies as research if its purpose is to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes” (p. 53). As my project explored chamber music repertoire and practice for double bass through a series of recitals, it meets this definition. Borgdorff lists the components of academic research as intent, originality, knowledge and understanding, questions and issues, context, methods and documentation and dissemination (2012, pp. 160-167). In establishing my project as a work of artistic research, I will consider each of these components.

When discussing intent, Borgdorff states: "Artistic research seeks in and through the production of art to contribute not just to the artistic universe, but to what we 'know' and 'understand'" (2012, p. 160). My project used the preparation and execution of recitals to contribute to the promotion and understanding of the role of the double bass in chamber music, while also allowing me to deeply examine my own practice.

Originality is established when research adds new knowledge to the existing corpus (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 161). I am certainly not asserting that I am the first double bassist to
deeply explore chamber music for the instrument. Many of the selected works in my project have been performed and recorded previously and there has been research undertaken on the featured composers both in a scholarly sense and through accessible projects including Jason Heath’s Double Bass Blog and David Heyes’ online projects. There has also been significant interest in Viennese tuning through research and performance. The originality of my project lies however in the amalgamation of traditional musicology, performance and reflexive practice, with the specific intention of promoting and exploring collaborative music and practice on the double bass.

My project is also original in its scope. I deeply examined repertoire covering four centuries, which meant that chamber music repertoire from every common practice period where the double bass was specifically composed for was represented. This not only allowed for a broad range of chamber music works to be covered, but also created an opportunity to compare chamber music practice in different musical periods. Specific aspects of chamber music for the double bass were examined in detail – works for the Viennese bass, piano quintets, and the influence of contemporary writing on double bass chamber music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. My exploration of Viennese tuning was particularly thorough, as I learnt an entire programme of works written idiomatically for this tuning system in standard fourths tuning and Viennese tuning, allowing for a direct comparison. It has become quite common for double bassists to explore repertoire for the Viennese bass in traditional tuning. However, I am unaware of any projects where a full recital of chamber music was studied and performed in both tuning systems, followed by an in depth reflection on the process.

My research satisfies Borgdorff’s criteria of contributing to knowledge and understanding through exploring and historically contextualising chamber music available to
the double bass, as well as examining collaborative practice more generally. Borgdorff notes that questions, issues and problems that need to be addressed usually lead research (2012, p. 164). My research was led by the question: “In what ways can I better champion the double bass as a collaborative instrument?” This question arose from the issue of the double bass being underrepresented in chamber music practice. The term “collaborative” in this context refers to an essential aspect of chamber music practice, where, in this context, the double bass player is working as an equal partner with other individual musicians as interpretative decisions are negotiated and shared as they work towards a common goal.

Borgdorff also notes “the requirement that a research study should set out with well-defined questions, topics, or problems is often at odds with the actual course of events in artistic research” (2012, p. 164). In the early stages of my project, I certainly found that the designation of one central research question seemed less relevant to my project, settling for the broad question, “What roles has the double bass played in classical chamber music since the eighteenth century?” This developed into focusing on the ways in which I can better champion the double bass as a chamber music instrument. I did this through researching chamber music from each period, sourcing a diverse range of works and presenting them to the wider public through a series of recitals. I then employed reflexive practice to explore the chosen repertoire in detail and examine my collaborative skills. Although I did articulate a research question, it was not a driving force for my research; having a clear framework and timeline for the research, preparation and presentation of each recital was more useful in structuring my project.

In his discussion of context, Borgdorff explains that “artistic practices do not stand on their own; they are always situated and embedded” (2012, p. 165). To reflect this reality, I used musicological research to situate each of my recitals in the context of double bass and
broader musical history. From a broader perspective, my doctoral project was also embedded within my own creative practice and was thus heavily influenced by my previous education and professional experience. Robin Nelson (2013) notes that this is common within the artistic research discipline:

Advanced students engaging in PaR [practice as research] bring with them to the praxis a baggage of prior educational experience and, typically, specialist training. Most hold a first degree and masters-level qualification and many have significant professional experience. Accordingly, they know how to engage in their practice (p. 42).

I definitely fit within Nelson’s description, holding undergraduate and masters qualifications and having significant professional experience in double bass performance and pedagogy. One of the most tangible ways in which my research was influenced by my professional experience was the opportunity it allowed me to collaborate with highly experienced and informed colleagues for each recital. Nelson notes “inspiration comes through working with, and sparking off, others” (2013, p. 28). The musicians I played with throughout the Collaborative Contrabass project certainly inspired me and their knowledge and skill substantially enhanced my research.

In his discussion on methods in artistic research, Borgdorff comments: “experimental art practice is integral to the research, just as the active involvement of the artist is an essential component of the research strategy” (2012, p. 165). When establishing the methodology for my research, the performance project was always the central aspect. The performances were guided by traditional musicological research and were examined through reflexive practice. My methodology will be discussed in greater detail on page 37.
In terms of documentation and dissemination, Borgdorff suggests that artistic research is often best represented by “innovative forms of discursivity that stand closer to the artistic work than a written text” (2012, p. 167). That is certainly the case with my project and, for that reason, my exegesis will not only be accompanied by video recordings of all four recitals in full, but will also be interspersed with short video examples that highlight particular points of research. In many cases, the provided musical examples illustrate my points more clearly and dynamically than the written word ever could. As Doğantan-Dack (2015a) observes, “it is the artistic outcome itself that conveys the message – more powerfully than discursive reasoning and argumentation” (p. 37).
Literature Review

This project has drawn upon a broad and varied body of literature. Firstly, I consulted the work of leading thinkers in artistic research to establish a strong understanding of the field and to position my research within the discipline. The work of Burke and Onsman (2017), Henk Borgdorff (2006; 2011; 2012), Mine Doğantan-Dack (2012; 2015a; 2015b) and Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (2009) was particularly valuable to me in defining the tenets of artistic research and articulating the components that qualify a performance project as research. Robin Nelson (2013) similarly provides clear guidelines for artistic research, though he uses the equivalent term of practice as research, as well as exploring the relationship between artistic research and professional practice. Kim Etherington (2004) provided me with important insights into reflexive practice. Stephen Emmerson’s Around a Rondo project (2006) presents a practical example of research that deeply examines creative practice and served as a valuable model for my project.

Examples of practice-led research by double bassists were particularly relevant to this project. Some of this research is presented in less scholarly forms. For example, Rinat Ibragimov from the London Symphony Orchestra double bass section has recorded concerti by Vanhal and Dittersdorf in Viennese tuning and discussed the process in a series of interviews available on YouTube (2011). I also consulted formal scholarly examples of double bassists in the field of artistic research. These examples often came in the form of Doctor of Musical Arts theses. Jason Roederer’s 2009 DMA Thesis, A Performer’s Guide to Hertl’s Concerto for Double Bass, uses historical investigation and practical research on the double bass instrument to compare traditional and contemporary technical approaches to that concerto. Robert Matheson’s 2012 DMA Thesis, New Performance Editions of Three Works for Double Bass by Theodor Albin Findeisen also combines practical elements with
musicological research. This project culminated in the creation of three new editions of the works it explored. These projects demonstrate the increasing interest in practice-based research within the double bass community and helped me clarify the shape of my own research.

I explored literature on chamber music to ascertain the position of repertoire for the double bass within it. It was interesting to observe that although the research on chamber music by Homer Ulrich (1948), Donald N. Ferguson (1964) and James M. Keller (2011) is representative of various decades of musical scholarship, all three contain little more than a cursory mention of a few of the standard works that include double bass such as Schubert’s ‘Trout’ Quintet and Beethoven’s Septet, Opus 20. While none of these works claim to be representing a full survey of chamber music literature – Keller opens by stating that “a guide of this size obviously cannot approach the repertoire in an exhaustive way” (2011, p. viii) – the absence of any significant discussion of chamber music for the double bass illustrates the need for broader awareness and promotion of a largely neglected repertoire.

I found only one work of scholarly research on the topic of chamber music for the double bass - Gudrun Raschen’s 2009 doctoral thesis, *Chamber Music With Double Bass: A New Approach to Function and Pedagogy*. Although the focus of this research was directed toward the pedagogical benefits of chamber music for student double bassists, it proved relevant to my research. I also explored a number of non-scholarly resources pertaining to chamber music for the double bass. One of these, Jason Heath’s Double Bass Blog (http://doublebassblog.org), is highly regarded within the double bass community. It has been running for over a decade and features podcast interviews with high profile professional double bassists who share their knowledge on topics ranging from repertoire to pedagogy. Paul Nemeth’s website *4000 Chamber Works With Double Bass* provides a comprehensive
catalogue of chamber music for the instrument (2009). David Heyes disseminates his research on double bass history through social media. His projects on double bass performers, recordings and compositions include the blogs “My Favourite Bass Things”, “Bass Notes” and “A History of the Double Bass in 100 Pieces”, all made available through Facebook. Although all of these resources do not take the form of traditional scholarly literature, they provide significant insight into the current double bass culture and are excellent resources for discovering new repertoire.

Some literature on the concept of collaboration was also explored including Beckman and Graves (1997), Berg (1997), John-Steiner (2000), Williamon and Davidson (2002) and Ginsborg and King (2007a; 2007b). Margaret Barrett’s 2014 discussion of “collaborative creativity” was particularly useful in drawing from sources both within and removed from music scholarship to define collaboration and its diverse guises. She notes that collaboration is “characterized by a range of elements, including time and commitment to dialogue, extended time working together, mutual trust, shared ownership, the capacity to give and receive constructive critique, and complementarity rather than replication of skills and knowledge” (pp. 8-9). Cotter-Lockard’s 2012 dissertation similarly explores collaboration in different contexts, resulting in a definition that aligns well with how it applied to my project: “I derive my operating definition of collaboration as a relational process in which people communicate diverse perspectives with honesty and care, share a common mission, and contribute passion, ideas, and energy to create a shared outcome” (p. 16).

As explained earlier, the use of the word “collaborative” in the title and throughout the body of this exegesis refers to an essential aspect of chamber music practice. My research also reflects on and discusses the nature of the collaborations that occurred in relation to the preparation and performance of four recital programs. In this context, my understanding of
collaboration is aligned with Cotter-Lockard’s definition as the process of musicians bringing together their collective knowledge and imagination to present a unified, coherent and engaging interpretation of the selected works.

There are three seminal works on the history of the double bass — Alfred Planyavsky’s *The Baroque Double Bass Violone* (1998) and Paul Brun’s *A History of the Double Bass* (1989) and *A New History of the Double Bass* (2000). Alfred Planyavsky was a passionate advocate for double bass chamber music, who established the Vienna Double Bass Archive for the Austrian National Library in 1974. This archive focuses on the research, analysis and performance of works of chamber music for the double bass and through it Planyavsky was able to uncover a wealth of lesser-known repertoire (Trumpf, 2013). Brun and Planyavsky’s research has been invaluable to this project, particularly in historically contextualising many of the double bass performers and composers featured in my recitals. Research dedicated to major figures in double bass history, particularly Fiona Palmer’s 1997 work on double bass virtuoso Domenico Dragonetti, was also pertinent to this project.

The instigation of an international double bass organisation in the late 1960s by virtuoso double bass player Gary Karr led to a number of important research avenues. In particular, it introduced journals that focus specifically on the double bass and provide access to invaluable research on all aspects of the instrument, its history and its repertoire. For my research, the double bass journals *Bass World* and *International Society of Bassists* were important resources, along with journals that deal with a wider spectrum of musical research. Through these channels, I was able to access research specifically on double bass chamber music.

Some of these articles (Kamminga, 2003; Cameron, 1990; Schrickel, 1989) bring attention to the perceived lack of chamber music repertoire for the double bass and highlight
repertoire that is not widely known. Jeremy Kurtz’s 2010 article, “Chamber Music Treasures: An Annotated List of Bass Players’ Favorites,” highlights the enthusiasm that some members of the double bass community have for chamber music and also introduces some lesser-known repertoire. All of these sources underline both the interest in research on double bass chamber music and the need for further study. Although they laid valuable groundwork and brought attention to works of chamber music that are not widely known or performed, it was clear there was so much further to go in championing the double bass as a collaborative instrument. I recognised the need to not only uncover new or rarely performed repertoire, but to also present it to a wider audience in public recitals. Exploring this repertoire through performance and reflecting on the process allowed me the opportunity to promote the double bass in chamber music by demonstrating the validity and quality of the selected repertoire.

One of the primary objectives of the Collaborative Contrabass project was to source rarely performed works of chamber music for the double bass. For this reason, resources that brought to light unfamiliar chamber works for double bass were particularly relevant. Yazdanfar’s 2010 article on the string quintets of George Onslow was just one of the articles available through the journal Bass World that brought previously unknown repertoire to my attention. Similarly valuable was Claire Sykes’ (2010) article on double bass performer and historian John Feeney, who is currently undertaking a project to uncover, publish and record the chamber music of Domenico Dragonetti. This article inspired me to include Dragonetti’s Quintet 26 in Bb Major in my first recital programme and I acquired Feeney’s edition (2013) of the work and also studied the original manuscript held at the British Library.

Primary sources add a unique perspective to a research topic that involves musical performance and interpretation. I was fortunate to be able to visit the British Library in the early stages of my research and access a selection of original manuscripts and letters
belonging to Domenico Dragonetti. Contemporary double bass player and teacher, Rodney Slatford (1999) notes that after Dragonetti’s death in 1846, “Dragonetti’s friend for over forty years, Vincent Novello, lovingly annotated his compositions and left them to the nation, together with a large bundle of correspondence that Dragonetti, evidently an inveterate hoarder, had entrusted to him” (p. 298). These documents provide insight into Dragonetti’s life as a performer, composer and revered musical figure. They also allow a more thorough understanding of his creative practice. Fiona Palmer (1997), Nanna Koch (2002) and John Feeney (2011; 2013) have drawn from these sources in their research on Dragonetti. However, aside from their contributions, the sources have not been widely studied and therefore constitute a valuable part of my research.

Brun (1989) notes that a “Golden Age of Virtuosity evolved in early classical Austrian music when a new type of double bass was devised and a tuning procedure typical of that area was adopted to its special needs” (p. 107). This tuning, widely known today as Viennese tuning, is a common research focus in both double bass journals and more general musical journals (Baines, 1988; Chapman, 2003; le Compte, 1991-2; Echlin, 1940; Focht, 1992; Halfpenny, 1948; Jones, 1982; Morton, 1998; Slatford, 1986; Stein, 2006 and Webster, 1976).

Much of the available research on Viennese tuning focuses on its historical context, discussing the key players, composers and repertoire. There is some practical research available – for example, Korneel le Compte (1991-2) offers advice on how to set up an instrument and adjust to the new tuning system if one wished to experiment on a modern double bass. However, few sources investigate the experience of adapting to Viennese tuning as a modern player accustomed to fourths tuning. As a result, I decided that exploring the rise
of Viennese tuning and the repertoire composed specifically for this tuning system in a more practical sense would be an interesting and relevant focus for my first recital programme.

One of the most interesting articles I found related to Viennese tuning was by David Wyn Jones (1982a). Jones drew attention to Vanhal’s Divertimento in G for Violin, Viola and Violone and provided a convincing argument that the violone part was written with the double bass specifically in mind. Jones has also edited a score of the work (1982b), which was included in the first recital programme. Along with this edition, I utilised a number of other editions of recently discovered chamber works for the bass edited by prominent double bass historians. Planyavsky and Führer’s 2000 edition of Haydn’s Divertimento for String Quartet is an example, as is Glöckler’s 1996 edition of Mozart’s concert aria, *Per questa bella mano*.

Many of the featured works in the Collaborative Contrabass project were made available by publishers eager to showcase lesser-known repertoire. A number of the piano quintets were made available through boutique publishing company, *Editions Silvertrust*, which is focused on publishing the work of neglected composers (Editions Silvertrust, n.d.). The works of Louise Farrenc have been made available through the Hildegard Publishing Company, which champions female composers. Faber Music published the first edition of Vaughan Williams’ Piano Quintet in C minor in 2002 after the composer’s widow released the manuscript, despite the work being composed almost a century prior in 1903 (Kurtz, 2010, p. 25). In preparing Cathy Milliken’s 2009 work, *Two Step: Duo for Viola and Contrabass*, for my final recital, I was able to work directly with the composer, resulting in a revised edition of the work (2015).

Recordings were a valuable resource not only in the preparation of repertoire, but also in discovering new works. Double bassist Barbara Sanderling’s recording project *Raritäten*
für Kontrabass (1998) presents Rossini’s much loved duet for cello and double bass alongside lesser-known works by Couperin, Michael Haydn and Vanhal. The Vanhal and Michael Haydn works were included in my first recital programme. John Feeney’s recording project, Dragonetti’s New Academy, has resulted in two volumes of chamber music by Joseph Haydn and Domenico Dragonetti (2009; 2010). These recordings contributed to my selection of a quartet by Joseph Haydn and one of the Dragonetti solo quintets in my first recital programme. Nepomuk Fortepiano Quintet’s 2012 collection, Romantic Piano Quintets, brought my attention to rarely performed piano quintets by composers including Ries, Onslow and Hummel, which are recorded alongside Schubert’s iconic ‘Trout’ Quintet. Lastly, although Eugene Levinson’s self-titled CD (1996) predominantly showcases solo double bass repertoire, it also brought my attention to Behzad Ranjbaran’s violin and double bass duet, Dance of Life, which was included in the final recital programme.

Renowned double bass player and professor Kurt Muroki (2010) has noted that, “for centuries, composers have recognized the versatility of the double bass. Now, thanks to the Internet, we are able to find more and more ways to bring its supportive and beautiful sound to chamber music audiences” (p. 41). In my artistic research, the Internet proved to be an invaluable source of information relevant to double bass history, and for chamber music for the instrument. For instance, Jeff Bradetich’s foundation website (2013) and Paul Nemeth’s online chamber music catalogue (2009) offer information on chamber works including the double bass from all musical periods. Similarly, Pecevski’s website (2004) offers a very thorough resource on all aspects of the double bass and Viennese tuning.

Internet resources played a particularly important role in my research for the recital of contemporary duets. As many of the featured works were composed within the last few decades, there were very few print resources available. For most works, it was helpful to
consult the website of the composer, such as that of Andrea Clearfield (2012). I also found
websites that provided more general information on contemporary compositions of value,
such as the Australian Music Centre, which provides information on Andrew Ford’s
compositions (2016).

I have observed that scholarship in many of my focus areas for the Collaborative
Contrabass project has continued to expand over the last few years while I have been
undertaking my research. In fact, the two most recent editions of *Bass World* featured an
article on experimenting with Viennese tuning by Heather Miller Lardin (2016) and an article
on the inclusion of double bass in string quintets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries
(2017). It is exciting to see the double bass community embrace these research areas and it
validates the direction of my own research.
Methodology

Robin Nelson (2013) asserts that artistic research is multi-modal and that, while discovery through performance remains key, reading to acquire knowledge prior to the practice and critical reflection after the event are important methodological approaches (p. 40). Just as Nelson proposes, my investigation of double bass chamber music was multi-faceted. I used musicological research to discover repertoire and establish the historical context of each selected programme and work. Performance remained the central aspect of my methodology through the presentation of four chamber music recitals. Finally, reflexive practice was employed to analyse the preparation and performance of each recital programme.

Musicological research. I engaged with musicological research methods to shape each recital programme and contextualise each chosen work. Initially, my research was broad to allow me to develop a strong understanding of the history of the double bass and the repertoire for each era I wished to represent: Classical, Romantic and contemporary. This allowed me to establish more specific research areas that I felt were of particular relevance to the wider double bass community—repertoire that had been composed for Viennese tuning, the compositional output of Domenico Dragonetti, piano quintets composed for double bass, and contemporary writing which pushes the boundaries of double bass playing. Each focus area drew from a distinct body of research. It is important to note that my research was not intended to be a comprehensive history of the double bass in chamber music—such a project was beyond the scope of my practice-based investigation. However, through an approach akin to that of case studies, the selected works would reflect the major ways in which the double bass evolved within chamber music contexts.
As highlighted in the literature review, I discovered a wealth of information available on the era of the Viennese double bass and the repertoire it inspired, particularly in the form of scholarly books and articles. In researching this chapter of double bass history, I was particularly interested in finding repertoire that was historically significant or that employed the instrument in interesting and innovative ways. Some works were significant because they were written by the leading composers, such as Franz Joseph Haydn and Mozart. Others were composed by virtuoso double bassists who explored the possibilities of the instrument, such as Sperger. Some of the selected works have only been recently re-discovered, such as the featured works of Michael Haydn and Franz Joseph Haydn that were both uncovered in the twentieth century.

Repertoire for the Viennese bass employs the double bass in a variety of roles, ranging from performing a simple bass line to presenting a virtuosic solo display. Accordingly, it was important to uncover works through musicological research that showcased the diversity of musical functions available to double bassists during this era. Vanhal’s Divertimento für Violin, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, one of the repertoire items included in the first recital programme, features the double bass in both bass line and solo roles, with Vanhal entrusting the double bass with the primary melodic material for the entirety of the Trio section. This notable treatment of the double bass made Vanhal’s work an obvious repertoire selection for the project.

Once I had selected a diverse and historically representative programme, I then employed further musicological research to contextualise each work. I was interested in learning about each composer and how the selected repertoire was situated within their oeuvre. I was also interested if a particular double bassist inspired the double bass writing.
For example, Mozart’s virtuosic double bass obbligato part for his concert aria *Per questa bella mano* was dedicated to and written for virtuoso performer Friedrich Pischelberger.

The success and popularity of the Viennese bass was inextricably linked to the virtuoso double bassists who championed their instrument and its repertoire. Until recently, traditional musicology tended to focus on composers and scores, often relegating performers to the margins of history. I felt it was important to showcase repertoire composed for and by leading double bass performers because it allowed me to highlight the role they played in promoting their instrument and expanding its language and role.

As the Viennese double bass era was largely confined to the second half of the eighteenth century, I decided to end the recital with a taste of what followed this intense period of activity for the instrument. The obvious figure to feature was Domenico Dragonetti. Arguably one of the most famous double bassists in history, Dragonetti traversed the Classical and Romantic periods and continued to extend the possibilities of the instrument well after Viennese tuning became obsolete. My musicological research on Dragonetti’s influence and repertoire drew not only from scholarly books and articles, but also from a selection of primary sources available at the British Library.

When researching the nineteenth century, it was hard to avoid Schubert’s ‘Trout’ Quintet. This work is one of the few works of chamber music including double bass that is discussed in detail in literature on chamber music more generally, including works by Ferguson (1964), Smallman (1994) and Keller (2011). As I was eager to showcase works that are not widely known, I decided to compile a recital featuring works that share the same instrumentation as Schubert’s work, but do not enjoy the same profile. Through my research, I sourced works by composers including Hummel, Ries, Farrenc, Onslow, Goetz and Vaughan Williams. It was particularly interesting to learn about the influence of high profile
double bassists Dragonetti, Gouffé and Bottesini on composers during this time. For example, André George Louis Onslow was inspired to score his late piano and string quintets for cello and double bass, rather than two cellos, after hearing virtuoso double bassist Domenico Dragonetti play the second cello part in one of his early quintets (Palmer, 1997, p. 173).

When devising a programme to represent contemporary music for the double bass, I wanted to showcase repertoire that pushed the boundaries of writing for the instrument and that extended my own playing. I decided that presenting a recital of duets including double bass would allow great scope for imaginative and demanding writing for the instrument. Every work selected was written for, and in many cases dedicated to, a particular professional double bassist. There is little doubt that the skill of these double bassists encouraged each composer to explore the technical and musical possibilities of the instrument. Once again, this recital highlighted the important role performers have played in the development and promotion of the double bass. Studying these works not only allowed me to develop my own playing, but also allowed me insight into the impact and virtuosity of the players that inspired them.

The earliest work featured was John Tartaglia’s 1987 Fantasia on Themes of Marin Marais for viola and double bass and the most recently composed was Two Step for viola and double bass by Australian composer Cathy Milliken from 2009. As all of the repertoire was composed relatively recently, my musicological research drew from markedly different sources. With the exception of Luciano Berio, every composer featured is still alive. I was able to communicate with John Tartaglia, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Andrew Ford, Behzad Ranjbaran and Andrea Clearfield through email and learn about the context of their compositions directly. I was able to work with Cathy Milliken in person on her duet, which brought greater depth to both the rehearsal and research processes. Although I was not able to communicate
directly with Edgar Meyer, Katinka Welz’ 2001 interview with him in the journal *Double Bassist* was illuminating (pp. 28-47).

Musicological research enabled me to formulate and contextualise three historically relevant and technically challenging recital programmes of chamber music for the double bass that represented three distinct musical eras. Drawing from a diverse range of sources, I discovered new compositions for the instrument that I believe are engaging and well worth exposure. Understanding the historical background of each selected composition provided a strong foundation on which to learn and perform each recital programme.

**Performance.** As already outlined, the three recital programmes of chamber music were central to this research project. As the first of these programmes was presented twice to allow for an exploration of period tuning, four recitals in total were presented across my candidature.

The first recital programme featured chamber music for the double bass from the second half of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, focusing on the rise of the Viennese double bass tradition. Owen Lee, principal double bassist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, is one of many to comment on the wealth of chamber music repertoire available to the double bass from this period, describing it as an “embarrassment of riches” (Lee, as cited in Muroki, 2010, p.40).

From the initial stages of my musicological research, the breath and variety of chamber music for the double bass from the Classical era was apparent. I decided that the best way to showcase this was to present single movements from a number of works, to allow as many compositions and composers as possible to be represented. Many of the key composers of the Classical period were represented, allowing insight into their contribution to chamber music repertoire for the double bass. Some composers, such as Sperger, were also
virtuoso double bassists. Studying their works allowed me insight into their virtuosic command of the instrument. The recital featured duets, trios, quartets and quintets for different combinations of string instruments, as well as Mozart’s concert aria, *Per questa bella mano*, which was included as an outstanding example of virtuosic solo writing for the Viennese bass. The recital programme employed the double bass in a number of different roles, ranging from a bass line role to virtually replacing the first violin as the leader of the ensemble. The experience of rehearsing and preparing this repertoire allowed me deeper insight not only into this particular body of repertoire, but also into my chamber music practice.

With the exception of the Dragonetti Quintet, every work on the first recital programme was written specifically for a double bass in Viennese tuning. In this tuning system, the instrument utilises five strings, tuned in a combination of thirds and fourths (F₁, A₁, D, F♯, A). This is markedly different to the tuning in fourths that is standard practice today (E₁, A₁, D, G) and it changes the resonance and technical approach to the instrument. In his exploration of artistic research, Nelson (2013) notes that new sparks of creativity are often struck when researchers take the risk of reinvention through defamiliarisation (Nelson, 2013, p. 28). In line with this, the process of re-learning my selected recital programme in a new system of tuning was a revelation to me. It enabled me to understand the repertoire from this era more deeply and to perform it in a more informed and, I believe, a more convincing and meaningful way.

To facilitate performing the recital in period tuning for each piece, I required two different instruments and employed four different systems of tuning. The Dragonetti Quintet was the only work performed on a four-string double bass in modern tuning. The rest of the programme was performed on a five-string double bass using variations of Viennese tuning.
For Mozart’s *Per questta bella mano*, I used traditional Viennese tuning except for the lowest string, which was tuned to F sharp rather than F natural. Francis Baines (1988) confirms that the tuning of the lowest string in Viennese tuning can be variable (p. 108). Works by Sperger, Vanhal, Hoffmeister and Joseph Haydn were played with the traditional Viennese tuning of F₁, A₁, D, F#, A. This tuning is not idiomatic for the works by Dittersdorf and Michael Haydn, which are both in E flat Major. Historically, double bassists accommodated this key in Viennese tuning by playing in D Major but using a half-step scordatura to an E flat tuning scheme (Chapman, 2003, p. 229). These works were performed as though in D Major, with each string tuned up a semitone to F♯₁, B♭₁, Eb, G, B♭.

Exploring Viennese tuning was a fascinating part of my artistic research. I was able to develop a deep understanding of the repertoire as it was intended to be played and further develop technical skill on my instrument. Moreover, as I presented the first recital programme twice, I also was able to experience the same repertoire with different musicians, which allowed me to examine chamber music practice from an interesting additional perspective.

Although the performances in my research did not aim to represent historical performance practices, many aspects of the recital processes were informed by various forms of historical evidence. My examination of Viennese tuning in the eighteenth century programme, in particular, was deeply informed by such evidence though the use of period instruments, strings or bows were not explored. Each recital programme was contextualised through musicological research and considered elements of historically-informed performance including vibrato, articulation, tempo modification and rhythmic alteration within the preparation and reflective processes.
In contrast to the variety of the first programme, my second recital programme focused on works for piano quintet featuring double bass. Entitled *Anything but the ‘Trout’*, the recital, as previously mentioned, featured works written during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that share the same instrumentation as Schubert’s iconic ‘Trout’ Quintet (1819). I also included a Bottesini showpiece as a demonstration of the direction of solo double bass repertoire during the nineteenth century. Once again, I selected single movements from a number of works to allow for the diverse approaches of more composers to be examined. Single movements from quintets by Hummel (1802), Ries (1819), Farrenc (1839/40), Onslow (1846/49) and Goetz (1874) were presented chronologically and the programme culminated with a complete performance of the Vaughan Williams Piano Quintet in c minor (1903). This programming allowed both the performers and the audience members to experience the way in which the piano quintet genre developed over the course of the nineteenth century. It was interesting to examine and share the way in which the role of the double bass evolved and changed in the space of one programme.

Two different pianists were engaged to execute this recital programme as the repertoire was very demanding in terms of the keyboard writing. The rest of the ensemble remained unchanged throughout the performance. This allowed me the rare opportunity to explore our chamber music practice in depth, examining the relationship between the string ensemble and the piano and how to improve balance, blend and intonation.

The modern era has seen a noticeable surge in the composition of chamber music including the double bass. William Schrickel, founding member of the Minneapolis Artists Ensemble, commented on this phenomenon:

Many of today’s finest composers are now writing chamber music involving the double bass. While it is unrealistic to expect that each new work will enter the
musical mainstream, some will certainly achieve long-term success, bringing the double bass of the future closer to parity with the other stringed instruments in the realm of first-class chamber music (Schrickel, 1989, p. 21).

As mentioned previously, I wanted to showcase the ways in which composers and performers have pushed the boundaries of double bass playing in recent decades. The programme featured duets for double bass with violin, viola and oboe and explored a range of timbral and technical possibilities on the instrument. Once again, different tuning systems were engaged, this time comparing solo and orchestral tuning. The selected works drew inspiration from a diverse range of musical styles including jazz, rock and bluegrass, and employed a range of contemporary and extended techniques. The process of learning and performing this recital programme was a significant challenge but it allowed me an opportunity to develop both my technical skill and my understanding of contemporary writing.

**Performance analysis–reflexive practice.** Reflexive practice was the final component of my methodology for the Collaborative Contrabass project. Reflexive research authority Kim Etherington (2004) describes researcher reflexivity as “the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry” (pp. 31-32). As a musician, I am accustomed to regularly reflecting on my playing but not often on the process of preparation. Engaging in a long-term artistic project with the conscious intention of reflecting on my preparation and performance processes allowed me a significantly deeper insight into my own creative practice.

My reflexive practice took the form of reflective notes I made during the preparation process and after the performance for each recital. I analysed the technical and collaborative
challenges of each featured work and examined how the double bass was employed. I also
reflected on the collaborative experience of each individual recital project. Etherington
highlights how, through reflexive practice, a performer’s own experiences can become
research: “By using reflexivity in research we close the illusory gap between researcher and
researched and between the knower and what is known” (2004, p. 32). This research
approach allowed me to understand more deeply my own creative practice. Analysing my
preparation and performance of a significant cross-section of chamber music repertoire not
only provided insight into my chamber music practice but also allowed me to develop a
deeper knowledge and appreciation of the chosen repertoire and chamber music for the
double bass more generally.

Borgdorff (2012) notes: “artistic research seeks to convey and communicate content
that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices, and embodied in
artistic products” (p. 144). Engaging in reflexive practice allowed me to harness this
‘embodied’ knowledge. After many years of studying an instrument, it is easy to take much
of the knowledge one has acquired for granted. Furthermore, much of it remains implicit
rather than explicit and, as performers, we are not always able to articulate why we are
making particular musical decisions. Through examining my creative practice more deeply, I
was able to clarify and use this embedded knowledge as a resource for my research. Brown
and Sorensen comment on this practice:

It is common for arts practitioners to have significant knowledge without necessarily
being able to adequately describe that knowledge. In other words, knowledge
embedded in practice is often personal and ineffable. In order to make this personal
knowledge more generally useful a process of reflection and contextualisation is often
required (Brown & Sorensen, 2009, pp. 162-3).
The process of historically contextualising, preparing and performing a significant body of chamber music for the double bass and then reflecting on my creative process allowed me to develop new knowledge and also connect with the tacit knowledge I had previously acquired.

Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2009) note that it is customary to employ a multifaceted methodological approach to research in the creative arts:

Research . . . needs to be treated, not monolithically, but as an activity which can appear in a variety of guises across the spectrum of practice and research. It can be basic research carried out independent of creative work (though it may be subsequently applied to it); research conducted in the process of shaping an artwork; or research which is in the documentation, theorisation and contextualisation of an artwork – and the process of making it – by its creator (p. 3).

The Collaborative Contrabass project combined all three of the approaches outlined above. It used musicological research independent of creative practice to select and historically contextualise chamber music repertoire, and it had an active creative component, through the presentation of four public chamber music recitals. Finally, it employed reflexive research to examine and document this process. This amalgamation of methodological approaches resulted in a detailed study of double bass chamber music and my personal collaborative practice.
Significance

Though hopefully of some interest to the wider musical community, the Collaborative Contrabass project is principally relevant to the double bass community. Slatford (1999) commented, “There are fewer books written about the double bass itself, let alone its players, than probably any other instrument of the orchestra” (p. 297). The considerable body of research that has been undertaken to date on the double bass, its history and players was discussed in the literature review. However, I feel there still remains much to contribute to an understanding of both its historical role and the challenges of performing on it. Thus, this project will contribute not only to literature on double bass chamber music from a historical perspective, but also to practice-based research specific to the double bass.

There is growing interest in double bass research and many of the leading figures in the double bass research community are also active practitioners, performing regularly in solo, chamber and orchestral settings and holding teaching positions at major universities. Jeremy Kurtz, who exemplifies this trend of double bass practitioner/researcher, notes, “While there is a great deal of repertoire for the bass in chamber music, much of it is unknown—both by the bassists and the general public” (Kurtz, 2010, p. 23). Perhaps as evidence of this, each of my four recitals was well attended and I was approached by a number of double bassists in the audience who were interested in exploring the featured repertoire or composers further. Some of my own students have already presented performances of the repertoire I uncovered through my research. I hope that my project has enhanced understanding of the double bass as a chamber music instrument and encouraged double bassists to become more actively involved in chamber music practice at a high level.

Finally, this project has relevance to the wider musical community as a work of artistic research. In his discussion on the validity of this burgeoning area of enquiry,
Borgdorff articulates that misgivings “arise mainly because people have trouble taking research seriously which is designed, articulated and documented with both discursive and artistic means” (2006, p. 20). The validity of this field of research deserves wider recognition as it allows musicians to research their work deeply and directly relate their findings to their practice, contributing not only to knowledge, but also to a higher standard of performance. I hope that my research will contribute toward a consolidation of the legitimacy of practice-based research.
Chapter II:

Chamber Music for the Viennese Double Bass

Background

The eighteenth century was a time of unprecedented change and development for the double bass. The transition away from the continuo practice of the Baroque period allowed composers to write for the double bass idiomatically for the first time. No longer relegated to solely performing a shared bass line role, the instrument was featured in solo and chamber music settings, as well as retaining its important role in orchestral writing. As the earliest time period in which the double bass was treated as an independent instrument, the mid-eighteenth century was the obvious starting point for my Collaborative Contrabass project.

It is worth noting that, during the eighteenth century, composers often used the term violone rather than double bass or contrabass. This term can be confusing, as it has multiple meanings. It has been used as a term to represent the bass line more generally or as a plural form of viol, as well as to denote a specific fretted six-string instrument tuned in fourths with one third (Planyavsky, 1998, pp. 1-2). Alfred Planyavsky explores the confusion of the term violone in detail in his 1998 work, *The Baroque Double Bass Violone*. He confirms the equivalent use of the terms violone and contrabasso and lists the features that characterise the violone as a double bass instrument as its size, range, the use of strings tuned in fourths, the gamba form, the use of a short end-pin and the standing playing position or use of a high stool (pp. 2-3). In his violin treatise, Leopold Mozart employs a number of terms to reference the double bass, including great-bass, contra basso, violon and double bass, and notes that the term violon is most commonly used (1787/1948, p. 11). For the purposes of this project, repertoire for the violone will be considered as repertoire for double bass, as is standard contemporary performance practice.
When I began researching repertoire possibilities for chamber music composed during the eighteenth century, I was immediately struck by the breadth and variety of repertoire written during this time. Composers included the double bass in duos, trios, quartets and quintets and the function of the double bass varied widely, from providing a standard bass line to being a featured soloist. One of the most interesting features of the double bass in the second half of the eighteenth century is that it did not yet have a standardised system of tuning, but a number of localised tunings. One of these tuning systems was prevalent in Vienna and used a combination of thirds and fourths (F₁-A₁-D-F#-A). Viennese Tuning, as it is known today, resulted in the instrument strongly resonating in the key of D Major and opened the bass to new virtuosic possibilities, inspiring an abundance of solo and chamber music repertoire. Brun (2000) notes, “We owe the Viennese violone a wealth of idiomatic music composed by Mozart, Sperger, Hoffmeister, Dittersdorf” (p. 96).

Mozart’s concert aria for bass voice, double bass obbligato and orchestra, *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, reveals the composer’s thorough understanding of the virtuosic possibilities of the Viennese double bass. It is therefore interesting to note that, although Mozart regularly employed the double bass in his chamber music, he did not usually exploit the virtuosic capabilities of the Viennese double bass in a chamber music context. In fact, in many of his Divertimenti and Serenades, including the much-loved K. 525 *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and String Divertimenti K. 136, 137 and 138, Mozart continued the Baroque tradition of a shared *basso* part for cello and double bass.

Mozart does provide an independent role for the double bass in some of his chamber works. His *Gran Partita* K. 361/370a uses the double bass as a solitary string instrument alongside twelve wind instruments, and *Serenata Notturna* K. 239 provides independent parts for the cello and double bass (Webster, 1976, p. 425). In both of these works, the double bass
is employed in a predominantly bass line role. Although the double bass is often replaced by a contrabassoon for performances of *Gran Partita*, it is clear that Mozart was writing specifically for a double bass, as *pizzicato* directions are included in the autograph score (Mozart, 1780). *Per questa bella mano* was composed in the final year of Mozart’s life so perhaps he was only just beginning to become aware of and explore the full capabilities of the Viennese double bass.

A notable composer who made a significant contribution to chamber music for the double bass in the early nineteenth century was Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868). His six *String Sonatas* written in 1804 and his duet written twenty years later both reveal a strong understanding of the possibilities of the double bass as a chamber music instrument. The *String Sonatas*, written for a quartet of two violins, cello and double bass, were commissioned by skilled amateur double bassist Agostino Triossi and highlight the instrument in short solo passages, although predominantly using the bass in a supporting role (Liuzzi, 2014). Amateur cellist Sir David Salomons commissioned Rossini’s *Duetto for Cello and Bass* 1824 for a soirée with virtuoso Dragonetti (Palmer, 1997, pp. 103-104). Again, Rossini’s writing reveals an understanding of both the instrument and the intended performer. In this work, the double bass writing is significantly more challenging than that of the String Sonatas and the instrument is functioning as an equal partner to the cello.

Rossini was disconnected from the Viennese tuning tradition, composing his first works in Italy where double bassists typically used three-string instruments tuned in fourths (Brun, 2000, pp. 137-140). He later demonstrated an interest in discovering the ideal tuning system for the instrument. Palmer (1997) notes that Rossini was in contact with Dragonetti in the 1820s, enquiring about the advantages of the double bassist’s fourths tuning (p. 69). He must have been convinced by Dragonetti’s method, as he demanded the double bass section
tune in fourths for a performance of his opera, *Siege of Corinth*, at the Paris Opéra on 9 October 1826 (Brun, 2000, p. 132). Dragonetti’s own chamber music, written for a double bass in fourths tuning, will be explored further in this chapter. However, apart from this exception, the chapter will focus on repertoire written for the Viennese double bass by composers who were part of that school of playing, rather than attempting to offer a survey of all chamber music repertoire for the double bass from the eighteenth century.
The Rise of the Viennese Double Bass

Brun (2000) describes the Viennese double bass tradition of the mid-eighteenth century as “an unprecedented contrabass school of virtuosity that achieved its major and rapid evolution in and around the city of Vienna” (p. 99). It fostered numerous virtuoso performers who, in turn, inspired many leading composers to contribute repertoire for the instrument. Planyavsky (1998) also notes “every master of the Viennese classical period made a contribution to the concertante or chamber music literature for the instrument” (p. 130).

Viennese tuning became established towards the middle of the eighteenth century and, most commonly, performers during the time used instruments with five strings tuned upwards from F in a series of thirds with one perfect fourth in the middle (Brun, 2000, pp. 100-101). Planyavsky (1998) describes Viennese tuning as “probably the most important of all historical tunings of the double bass” (p. 129). It certainly had an undeniable impact on the way the instrument was played and utilised. Viennese tuning allowed the instrument to resonate strongly in the key of D Major as mentioned previously, and also in its related keys. Baines (1998) highlights that on the Viennese bass, “the ‘ring’ of the tonic key is always in evidence, derived from the sympathetic resonance of the open strings” (p. 109). This new quality of tuning in a manner that related directly to the key of the music was unique among the string instruments of the era and attracted composers to the double bass (Chapman, 2003, p. 228).

The Viennese bass was known for its mellifluous, transparent sound quality. Leopold Mozart (1787) commented on the Viennese bass in the third edition of his violin treatise: “I have heard concertos, trios, solos, and so forth performed on one of these [double basses] with great beauty” (1787/1948, p. 11). Although Mozart made a note of the Viennese bass in
the first edition of his violin treatise (1756), he only went into detail regarding its sound quality and advantages in later editions, published after his first visit to Vienna (Planyavsky, 1998, p. 128).

In addition to improved quality of sound and resonance, Viennese tuning also afforded soloists greater virtuosic capabilities. Triadic passagework could be executed with convenient and idiomatic fingering patterns and double-stops and chords could be performed with greater ease (Chapman, 2003, p. 229). Brun (2000) comments that Viennese tuning allowed florid bravura passages in all positions of the fingerboard and facilitated passagework across the strings and bariolage with clarity (p. 103).

The solo possibilities of the Viennese bass were explored and extended by a number of virtuoso players that emerged during this period. Brun (2000, p. 99), Planyavsky (1998, p. 128), Chapman (2003, p. 228) and Jones (1982, pp. 65-66) all concur that the three leading representatives of the Viennese bass school were Josef Kämpfer (1735- after 1796), Friedrich Pischelberger (1741-1813), and Johann Matthias Sperger (1750-1812). Their brilliant playing inspired almost 40 concertante works to be composed for double bass in the second half of the eighteenth century (Planyavsky, 1998, p. 128). These works famously include Franz Joseph Haydn’s lost concerto (1763) and a concert aria by Mozart for bass voice and obbligato violone (Jones, 1982, p. 66). In the period from the early 1760s to Sperger’s death in 1812, over thirty concerti for Viennese bass were composed by Antonio Capuzzi, Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, Franz Anton Hoffmeister, Karl Kohaut, Wenzel Pichl, Johann Sperger, Johann Baptist Vanhal and Anton Zimmermann, of which 29 survive today (Focht, 1992, p. 46).

The repertoire for the Viennese bass was extensive and varied, ranging from concerti to works for chamber ensemble. Pichl and Dittersdorf wrote the earliest known concerti in the
1760s, the latter also composing several duets for viola and concertante double bass (Webster, 1976, p. 422). It was common for chamber works with a double bass part to feature the instrument in variations and cadenzas (Planyavsky, 1998, pp. 128-9). Haydn specialist James Webster, (1976) notes that solo double bass not only flourished in such concertante settings, but also as the bass instrument in chamber music, with a significant number of early Classical Viennese chamber works being specifically written for double bass (p. 423).

Virtuoso performer Sperger was one of the most prolific composers for the Viennese bass, contributing 18 concerti to the literature (Focht, 1992, p. 46). In addition to his own compositions, he preserved much of the repertoire from this period for future generations. Unearthed in 1955 in the Landesbibliothek in Schwerin, Germany, his collection includes concerti by Borghi, Dittersdorf, A. Zimmermann, Pichl, Stamitz, Vanhal, Capuzzi, Cimador and F. A. Hoffmeister (Brun, 2000, p. 110). Contemporary performer, pedagogue and researcher Klaus Trumpf has done much work to make Sperger’s manuscripts and letters available to the double bass community. He believes that Sperger set the precedent for solo literature for the Viennese bass and was largely responsible for inspiring composers such as Vanhal and Hoffmeister to write for the instrument (Brun, 2000, p. 111).
The End of the Viennese Tradition

As the eighteenth century neared its end, so did the widespread use of Viennese tuning on the double bass. Composers were moving toward more Romantic musical language that demanded a bass string instrument which was flexible across all keys and could project a strong, sonorous sound beyond D major and its related keys. Chapman (2003) notes that the dawn of the nineteenth century saw a change in approach to tuning away from key-specific resonance toward sound projection and power (p. 230). Planyavsky (1998) also comments that the larger symphony orchestra of the nineteenth century demanded a fuller tone and deeper sound from the double bass and, in most cases, players moved to the tuning of E₁-A₁-D-G which allowed them ease of playing and projection across the full range of keys (p. 132). In his 1843 treatise on instrumentation, Berlioz noted the use of three-string double basses tuned in fifths and four-string double basses tuned in fourths and confirmed that his preference and recommendation was for the latter of the two (1843/1882, p. 40).

Viennese tuning posed limitations not only on the keys in which the double bass could readily play, but also on the instrument’s ability to modulate within a piece. Brun (2000) notes that this did not pose an issue while the tonal possibilities of the orchestra were also limited by wind and brass instruments, which he describes as rather crude and valveless (p. 105). However, as these instruments developed and became more versatile, “the Viennese violone was incapable of meeting the changing requirements of the new, Romantic current, and soon disappeared from the forefront” (Brun, 2000, p. 105). Despite the movement away from Viennese tuning, some of its most successful proponents continued the tradition into the nineteenth century. Sperger, in particular, continued to perform and compose for the Viennese bass until his death in 1813 (Baines, 1988, p. 109).
Planyavsky (1998) notes that the Viennese double bass tradition and the repertoire it inspired was forgotten in the nineteenth century, as it left behind no written method (p. 131). Focht (1992) confirms this: “Abandoning the triad tuning meant giving up the technique and idiom of the solo instrument, which precipitated the end of the Viennese double bass concerto” (p. 51). Even one of the last players to utilise Viennese tuning, Johann Hindle (1792-1862), moved to a four-string double bass tuned F₁-A₁-D-G as recorded in his 1854 double bass method (Planyavsky, 1998, p. 131). Not one of Hindle’s 106 documented public concerts throughout Europe featured concertante repertoire for the Viennese double bass (Planyavsky, 1998, p. 131).

Double bass virtuoso Domenico Dragonetti’s use of fourths tuning is often credited as a factor that contributed significantly to the end of the era of Viennese tuning (Chapman, 2003, p. 231). The revered musician performed solo, chamber and orchestral repertoire on a three-string Gasparo da Salò double bass tuned A₁-D-G (Planyavsky, 1998, p. 136). Palmer (1997) observes that his “performances of chamber and orchestral music showed the way forward for the instrument” (p. 63). After the demise of the Viennese double bass tradition, Dragonetti became undoubtedly the most famous and influential exponent of the double bass.
Selection of Repertoire for the Recital Programme and its Historical Background

When selecting a recital programme to represent the eighteenth century, I thought it imperative to reflect the marked influence of the Viennese double bass tradition. For this reason, I decided to focus on repertoire composed specifically for a double bass in Viennese tuning. To highlight the striking diversity of this oeuvre, I programmed single movements from duets, trios, quartets and a quintet. I also strove to select works and movements that demonstrated the different ways in which the Viennese double bass was utilised, ranging from a traditional bass line role to being employed as a virtuosic solo feature. In addition to the selected works for chamber ensemble, I decided to include Mozart’s concert aria for bass voice and double bass obbligato _Per questa bella mano_, to represent the height of virtuosic solo writing for the Viennese bass, providing context and comparison for the rest of the programmed works.

The only composition included that was not from the Viennese double bass tradition was a quintet by Domenico Dragonetti. I wanted to end the programme with one of Dragonetti’s solo quintets to bring attention to this aspect of his compositional output and also to demonstrate one of the directions for double bassists after the golden era of the Viennese double bass reached its culmination. The selected recital repertoire is listed below in Figure 1. These works will be discussed below to outline what each contributed to the programme and to provide some historical background.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791): _Per questa bella mano_, K.612.**

I decided to start the programme with Mozart’s concert aria _Per questa bella mano_ for bass voice, double bass and accompanying orchestra as it demonstrates, perhaps more than any other work, the virtuosic capabilities of the Viennese bass. Planyavsky (1998) comments, “with this concert aria from Mozart’s final year, classical double-bass playing reached the
Figure 1: First recital programme

W. A. Mozart  
*Per questa bella mano*, K.612

C. Dittersdorf  
Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219  
Movement V: *Thema con variazioni*

J. M. Sperger  
Sonata in for Viola and Double Bass in D Major  
Movement II: *Romanze*

M. Haydn  
Divertimento for Viola, Cello and Double Bass in E flat major  
Movement III: *Presto*

J. B. Vanhal  
Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur  
Movement II: *Menuetto*

F. A. Hoffmeister  
Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major  
Movement IV: *Rondo*

F. J. Haydn  
Divertimento in C Major, Hob II: C5  
Movement I: *Presto*

D. Dragonetti  
Quintet No. 26 in Bb Major
highest point in its development as well as its end.” (p. 130). Mozart noted on the original manuscript that this work was composed for Messrs Görl and Pischlinger (Focht, 1992, pp. 51-52). Franz Xaver Gerl and virtuoso double bassist Friedrich Pischelberger were Mozart’s colleagues at the time at the Schikaneder Freihaus in Vienna. Gerl also had the distinction of singing the role of Sarastro at the premiere of Mozart’s opera, *The Magic Flute* (Glöckler, 1999).

Brun (2000) observes that the instrumentation of this work was not an isolated example in Vienna at the time, noting two arias composed by Sperger, as well as similar works by Salieri and Riccini (p. 109). Glöckler comments on the instrumentation: “The extraordinary choice of virtuoso double bass as an obbligato instrument results in an interesting partnership of vocal and instrumental basses, a combination which is also appealing in sound” (1999). This rang true in performance—the richness of the bass voice complemented the tone of the double bass while not overpowering it.

As one of the double bassists whom Mozart admired, Friedrich Pischelberger (1741-1813) was highly respected as a virtuoso double bass player throughout his career. Planyavsky (1998) lists him as one of the most important representatives of the Viennese double bass school (p. 128). In addition to Mozart’s concert aria, he notably performed works for solo double bass by Dittersdorf and Pichl (Focht, 1992, p. 52). Pischelberger was acquainted with these composers through the Episcopal Orchestra at Growardein, and Dittersdorf continually praised his skill as a solo and orchestral double bassist (Brun, 2000, p. 267). Brun (2000) highlights Pischelberger’s proficiency on the double bass, commenting that he was noted for his lyrical harmonic passages and was reported to have performed *Per questa bella mano* with extraordinary execution (pp. 108 & 267).
There is probably no greater testament to Pischelberger’s proficiency on the double bass than the difficulty of Mozart’s writing in this work. At the turn of the twentieth century, when much of the information regarding Viennese tuning had been lost, *Per questa bella mano* was believed to be unplayable and there was even doubt the obbligato part was written for the double bass (Heyes, 2014). Glöckler (1996) asserts that the fundamental reason the writing is so challenging is because it was tailored for a double bass tuned in Viennese tuning, commenting that performing it on an instrument tuned in fourths creates “a greater demand in technical proficiency than had been originally intended by the composer”. When double bass virtuoso Bottesini performed the work in fourths tuning late in the nineteenth century, he transposed nearly all of the work two octaves lower than written to lessen the technical demands (Heyes, 2014). There is little doubt that to truly appreciate the work through performance, its possibilities should be explored within the tuning system for which it was intended.

**Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf** (1739–1799): **Duetto for Viola and Violone in E flat Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: Theme and Variations.** Today, Dittersdorf is most often remembered as being part of a famous string quartet performance that involved Mozart on viola, Joseph Haydn on violin and Vanhal on cello, an event recounted by tenor and composer Michael Kelly in his memoir, *Reminiscences* (1826/1975, p. 122). However, during his lifetime, Dittersdorf was a highly respected Kappellmeister and composer. Gjerdingen (2007) notes the influence of his relationship with the leading composers of the era: “Dittersdorf was fully conversant with the rapidly developing styles of quartet writing in Vienna” (p. 107).

Dittersdorf contributed significantly to repertoire for the Viennese double bass, making him an obvious inclusion in my recital programme. As mentioned earlier, the
virtuoso bassist Pischelberger worked under Dittersdorf and opened the composer’s eyes to the possibilities of the Viennese double bass (Brun, 2000, p. 267). Stert & Slatford suggest that Pischelberger’s playing inspired Dittersdorf to not only compose this duet, but also his two double bass concerti and *Sinfonia Concertante*, a double concerto for viola and double bass (1971). The writing in his Duetto for Viola and Violone reveals his deep understanding of the capabilities of the double bass.

It is notable that James Webster describes this duet by Dittersdorf as being written for viola and concertante double bass (1976, p. 422). The double bass is clearly treated as an equal partner to the viola, with the two instruments alternating as the leading voice. Although it would not be considered virtuosic by today’s standards, there are still challenges for the bassist, including double stops and chords, fast passagework, arpeggiated figures and lyrical melodic content. I selected the final *Theme and Variations* movement as it frequently showcases the double bass as the leading voice and provides a variety of technical challenges for the instrument.

**Johannes Matthias Sperger (1750–1812): Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze.** A recital celebrating the Viennese double bass would be incomplete without featuring the work of Johann Matthias Sperger. As previously mentioned, not only was Sperger one of the leading virtuoso bassists of the Viennese tradition, he also made a significant contribution to the repertoire of the Viennese bass with his own compositional output, as well as through preserving the works of other leading composers. Although he is mostly known today for his efforts in composition for double bass, his oeuvre includes over 40 symphonies and approximately 30 concerti for various instruments, 18 of which are for double bass (Brun, 2000, p. 269).
Sperger’s writing is idiomatic to the Viennese bass, taking full advantage of the harmonics, double stops and chords this tuning allows. Slatford (1986) comments that Sperger’s works are innately suited to Viennese tuning and therefore on a modern instrument they tend to be unapproachable and unsatisfactory (p. 446). This is evident in the second Romanze movement of the D Major Sonata, which explores the highest range of the instrument and utilises the harmonic series made available by the high A string of a Viennese bass. I programmed this movement for a number of reasons. Firstly, I was drawn to its lyrical melodic content, which is shared so democratically between viola and double bass. I realised that learning this movement would be a significant technical challenge and would provide me insight into Sperger’s virtuosity and vision. I also felt that this movement would highlight for the audience the achievements and contribution of Sperger not only to the Viennese double bass tradition, but also to double bass history and development more broadly.

Sperger’s virtuosity on the double bass is well documented. He is reported to have studied with virtuoso Friedrich Pischlberger and had concerti composed for him by highly regarded Viennese composers including Anton Zimmermann (Brun, 2000, p. 267). His obituary highlights how respected he was in his position of first Contrabassist to the Duke of Meklenburg-Schwerin in Ludwiglust: “The orchestra loses in him one of its most distinguished members in that he displayed a rare mastery and purpose on his instrument; knowing how to impart character to the performance as a whole [AmZ(L), 26, 24 June 1812, Col. 432]” (Brun, 2000, p. 269). Sperger continued composing for and performing on the Viennese bass until his death in 1812, well after its popularity had waned.

Michael Haydn (1737–1806): Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E Flat Major, Movement III: Presto. Throughout his career, Michael Haydn worked as a court musician and a prolific composer. He held the post of Kappellmeister to
the Bishop of Grosswardein in Hungary, where Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf succeeded him, and later was Konzertmeister in Salzburg (Clive, 1993, p. 72). Although overshadowed by his brother Franz Joseph, Michael Haydn was a successful composer in his own right. Michael Kelly (1826/1975) commented that Michael Haydn “was by many competent judges reckoned even superior to his brother in the composition of church music” (p. 141). He composed a significant body of sacred music, as well as symphonies, concertos and chamber music (Clive, 1993, p. 72).

I felt it was important to include a work by Michael Haydn in the recital programme as he regularly featured the double bass in his compositions. Planyavsky (1996) observes that he often gave the double bass a dominant role in his church music and also regularly included it in chamber music, with surviving works for double bass including trios, quartets, quintets and sextets. The selected Divertimento was only discovered in the late 20th century, concealed in the cello score of a Sonata by Francesco Saverio Richter in the Parry Room at the Royal College of Music in London (White & Slatford, 1971). The absence of a violin in this trio allows the viola to function as the leading voice and the double bass to be more prominent in the texture.

**Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739–1813): Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, Movement II: Menuetto & Trio.** Vanhal’s success as a composer during the Classical period is well documented. Clive, an authority on Mozart and his associates, comments, “Vanhal’s reputation as a composer stood high in his day” (1993, p. 161) and Jones (1980) notes that he was “considered second only to Haydn”. Based in Vienna for the greater part of his career, Vanhal’s symphonies, string quartets and works for keyboard achieved popularity throughout Europe (Jones, 1982, p. 64). I felt it was important for Vanhal to be represented in the recital programme not only because he was one of the
leading composers of his time but also because he significantly contributed to repertoire for the double bass with works for chamber ensemble and a concerto.

Vanhal is rare amongst composers of his time in that he never held a court or church position (Jones, 1982, p. 64). He began life as a serf and, after he became successful enough to buy freedom, he remained free from the restrictions of court life and made a good living composing and publishing keyboard and chamber music for the middle class (Gjerdingen, 2007, p. 278). Unfortunately, as he was not attached to an institution, many of his manuscripts were not preserved (Jones, 1982, p. 64). This G Major Divertimento is one of the rare surviving Vanhal autograph manuscripts that were preserved in parts across libraries in Prague, Bologna, Austria and Paris (Jones, 1980).

The manuscript of Vanhal’s G Major Divertimento, believed to be from the mid-1760s, includes a casser inion for violin, cello and violone composed by Dittersdorf, written in Vanhal’s hand (Jones, 1982, p. 65). Vanhal was a student of Dittersdorf when he first arrived in Vienna in the early 1760s (Clive, 1993, p. 160). Jones (1982) suggests that it would have been common practice for Vanhal to copy out a work by his mentor, and also write a work of his own in a similar style (p. 65).

Vanhal had a strong understanding of the capabilities of the Viennese bass and this is evident in his concerto for the instrument, which remains standard repertoire today. I selected the second movement of the G Major Divertimento, a Minuet and Trio, as it features the double bass with an extended solo in the Trio. The instrument is therefore featured in both bass line and solo roles, highlighting the flexibility and diversity of the Viennese double bass. I chose to include Vanhal’s G Major Divertimento because, despite being scored for cello or double bass, there is evidence that Vanhal conceived the work specifically for the Viennese double bass. Jones (1982) notes that the manuscript offers proof that Vanhal conceived the
work with the double bass in mind: “Conclusive evidence of a rare kind is provided on the second page, where Vanhal has noted in the top right-hand corner the tuning of the violone” (p. 66).

Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754–1812): Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo. James Webster (1976) describes Franz Anton Hoffmeister as a composer-publisher (p. 422). Based in Vienna for most of his life, he was well respected for both facets of his career. Butter (1968) notes that “the acknowledgement of his contemporaries was undivided” with regard to the quality of his compositions, which included operas, symphonies, concertos and chamber music (p. 3). As a publisher, he championed works by Mozart, Joseph Haydn, Vanhal, Albrechtsberger, Beethoven and Dittersdorf (Clive, 1993, p. 76). Leipzig bookseller Carl Friedrich Peters eventually purchased Hoffmeister’s publishing company and its activities and reputation have endured to the present day (Clive, 1993, p. 76). Peters (2013) acknowledges that Hoffmeister and his partner Ambrosius Kühnel’s publishing credits include collections of Haydn and Mozart Quartets, the first edition of J. S. Bach’s Keyboard Works in 14 volumes and some of the earliest Beethoven works, including his First Symphony and Second Piano Concerto.

A unique aspect of Hoffmeister’s compositional output is a set of four solo quartets for double bass, violin, viola and cello. In these works, the double bass is the leading voice throughout, taking the role most commonly performed by the first violin. I wanted to include one of Hoffmeister’s solo quartets in my recital programme to highlight this unusual instrumentation and ambitious writing for the double bass. Hoffmeister’s quartets not only pose significant technical challenges for the double bassist, but also present the additional responsibilities that come with leading the ensemble. Butter (1968) recognises that
Hoffmeister would have conceived this work with the double bass virtuosos of his time in mind and that it would have been intended for an instrument in Viennese tuning (p. 3).

In Quartet No. 2 the solo double bass part is demanding, using the higher range of the instrument and including virtuosic passagework and extended passages of double stops. I selected the final *Rondo* movement as it extends the demands placed on the solo double bassist further by including a challenging cadenza that is dominated by double stops.

**Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809): Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5,**

**Movement I: Presto.** Often identified as the “Father of the String Quartet”, Franz Joseph Haydn’s influence on chamber music writing during the Classical era is widely acknowledged. What is less recognised is the impact he had on writing for the double bass. He had a strong understanding of the capabilities and unique properties of the violone and incorporated solos for it in many of his symphonies (Chapman, 2003, p. 230). He also wrote a concerto for the instrument, which has unfortunately been lost. Both Joëlle Morton (1997) and James Webster (1976) note that the date of Haydn’s lost double bass concerto (early 1760s) indicates it may well have been the first double bass concerto in history, and “if so, it would be one more ‘invention’ we must credit to this remarkable composer” (Webster, 1976, p. 423). Planyavsky (1998) confirms, “During the 1760s, Joseph Haydn wrote the first violone concerto as well as violone concertante variations in his symphonies 6, 7, and 8, and later in numbers 31 and 72” (p. 128).

There is significant evidence that Haydn was composing specifically for an instrument using Viennese tuning. Esterházy documents confirm that while Haydn was employed, Violone strings for A, F#, D and low A were purchased, which would accommodate Viennese tuning without the lowest string (Baines, 1988, p. 107). Joëlle Morton (1997, p. 29) corroborates this, stating that Haydn was likely using a four-string bass
tuned in Viennese tuning with no low F based on receipts from the purchase of strings at Esterházy.

I decided to include Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5 for two violins, viola or cello and double bass in the programme to highlight Haydn’s contribution to chamber music for double bass and also because of the particular significance of this work. The C Major Divertimento was only re-discovered at the end of the twentieth century, as part of Alfred Planyavsky’s Vienna Double Bass Archive project. Planyavsky (1996) described resurrecting the work from the music archive of a Benedictine Abbey at Seitenstetten in upper Austria as “the most exciting event of our labor with the archive”. Although it is not included in Haydn’s list of works, Haydn scholar Ernst Fritz Schmid has confirmed its authenticity and violinist Gerhart Hetzel has identified parallels between the quartet and Haydn’s C Major Violin Concerto (Planyavsky, 1996). The combination of instruments for this work seems unusual, especially given Haydn’s contribution to the traditional string quartet genre. However, both Albrechtsberger and Michael Haydn composed numerous Divertimenti for the same instrumentation, proving that it was an accepted format (Planyavsky, 1999/2000).

In the C Major Divertimento, the double bass is employed in a standard bass line role, and is not featured in a solo capacity. Gjerdingen (2007) indicates that often Haydn’s instrumental music was intended for amateur musicians among the local aristocrats or even his patron, the Prince of Esterházy, and that this prevented him from fully exploiting the full potential of each instrument at times (p. 129). This may explain the double bass writing but it could also have been a purely musical decision. Although Haydn was fully aware of the capabilities of the Viennese bass, he did not take advantage of them in every work including the instrument.
Domenico Carlo Maria Dragonetti (1763–1846): Quintet no. 26 in B flat major,

Movement I: Andante con moto & Movement II: Allegretto. Domenico Dragonetti was removed from the Viennese double bass tradition by both time and location. He was not born until 1763, when the Viennese double bass was reaching its peak of activity, and for much of his career he was based in London—away from Viennese influence (Brun, 1989, p. 160). As has already been mentioned, Dragonetti did not utilise Viennese tuning, preferring a three-string instrument tuned in fourths: A₁-D-G (Planyavsky, 1998, p. 136).

A remarkable virtuoso on the double bass, Dragonetti received his first professional engagement at the age of 13, as principal bass of the orchestra for Venice’s Opera Buffa company, and usurped his teacher as principal bass at the Ducal Chapel of St. Mark’s when he was only 18 years old (Sykes, 2010, p. 48). Although his early life was spent in Venice, the greater part of Dragonetti’s life and career was spent in London. His first position there was in 1794 at the Italian Opera at the King’s Theatre, and in 1813 he became the founding principal double bassist of the Philharmonic Society (Brun, 1989, p. 160). In London, Dragonetti had the opportunity to become acquainted with many of the greatest musicians of his era and he quickly became renowned throughout Europe for his imaginative and virtuosic playing (Planyavsky, 1998, p. 136). Sykes (2010) notes that he frequented composer and publisher Vincent Novello’s private soirées, attended by high-profile musicians such as Felix Mendelssohn, Franz Liszt and Nicolò Paganini (p. 48).

Vincent Novello was a great supporter of Dragonetti. In a description of his friend’s double bass playing, he wrote:

Exquisite taste and acute discrimination in finding out the most effective and musician-like notes, and the most refined and beautiful passages in every bass part that he has to perform. Unrivalled talent in being able to execute them in such a
manner as to render their beauty prominently evident to the audience (as cited in Brun, 1989, p. 161).

As mentioned earlier, today’s double bass community has Novello to thank for the vast number of Dragonetti manuscripts and papers that have remained in existence to the present time. These documents provide significant insight into Dragonetti’s life as a performer and his compositional output.

There is a common perception within the double bass community today that Dragonetti’s compositional output was minimal and of a low standard. In the words of David Chapman (2010), “Dragonetti has gotten this incredibly bad rap into the twentieth century as someone who was a fantastic double bass player and an eccentric character, but not a great composer” (as cited in Sykes, p. 48). However, this reputation as a composer of negligible interest seems unfounded. In fact, he composed prolifically and, as is being increasingly recognised, many of his works are worth re-evaluating in terms of their quality and the unique manner in which they employ the double bass. Dragonetti scholar Fiona M. Palmer notes that his oeuvre is considerable and illuminates his facility as a player—there are 18 volumes of his work at the British Library alone (1997, p. 76). His manuscripts include works for solo double bass with and without piano accompaniment, double bass concerti and chamber music composed for ensembles both with and without double bass.

Dragonetti wished for his manuscripts to be printed after his death and to be brought to life by generations of bassists to come (Palmer, 1997, p. 78). Although his friend Vincent Novello did carefully preserve his manuscripts, Dragonetti’s aspirations of being published were not realised. Fortunately for double bassists today, John Feeney, principal double bass of the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, is bringing Dragonetti’s wishes to fruition. In 1996, Feeney visited the Manuscript Room of the British Museum, having heard about the wealth of
original Dragonetti manuscripts available that had not been played since the composer’s time (Sykes, 2010, p. 47). Sykes (2010) reports that Feeney is now bringing exposure to these works after “163 years in darkness” (p. 47).

Another researcher making Dragonetti’s work accessible to the public is Nanna Koch. Her 2002 German publication *Concertante Curiosities* researches and analyses Dragonetti’s output of ‘solo’ quintets. These works are scored for a string quintet of violin, two violas, cello and solo double bass and feature the double bass as the leading voice of the ensemble. Koch’s research has resulted in the publication of three quintets so far: Quintet in B flat major (2006), Quintet in C Major (2008) and Quintet in g minor (2010), all through publisher Diletto Musicale (Koch, 2002).

John Feeney attests to Dragonetti’s skill as a composer, describing the chamber music he uncovered as “varied, colorful, entirely unique and well crafted” (Feeney, as cited in Muroki, 2010, p. 41). He also observes that, “Not only does the music display virtuosity, but also it expresses an eclectic mix of styles and moods, freely moving from one evocative scene to another, all stitched together with fantastic skill and creativity” (Feeney, as cited in Sykes, 2010, p. 48). Will Crutchfield comments that, in his compositions, Dragonetti “clearly had fun showing people what the contrabass could do, beyond its obvious qualities” (Crutchfield, as cited in Sykes, 2010, p. 48). Dragonetti’s compositions reveal his technical command of the double bass and his desire to showcase it as a virtuosic solo voice.

Since his discovery of Dragonetti’s manuscripts in the British library, John Feeney has been bringing this music to the broader double bass community by publishing, performing and recording Dragonetti’s compositions. In 2008, he founded the DNA Quintet, the acronym DNA being an abbreviated form of “Dragonetti’s New Academy”. Feeney reflected on the story behind the group’s name:
The reason I chose the name Dragonetti’s New Academy for the project was to try to give a kind of rebirth to the vitality of musical life that double bassists during Dragonetti's time and earlier - throughout the classical era - enjoyed. The double bass was no stranger to chamber music, rather, it was a ubiquitous presence. Musical scholarship in the last two decades has finally been catching up with the truth as regards the usage of the double bass in music. Hence the term "New Academy" (J. Feeney, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

The DNA quintet has already achieved much in their quest to bring exposure to Dragonetti’s work. It has released two CDs, Dragonetti’s Academy Volume I and II, that feature five of Dragonetti’s quintets and two string quintets, as well as the newly discovered Divertimento Hob.II:C5 for two violins, cello and double bass by Joseph Haydn discussed earlier. Feeney has also made the performing scores for all of the works featured on the Dragonetti’s New Academy recordings available to purchase through his website, http://johnfeeney.musicaneo.com/. We worked from Feeney’s edition of Quintet No. 26 in B flat Major.

Through his work publishing, performing and recording these remarkable works of Dragonetti, John Feeney has made a significant contribution to the double bass community. In the words of leading double bass performer and pedagogue Gary Karr, “I salute John for his efforts, and I look forward with great pleasure and anticipation to the impact they will have on the future of double bass playing” (Karr, as cited in Sykes, 2010, p. 49).

The instrumentation for Dragonetti’s Quintet No. 26 in B flat Major is specified as solo double bass, violin, two violas and basso. For my recital programme, I chose to have the basso part performed on cello. Webster (1976) examines the use of the term basso in eighteenth century repertoire in his research, clarifying that the term simply refers to the bass
part and can be performed on cello or double bass (p. 413). John Feeney notes that the Dragonetti quintets are generally scored for a solo basso and an accompanying basso and can be performed very effectively with two double basses or with a solo double bass and a cello (J. Feeney, personal communication, October 1, 2014). On using the cello, rather than a second double bass, Feeney writes, “I think using a cello has the obvious asset of including a separate voice and color to the ensemble and also facilitates access to wider repertoire of other composers (J. Feeney, personal communication, October 1, 2014).

In comparison to other string quintets, such as Dvořák’s Opus 77, which has come to be a staple of collaborative double bass repertoire, Dragonetti’s Quintet No. 26 is uniquely constructed. Rather than assigning the bulk of the primary melodic material to the violinist, Dragonetti has given the double bass the primary solo line. Considering Dragonetti primarily wrote this repertoire for himself to perform, it is unsurprising that the double bass is featured prominently and that the part is challenging and rewarding.

As previously stated, this work is one of many original Dragonetti manuscripts housed in the British Library. It is interesting to note that it is from a collection entitled, “Works for Double Bass Solo,” rather than in the collection of “Quintettts”. This highlights the fact that Vincenzo Novello, who compiled Dragonetti’s works for the British Library, was aware of the significant role given to the double bass in this work. Despite this designation, it appears to be fully collaborative chamber music rather than a solo bass work with string accompaniment.

Dragonetti’s achievements were extraordinary for an artist whose instrument was neither the violin nor the piano, the favoured virtuoso vehicles of the time. He established both a new status for his instrument and new standards against which future double bass players would come to be judged (Palmer, 1997, p. 62). Performing his music provides
insight into his extraordinary technical facility and his uninhibited expectations of what could be achieved on the instrument. His B flat Quintet allows double bassists the opportunity to perform chamber music where the double bass is no longer relegated to the background, but is a striking feature. In this way, it shares much with the concertante Viennese works showcased in this recital programme.
Setting up Viennese tuning

In researching the recital programme, it quickly became clear that to truly understand the selected repertoire, I needed to explore each work in its original tuning. I decided to present two separate recitals—the first using my normal practice of standard fourths tuning and the second using Viennese tuning for the relevant works. Re-learning this music in its original tuning posed a significant challenge. However, it also allowed me the opportunity to explore how each work was intended to be played and to more deeply understand the composers’ intentions for the music. For details of the second recital programme, see Appendix II. The order of works had to be adjusted to accommodate the changes in tuning throughout the programme, and two double basses were required for performance, as Dragonetti’s Quintet was written for a double bass tuned in fourths.

Having decided to re-learn the recital programme in Viennese tuning, I needed to explore the best way to set up this tuning system. I found Korneel Le Compte’s 1991-2 article, “Viennese Tuning” a good starting point, as it provides suggestions on how to set up an instrument and adjust to the new tuning system (pp. 74-75). I also corresponded directly with double bassists experienced with Viennese tuning. I played for Damien Eckersley, an Australian professional double bassist who has studied and worked in Vienna. His advice was invaluable and helped me to feel more confident performing in the new tuning system (D. Eckersley, personal communication, October 20, 2014). I also contacted Dane Roberts, double bassist with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, who specialises in historical double bass. Although he replied after the recital process was completed, his thoughts were pertinent to my research and will be included in this discussion (D. Roberts, personal communication, November 25, 2014).
All sources I consulted on Viennese tuning concurred that the top four strings should be A¹-D-F#-A. However, the tuning for the bottom string was less consistent. Viennese double bass specialist Francis Baines (1988) cautions that the tuning of the lowest string causes consternation and, as mentioned earlier, states that it is usually given as F natural but is variable (p. 108). In contrast, Dane Roberts commented that there are no sources for a note lower than F in Viennese tuning and that he believed tuning the lowest string to F was logical both technically and for the sonority of the instrument (D. Roberts, personal communication, November 25, 2014).

Roberts did note that there are occasionally notes below F in Viennese bass repertoire, including Schubert’s ‘Trout’ Quintet, and that some bassists experiment with a low D string. However, he suggested that it is better to work and adjust within the tuning system, just as one has to occasionally with modern orchestral tuning. He commented that he believed the preoccupation with playing all low notes within their written range is one of our time, commenting, “Surely the Contraviolonist that Leopold Mozart praised (and he was a snob) with their 5 stringed, fretted instruments, were playing their instrument in a way that they felt sounded the best - not in the way of a modern orchestral double bassist” (D. Roberts, personal communication, November 25, 2014).

In the recital repertoire that was selected, both the Michael Haydn and Franz Joseph Haydn bass parts used low F below the bass clef. Franz Joseph Haydn also notates one low D below the score, which would only be available to a player in modern tuning if they had an extension or a fifth string. It is common practice today for players without these notes available to play them an octave higher. Tobias Glöckler's 1996 edition of *Per questa bella mano* suggests tuning the lowest string to F#. Roberts commented that he did not approve of this suggestion and would consistently tune the lowest string to F natural (D. Roberts,
personal communication, November 25, 2014). However, after experimenting with both options, I found tuning to F sharp did not have a discernable impact on the overall resonance and more easily accommodated the two moments where I needed to play on that string, allowing me to execute the notes with less shifting.

In my initial experiments with Viennese tuning, I found the two works in E flat major by Dittersdorf and Michael Haydn particularly confusing and difficult to play well. The ease and resonance that came naturally for the works in D Major was notably lacking and the sound lacked the brilliance for which I was striving. I researched playing in E flat major with Viennese tuning and found that Chapman (2003), Baines (1988), Planyavsky (1998) and Brun (2000) all noted that scordatura was used for pieces written in E flat major. This meant that double bassists read the music as though it was in D Major (down a semitone) and tuned the strings up a semitone to G\textsubscript{b}-B\textsubscript{b}-E\textsubscript{b}-G-B\textsubscript{b}. Chapman (2003) asserts that this scordatura technique increased the brilliance and projection of the instrument, while continuing to maximise the resonance of the instrument by allowing for open-string possibilities at important structural junctures (p. 229).

Baines (1988) remarks that when Dittersdorf, Hoffmeister, Vanhal and Sperger used the keys of E and Eb, they typically used a semitone or tone scordatura (p. 108). Paul Brun (2000) reports that the use of scordatura increased the tonal possibilities of the Viennese bass and made it more convenient for playing with wind instruments” (p. 103). Dane Roberts agreed that playing the Dittersdorf Duo as though in D major with scordatura is an interesting approach and suggested that another solution is the violist playing in D Major as well, as is traditionally done with Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola. He also commented “the final criterion should be if the idiomatic aspects of the Wiener Bass really bring something to the piece” (D. Roberts, personal communication, November 25, 2014).
With this information in mind, and after working on playing the Dittersdorf and Michael Haydn works in D Major and E flat Major, I decided to use E flat scordatura for both works. This tuning approach allowed me to achieve greater resonance and projection in performance, as it made more open strings and natural harmonics available. Scores of the double bass parts for these works transposed to D Major are provided in Appendix V (Dittersdorf) and Appendix VI (Michael Haydn).

Through this process of research and experimentation, I decided to present my recital opening with the suggested Viennese tuning from Tobias Glöckler for *Per questa bella mano* (F#₁-A₁-D-F#₁-A). Then I tuned my bottom string to the more widely accepted option of F natural (F₁-A₁-D-F#₁-A) for works by Sperger, Vanhal, Hoffmeister and Franz Joseph Haydn. I then moved to an E flat scordatura tuning (Gᵇ₁-Bᵇ₁-Eᵇ₁-G-Bᵇ₁) for Dittersdorf and Michael Haydn. Finally, the recital ended on a bass in modern fourths tuning for Dragonetti’s Quintet.

For my choice of strings, I used the following from lowest to highest:

F – solo tuning F# string tuned down semitone
A – orchestra A string
D – orchestra D string
F# - orchestra G string tuned down semitone
A – solo tuning A string
Comparing Viennese and Standard Tuning

Planyavsky (1998) asserts: “the authentic performance of literature written for the Viennese Quart-Terz Violin, is largely dependent on the use of the original tuning (F₁)-A₁-D-Fsharp-A” (p. 147). Re-learning my recital programme (with the exception of the Dragonetti Quintet) in Viennese tuning provided remarkable insight into this repertoire. The new tuning completely transformed the sound quality of the works and the projection of the bass within the ensemble. The change in tuning also impacted the technical aspect of playing these works.

I found that, for most part, performing these works in their original tuning allowed me to play with significantly greater ease. Slatford (1986) comments on the increased ease of playing that Viennese tuning allows:

Most Classical virtuoso bass music relies to a great extent on arpeggios built on the natural harmonic series, or an extended passage of double stops, so obviously there will be many notes that lie easily on a bass tuned as the composer intended but are unobtainable on a modern instrument (p. 446).

As Slatford recommends, I was able to utilise less complicated fingerings and execute fast passagework, double stops and chords more effectively. Viennese tuning made a greater number of open string and harmonic options available to me. This, combined with the greater ease of playing, contributed to an audible difference in sound quality.

The seven works that I relearned in Viennese tuning fell into three categories: works with a relatively simple bass line (Franz Joseph Haydn and Michael Haydn), works that combined bass line material with solo material (Dittersdorf and Vanhal) and, finally, works where the double bass was the leading voice that featured highly virtuosic material (Sperger,
Hoffmeister and Mozart). The function of the double bass in each work had a significant impact on the ease with which I adapted to the new tuning system.

The bass part of the first movement of Franz Joseph Haydn’s Quartet is quite simple and essentially sight-readable in standard tuning. However, reading it in a different tuning system was more complicated. At the same time, as I became more accustomed to playing in Viennese tuning, I observed that it did allow greater ease of fingering. This is clearly visible when one compares video excerpts of the opening of the work in both tunings, as seen in video examples 1 and 2.

Video example 1: [https://youtu.be/kdxq091N7mM](https://youtu.be/kdxq091N7mM)

F. J. Haydn: Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5, Movement I: Presto, bars 1 – 36 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 2: [https://youtu.be/e3cpd3JHYyQ](https://youtu.be/e3cpd3JHYyQ)

F. J. Haydn: Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5, Movement I: Presto, bars 1 – 36 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

In Viennese tuning, it is possible to play the first thirty-six bars almost entirely in half position, only moving to accommodate the Ds in bars 20 and 22. Conversely, the version in modern tuning demands much more shifting. Keeping in mind that players during the Classical era would have been dealing with unwieldy gut strings, Viennese tuning would have allowed greater ease when executing the bass line.

Michael Haydn’s Trio places similar demands on the double bassist to Joseph Haydn’s work. However, my playing experience was notably different. This was because I
used scordatura for this work, transposing the double bass part from E flat major to D major and then tuning my strings up a semitone so they sounded in the key of E flat. This had a marked impact on the way I was able to perform the work. E flat major can be a notoriously difficult key for double bassists, often sounding less resonant and relatively closed in quality.

Using scordatura tuning meant that the top three strings of my instrument were an E flat major chord, opening up the possibilities of open strings and harmonics. In video examples 3 and 4, one can hear the first eight bars of the movement isolated from the other parts in both tunings. It is immediately apparent that the Viennese scordatura enables more resonance using mostly open strings, except for a few notes. The sound is noticeably more open than the modern version.

Video example 3:  https://youtu.be/XBgnK8jqRDs

M. Haydn: Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E flat major, Movement III: Presto, bars 1 – 8 (Orchestral Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Video example 4:  https://youtu.be/_jarOVRpwL1

M. Haydn: Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E flat major, Movement III: Presto, bars 1 – 8 (Viennese Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

When the scordatura Viennese tuning is translated into the ensemble it has a clear effect. This can be observed in video examples 5 and 6, which show the first 37 bars of the movement in both tunings. The more resonant quality of the double bass allows for more consistent tuning and a higher quality of sound. I am no longer relying so heavily on vibrato, as the instrument is ringing naturally. The whole feel of the piece is less forced. This experiment in tuning highlights the difference in approach to vibrato during this period when
compared to contemporary practice. It therefore made me question the necessity of a continuous vibrato for bass lines in this repertoire.

Video example 5: [https://youtu.be/AFrNmYaPekA](https://youtu.be/AFrNmYaPekA)

M. Haydn: Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E flat major, Movement III: Presto, bars 1 – 37 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 6: [https://youtu.be/U_CzfUdhTpg](https://youtu.be/U_CzfUdhTpg)


I used the same scordatura tuning system for the Dittersdorf Duet and, similarly to the experience with the Michael Haydn, it was very effective. Dittersdorf often utilises arpeggiated figures and they are particularly idiomatic to strings tuned in thirds. This is evidenced in the following video examples.

Video example 7: [https://youtu.be/eWAPaJdj0TY](https://youtu.be/eWAPaJdj0TY)

C. Dittersdorf: Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: Thema con variazioni, bars 49 – 56 (Orchestral Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Video example 8: [https://youtu.be/_zyjk9WiBfY](https://youtu.be/_zyjk9WiBfY)

C. Dittersdorf: Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: Thema con variazioni, bars 49 – 56 (Viennese Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Video examples 7 and 8 show the first half of Variation III (bars 49 – 56) in orchestral and Viennese tuning isolated from the ensemble. This passage is considerably more acrobatic
in modern tuning. I need to change position constantly, sometimes even within a single broken chord. In contrast, every chord played in Viennese tuning remains in one position and the opening E flat major chord can be played entirely with open strings, instigating a generous resonance that continues throughout the passage. This makes the accompaniment appear fuller, with a warm and ringing sound. In the context of the ensemble, Viennese tuning allows the double bass to better support the melodic content in the viola. The use of scordatura impacts both melodic and accompanying material in the double bass part. Video examples 9 and 10 show Variations I and II in performance.

Video example 9: https://youtu.be/jJDeb7Y_HkE

C. Dittersdorf: Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: Thema con variazioni, bars 17 – 48 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 10: https://youtu.be/NLGxTTIy9EE

C. Dittersdorf: Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: Thema con variazioni, bars 17 – 48 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

In Variation I, the moving accompaniment in the double bass is given a new life in Viennese tuning. Again, the difference between playing in the keys of E flat and D major is noticeable. In the D major version the natural ring of the strings can be more heavily relied on, whereas the modern tuning version again relies more heavily on vibrato to create additional warmth to the sound. The double bass takes over the melodic line for Variation II and the ease of playing in Viennese tuning is apparent. As the top string in scordatura Viennese tuning is a tone and a half higher than in the modern tuning version, I no longer needed to shift as far to accommodate notes in the higher register. The highest note in the
variation (Bb, now an A in Viennese tuning) at the start of the second half is now available as a harmonic, significantly changing the ease of playing and consistency of intonation. In the modern tuning performance I executed that note in tune but it had a tension in the sound from the effort of reaching it, a strain the Viennese version avoided.

In the second movement of Vanhal’s G Major Divertimento, the double bass functions as both a bass line and as the leading voice. In the melodic material, the benefits of Viennese tuning become most obvious. Video examples 11 and 12 show bars 35 to 36 of the double bass part in both tunings. In these two bars, the double bass has a rising figure, with an A pedal.

Video example 11: https://youtu.be/wc1un1VAPSk

J. B. Vanhal: Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, Movement II: Menuetto, bars 35 – 36 (Orchestral Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Video example 12: https://youtu.be/bq6KxKyFbtg

J. B. Vanhal: Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, Movement II: Menuetto, bars 35 – 36 (Viennese Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

As can be seen, the passage is considerably easier in Viennese tuning, because the pedal A is now an open string. Not only does this ease of playing allow for better intonation and a more effortless feel, it also allows the pedal A to resonate more, creating more sound and a richer tone.

The double bass is featured as the solo voice throughout the Trio, available in the following two video examples (13 and 14). When viewing the videos, it is clear that the material works well in both modern and Viennese tuning. However, the D Major resonance
that comes with Viennese tuning allows it to have a more glowing and soloistic tone. The Trio solo can now start on an open A string, which can also be used as a pedal in bars 35 & 36, as previously discussed. These open string pedal notes are indicated in blue in score example 1.


Video example 13: [https://youtu.be/jkm3O0OFyMk](https://youtu.be/jkm3O0OFyMk)

J. B. Vanhal: Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, Movement II: Menuetto, bars 27 – 46 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 14: [https://youtu.be/cJFtxfnrQhU](https://youtu.be/cJFtxfnrQhU)


Sperger’s duet was particularly challenging to play well in modern tuning and I was quite disappointed with my initial performance. The Doblinger edition that I used provided a bass part in solo tuning, which would have made it slightly easier to play. Solo tuning, a system used by double bassists for solo repertoire, uses strings tuned one tone higher than standard orchestral tuning. This means the strings on a four-string double bass would change from E₁-A₁-D-G to F#₁-B₁-E-A. The higher strings help the instrument achieve a brighter and
more soloistic sound, thus aiding projection. Solo tuning has the same top string as Viennese tuning (A string). As much of the material in Sperger’s duet is in the high range on the top string, it would have made it more comfortable to play. However, I decided to play it in modern orchestral tuning to allow me the same comparison between the Viennese and modern orchestral tuning systems as I had for the other works on the programme. This meant I needed to transpose the part from the Doblinger score down one tone. The transposed double bass part in orchestral tuning is available in Appendix VII.

When I began the process of re-learning this work in Viennese tuning, it immediately struck me how much more idiomatic the music was to the instrument. Moreover, I could play with significantly less effort. This is particularly evident from the first melodic material in the double bass part shown in video examples 15 and 16.

Video example 15: [https://youtu.be/bKHjbOLNRMY](https://youtu.be/bKHjbOLNRMY)

J. M. Sperger: Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze, bars 9 – 16 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 16: [https://youtu.be/7VoHt2_O0RA](https://youtu.be/7VoHt2_O0RA)

J. M. Sperger: Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze, bars 9 – 16 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Although it is certainly still challenging, there is much greater ease playing in Viennese tuning. The melody now starts on a harmonic and there are more harmonics that can be used throughout the passage. The sound is therefore less tight and the section is easier to play with good intonation. In Viennese tuning, I was able to allow the musical line to come through, despite the technical challenges.
Sperger’s work demonstrates the greater availability of harmonics in Viennese tuning. This is particularly highlighted in the passage from bar 64 to bar 81 shown in video examples 17 and 18.

Video example 17: [https://youtu.be/He2YzhfUvbY](https://youtu.be/He2YzhfUvbY)

J. M. Sperger: Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze, bars 64 – 81 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 18: [https://youtu.be/cQQGYfuKBUg](https://youtu.be/cQQGYfuKBUg)

J. M. Sperger: Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze, bars 64 – 81 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

This passage is markedly more successful in Viennese tuning and the greater availability of harmonics contributes again. In the modern tuning version, when there are harmonics available they are in much less convenient places, higher on the instrument on lower strings. This is clearly demonstrated in video examples 19 and 20, which provide the double bass part for bars 71 to 73 played slowly and in isolation.

Video example 19: [https://youtu.be/h-Sg70fC9BQ](https://youtu.be/h-Sg70fC9BQ)

J. M. Sperger: Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze, bars 71 – 73 (Orchestral Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Video example 20: [https://youtu.be/rpJkuTJ3QCQ](https://youtu.be/rpJkuTJ3QCQ)

In the featured passage, Viennese tuning allows for the arpeggiated figure to be almost entirely comprised of harmonics on the top string and the high note in bar 73 is also a harmonic. Below, in score example 2, harmonics on the top A string are marked in blue.


In stark contrast, for modern tuning I needed to be much higher up on the instrument to facilitate the harmonics and I had to change strings multiple times. This affected the resonance and accuracy of the passage. The high note in bar 73 was a stopped note, which again raised the level of difficulty and made it difficult to execute consistently.

Viennese tuning also facilitates the playing of chords. The second movement of Sperger’s duet ends on an A major chord in first inversion on the double bass, as shown in video examples 21 and 22.

Video example 21: [https://youtu.be/5qDSY-XjwqI](https://youtu.be/5qDSY-XjwqI)

J. M. Sperger: Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze, bars 115 – 116 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 22: [https://youtu.be/pCTdaH_dzHU](https://youtu.be/pCTdaH_dzHU)

In Viennese tuning, the top A of the chord can be played as a harmonic, whereas in orchestral tuning it is a stopped note. Having the top note of the final chord as a harmonic with Viennese tuning means that the intonation can be guaranteed and the note will easily ring, without vibrato.

Similarly with the Sperger duo, the Hofmeister editors chose to publish the double bass part of Hoffmeister’s Solo Quartet in D Major in solo tuning. Again, to allow for the best comparison, I played it in modern orchestral tuning and transposed the part down one tone – See Appendix VIII for the transposed score. If I chose to tackle this work again in fourths tuning I would definitely use solo strings so I would have the advantage of a top A string.

Many of the observations I made with regard to Sperger’s writing also apply to Hoffmeister’s work. It was significantly easier to play in Viennese tuning and, even in the early stages of re-learning the part, it was apparent that Hoffmeister had written music to suit the characteristics of the Viennese double bass. This is evidenced in the opening melody that keeps returning throughout the Rondo movement in video examples 23 and 24.

Video example 23: [https://youtu.be/m6WFJZ_8OEY](https://youtu.be/m6WFJZ_8OEY)
F. A. Hoffmeister: Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo, bars 1 – 8 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 24: [https://youtu.be/CmOi2lSaY8E](https://youtu.be/CmOi2lSaY8E)
F. A. Hoffmeister: Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo, bars 1 – 8 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).
In Viennese tuning, the opening melody could remain on the top string. This allowed for the best projection and consistency of sound and also enabled me to play the melody line with appropriate intent and phrasing. In modern tuning, I played this passage across the string for ease and accuracy, which slightly segmented the line and was therefore not as lyrical.

Playing this work in orchestral fourths tuning actually rendered some short sections almost unplayable. In the score in bars 31–34, there is an *ossia*, or alternative passage, allowing an easier version with not as many notes—in this case, triplets are replaced with duplets. When I prepared the work in orchestral tuning, I decided to settle for the simpler version as I could not make the triplets speak clearly in rehearsals. However, in my performance in Viennese tuning, I was able to execute the more complex triplet version. These differences can be observed in video examples 25 and 26.

Video example 25: [https://youtu.be/uceBjjRV8To](https://youtu.be/uceBjjRV8To)
F. A. Hoffmeister: Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo, bars 31 – 34 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 26: [https://youtu.be/mZF_ya7H9IU](https://youtu.be/mZF_ya7H9IU)

Similarly, in the score there is a suggested cut from bar 88 to bar 93. Although I did work on this section in rehearsal, I eventually decided to make the suggested cut in my performance in orchestral tuning as I found the triplets unplayable. In Viennese tuning, however, I found it was possible to execute this passage, as shown in video example 27.
As was common in repertoire for the Viennese bass, Hoffmeister includes passages of double stops throughout this work. The cadenza shown in video examples 28 and 29 is almost entirely constructed in double stops.

As can be observed in video examples 28 and 29, I found the double stops far easier to execute in Viennese tuning. The cadenza in the orchestral tuning performance was quite unsuccessful, whereas in the Viennese tuning version, I not only could reach the notes, but I was also able to perform them with shape and direction. The following two score examples represent the most challenging section of the cadenza, which is entirely comprised of double stops. Score example 3 features the actual notes from the excerpt with notation of the fingering that I used in standard fourths tuning. Score example 4 is a realisation of the
Viennese tuning performance, with the notes notated as the pitches that would have been played if I were using standard tuning.

Comparing these examples, one can see that both versions allow for the use of harmonics (notated with a circle). However, in the Viennese tuning version, I was able to play a number of the double stops with both notes as harmonics, which made a significant difference to the ease with which I could play the passage. One can also observe that the notes in the Viennese tuning version sit lower on the instrument, as the top three strings in Viennese tuning (A-F#-D) are higher than those on standard fourths tuning (G-D-A). Finally, in the standard tuning version I had to be quite acrobatic with the use of my thumb (marked with a +), using it for many different notes. In the Viennese tuning version, I was mainly able to reserve my thumb for notes played as harmonics, which again increased the ease of playing the passage.

I found that Viennese tuning also allowed me to execute fast passagework more accurately, as the strings rang with a more natural ease and the notes sat lower on the instrument. This is demonstrated in video examples 30 and 31.

Video example 30: https://youtu.be/V0qur8irnso

F. A. Hoffmeister: Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo, bars 95 – 98 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 31: https://youtu.be/FCVHyNzDQ9Y

F. A. Hoffmeister: Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo, bars 95 – 98 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Unlike the cadenza, I was able to play this passage successfully in both tuning systems. However, the version in Viennese tuning has greater clarity and accuracy, allowing it to be played more in the spirit of the music. In orchestral tuning, there was a sense of greater effort that translated negatively into the sound quality.

Many historians consider the double bass obbligato part of Mozart’s *Per questa bella mano* to be the peak of virtuosic writing for the Viennese bass, so perhaps unsurprisingly, I
found this work a significant challenge in both tunings. However, I think the Viennese tuning performance was far more successful, both in execution and in expression.

In my preparation, I consulted an edition by double bass historian Tobias Glöckler with regards to approaching playing the work in Viennese tuning. In his 1996 edition of Mozart’s work Glöckler uses what he describes as *tablature-like notation*, where the notes can be read and fingered in the same way as on a usual instrument which is tuned in fourths, allowing double bassists to play in Viennese tuning while maintaining the sensation of their usual method of fourths fingering (Glöckler, 1996). Although it was interesting to explore this method, I actually found it very distracting reading a part where the exact pitches were not notated. I quickly reverted to the original score, using my ear as a guide to work out the new tuning system. Damien Eckersley commented that he had a similar experience with this edition and recommended taking the time to understand the tuning system (D. Eckersley, personal communication, October 20, 2014).

Generally, even with the high level of complexity, I found playing this work in Viennese tuning markedly easier. When reviewing both performances, this ease is obvious from the opening statements in the double bass in video examples 32 and 33.

Video example 32: [https://youtu.be/YSTtjv2O3HM](https://youtu.be/YSTtjv2O3HM)

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bars 9 – 12 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 33: [https://youtu.be/aJahKE51PHo](https://youtu.be/aJahKE51PHo)

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bars 9 – 12 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).
In the first performance in orchestral tuning, I executed the double stops quite accurately but the sound is somewhat forced. In Viennese tuning, this opening passage remained a challenge. However, I do think it sounds more open and it was easier to phrase well.

Mozart’s double bass writing in this work is littered with double stops, which is by far the greatest challenge of the work. In the following videos (34 and 35), I am playing bar 90 slowly and isolated from the other parts.

Video example 34: [https://youtu.be/ZvjlDG7Hy28](https://youtu.be/ZvjlDG7Hy28)

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bar 90 (Orchestral Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Video example 35: [https://youtu.be/78I2skD7ius](https://youtu.be/78I2skD7ius)

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bar 90 (Viennese Tuning). Recorded on 20/10/2014 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

In orchestral tuning, I need to shift on the fingerboard to accommodate each new chord, except the final chord, where I need to cross to lower strings. These small motions are manageable at the demonstrated slower tempo. However, when this bar is performed, it is considerably faster and repeated four times, magnifying these challenges. In Viennese tuning, the first two chords of bar 90 can be played with both notes as harmonics and one only needs to shift for the final chord. At tempo, this greatly changes the ease with which this passage can be executed. This is demonstrated in the following video examples (36 and 37) of bars 90–94, in context.
Video example 36: https://youtu.be/pGfjL-6vPsK

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bars 90 – 94 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 37: https://youtu.be/bnvvF0elwr4

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bars 90 – 94 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

Again, the excerpt in orchestral tuning is playable but it is a little tight in the sound and the effort is tangible. The version in Viennese tuning is clearly easier and is played more accurately.

The section I was most displeased with in my first performance in fourths tuning was bar 115 to 129, near the end of the work. This burst of frenetic energy that continues to the end of the aria begins with a prolonged passage of fast semi-quavers and then moves into changing double stop figures. This passage can be seen in video examples 38 and 39.

Video example 38: https://youtu.be/YFo-lLuJRKe

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bars 115 – 129 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 39: https://youtu.be/EQl2uz4gTXs

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bars 115 – 129 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).
In the performance in orchestral tuning, I completely misjudged the start of the semi-quaver passage and it was very difficult to recover. The double stops were also affected, having some issues with intonation. In my performance with Viennese tuning, this entire section was executed more successfully. The string crossings were more clear and accurate and the tuning in both the semi-quaver passage and the double stops was more consistent. The reason I was able to perform the semi-quaver passagework more successfully was that Viennese tuning made available a significantly simpler fingering, which is visible in score examples 5 and 6 below, followed by a more detailed explanation.


Similar to the earlier Hoffmeister examples, the first example features the actual notes from bars 115 to 118 with the fingering that I used in standard fourths tuning being notated. The second example is a realisation of the Viennese tuning performance, with the notes notated as what would have been played if I were using standard tuning. In both examples, notes that can be played as open resonances (open strings or harmonics) are notated in blue.

In both versions, I was able to utilise harmonics and open strings. However, in the Viennese tuning version, noticeably more of these options were available. In fact, the whole second bar could be played without pressing down a closed note. Additionally, I am lower in the range of the instrument. The use of thumb is also noteworthy. In fourths tuning, I needed to press down my thumb to execute many of the fingering patterns. In contrast, my thumb was used only on harmonics in Viennese tuning. This greatly enhanced the ease of playing, allowing the passage to work more successfully.

Learning this recital programme in Viennese tuning, especially after I had experienced performing it in the fourths tuning system with which I am intimately acquainted, was a revelation. Although I felt that my performances of Michael Haydn’s trio and Dittersdorf’s duet were both successful in orchestral tuning, the use of E flat scordatura really brought these works to life. The change in resonance and projection was clear and allowed me to play with more freedom and flair. Similarly, both performances of the Vanhal trio were effective but I think Viennese tuning allowed me to more successfully capture the spirit of the work.

The works by Mozart, Sperger and Hoffmeister were transformed in Viennese tuning. Although I have no doubt many accomplished double bass players would be able to successfully tackle these works in modern orchestral tuning, it is not something I would recommend. They sit more easily in Viennese tuning and the fast passagework and double
and triple stops can be executed more accurately. More importantly though, Viennese tuning enables the player to perform these works with greater resonance, improved sound quality and with a clearer sense of phrasing and direction. The experience of exploring these works in Viennese tuning has inspired me to re-learn other virtuosic Viennese Classical repertoire, especially the Vanhal and Dittersdorf Concertos.

In spite of the overall success, I felt there was one work where Viennese tuning had the least impact: Franz Joseph Haydn’s Quartet. Although Viennese tuning allowed for technically simpler fingerings, it was such a straightforward bass line in orchestral tuning and the change of tuning complicated what was initially an uncomplicated work.

Despite its clear advantages, it is not always practical to perform works conceived for a Viennese double bass in period tuning. Comparing systems directly allowed me to examine the best way to approach this repertoire on an instrument in modern tuning. Most striking was the effect Viennese tuning had on the overall sound quality and resonance. For this repertoire, it is imperative that an open, ringing sound is achieved. To create this, I would recommend using all available open strings and harmonics. In contemporary double bass playing it is quite common for players to avoid using open strings or harmonics completely or, if players use them, the notes tend to be carefully disguised. When I played for Damien Eckersley, he commented that he felt I was disguising the harmonics too well and suggested that, in this repertoire, it is nice to bring out their different sound quality as a feature (D. Eckersley, personal communication, October 20, 2014).

This approach of playing with as many open strings and harmonics as possible makes the use of consistent vibrato redundant. The open, ringing sound of the Viennese strings, along with the high prevalence of harmonics and open strings allowed me to have a more sparing approach to vibrato. I would also consider approaching the use of vibrato in this
repertoire more conservatively on a modern set-up. This seems particularly appropriate for bass line material, such as that in the Franz Joseph Haydn quartet and the Michael Haydn trio. If I performed these works again in modern tuning, I would try and create a round, ringing tone through my articulation and bow speed, rather than relying so heavily on vibrato.

Using Viennese tuning significantly affected the fingering possibilities for each of these works. This was most overt in arpeggiated figures, where often bariolage fingerings became possible. Although not all of these options are available when using fourths tuning, I would definitely seek out more opportunities to do arpeggio and chordal figures across the string where possible, to emulate the texture it brings to the sound. Finally, it is worth noting that the lowest note in Viennese tuning is an F, whereas double basses in modern tuning have an E string and have the potential to go down to a C or B if the player has a fifth string or an extension. This means that notes below the Viennese range should be carefully considered, in the context of the music and the other parts.
Collaborative Experience

This recital programme offered me the opportunity to experience a number of contrasting collaborative experiences, as the function of the double bass varied widely from one piece to the next. The instrument was utilised in a standard bass line role, as an equal partner sharing melodic material and also as a solo feature. In the works by Hoffmeister and Dragonetti, the double bass even took the role of leading voice. I also worked with different groups of musicians in each performance. The process of rehearsing and performing both recitals allowed me to deeply examine the collaborative experience.

In Franz Joseph Haydn’s quartet for two violins, cello and double bass, the bass line is simple and the harmony clearly dictates the phrasing and shape. For this work, the first violin is the clear leader throughout. This posed some interesting questions about the collaboration because I was the coordinator of the concert but it made musical sense to take a supportive ensemble role. Fortunately, in both concerts I was playing with colleagues who were not only accomplished at leading an ensemble, but who were also willing to rehearse in a collaborative manner.

The two performances of this Presto in video examples 40 and 41 demonstrate one effect collaborating with different musicians can have: markedly different approaches in interpretation. The Viennese tuning recital was heavily influenced by the inclusion of a first violinist with significant early music experience.

Video example 40: [https://youtu.be/z5SPu4hy_5M](https://youtu.be/z5SPu4hy_5M)

F. J. Haydn: Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5, Movement I: Presto, bars 49 – 68 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
Video example 41: [https://youtu.be/TM3-zSeF45M](https://youtu.be/TM3-zSeF45M)

F. J. Haydn: Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5, Movement I: Presto, bars 49 – 68 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

In the second performance, where Viennese tuning was featured, our decision to use bow vibrato for the repeated notes instead of articulated separate bows has a tangible impact on the sound quality and character of the music. We also take a little more time at the end of the phrase, rather than moving straight through. Reviewing the recordings, it is quite interesting to note the differences between the two performances and to consider the wide range of possibilities available in this one short movement.

The double bass is utilised in a similar manner in Michael Haydn’s trio, performing a bass line function. This work employs the unusual instrumentation of viola, cello and double bass, casting the viola in a leadership role and placing the cello as a middle voice. As all the instruments are quite close to each other in range, the sound is quite dense. This meant that the group needed to collaborate carefully to achieve a balanced sound, not least because Michael Haydn emphasises the unusual texture with uneven bar groupings and jagged accompanying figures. Although the double bass is predominantly performing an accompaniment role, there is one interesting moment where the three instruments join together for a short melodic statement. This can be seen in video example 42.

Video example 42: [https://youtu.be/Uk6Rgk1nhOQ](https://youtu.be/Uk6Rgk1nhOQ)

M. Haydn: Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E flat major, Movement III: Presto, bars 51 – 70 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
The excerpt begins with the cello taking the melody, the viola an accompanying role and the double bass providing the bass line, with occasional interjections. The texture and character of the music suddenly change when all three instruments come together in a four-bar melody in rhythmic and melodic unison. In performance, we needed to be careful to maintain good contact with each other so the ensemble was strong and our articulation was unanimous, as this is the only such moment in the movement.

Vanhal’s *Menuetto and Trio* employs the double bass in both solo and accompanying roles. Strong collaboration ensures that the changes between the roles are smooth. The double bass is the feature throughout the *Trio*, having the melody for the whole section. In the *Menuetto*, the double bass plays an accompanying role but occasionally jumps out of the texture with melodic content. Video example 43 provides a short excerpt from the start of the movement that demonstrates the changing role of the double bass within the ensemble. The double bass opens with a very simple repeated bass line. However, near the end of the section, it emerges from the texture with an arpeggiated figure. This motif contrasts with the simplicity of the preceding bass line material.

Video example 43: [https://youtu.be/H610DTPrneQ](https://youtu.be/H610DTPrneQ)

J. B. Vanhal: Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, Movement II: Menuetto, bars 1 – 10 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

In Dittersdorf’s duet, the viola and double bass are equal partners and are both featured alternating as the leading voice. This requires a constantly shifting collaborative effort. In the opening of the final theme and variations movement, both instruments play the theme in unison and then alternate playing melodic content in the subsequent variations. In
both performances of this work we allowed the player with melodic content to dictate the character and tempo of the variation, which led to contrasts between the performances. In Variation IV, a fragmented version of the melody is presented running through both parts, so the parts had to merge as one. The first performance of this variation is provided below in video example 44.

Video example 44: [https://youtu.be/g28k5yewoxw](https://youtu.be/g28k5yewoxw)

C. Dittersdorf: Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: Thema con variazioni, bars 65 – 80 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Here, more attention was required to have good ensemble and maintain the *perpetuum mobile* feel of constant movement. It stood in sharp contrast to the other variations where only one player had melodic content.

Similarly to the Dittersdorf work, Sperger’s duet for viola and double bass shares the melodic content equally between the two instruments. It differs from the Dittersdorf in that it places more virtuosic demands on the double bassist, writing in a much higher range of the instrument and heavily using double stops and harmonics. Although the viola and double bass often alternate playing the melody, they sometimes have shared melodic content and approaching these sections collaboratively was a focus in our preparation. The most interesting example of this shared melodic material is in the *minore* section shown in video example 45.

Video example 45: [https://youtu.be/Id3KhnqSYeI](https://youtu.be/Id3KhnqSYeI)

J. M. Sperger: Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze, bars 35 – 56 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).
Here the shared melody in the viola and bass parts results in a complete change of mood. The new tonality paired with a change in texture from melody and accompaniment to one almost homogenous line creates a completely different atmosphere. This material required particular attention regarding intonation in the preparation of both recitals.

In Hoffmeister’s second solo quartet, the double bass performs the dominant solo line usually reserved for the first violin. The double bass part is quite virtuosic and even includes a cadenza. This unusual texture creates some challenges in balance, with the other string players needing to be cautious not to overpower the solo line in the double bass. As the double bass needs to project constantly, it is impractical to play very softly, which somewhat restricts the overall possibilities with dynamic contrast. I tried to create contrast through articulation and character, rather than relying too heavily on dynamic extremes. I was fortunate to be collaborating with sensitive players who supported the double bass’s solo line.

Although for the most part, the double bass is the clear feature throughout Hoffmeister’s work, there are some exceptions. In video example 46, the violin plays the exact same melody as the double bass but an octave higher. When initially studying the score, I was concerned this would create issues of balance. However, in context, it proves to be effective writing. The violin melody, played in a softer dynamic, adds a glow to the double bass sound and offers a contrasting restatement of the melody.

Video example 46: https://youtu.be/jYFTI_W7GJ0

F. A. Hoffmeister: Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo, bars 9 – 16 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).
Bars 74 to 80, seen in video example 47, feature the violin as the leading solo voice for a short passage. This moment provides a break for both the double bass soloist and for the listener and is a refreshing contrast of material before returning once again to the theme in the solo double bass.

Video example 47: [https://youtu.be/6bu0dnrbilQ](https://youtu.be/6bu0dnrbilQ)

F. A. Hoffmeister: Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo, bars 74 – 80 (Recital 2 - Viennese Tuning). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

As previously discussed, I was much more satisfied with my performance of Mozart’s concert aria *Per questa bella mano* in the second recital. This was partly because I felt the collaborative experience was much stronger in the second performance. In the first performance, I was uncomfortable with the tempo. I felt it started too slow, making it difficult for me to push the tempo forward, as I was performing an obbligato role. The pianist and singer both seemed very settled in the slower tempo but it was uncomfortable for me to execute the double stop figures without a feeling of forward motion. In the second performance in Viennese tuning, we were much more aware of each other and the tempo flowed more easily. This undoubtedly demonstrates the benefit that hindsight can provide for collaborative experiences—I was clearer about the tempo in the rehearsal period for the second performance and we were accordingly more active in staying in contact with each other throughout the performance. One passage where these differences are particularly evident is the cadenza-like section in bars 108 to 112, seen in video examples 48 and 49.
Video example 48: [https://youtu.be/yREqm9myeFQ](https://youtu.be/yREqm9myeFQ)

W. A. Mozart: *Per questa bella mano*, K.612, bars 108 – 112 (Recital 1 - Orchestral Tuning). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 49: [https://youtu.be/I9uxLbhlux4](https://youtu.be/I9uxLbhlux4)


In the first performance, our ensemble was badly compromised in this section. I think this mainly came from not having a unanimous concept of the tempo and not staying well enough connected to each other. The ensemble playing in this section was significantly better in the second recital, as the participants were more aware of what each other was doing and Viennese tuning allowed me greater command of the technical challenges of the music.

Quintet No. 26 in B flat Major by Domenico Dragonetti was the only work on the programme that I did not re-learn in Viennese tuning. This is because Dragonetti, as mentioned earlier, performed on and composed for a double bass tuned in the system of fourths we use today. As such, it was the only work on the programme where comparisons between the performances would focus primarily on the collaborative experience. Dragonetti’s work, similarly to the Hoffmeister, places the double bass in the unusual position of being a leading voice. The solo double bass part is challenging both technically and in terms of stamina. This was exacerbated in performance as it was last on the programme in both recitals.

From the initial stages of preparing this work, it was obvious how idiomatically the double bass part was written for an instrument with this tuning. Although certainly presenting challenges, especially with fast passagework, the phrases fell naturally under the hand. It was
immediately apparent that this writing could have only been constructed by a double bassist or, at the very least, someone with innate knowledge of the instrument. For instance it is written so the double bass is in a very comfortable range of the instrument, where it is best suited to creating a warm tone and achieving variety in timbre and color. This can be seen in the opening seven bars of the first movement in score example 7 below.

![Score Example 7](http://johnfeeney.musicaneo.com/)


Dragonetti has also scored the work very cleverly so the double bass part can project over the other parts without sounding forced. During the preparation process and performance of this work there were no significant issues regarding projection or balance in either performance. It is worth noting though that, in both performances, I was working with experienced musicians who were mindful of allowing my part to project.

Although the double bass is the central focus for much of the work, it certainly is not simply written as solo and accompaniment. There is a lot of interplay between the parts and melodic material often passes through different voices. This can be seen in bars 200 – 204 in the second movement, seen in score example 8. Here, the cello has a figure that is repeated
by the double bass in the following bar. In bar 202, while the double bass sustains a high note, the violin’s part is of melodic interest. The cello is featured in the second half of bar 203 with a scalic run that feeds into the passagework that follows in the double bass part. This intricate weaving of melodic material throughout the instruments is present throughout the entire work.


I felt that this work was performed quite well in both recitals. In the second recital, I had the added challenge of changing to a new instrument with a tuning system different to the rest of the programme. I think this made the very start of the performance slightly shaky but I recovered relatively quickly. In the second performance, we took the first movement slightly faster, which allowed it to flow more easily. This tempo comparison is clear in video examples 50 and 51, which feature bars 27 to 50 of the first movement from both recitals.
Video example 50: [https://youtu.be/cxUtpLPC6-Y](https://youtu.be/cxUtpLPC6-Y)  
D. Dragonetti: Quintet No. 26 in Bb Major, Movement I: Andante con moto, bars 27 – 50 (Performance 1). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 51: [https://youtu.be/FIx7VS9RZuc](https://youtu.be/FIx7VS9RZuc)  
D. Dragonetti: Quintet No. 26 in Bb Major, Movement I: Andante con moto, bars 27 – 50 (Performance 2). Presented on 31/10/2014 at South Melbourne Town Hall, Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia).

These excerpts begin at the start of the middle section of the first movement and move into the reprise of the elegant opening material. The middle section suggests an explosion of energy with uninterrupted scalar passages in the double bass solo being accompanied sparingly by the rest of the ensemble. In the first performance, I decided to maintain a moderate tempo so I could execute this section accurately and maintain a feeling of control. In the second performance, the faster tempo was potentially a slight risk but it resulted in a more exciting interpretation. I also played less evenly in this version, exaggerating the contour of the bass line more, which I felt was quite effective. In both versions, the ensemble is very strong and the first violin and double bass are well blended when they share melodic content.

The rehearsal experience for the second movement was quite different. For the first performance, we focused heavily on issues of balance and ensemble. I was also getting used to playing my part for the first time, which was a challenge in itself. In preparing the second recital, I had the advantage of having previously performed the work. This allowed us to spend more time focusing on issues of character and contrast. The following excerpts (video examples 52 and 53) show the end of the second and final movement, starting with the
reprise of the opening string-crossing material, moving through an extended period of fast passegwork and ending with a short coda.

Video example 52: https://youtu.be/Jp-fh9pFAZM

D. Dragonetti: Quintet No. 26 in Bb Major, Movement II: Allegretto, bars 223 – Fine (Performance 1). Presented on 22/06/2014 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Video example 53: https://youtu.be/iG2ourD6xBQ


These performances are quite similar in tempo and execution and I was satisfied with both. However, I think the characters and dynamic nuances are slightly more clear and convincing in the second performance. I also think that a more unanimous sense of sound was achieved in the second performance, although it is hard to judge that, given that we were in notably different acoustics. In both performances I tired slightly during the passagework. Ideally, I would not perform such a physically demanding work at the culmination of a recital full of similarly challenging repertoire.
Conclusion

The eighteenth century was evidently a period of intense activity for the double bass, with the instrument employed in solo, chamber and orchestral settings. As has been established, much of this activity was focused in Vienna, with a new system of tuning now widely known as Viennese transforming the possibilities of the instrument and inspiring composers and performers to view it in a new light.

The fact that I was able to assemble a recital of rarely performed chamber music featuring works by the two leading composers of the era, Franz Joseph Haydn and Mozart, as well as other prominent composers of the time including Vanhal and Hoffmeister, is a testament to the impact of the Viennese bass. Heather Miller Lardin (2016) notes, “Double bassists have not had such an extensive repertoire tailored to their instrument by leading composers—until our time” (p. 64).

One of the most striking features of chamber music writing for double bass from the eighteenth century is its variety. As was demonstrated in my programme, there were works written for many different combinations of instruments and the double bass was employed in a range of roles, from performing simple bass lines to leading the ensemble with virtuosic solo material. Again, this virtuosity and variety of double bass chamber music writing has been unparalleled until recent times with many modern composers now pushing the boundaries of writing for the instrument once more.

It is difficult to understand this unique repertoire for the double bass without experiencing it in the original tuning. I found that re-learning and performing these works in Viennese tuning brought them to life in a way I would not have anticipated. For the virtuosic works by Hoffmeister, Sperger and Mozart, I would use Viennese tuning for future performances. For the other featured repertoire, it can certainly be performed well in either
tuning. However, it is important to be mindful of its context and, in particular, the importance of playing with an open and resonant sound.

Although Viennese tuning opened many possibilities for the double bass, it also had limitations, particularly with regard to tonality and modulations. As the era of the Viennese double bass faded at the turn of the nineteenth century, one of the greatest virtuosos of the instrument emerged—Domenico Dragonetti. Similarly to virtuosos of the Viennese bass era such as Sperger, Dragonetti contributed to double bass repertoire through his own compositions and through inspiring leading composers of his time to write for the instrument. His chamber music, which has only re-emerged in the last few decades, is demonstrative of his remarkable facility on the instrument and is an exciting contribution to our repertoire.

It is clear from my research that the repertoire opportunities for double bass chamber music from the eighteenth century are vast. Dragonetti’s chamber music alone would take years to explore, not to mention the wealth of repertoire written for the Viennese bass. I look forward to exploring this repertoire and the possibilities of Viennese tuning further into the future.
Chapter III

Anything but the ‘Trout’

Rationale

There is little doubt that Schubert’s 1819 Piano Quintet in A Major, D. 667—widely known as the ‘Trout’ Quintet—is one of the most significant works of chamber music composed for the double bass. It remains a favourite amongst audiences and one of the primary catalysts for the inclusion of double bass in chamber music concerts. It is a difficult work to ignore when considering a programme of double bass chamber music representative of the nineteenth century.

A piano quintet is typically understood to consist of a pianist, 2 violinists, a violist and a cellist (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2007). However, John Baron (1998) suggests that most of the early nineteenth century piano quintets were written for the ‘Trout’ instrumentation, beginning with Dussek’s Opus 47 in 1799 (p. 263). Whereas the common perception is that the standard piano quintet does not include double bass, there is in fact a wealth of repertoire for the ‘Trout’ instrumentation.

In Kurt Muroki’s article, “Beyond the ‘Trout’ Quintet,” Owen Lee, principal bassist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, notes that there are more than sixty compositions written for the ‘Trout’ formation of instruments (Owen Lee in Muroki, 2010, p. 40). When first reading this article, I was taken aback that I was mostly unfamiliar with this breadth of repertoire for my instrument. I was inspired to use my Collaborative Contrabass programme focusing on the nineteenth century to showcase lesser-known piano quintets that share the same instrumentation as Schubert’s work.
Vaughan Williams’ 1903 Piano Quintet in c minor was an obvious inclusion for the Anything but the ‘Trout’ programme. Released for publication at the end of the twentieth century after being withdrawn by Vaughan Williams soon after its composition, it continues to gain popularity. The work showcases each instrument in the ensemble, including the double bass, and the writing is lush and effusive. It also seemed relevant, both historically and musically, to include one of Johann Nepomuk Hummel’s quintets. The quintet arrangement of his Opus 74 Septet in D minor is considered by many historians to have inspired the conception of Schubert’s ‘Trout’. Hummel’s Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, composed in 1802, was therefore included as the opening item on the programme, as it is his only work originally conceived for piano quintet.

Research into the history of the piano quintet genre and also into the leading double bass performers of the nineteenth century revealed other worthy inclusions for a quintet showcase. The most suitable works included Ferdinand Ries’ Opus 74, two quintets by French composer Louise Farrenc and the Quintet in c minor by Hermann Goetz. It also seemed important to feature a quintet by Onslow, as virtuoso double bassist Domenico Dragonetti influenced his choice of instrumentation.

The performance scores for many of these lesser-known piano quintets were available through boutique publishing company, Editions Silvertrust, which was founded by Raymond Silvertrust to publish what he describes as “unjustly neglected music” by over 400 composers (Editions Silvertrust, n.d.). In describing the composers his company champions, Silvertrust states: “Many [composers] were once as famous as those whose names you know. Their works were often played and held in high regard, and are fresh and original sounding, often as good as the most well-known masterworks” (Editions Silvertrust, n.d.).
It quickly became apparent that it would be difficult to comprehensively showcase the diversity of piano quintet repertoire including double bass if complete works were programmed. It was decided that individual movements from different works would be combined, allowing a broader cross-section of repertoire to be represented. This programme bracket was comprised of the first movement of Opus 74 by Ferdinand Ries, the second movement of Louise Farrenc’s second Piano Quintet, Opus 31, the third movement of André George Louis Onslow’s Opus 70 and the fourth movement of Hermann Goetz’ Quintet in c minor, Opus 16. This newly created quintet was bookended by a movement of Hummel’s Opus 87 and Vaughan Williams’ Quintet in c minor, the latter being the only work that would be performed in its entirety. The full recital programme is provided in Figure 2.

The six piano quintets featured either complete or in part were presented chronologically, covering a period from 1802 to 1903. It was hoped that this would provide the performers and audience with an audible journey through the nineteenth century and give insight into the way the piano quintet genre developed. Giovanni Bottesini’s *Introduction and Variations on the Carnival of Venice* was also included to provide an example of the heights solo double bass writing reached during this period. One work of this nature was featured in each of the Collaborative Contrabass recitals. The selected repertoire was demanding for all musicians involved, but the piano parts were particularly challenging and virtuosic. To accommodate this, the decision was made to use two pianists who shared the workload. The ensemble for the recital was Lucy Warren on violin, Beatrix Pickett on viola, Katherine Philp on cello, Stewart Kelly and Therese Milanovic on piano and myself on double bass.

It was fascinating to study these works from both historical and artistic perspectives. The historical research revealed many connections between the works and highlighted the influence of the major nineteenth century double bassists. Rehearsing and performing the
quintets provided me with an opportunity to explore the piano quintet genre deeply and to further develop my collaborative skills.
Figure 2: Second recital programme

J. N. Hummel
Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87 (1802)
Movement IV: Allegro Agitato

F. Ries
Quintet Opus 74 (1819)
Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio

L. Farrenc
Quintet No. 2 in E Major, Opus 31 (1840)
Movement II: Grave

A. G. L. Onslow
Piano Quintet, Opus 70 (1846)
Movement III: Allegretto Molto Moderato

H. G. Goetz
Quintet in c minor, Opus 16 (1874, published 1878)
Movement IV: Allegro Vivace

G. Bottesini
Introduction and Variations on the Carnival of Venice

R. Vaughan Williams
Piano Quintet in c minor (1903)
I Allegro con fuoco
II Andante
III Fantasia Quasi Variazioni: Moderato
Historical Background

In his discussion of the origins of the piano quintet before 1800, Smallman (1994) compares the parallel development of the string quartet and the piano quintet, commenting that the quartet genre was developed with professional string players in mind whereas the piano quintet predominantly catered to amateur musicians (p. 1). Lawson (2003) confirms this, noting, “whereas the string quartet offered the potential for perfect blend, keyboard ensemble music was altogether more diverse, often involving amateur string players in accompanying roles” (p. 322). Baron (1998) identifies Dussek’s 1799 Opus 47 for a piano quintet including double bass as one of the earliest contributions to the genre and notes that Cramer (Opus 60 before 1817 & Opus 69, 1823), Hummel (1816 & 1822) and Ries (1818) followed with works for the same instrumentation (p. 263).

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837) was one of the most celebrated pianists and composers of his time. A student of Mozart, his virtuosity rivaled that of his friend Beethoven and caught the attention of Joseph Haydn, whom he succeeded as Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Esterházy (Christians, 2009). Quintet in E flat, Opus 87 (1802) was his second piano quintet for piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass. His first work for this combination of instruments was a reworking of his Septet in D minor, Opus 74, which was published in 1816 (Smallman, 1994, p. 29).

Hinson and Roberts (2006) suggest that Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87 is one of Hummel’s greatest works for chamber ensemble (p. 557). Similarly, Smallman (1994) notes the popularity and originality of the work and highlights the significance of its contribution to the genre (p. 31). One noteworthy characteristic of Opus 87 is Hummel’s use of a major key signature, despite the work being in the minor key. Smallman (1994) suggests this may have
been to prevent discouraging potential purchasers, who may have been put off by a six-flat key signature (p. 32).

Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838) is largely recognised today for being Beethoven’s friend and biographer, publishing *Biographische notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* [Biographical notes about Ludwig van Beethoven] in 1838 with F. G. Wegeler (MacArdle, 1965, p. 34). However, during his lifetime the virtuoso pianist was a prolific composer, with over two hundred works listed by Cecil Hill in his 1977 thematic catalogue. Ries moved to London in 1813 and enjoyed great success during his eleven years there (Palmer, 1997, p. 173). Palmer (1997) notes that Ries performed his Opus 74 Quintet with J. D. Loder, Watts, R. Lindley and Domenico Dragonetti at the Philharmonic Society in London on March 15th, 1819 and suggests that this distinguished line-up of performers is a testament to the popularity Ries enjoyed during his time in England (p. 173).

Ries studied piano with Beethoven, who heavily influenced his compositional style. Beethoven noted this influence when he commented, “He imitates me too much” (Beethoven, cited in MacArdle, 1965, p. 33). Beethoven’s influence on Ries is most evident in the piano writing of his quintet, which is full of opportunities for virtuosic display, as well as the first movement’s slow and dramatic introduction.

Ries composed over 50 works for various chamber ensemble combinations (MacArdle, 1965, p. 33). A survey of the chamber music catalogue provided by The Ferdinand Ries Society (2009) reveals a number of works including double bass: a Septet, three sextets, an octet and *Variations and March* for piano, harp, two French horns and double bass, in addition to his 1815 Piano Quintet, Opus 74. Given Ries’ close relationship to Beethoven, it is possible he was encouraged to write for double bass in a chamber ensemble context after hearing his mentor’s celebrated Septet in Eb Major, Opus 20, composed at the
turn of the nineteenth century. While the septet combination was not new at this time, the inclusion of a double bass part set something of a precedent.

Baron (1998) describes Schubert’s ‘Trout’ Quintet, D. 667 as “the most important piano quintet of the epoch” (p. 263). It was composed in 1819 during a summer spent by the composer in Steyr, Austria. Joseph Czerny published the work in 1829, one year after Schubert’s death (Smallman, 1994, p. 29). The circumstances surrounding Schubert’s conception of the work and its instrumentation have been widely researched. A letter from Schubert’s childhood friend Albert Stadler in 1858 revealed that the quintet was commissioned by amateur cellist and chamber music enthusiast Sylvester Paumgartner, who requested a work with the same instrumentation as the piano quintet version of Hummel’s D minor Septet (Smallman, 1994, p. 29). Keller (2011) notes that this instrumentation matched the musical forces available to Paumgartner in Steyr (p. 394). Piero Weiss (1979) provides a persuasive argument that Hummel’s Opus 74 may have served as a model for Schubert’s composition (pp. 539-548). However, Ferguson (1964) asserts that instrument availability was a key factor, even if Schubert was somewhat influenced by Hummel’s earlier works (p. 140).

To my knowledge, the identity of the double bassist who first performed Schubert’s quintet is not known beyond that they were part of an ensemble of amateur musicians assembled by Paumgartner. Smallman (1994) discusses discrepancies between the instrumental parts that Albert Stadler prepared for the first performance in 1819 and the published edition of the work from 1829, noting that Schubert clearly revised the double bass part to include an extended range down to a low C (p. 36). It is likely that the first double bassist to perform the work did not have this extended range available, potentially because
they were using an instrument in Viennese tuning, a practice discussed in detail in chapter two.

Ulrich (1948) suggests that, although Hummel’s early quintets may have influenced Schubert to include double bass, the way he employed the instrument was unique (p. 290). The double bass plays a largely independent role throughout the work and is even given a melodic solo in the first movement. From experience, I have found it an engaging work to perform. While the double bass part functions predominantly as a bass line throughout, it is often responsible for providing rhythmic drive and harmonic stability. Ulrich (1948) notes that Schubert predominantly writes in the higher range of the piano and poses the question of whether the double bass was included to balance this and thereby provide a more substantial foundation for the piano and the other string instruments (p. 291). Smallman (1994) is dismissive of Hummel’s influence on Schubert’s Quintet: “It is difficult to recognize in the ‘Trout’ Quintet any specific details which might have been prompted by Hummel’s work, beyond its scoring with double bass, for which there were in any case models by other composers” (p. 30).

Louise Farrenc (1804–1875) was a celebrated French pianist, composer, pedagogue and scholar. She was the first woman to hold the position of professor of piano at the Paris Conservatoire and successfully fought to receive equal pay for her work (Buckley, 2011). Farrenc rose to prominence as a composer of chamber music in the early 1840s and enjoyed great success in this genre, despite it being unpopular in France at the time (Friedland, 1974, pp. 267-268). Her piano quintets, Opus 30 and Opus 31, were her first chamber compositions and were very well received, with Henri Blanchard of La Gazette Musicale describing Farrenc as one of the most distinguished chamber music composers of the era (Kamminga, 2003, pp. 11-12).
Kamminga (2003, p. 11) and Friedland (1974, p. 268) both attribute the use of double bass in Farrenc’s two piano quintets to the availability of Achille-Victor Gouffé (1804-1874), the virtuosic principal double bassist of the Paris Opéra, whose renown in France was comparable to that of Domenico Dragonetti in London. In Hinson and Roberts’ (2006) discussion of piano quintets, they note that Farrenc’s piano quintets provide extremely worthy alternatives to the standard literature including double bass (p. 552).

The other commonly used instrumentation for the piano quintet was without double bass, with the standard string quartet of two violins, viola and cello. Smallman (1994) notes that Piano Quintet in C minor, Opus 1 by Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia (1772-1806) was one of the first works composed for this instrumentation, published in 1803 (p. 26). However, this instrument combination did not become the standard until some decades later. The catalyst for this change was Schumann’s Piano Quintet in E flat Major, Opus 44, composed in 1842. Lawson (2003) comments that this work “represents a watershed in the history of piano and string quartet collaboration” (p. 323). Smallman (1994) describes Schumann’s work as “inspirational” and states that the widespread success of the work established a new genre that was emulated by leading composers in the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond (p. 55). From this time, quintets with double bass became less common but were still composed.

Although written just four years after Schumann’s groundbreaking quintet, Piano Quintet, Opus 70 by George Onslow (1784-1853) does not share the complexity of Schumann’s writing. This is indicative of the purpose behind Onslow’s chamber writing. Sumner Lott (2015) notes that his music was written to appeal to his middle class neighbours and friends, in addition to amateur musicians who purchased sheet music (p. 79). Yazdanfar (2010) confirms that Onslow’s chamber music “was not written for the concert hall, but
rather for the salons of the upper class” (p. 48). Sumner Lott (2015) highlights the difference between these two different approaches to chamber music in the mid-nineteenth century, noting that a “sense of ‘playability’ distinguishes many of these popular works from the more revered pieces of the same period—works by Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and Brahms—which often feel more difficult for both the player and the listener” (p. 32). Having said this, Onslow’s string parts are more independent than one sees in earlier piano quintets, which suggests that Schumann’s work may have had some impact.

Onslow was admired by high profile composers including Mendelssohn, Schubert and Schumann and was famously described as the successor of Beethoven by Berlioz in 1829: “since the death of Beethoven, he wields the scepter of instrumental music” (Hector Berlioz, cited in Yazdanfar, 2010, p. 48). Similarly to Louise Farrenc, Onslow focused on chamber music despite living at a time when opera dominated French culture. This reveals the influence of the Viennese musical scene, where chamber music was then more prevalent (Yazdanfar, 2010, p. 48). Brun (1989) notes Onslow’s considerable contribution to the quintet literature and comments that, although the works no longer enjoy popularity, they were appreciated greatly during the composer’s lifetime (p. 97). Stratton, writing in the late nineteenth century (1881), supported these comments in his article on English composers, noting that the chamber music of Onslow was still widely appreciated and that his chamber music was regularly featured in Philharmonic Society programs until 1837 (p. 428).

Onslow did not initially write for double bass in his piano quintets but was inspired to include the instrument by double bass virtuoso Dragonetti. After a cellist did not arrive for a concert, Dragonetti performed the second cello part of one of Onslow’s quintets and, despite initial reservations, the composer was impressed with the result (Palmer, 1997, p. 173). This 1826 performance featured the premiere of Onslow’s tenth quintet, Opus 32, and he
proceeded to publish this work and future quintets with parts for double bass (Yazdanfar, 2010, p. 48). He also rearranged his earlier quintets for double bass with the assistance of Gouffé (Palmer, 1997, p. 173). His relationship with Gouffé endured and each year Onslow invited him, along with other high profile French musicians, to his home to premiere his new compositions (Brun, 1989, p. 255).

The score we used for Onslow’s Opus 70 is an undated reprint by Merton Music, an English company that focuses on disseminating chamber music by neglected composers similarly to Editions Silvertrust (Silvertrust, 2004). As is common for Onslow’s chamber music, the score provided parts for either second cello or a double bass. This initially raised the question of whether the work was conceived with a double bass in mind. This question is answered by Onslow’s comments from 1842:

I have to say that if the 4-string bass […] were more in use in France, I would have greatly preferred it to the second violoncello, in that it separates the instruments in the group and serves as a true bass without confusion of sound with the first violoncello. I believe that in addition to the useful effect obtained, bassists would see a means to extend the domain of their instrument and to multiply their presence in chamber music (George Onslow, 1824, cited in Yazdanfar, 2010, p. 48).

Given that Opus 70 was composed in 1846, there is little doubt Onslow wrote the work with a double bass in mind.

In 1864, Brahms composed his Piano Quintet in F minor, Opus 34, another landmark work of the piano quintet genre. Hinson and Roberts (2006) suggest “this Quintet is probably one of the greatest masterpieces in the chamber music repertoire” (p. 548). Smallman (1994) highlights the influence of Brahms on Hermann Gustav Goetz (1840-1876) and, in particular, comments on the striking similarities between Brahms’ Opus 60 Piano Quartet and Goetz’
Piano Quintet in C minor, Opus 16 (p. 97). The works were composed during a similar time frame, share the same key and both directly reference Goethe in the score (Smallman, 1994, p. 97).

Goetz composed Opus 16, his only work for piano quintet, shortly before his death in 1874 and it was published posthumously. Goetz prefaced the work with a quotation from Goethe’s 1790 play Tasso relating to the unique ability of artists to give expression to their suffering: “And when mankind is struck dumb in its misery, a god gave me the ability to say what I suffer” (Smallman, 1994, p. 97). This literary reference was an acknowledgement of Goetz’ failing health, a theme which pervades the quintet. The key of c minor augments the dark quality of the writing and dramatic shifts in range and dynamic imbue emotion into the music. In a concert review in The Musical Times from 1879, the unknown author discusses a performance of Goetz’ quintet, notes the promise the composer exhibited in his short career and comments on the growing popularity of his work in amateur music circles (No author, 1879, p. 262).

The inclusion of double bass in Goetz’ quintet did not reflect common practice at the time. By this stage, piano quintets for piano, two violins, viola and cello had become the standard. Smallman (1994) lists the piano quintets by Brahms (1864), Franck (1879) and Dvorák (1887), all composed for piano with traditional string quartet, as the “most renowned piano quintets of the second half of the nineteenth century” (p. 98). All of these works are significant in their scope and the demands they place on musicians and were conceived more for concert hall performance than the homes of amateur music enthusiasts. Although composed for a piano quintet with ‘Trout’ instrumentation, Vaughan Williams’ Piano Quintet in c minor (1903) shares much in style and intention with these great works of the genre.
Kennedy (2002) notes the clear influence of Brahms on this work, particularly in the sweeping gestures of the first movement.

I was introduced to Vaughan Williams’ quintet through an article in *Bass World* detailing the preferred chamber music works of some of today’s leading double bassists (Kurtz, 2010, p. 25). Volkan Orhon describes Vaughan Williams’ work as an important addition to the chamber music literature for double bass and notes that it highlights the instrument with a substantial and enjoyable part (Volkan Orhon, cited in Kurtz, 2010, p. 25). Kennedy (2002) comments that Vaughan Williams composed in the quintet in 1903 after he had finished his studies at Royal College of Music but before he commenced his studies with Ravel in Paris in 1908, a time when he was struggling to identify his compositional voice.

Despite the quintet now enjoying growing popularity, particularly within the double bass community, there is significant evidence that Vaughan Williams was displeased with this work. The score shows heavy revision and Vaughan Williams withdrew the quintet, along with a number of his early works, forbidding their performance even after his death (Kennedy, 2002). Vaughan Williams did however re-visit the quintet, taking material from the final movement to use as the theme for the third movement of his Violin Sonata half a century later in 1954 (Kennedy, 2002). It is interesting to note that in Colin Mason’s 1957 review of this work, he comments that Vaughan Williams uses a theme “taken from a work written some years ago but now discarded” (p. 431). It is clear from this comment that the Piano Quintet was all but forgotten by this time. The quintet only re-entered the musical mainstream recently after Vaughan Williams’ widow released the manuscript, allowing it to be performed and published (Kurtz, 2010, p. 25). The first modern performance was given in 1999 in London and the performance score and parts were only made publicly available through Faber Music in 2002 (Kennedy, 2002).
Vaughan Williams’ withdrawal of his piano quintet from the public sphere was probably less a judgment on this specific work and more an indication of the turmoil he felt over his compositional output generally. Although he composed prolifically between 1895 and 1908, he destroyed or withdrew most of his works from this time, including four large-scale works for chamber ensemble (Kennedy, 2002). The piano quintet is a particularly enjoyable work to perform as it provides each musician with an engaging part full of lyrical melodic content. When we presented it in performance it received a positive response from the audience and its inclusion in Kurtz’ 2010 article on double bass chamber music is a testament to its growing profile. Since the score became publicly available in 2002, it has been professionally recorded and released on six different labels (Presto Classical, 2017).
Influence of Nineteenth Century Virtuoso Double Bass Players

During the research process for the *Anything but the ‘Trout’* programme, the strong influence the leading double bassists of the nineteenth century had on chamber music composers was apparent. Dragonetti, in particular, was heavily involved in the chamber music scene and is reported to have performed, and in some cases inspired, numerous works. French double bassist Gouffé was a central figure in French musical life and a significant influence on Farrenc and Onslow. It is also impossible to discuss double bass virtuosity in the nineteenth century without considering Giovanni Bottesini. Discussion of his involvement in chamber music is predominantly centred around the many recitals he presented with other leading virtuosi of the day, showcasing his unparalleled skill on the double bass with his own solo compositions and duos that continue to be performed today.

**Domenico Dragonetti.** There is little doubt that Domenico Dragonetti (1763-1846) remains, to this day, one of the most celebrated of all double bassists throughout history. In her seminal book on his life and work, Fiona M. Palmer (1997) writes that Dragonetti was a “uniquely talented musician whose life and achievement exerted a profound influence on the history of double bass playing: particularly in its reception, status, function, and technique” (p. 1). Numerous anecdotal accounts attest to his brilliance and renown throughout his career. One of the most famous of these is undoubtedly his 1799 meeting in Vienna with Ludwig van Beethoven, when the two performed Beethoven’s Opus 5 No. 2 Sonata for cello and piano. At the conclusion of the performance, Beethoven is reported to have been so impressed by Dragonetti’s playing he jumped up from the piano and embraced him (Slatford, 1999, p. 298). To this day, many double bassists credit Dragonetti as the inspiration behind Beethoven’s brilliant, challenging and independent double bass writing in his orchestral works.
Dragonetti was also a passionate chamber musician, who inspired composers to include the double bass in their writing. As discussed previously, he performed Ries’ Quintet with the composer and was the inspiration behind Onslow writing for double bass in his quintets. Dragonetti’s involvement in The Philharmonic Society in London provided him with regular opportunities to perform chamber music by all of the leading composers of his time, including Beethoven, Hummel and Cramer (Palmer, 1997, p. 91).

Some of the most interesting evidence of Dragonetti’s involvement in chamber music comes in the form of his private correspondence, which is available from the British Library. In one such letter, Charles Mangold invites Dragonetti to take part in an evening concert on April 25, 1842, where a sextet by Ferdinand Ries and a quintet version of a Beethoven Concerto were programmed. It is obvious that Mangold holds Dragonetti in very high regard, writing, “it would give to my concert a great attraction and to myself a great delight, if the ContraBassist part would be played by your masterhand” (C. Mangold to D. Dragonetti, March 28, 1842). This affectionate and respectful tone is also clear in a letter to Dragonetti by Lucy Anderson in 1840. Anderson was an accomplished pianist and the first woman to perform as a concerto soloist with The Philharmonic Society (Palmer, 1997, p. 204). In her letter, she invites Dragonetti to perform Hummel’s Septuor in D minor at an evening soirée on Thursday, April 2. She writes, “Shall I be trespassing too much on your kindness, in begging the great favor of your playing the double bass part, a favor which will give the greatest delight to me and my friends all of whom will be worthy of listening to your splendid performance” (Anderson, L. 1797-1878, L. Anderson to D. Dragonetti, March 24, 1840).

The personal correspondence of Dragonetti also demonstrates his deep interest in chamber music repertoire for the double bass. In a letter to Dragonetti from Thomas Massa Alsager, he is invited to an evening party where Spohr’s Nonet and Hummel’s Septet are to
be performed. When listing the repertoire, Alsager comments that the works are, “good music of the sort you like” (Alsager, T. M. 1779-1846, T. M. Alsager to D. Dragonetti, personal communication, n.d.). In another letter, the author, whose name is difficult to discern, informs Dragonetti that he has arranged the delivery of Onslow’s two last quintets (Author unknown, March 22nd, n.y.). It is clear from the tone of the letter that the correspondent is aware of Dragonetti’s interest in Onslow’s chamber works for double bass.

Achille Gouffé. Gouffé (1804-1874) was the leading double bass player in France during the nineteenth century, holding the position of solo bassist of the Paris Opéra for 35 years. Brun’s (1989) comments highlight the high regard in which the double bassist was held: “Dubbed ‘the French Bottesini’ in his later years, no greater acclaim was perhaps given to his talent than when Hector Berlioz declared him to be a ‘master virtuoso’” (pp. 254-255). Gouffé was even the subject of a portrait by artist Edgar Degas; L’orchestre de l’Opéra is on display in Musée d’Orsay, Paris (Brun, 1989, p. 256).

As discussed previously, scholars attribute Farrenc’s double bass writing to the influence of Gouffé. He also had a strong relationship with Onslow, helping the composer to re-write his early quintets for double bass instead of second cello and participating in premieres of his new works. In addition to being an active chamber music performer, Gouffé also curated regular chamber music concerts in his home. Brun (1989) notes that these musical soirées were attended by the Parisian society of intellectuals and fashionables and featured leading Paris musicians performing works by masters as well as new works by emerging composers (p. 255). Through his chamber music concerts, Gouffé commissioned numerous chamber music works with double bass and many attribute Onslow’s significant oeuvre of chamber music for the double bass to the bassist (Brun, 1989, p. 255).
Giovanni Bottesini. Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889) is widely regarded as one of the greatest virtuosos in the history of the instrument. His unparalleled skill brought him international acclaim and elevated him to the same status as violin and piano soloists of his time. A description of his skill on his instrument is provided in his obituary in *The Musical Times:* “The beauty of the tone and sound he elicited from that unwieldy instrument, his marvelous facility, not to say agility, in executing the most difficult passages – the grace, elegance, and delicacy of his touch and method, gave proof of the most consummate art and unrivalled talent” (C.P.S., 1889, p. 476).

Bottesini also enjoyed significant success as a composer and as a conductor, predominantly of operatic repertoire. Although his diverse compositional oeuvre ranges from symphonic repertoire to a technical method for his instrument, it is his virtuosic solo repertoire for double bass that has endured and remains integral to double bass repertoire today. Brun (1989) highlights Bottesini’s contribution, noting that he reached far beyond the orchestral capacities of the double bass of his time, composing works that are still recognised as the most technically demanding of the standard concerto repertoire (p. 95).

Bottesini also enjoyed performing and composing chamber works and his duo concertante repertoire includes works for double bass with violin, cello and clarinet. Brun (1989) describes a recital Bottesini presented in London on 26 June 1849 that established him as one of the greatest virtuosos on the double bass ever seen in England (p. 229). The repertoire for this performance included one of George Onslow’s string quartets, with Bottesini taking the cello part, and one of Bottesini’s most celebrated works for solo double bass, *Introduction and Variations on the Carnival of Venice* (Brun, 2000, p. 229). This anecdote reveals that Bottesini was aware of the chamber music of Onslow and, undoubtedly, of many of the composers featured in this quintet programme. Although he is not connected
as directly to many of the works as Dragonetti, there is little doubt that his virtuosity and promotion of the double bass as a legitimate solo instrument would have served as inspiration for countless composers. For this reason, it seemed appropriate to feature Bottesini’s *Carnival of Venice* in the programme to demonstrate the heights of solo playing in the nineteenth century. The specific date of composition for *Carnival of Venice* is not documented but Bottesini performed it publicly in 1847 so it must have been composed prior to this date (Brun, 2000, p. 229).

The demands Bottesini places on the double bassist in this work are a testament to his remarkable skill on the instrument. Variation 5 is a clear example of this, shown in score example 9 and video example 54. Bottesini opens the variation with rapidly changing harmonics and then moves to passages of double stops. This variation also includes ornaments and long lyrical lines across the range of the instrument. This melodic material is a clear reference to the *Bel Canto* opera style of Verdi. Bottesini regularly conducted Italian opera and was even engaged to conduct the premiere of Verdi’s *Aïda* in Cairo in 1871 (Brun, 2000, p. 233).
INTRODUCTION AND VARIATIONS on The Carnival of Venice
For String Bass and Piano
By Giovanni Bottesini
Editing and Preface by Thomas Martin
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Video example 54: https://youtu.be/VAvP2wuFJ_U


The final variation in this work also combines a number of complex technical approaches to the instrument, as shown in score example 10 and video example 55. It has fast changes in register, large shifts and rapid string crossings. It also features extended use of harmonics and chords. This writing for the double bass provides insight into Bottesini’s
virtuosity and the manner in which he revolutionised the performance techniques of the instrument.

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Video example 55: https://youtu.be/9Hi-i5rRsNY

G. Bottesini: Introduction and Variations on The Carnival in Venice, bars 153-168. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)
As discussed in chapter two, there were clear correlations between the virtuosic solo capabilities of the Viennese double bass and the way composers employed the instrument in chamber music, often featuring it with melodic content and opportunities for solo display. In the nineteenth century, however, there was a striking disparity between how the double bass was employed in solo repertoire and its role in chamber music both technically and musically. Of the quintet works featured in this recital programme, only the Vaughan Williams provides substantial melodic content or explores the higher range of the instrument, requiring the use of thumb position in some moments. The faster tempi of the Hummel and Goetz movements, as well as some movements of Schubert’s ‘Trout’, do create technical challenges for the double bassist and demand speed and agility. However, the double stops, chords and high harmonics that were seen widely throughout chamber music repertoire for the Viennese double bass were a rarity in chamber music during the nineteenth century.

The double bass parts of the featured piano quintets do not exhibit the idiomatic style of composition seen in repertoire for the Viennese bass, where composers were clearly writing to take full advantage of the resonance and innate qualities of the instrument. Although the parts do fit quite comfortably under the hand for the most part, this is more evidence of the employment of the double bass in a bass line function than particular diligence from composers to write idiomatically for the instrument or exploit its full potential.

One possible explanation for the disparity between the function of the double bass in solo and chamber repertoire is that composers may have been largely unaware of the possibilities of the double bass. This argument could certainly be supported by Berlioz’s comments on the instrument from his 1843 treatise, where he actively encourages composers to write simple parts for the instrument within the orchestral context:
Modern composers are wrong to give the heaviest of all instruments passages of such rapidity that even the cellos have difficulty with them. The result is a considerable nuisance since idle players, or those incapable of tackling such difficulties, give up at once and take it upon themselves to simplify the passage. But since one man’s idea of simplification differs from that of the next, having various estimates of the harmonic importance of individual notes in the passage, the result is horrible confusion and disorder. Such buzzing bedlam, full of strange noises and hideous grunting, is made yet worse by other, keener players with more confidence in their own ability who exhaust themselves in pointless attempts to play the passage exactly as it is written. Composers must therefore take care not to ask more of double basses than is possible or more than can be played with safety (Berlioz, 1843/2002, p. 58).

It is hard to believe that these comments were written during the peak of Bottesini’s success as a soloist throughout Europe and three years before the death of Dragonetti, who had done so much to raise the profile of the instrument.

The other possible and, in my opinion, more plausible, explanation for the simplified double bass writing in the piano quintets of the nineteenth century lies in the function of this repertoire. As previously discussed, piano quintets from the first half of the nineteenth century were often catering for amateur string players so composers would have been reluctant to compose virtuosic double bass parts, even if they were made aware of the possibilities of the instrument by the virtuosos of the time. The featured piano quintets by Hummel, Ries and Farrenc in particular are vehicles for solo display on the piano and the challenges for string players in this repertoire are predominantly in the collaborative process. Preparing Bottesini’s virtuosic tour de force was a significant undertaking from a technical
viewpoint. However, the greatest challenges presented by this Collaborative Contrabass programme were related to the internal dynamics of performing within the quintet context.
**Working as a Quintet**

This recital differed from other Collaborative Contrabass performances in that every work was written for the same combination of instruments: piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass. The same quartet of string players was used for every work. However, for reasons already stated, we used two different pianists. Playing a diverse array of works for piano quintet with the same group of musicians allowed me the opportunity to examine this genre and the challenges it presents.

I found during the preparation of this recital that many of the challenges of playing piano quintets stem from the collaboration required between strings and piano. These challenges include achieving a good balance and blend, playing with consistently accurate intonation and organising which players lead the ensemble at various points throughout the performance. During our rehearsal period, we employed different techniques to take full advantage of the limited time available to us. Although the recital went quite well overall, there were certainly aspects of the performance I would have liked to further refine, as is often the case with occasional or ad hoc ensembles and programmes.

One of the most interesting aspects of this programme was that it presented a clear insight into the way quintet writing developed throughout the nineteenth century. The works were presented chronologically in order of composition, spanning from 1802 to 1903. Stylistically, the works moved from Hummel’s clear Classical style to the height of late romanticism with Vaughan Williams’ Quintet. It was particularly interesting to experience how writing for double bass developed, graduating from simply doubling the piano bass line to being entrusted with significant melodic content.
**Balance and Blend.** As an ensemble, we faced many general challenges that would be common to any chamber music performance. We strove to achieve good balance between the instruments and to play with a well-blended sound. A number of diverse factors needed to be considered to accomplish this. Firstly, we needed to understand the function of each instrument and how this changed from one work to the next. It was also important to recognise which lines were dominant at any point in time and needed to be favoured in the balance. For the string players, our approach to vibrato and bowing needed to be as unanimous as possible, which is always an essential if not easily solved issue. Finally, we aimed for uniformity of articulation and rhythm throughout the ensemble, which is another perennial challenge for chamber ensembles, not just those dealing with the less familiar instrumental groupings.

Many of these challenges regarding balance and blend were exacerbated by the instrumentation of the piano quintet format. The combination of piano, two violins, viola and cello that became standard after Schumann’s piano quintet allows the strings to function in the standard string quartet unit to which players are usually very familiar. The inclusion of two violins also allows for a very natural blend between the two highest string instruments. However, with the ‘Trout’ instrumentation, each instrument has a more individual voice and achieving good balance and blend becomes more difficult. The double bass also adds an octave to the possible string range, meaning that instruments are often spaced quite far apart. This became more marked as the nineteenth century progressed and the full ranges of the piano and strings were increasingly harnessed. This is particularly noticeable in Vaughan Williams’ writing, which takes advantage of the lowest notes available to the double bass as well as the highest range of the violin.
The function of each instrument within the ensemble differed greatly throughout the programme. Some works felt almost like piano concerti, with the strings essentially accompanying an impressive solo display from the pianist. In other works every instrument was provided the opportunity to play melodic material.

Hummel’s Quintet in E flat minor clearly features the piano and was undoubtedly written to showcase the composer’s virtuosic command of the instrument. Baron (1998) confirms that Hummel often played it when on tour as a soloist (p. 263). In the final movement, the sparkling solo piano line is obviously the dominant voice, with the only exception being a short passage in the middle of the movement where the strings are featured. Score example 11 highlights a rare moment where the piano performs in an accompanying role, while the cello plays the primary melodic material.


Hummel employs the violin in a similar way to the Mozart violin sonatas, functioning as part of piano sound and not necessarily trying to rise above it or become an entirely
different voice. The double bass is often paired with the piano, rather than being part of the string sound. In video example 56, the double bass punctuates the left hand of the piano part and provides an added depth to the bass line. This is also visually represented in score example 12. Here, one can observe that the double bass is playing the same note as the bass line of the piano part. I strove for a very articulated sound, with a similar quality to *pizzicato*, to mimic the timbre of the piano.


Video example 56: [https://youtu.be/9L60SrDnHJQ](https://youtu.be/9L60SrDnHJQ)

J. N. Hummel: Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, Movement IV: Allegro Agitato, bars 9-12. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Quintet, Opus 74 by Ries also predominantly showcases the piano. For the string players, it felt more like a piano concerto than a work of chamber music. Throughout the first
movement, the strings are beholden to the piano part, which is complex in terms of figurative writing and contains a number of short cadenzas. Conversely, Farrenc’s Quintet No. 2 in E Major, Opus 31 employs the instruments more equally. The writing allows the interweaving melody lines to easily project so the richness of sound comes from every instrument contributing. This can be seen in score example 13 and video example 57. In this excerpt, even though each string player is playing with a rich, warm tone, they can all be heard within the balance and overall texture.


Video example 57: https://youtu.be/0zO7zg9QBwo

L. Farrenc: Quintet No. 2 in E Major, Opus 31, Movement II: Grave, bars 9-14. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Further to understanding the function of each instrument within the quintet, we found it was crucial to recognise dominant lines and decide how to clearly project them. In one
passage of Hummel’s quintet, the violin and viola share the dominant material. The violin naturally projects with greater ease than the viola so the violist needed to make a concerted effort to match the violin to create the competitive sound necessary for this moment. Video example 58 shows this paired effort.

Video example 58: [https://youtu.be/CSMAWeZVg0s](https://youtu.be/CSMAWeZVg0s)

J. N. Hummel: Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, Movement IV: Allegro Agitato, bars 29-36. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

In other passages, it was necessary to discuss the hierarchy of the parts to achieve good balance. In score example 14, the violin is the dominant line, the double bass part has an accompanying line that has melodic and harmonic interest, the viola and cello share repeated accompanying figures and the piano has occasional interjections.

We discussed the string balance for this passage and decided the best approach to allow space for the violin melody to shine and the double bass line to be clear was to see it as a three line passage, where the viola and cello were sharing a double-stop effect line of the same part. Approaching this section as a three-part texture, as opposed to thinking of four equal parts, allowed us to achieve good balance. This can be seen in video example 59. In this section, we also decided that the repeated notes in the viola and cello needed to be longer to support the violin. This allowed the melodic material to sound more legato and cantabile.

Video example 59: [https://youtu.be/tK91r7Urlq8](https://youtu.be/tK91r7Urlq8)

J. N. Hummel: Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, Movement IV: Allegro Agitato, bars 74-97. Presented on 30/04/2015, at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Vaughan Williams constantly changes the dominant voice in his quintet, providing every instrument the opportunity to be the leading voice. This is a significant departure from the featured quintets by Hummel, Ries and Farrenc, composed early in the nineteenth century. In score example 15, the viola and double bass share melodic content. Here the double bass needs to remain strong in terms of the balance.
Video example 60 features the passage from score example 15 and continues eight bars further where Vaughan Williams moves the melodic content to the cello and violin. When the cello joins as the leading voice, the viola has to stay strong to project and support the melodic line. When the violin joins, it naturally soars above the other instruments so the secondary material in the cello and viola and the double bass pizzicato can still project strongly. Here, the double bass pizzicato punctuates the left hand of the piano and gives the predominantly lyrical texture some rhythmic energy.

Video example 60: https://youtu.be/Zbm3lUXHGpM

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 160-171. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
Vaughan Williams also constantly changes the texture in this work—he writes for solo piano, string ensemble without piano and every internal combination of duo and trio. In score example 16, Vaughan Williams has written for a solo trio of viola, cello and double bass.

During that section, the three instruments are written very close in range and we were aiming for a very homogenous sound. Although all three instruments are marked pianissimo, I had to play more loudly relatively to the others to create the right balance and to support intonation. This can be seen in video example 61.

Video example 61: https://youtu.be/s7Qf6dU5Zr4

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in C minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 298-303. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Vaughan Williams’ consistent varying of which instrument was leading as the dominant voice and texture meant that we had to remain aware of the balance, and this changed constantly. This is exemplified in score example 17 and video example 62. Throughout this section, the identity of the leading voice is fluid. Every musician had
important parts to project, even if it was just one note, while still aiming to create a united sound. We decided on a very legato approach here, with a long sense of line. Technically, this was achieved in the strings by keeping the bow into the string throughout.


Video example 62: https://youtu.be/_h0Fi_Nq9d8

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement II: Andante, bars 146-153. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Another factor in creating a good string blend was to ensure our collective approach to vibrato was as unanimous as possible. For example, there were some moments that we agreed to play without vibrato. In the following passage from Hummel’s quintet, we decided the strings should enter with no vibrato, to allow the piano to shine and remain in the
foreground of the balance. Brown (1999) suggests that throughout the nineteenth century, vibrato was primarily reserved for soloists and therefore in string chamber music should be reserved for when instruments are taking on a clearly soloistic role (p. 415). Whilst we did not strictly adhere to Brown’s approach for vibrato, we did discuss saving it for more melodic material, as is evidenced in video example 63.

Video example 63: [https://youtu.be/dENkF2OxngI](https://youtu.be/dENkF2OxngI)

J. N. Hummel: Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, Movement IV: Allegro Agitato, bars 134-150. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

As the passage continues, the role of the strings changes from being a clear accompaniment to providing secondary melodic content. We used vibrato to highlight this role change and to make the sound more rich and warm.

We varied our use of vibrato for the opening of the third movement of Vaughan Williams’ quintet, featured in video example 64. Vaughan Williams marks *senza espressivo* for this section and has the string section playing alone, in unison. We played without vibrato here to highlight the fragile, exposed quality of the writing and maintain a sense of stillness, striving for very smooth bow movements.

Video example 64: [https://youtu.be/bsWbq8sRTz8](https://youtu.be/bsWbq8sRTz8)

In the second statement of the strings after the piano solo we began to introduce vibrato but only on notes that we wanted to accentuate. This passage is visible below in score example 18. The circled notes in the double bass part represent the notes I wanted to emphasise with vibrato.


The quintets featured in this recital programme traverse the Classical and Romantic periods and therefore demand different approaches to vibrato. For the works more clearly in a Romantic style, such as the Vaughan Williams quintet, we generally played with a wider and more constant vibrato. This can be heard in video example 65, where we endeavored to match our vibrato closely to create a unified sound. We especially tried to vibrate through note changes, to facilitate longer lines and a sense of unending sound.

Video example 65: [https://youtu.be/5TDrwFI3WO8](https://youtu.be/5TDrwFI3WO8)

The other string-specific factor that we considered in striving for good balance and blend was bowing. Wherever possible, we tried to match our bowing in the strings and discuss with the pianist the ramifications of the chosen bowings on articulation and rhythm. A clear example of this is at the beginning of the *Allegro con brio* section of Ries’ quintet. Here, we decided to play the double-dotted rhythm with a hooked bow stroke, to maintain the length of the longer notes, as seen in video example 66. We strove for sharp dotted rhythms, to enhance the dramatic quality of the music. Our selected bowing allowed us to execute this rhythm with the appropriate character and maintain a strong sound through this figure, creating a clear contrast to the softer writing that precedes it.

Video example 66: [https://youtu.be/aIYeBxrVW1Y](https://youtu.be/aIYeBxrVW1Y)

F. Ries: Quintet, Opus 74, Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio, bars 19-21. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

In Goetz’ Quintet in c minor, Opus 16, we used bowings to help create different characters in the music. In score example 19, the double bass part has two different rhythmic motives. The first is marked *pesante* and the second is sharper and more articulated, notated with *staccato* dots. To create contrast here, we used a hooked bowing in the *pesante* section, which allowed us to make a strong, connected sound and successfully achieve the ponderous feel. For the more articulated material, we used separate bows that we kept short and sharp. This bowing change allowed us to create an effective contrast not just audibly, but also visually which can be seen in video example 67 below the score.
As an ensemble, we also discussed our approach to articulation, to ensure we played with the same intention. I found that my articulation, in particular, could have a significant effect on the overall balance and sound of the ensemble. Even in the simplest bass lines, my articulation could alter the concept of sound for the entire ensemble. In this short excerpt from the first movement of Ries’ Opus 74, seen in video example 68, I gave the bass line length, using faster bow strokes with air in the sound. My approach to the bass line here allowed for a more lyrical feel overall.

Video example 68: https://youtu.be/U2KNfLGJdX0

F. Ries: Quintet, Opus 74, Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio, bars 47-50. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Similarly, in the second movement of Farrenc’s work, the melodic material was best supported by longer accompanying figures. In this excerpt (video example 69), we played the repeated triplet figures in the viola, cello and bass in a legato style and with vibrato to contribute to a singing, resonant sound that supported the violin and piano.

Video example 69: https://youtu.be/q3vO8N3ywMk

H. G. Goetz: Quintet in c minor, Opus 16, Movement IV: Allegro Vivace, bars 25-34. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
Video example 69: https://youtu.be/MhE2JYKLD90

L. Farrenc: Quintet No. 2 in E Major, Opus 31, Movement II: Grave, bars 27-30. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Often we varied our articulation to highlight changes of character in the music. In the following excerpt from the third movement of Onslow’s Piano Quintet, Opus 70, we used a portato-style bowing with pulsed longer notes for the softer material, separate bows for the louder material and an exaggerated legato style for the slurred material. These bowings are marked in the double bass score in score example 20 below.

![Score Example 20](image)


Executing these articulation changes unanimously allowed us to rapidly change the character of the music and also helped us have a well-blended and balanced sound. This can be observed in video example 70.

Video example 70: https://youtu.be/USjOfb5-Amg

A. G. L. Onslow: Piano Quintet, Opus 70, Movement III: Allegretto Molto Moderato, bars 165-180. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
We also worked toward having well-matched articulation in the opening of the fourth movement of Goetz’ quintet, shown in video example 71. Here, we tried the stroke two different ways, firstly with a clearly defined *spiccato* and then with a more ambiguous tremolo style. We decided to use a less rhythmically defined stroke for our semi-quavers to create a more ominous feeling.

Video example 71: [https://youtu.be/-fKConwqT-A](https://youtu.be/-fKConwqT-A)


We amplified this mysterious atmosphere by exaggerating the dynamic contrast and being slightly flexible with the tempo. After the piano enters, the character of the music changes dramatically. Here we ensured the tempo was forward moving and highlighted the impish character with rhythmic vitality. In this material, the cellist and I made our punctuations very sharp and pointed, with short, concise bows. I think our unanimity of articulation created a good blend with each other and the rest of the ensemble.

Finally, we needed to agree on our interpretation of the rhythm in some works to ensure the balance and ensemble worked well. As was mentioned earlier, we strove for sharp and articulated dotted figures in Ries’ quintet. However, in the slow movement of Farrenc’s work we tried to not be too pedantic with the dotted rhythms. By placing the dotted figures somewhere between a triplet and a completely literal interpretation of the rhythm, we were able to make the music sound elegant and poised. This is consistent with a historically informed approach, as this type of rhythmic flexibility was prevalent during the nineteenth century.
**Intonation.** The piano quintet genre poses particular challenges with regard to intonation. It is already quite difficult for a small ensemble of strings to achieve consistently good intonation and the inflexible tuning of the piano adds an extra dimension. Kilburn (1904) notes that when combining strings with piano, “perfect intonation is no longer possible, and the purity which the strings afford is of necessity somewhat marred” (p. viii). Loft (2003) suggests that intonation “should be a constant concern in practice, whether of the individual part, the subgroups, or the overall ensemble” (p. 191). During our rehearsal process, we worked on the tuning both with and without the piano and strove to have a thorough understanding of the harmony for each work. As the double bassist, I felt a particular responsibility to provide a stable foundation on which the other strings could build to ensure consistently accurate intonation. I tried to match the piano as much as possible for this reason.

A number of different factors affected our approach to intonation. In some cases, understanding the quality of the key in which we were playing was valuable. For example, the final movement of Hummel’s quintet is in the minor mode. We found that embracing the darker quality of this tonality helped to settle the intonation and bring out the angst in the music. The passage featured below in video example 72 was one section that we worked on particularly for the intonation.

Video example 72: [https://youtu.be/baViUm2l5GY](https://youtu.be/baViUm2l5GY)

J. N. Hummel: Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, Movement IV: Allegro Agitato, bars 229-248. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
In our rehearsal for this passage, we found it helpful to balance and tune the chords separately and then put them back into context. We also found that if I was more prominent in the balance, it gave us greater security. We placed *tenuto* markings on the more dissonant harmonies so we would play into them with greater emphasis, rather than shying away. In the slurred material in the strings seen in score example 21, we found that playing with limited vibrato significantly improved intonation. We also strove to play with calm, slow bows and smooth bow changes, leaving the rhythmic energy to the articulated passagework in the piano.


The instruments of the piano quintet cover a significant range. We found that the more widely displaced we were, the harder it was to maintain consistent intonation. This can be seen in the ending of Onslow’s piano quintet, available in video example 73.
Video example 73: https://youtu.be/NMiNIefMNnk

A. G. L. Onslow: Piano Quintet, Opus 70, Movement III: Allegretto Molto Moderato, bars 301-312. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

The sustained chord in that excerpt where the string parts are disparate is not well in tune, although I do move higher to adjust throughout the chord. In the surrounding material where we are closer in range, our intonation is more secure. This improved intonation was aided by our unified approach to articulation.

Another example of articulation influencing intonation is seen in score example 22, taken from Goetz’ quintet. In this excerpt we used articulation to exaggerate the modulation from c minor to c major.


As can be seen in video example 74, we attempted to bring out the agitation in the music by making the material in the minor mode more articulate and sharp and contrasted this with a lighter and more rounded approach to the material in the major mode. We
discussed the imagery of the sun suddenly coming through clouds as a possible point of inspiration at this juncture. Supporting this key change with articulation helped us to play with better intonation in the new key and ensuring a more unified approach to articulation helped us to have an equally unified approach to tuning.

Video example 74: [https://youtu.be/yfP5E_hbyk](https://youtu.be/yfP5E_hbyk)


As mentioned earlier, I felt a particular responsibility to contribute to consistent intonation in my bass line role. This role changed across the programme. At times, I was directly doubling or punctuating the bass line of the piano. Hummel, in particular, often employed the double bass in this manner and one illustration of this is seen in score example 23, which has the double bass part and the left hand of the piano part highlighted.

In this type of scoring, I needed to match my intonation to the piano. Ries and Goetz often have the double bass doubling the cello line, at times in a simplified version and at other times as an exact replication. Score example 24 in an example of the latter, taken from Goetz’ Quintet. This manner of pairing the cello (top line) and double bass (bottom line) is commonly seen in orchestral repertoire from the start of the nineteenth century.


When I was sharing material with the cello, my approach to intonation had to shift slightly. Although an awareness of the piano part remained essential, it was also important for the cello and bass to blend and adjust to each other to provide a foundation for the rest of the ensemble.

Farrenc and Onslow predominantly employ the double bass in a bass line role and, at times, have it doubling the piano or cello. However, they also write material for the double bass that is independent of both the piano and cello parts, adding another dimension to the texture. This more varied approach to the double bass writing generates a different approach to intonation again. In some moments the double bass sets the pitch but, in other instances, it is necessary to tune to another instrument within the ensemble. In score example 25, Farrenc places the melody in the violin part, a counter melody in the piano and gives the cello a
repeated bass line figure. The pizzicato double bass line also provides harmonic support but, in this instance, I adjusted my intonation to the cello line.


The double bass writing in Vaughan Williams’ quintet employs the instrument in a diverse array of roles, including doubling the piano, providing a bass line to the string section, playing melodic content in unison with other string instruments and even playing leading melodic material. At times, Vaughan Williams uses the double bass to provide a prolonged drone or pedal point throughout a phrase. In these moments particularly, I had a responsibility for setting the intonation and needed to provide a consistent approach to the pitch, while remaining aware of the piano. One example of this is from the first movement, at a point where the double bass sustains a G sharp for 32 bars while the strings and piano share sweeping melodic content. The strings and the piano frequently join the double bass and
restate the G sharp throughout this section, which culminates with the whole string section playing the note in unison. In rehearsal, I tuned my note to the piano and then the other strings built their harmonies on top of my note. Although my part is of the least interest in this passage, I played it quite strongly to provide something that the other string players could focus upon aurally (see video example 75).

Video example 75: https://youtu.be/FAphx5wxBRY

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 104-121. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

It was also imperative that I provided a good foundation when I was playing the lower part of melodic material. Score example 26 provides a passage from Vaughan Williams’ first movement, where the cello and double bass are sharing the melody in octaves, accompanied by the piano.

Here, we felt particularly exposed as it was just two instruments with the piano. We practised the more difficult shifts together and strove to feel the rhythm together, as we found the timing had a clear effect on the tuning. The cellist tried to play with a thinner sound so she could blend better with the sound in my higher range. This can be seen in video example 76.

Video example 76: https://youtu.be/yytKumtSvDY

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 310-314. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Preparing the featured quintets allowed me an opportunity to examine and improve my intonation within the ensemble setting. As the bass instrument of the ensemble, I felt responsible for providing a consistent approach to pitch and achieving a compromise between matching the piano wherever possible, especially when doubling its line, while also blending with the other string instruments. As the writing for double bass evolved throughout the nineteenth century, each featured quintet employs the double bass slightly differently. I found that in order to achieve consistent intonation, it was important to be mindful of my role within the texture and how that changed from one specific context to the next.
Leadership. In her discussion of leadership within a chamber ensemble context, Goodman (2002) notes, “the way in which the music is composed can also affect the relationship between performers” (p. 165). The concept of leadership was another aspect of the collaboration we explored as a piano quintet. In this repertoire, much responsibility does fall to the piano and violin as they are most frequently given the leading voice. In quintets such as those by Hummel and Ries that function predominantly as a showpiece for the piano, it felt almost like a concerto, with the strings following the lead of the piano for most of the performance. However, in works that employed the instruments more equitably, we found it difficult for the string ensemble to maintain consistently strong contact with the pianist. In these instances, the violinist often played the important role of mediating between the string section and the piano. Once again, the chronological development of the programme was relevant. As the melodic content became more evenly spread throughout the ensemble, so did the responsibility of leadership.

In choosing our set up for the recital, we were mindful of which players would most commonly be in leadership roles. It was important for the violin and piano to be physically close to each other so they could communicate more easily. We experimented with myself between the viola and cello and on the end, facing the violinist. We decided the latter was the best, to allow me a strong point of contact with the violinist and pianist. This was particularly helpful in works where I regularly shared material with the pianist, as seen in Hummel’s quintet. This position also allowed me to be next to the cellist, allowing us the best opportunity to create a blended sound.

As Smallman (1994) explains, piano quintets from early in the nineteenth century commonly featured virtuosic piano writing and employed the strings in an accompanying role, with an occasional feature for the strings alone or solo violin (p. 25). This is certainly
the case in Hummel’s quintet, where the piano is clearly in the role of leader. Most of our featured movement was led by the pianist, with the violinist providing a strong point of contact between the piano and the rest of the strings to effect good ensemble. The strings tried to stay on the front of the beat and play with clear articulation and rhythmic vitality to help maintain the Allegro agitato tempo. In the middle of the movement, there is a contrasting section where the strings are featured and the piano moves into an accompanying role, shown in video example 77.

Video example 77: [https://youtu.be/aFe8Hp_vFuE](https://youtu.be/aFe8Hp_vFuE)

J. N. Hummel: Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, Movement IV: Allegro Agitato, bars 158-188. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

That section is a clearly perceptible change for the listener as it features new melodic material and it is the first time the piano has not been the main focus. We decided to exaggerate these changes with a slight relaxation of the tempo and expressive solo lines in the viola, violin and cello. In this section, the individual string players became the leaders, with the piano beholden to their phrasing and more free approach to the tempo.

Ries’ piano writing is particularly virtuosic and places the pianist in a leadership role for much of the work. There are a number of cadenza moments, which are notated in the string parts as pauses. For these it was necessary to understand the rhythm of the piano part, to aid confident and well-timed entries. In the case of the cadenza in bar 3, seen in score example 27, we needed to be aware that the cadenza ended with a quintuplet.
This is a difficult moment for ensemble and, although we were all aware of the piano rhythm, we remained quite reliant on the violinist to lead the string entry, which can be seen in video example 78.

Video example 78: [https://youtu.be/wvE0kwPekgc](https://youtu.be/wvE0kwPekgc)

F. Ries: Quintet, Opus 74, Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio, bars 3-4. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

In rehearsal, we listened to the pianist play each link from cadenza to full ensemble on her own and rehearsed them separately, as well as rehearsing them in the wider context of the piece. The violinist led the strings for each of the entries following piano solos and was also responsible for key tempo changes, including the transition into the *Più allegro* section near the end of the movement, seen in video example 79.
Video example 79: https://youtu.be/-9lb4019Po

F. Ries: Quintet, Opus 74, Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio, bars 232-235. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

This is a good example of clear leadership being required of the violinist. By taking a small break directly before the tempo change, she allowed us the time to catch her lead and to also execute an effective change in dynamic. Although the violinist took on much of the leadership responsibility for this work, there were some exceptions. In score example 28, the cello and double bass have a driving bass line that punctuates the left hand of the piano part.


In this instance, the cello and double bass led together, while remaining aware of the piano figuration. This change of leadership enabled us to drive the tempo and keep the ensemble tight, as evidenced in video example 80, which shows the same section plus two more bars.
Video example 80: https://youtu.be/ZwWz943G-Iw

F. Ries: Quintet, Opus 74, Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio, bars 82-85. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

That example of the lower strings leading the ensemble was a rare occurrence in our performance of Ries’ quintet. In retrospect, we should have explored more opportunities for leadership throughout the ensemble. I think that we relied a little too much upon leadership from the violinist, placing a lot of pressure on her to single-handedly link the piano to the rest of the ensemble. If we all had developed a deeper understanding of the piano part, we could have led more as an ensemble, thereby enabling a more confident and convincing interpretation. Similarly, in our performance of Onslow’s quintet, more leadership from every player and a stronger understanding of each other’s parts would have been desirable.

Both Hummel and Ries focus on the piano throughout their quintets, placing much of the leadership responsibility on the pianist and violinist. This is typical of piano quintets composed early in the nineteenth century. Farrenc and Onslow’s quintets, both composed in the 1840s, require more leadership from each member of the ensemble. Farrenc passes melodic material through all parts, demanding authoritative playing from every musician. We encouraged whichever player had the melody to bring out their lyrical line and be quite soloistic. The secondary melodic material also needed to be strong and played with a clear sense of line. In score example 29, the viola is finishing a melodic line, and there is a counter melody in the piano and repeated accompanying figures in the cello. The violin and cello then take over the melodic content together, supported by a syncopated accompaniment in the piano and lyrical harmonic support from double bass and viola. Here, leadership becomes fluid and instead of one player clearly taking the role, the responsibility is shared across the ensemble as a whole.
In his quintet, Goetz provides every member of the ensemble with melodic content. There is still ample opportunity for solo display on the piano but this is interspersed with sections where the strings are the focus. Goetz often has the cello and double bass sharing material, as is evident in score example 30.
Goetz often places the responsibility for maintaining the tempo on the lower strings. In that excerpt, it was important for the cello and double bass to lead together and drive the rhythm, as can be seen in video example 81. Here, we needed to fight against the natural urge for the dotted rhythm to relax and instead lead the rest of the ensemble to play with forward motion.

Video example 81: https://youtu.be/-MwgNMxhMLM

H. G. Goetz: Quintet in c minor, Opus 16, Movement IV: Allegro Vivace, bars 51-60. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Throughout Vaughan Williams’ quintet, the composer employs each instrument in different roles. From the perspective of leadership, this means that every musician has the responsibility of leading the ensemble at different times. Much of the writing also demands for the group to lead together, rather than relying on a single player. This type of leadership is exhibited in video example 82, which features an excerpt from early in the first movement.

Video example 82: https://youtu.be/lXwCPLVjtmA

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 27-33. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

In this difficult passage in terms of playing as an ensemble, we found that if we relied on one player to indicate the entries, we lost tempo; it was necessary for all of us to lead and move together. In rehearsal, it was helpful to work on this firstly with strings alone, and then
combine with the piano. Video example 83 features another striking example of a passage where we all needed to lead together.

Video example 83: [https://youtu.be/DMTXtgBg8fY](https://youtu.be/DMTXtgBg8fY)

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 181-191. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Here all parts are in rhythmic unison, although the piano has more notes. We tried to lead it together, with the violinist providing strong physical cues, as she was the main connection to the strings for the pianist. Initially, when the material is smooth and lyrical, our movement involved breathing and moving together and watching each other’s bows. When the material becomes heavier and more rhythmic, our movement mirrored this, becoming more overt and visible. In particular, we made the retake down-bows clear so the ensemble was precise.

The double bass often has a responsibility to drive the tempo and this was particularly apparent throughout Vaughan Williams’ quintet. This is obvious at the end of the final movement, where the double bass has continuous driving crotchets with the piano, as seen in score example 31.
Throughout that section, it was important to have collective leadership from the ensemble. It was also imperative that the double bass kept the tempo moving and connected the rest of the string parts with the piano. This can be seen in video example 84.

Video example 84: [https://youtu.be/20KXSfJWolk](https://youtu.be/20KXSfJWolk)


In this excerpt, the double bass part initially punctuates the piano rhythm in *pizzicato* and then moves to *arco*, as the texture becomes thicker and the rhythm becomes more incessant. This allows the bass line to cut through the other parts and have a greater impact.
In summary, the leadership roles changed across the programme. To perform effectively, every musician needed to be at ease with playing both leading and accompanying roles. I was particularly interested in studying the role of the double bass. I found that, similar to chamber orchestra playing, the double bass often bears the responsibility of driving the tempo and connecting the piano and string lines.

Our changing approach to leadership reflects the evolution of the piano quintet genre itself throughout the nineteenth century. The quintets of Hummel and Ries predominantly employ the piano as the primary voice and the leadership role falls mainly to the pianist and the violinist, although it is important for every player to contribute to the rhythmic drive and energy. The clearly defined designations of solo and accompaniment found in these works become more blurred as the century continues. As the melodic material is shared more evenly throughout the ensemble, the responsibility of leadership also needs to be more evenly distributed. There are glimpses of this in the quintets of Farrenc, Onslow and Goetz but it is most pronounced in that of Vaughan Williams.
Rehearsal Process and Performance. Sariti (2007) notes that "good rehearsal technique is indispensable for the chamber musician" (p. 18). In our preparation for this recital we employed a variety of rehearsal techniques. Most of these were standard practice: rehearsing under tempo, tuning difficult chords and harmonies separately and using the metronome as a rehearsal aid. We also found it very useful to invite other musicians to rehearsals. Having another set of ears provided us with feedback on aspects of ensemble that were more difficult to gauge from within the group, particularly balance. Each guest offered a different perspective and helped us fine-tune our performance.

In How to Succeed in an Ensemble: Reflections on a Life in Chamber Music (2003), Abram Loft draws from over twenty years experience in the Fine Arts Quartet to offer advice on productive rehearsal processes for chamber ensembles. He notes the benefit of rehearsing under tempo and working on relevant passages with just some members of the ensemble (Loft, 2003, p. 191). We found this rehearsal technique of separating out the parts beneficial. The texture of the piano quintet can be dense, making it difficult to discern what is happening in each line. Hearing individual voices helped us understand balance and clarify rhythm. It was also valuable to rehearse with just some of the parts to determine who had the dominant lines and to develop a cohesive ensemble feel. When working on intonation, it was helpful to firstly rehearse the piano and double bass, and then build the string parts on top of the foundation of a well-tuned bass line. These processes helped to expedite the process of balancing and tuning difficult passages. They also allowed one of us to listen at a distance and offer feedback.

Although we managed to get some works to a high standard, I felt that we did not attain as united a concept of sound, blend and intonation as I would have liked across the whole programme. Although some of the musicians in the ensemble had played together in
other contexts, we had not previously played in a quintet format such as this. This experience highlighted to me the value of a longer rehearsal period or, ideally, an established ensemble. The intrinsic knowledge gained after playing in an established ensemble for some time allows a higher level of musicianship than we were able to achieve consistently throughout the performance.

Despite such logistical constraints, I felt some aspects of the performance went very well. The performance of Hummel’s Quintet seemed confident and full of character with the pianist in particular exhibiting great Mozartian style and flair. Our tempo allowed us to play with elegance, while retaining forward motion, and the more relaxed tempo of the middle section allowed the strings to shine in their featured moments. In this work, we achieved good balance between the strings and piano and unanimity of sound and style. Similarly, I felt we achieved a unified vision for the slow movement of Farrenc’s Quintet.

For the final movement of Goetz’ Quintet, we had a clear concept of the characters we wanted to convey and I feel this was communicated successfully in performance, giving the performance vitality. I was also generally pleased with our performance of Vaughan Williams’ Quintet. As we performed the entire work, we were able to more deeply explore the sound world and style and gain a thorough concept of the whole piece. In our performance, I think we had a more unified concept of sound, phrasing and vibrato than we did in some of the other works.

I was not satisfied with our performances of Ries and Onslow. Both works would have worked better at faster tempi but we needed to accommodate the complexities of the piano part. In Onslow’s quintet, a faster tempo would have allowed us to feel it in two, rather than four pulses per bar, allowing for more natural phrasing. The featured movement of Onslow’s quintet is marked *Allegretto molto moderato*. In his discussion of the *Allegretto*
tempo marking, Brown (1999) notes that it needs to be played at a tempo that allows the bow stroke to not be sleepy, but have a sense of liveliness and even, at times, sharpness (p. 366). Although our tempo was by no means slow, it wasn’t a comfortable tempo for bow movement.

Sariti (2007) suggests that to aid productive rehearsal, it is crucial for each musician to be an active listener and be aware of all of the parts (p. 17). I think we each needed a stronger understanding of all the parts for Ries and Onslow’s quintets. This would have allowed us more confident entries after the piano cadenzas in the Ries and would have allowed us to communicate more effectively in the Onslow. In hindsight, we probably should have taken the Onslow off the programme so we could have presented a more prepared and refined three-movement bracket within the rehearsal time available.

Our preparation for the programme involved around twenty hours of rehearsal, held in the week leading up to the performance. I would have preferred the rehearsal period to be less concentrated to allow us time to adjust not only to the music but to playing together as an ensemble. Nonetheless, much of the selected repertoire was intended for a more casual setting and rehearsal for its original performance contexts probably would have been minimal. Sumner Lott (2015) confirms this:

Chamber music in this era [nineteenth century] was typically printed and sold in sets of parts rather than in full scores. This practice reinforces the notion, now somewhat lost, that the publication of a piece of new music was intended to facilitate performance of the work, not study (p. 21).

One does wonder if the standard of reading and performing these works was naturally higher during the nineteenth century, as musicians were accustomed to performing works in
the same vernacular with regularity, or if our current pursuit of perfection in performance is
not well aligned with the intended purpose of this repertoire.

Sumner Lott (2015) corroborates that “popular” nineteenth century chamber music
was specifically composed in an accessible style that is pleasurable to play, while not
requiring significant practice (p. 32). She includes Veit, Spohr, Reissiger and Hummel in her
discussion of aforementioned popular composers and later notes that Onslow was creating
chamber music to be played with his social peers in the upper middle class, not professional
musicians (Sumner Lott, 2015, p. 79). Given their compositional style, it certainly seems
plausible that Farrenc and Goetz would fit in a similar category. In his discussion on the
origins of the piano quintet at the turn of the nineteenth century, Smallman (1994) also
notes that often the burden rested on the keyboard player in these works, while the strings parts
were chiefly designed for amateur players and were therefore primarily accompanimental (p.
1). With the exception of Vaughan Williams, this comment applies to each of the featured
quintets on the programme, particularly those by Hummel and Ries.

I believe the challenges we encountered in preparing this programme are therefore
less reflective of the complexity of the repertoire and more demonstrative of our unfamiliarity
with the composers and their musical language. Many of us had not previously played works
by any of the featured composers, with the possible exception of Vaughan Williams, so it was
a significant task to become familiar with their work and style in a short period of time. For
the most part, we were approaching the repertoire with no collective knowledge or inherited
wisdom, as we would have with better-known nineteenth century composers, such as
Schubert. We also had limited aural awareness of the works, as they are performed and
recorded infrequently. Even the most widely known composer on the programme (Vaughan
Williams) was represented by an early work that has only recently become available to the
musical community, being published in 2002. It was revelatory to realise how often we rely on collective assumptions of style associated with more mainstream composers or works.

Of course, this practice of approaching completely new repertoire is not unheard of in chamber music practice, particularly for early music and contemporary ensembles. It is quite an unusual situation, however, when playing repertoire from the nineteenth century. Doğantan-Dack (2015b) discusses the value of approaching a musical work with “an open mind, and open ears to hear beyond the current performances of it” (p. 36). Although she is referring in particular to giving a well-known work by Rachmaninoff a new interpretation, her comments are certainly relevant to our approach to this recital programme. After experiencing this introduction to some of the forgotten composers of the nineteenth century, we all were encouraged to further explore their chamber music and develop a stronger sense of their musical language and style.
Development of Double Bass Parts Throughout the Century

The piano quintet programme provided an opportunity to observe the changing roles of each instrument within the piano quintet texture and to examine the development of the double bass writing. As underlined above, piano quintets from early in the nineteenth century were often vehicles for virtuosic piano display, predominantly employing the strings in an accompanying role. This was certainly the case with one of the first works for the ‘Trout’ instrumentation, Dussek’s Piano quintet in F minor, composed in 1799. Smallman (1994) mentions that this work features “a vivid concertante part, covering a range of nearly five and a half octaves which was clearly designed to exploit the power and extended compass of the latest instruments of the period” (p. 25).

Hummel’s Quintet in Eb minor (1802) is a clear example of Classical style and, similarly to Dussek’s work, features the piano in a soloistic role. The double bass performs a supportive role throughout, whether it is enunciating the bass line of the piano part or providing a sustained foundation on which the other string parts can build. Hummel does not give the double bass any independent melodic content and places few technical demands on the player, other than capturing the appropriate style and sound. The double bass writing is relatively sparse compared to the other instruments. It also functions more with the piano than the rest of the string section, often being used to punctuate the left hand of the piano part. This can be seen in score example 32.
In the first bar of this excerpt, the double bass is playing the same notes as the left hand of the piano. In the next entry, the double bass is again punctuating the piano’s left hand. However, this time it is in a simplified version. Video example 85 features the same excerpt as score example 32 but starts a couple of bars earlier, where the double bass shares material with the viola, cello and piano. The rest of the strings then continue together and the piano and bass share a rhythmic statement.

Video example 85: [https://youtu.be/QPRnfofk3t8](https://youtu.be/QPRnfofk3t8)

J. N. Hummel: Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87, Movement IV: Allegro Agitato, bars 41-51. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

As noted earlier, Ferdinand Ries’ close relationship to Beethoven is omnipresent in his Quintet, Opus 74 (1819). The grand style and virtuosic piano writing give the work the feel of a piano concerto, rather than an intimate work of chamber music. This feel combined with the extremes of range and dynamic in Ries’ writing are indicative of a transitioning style.
from a Classical to a more Romantic language. The double bass is again functioning predominantly as a bass line throughout the first movement. However, it occasionally is featured as an independent voice. In these moments, the double bass is not necessarily given the primary melodic line, but nonetheless has exposed material that cuts through the texture. This is seen in score example 33, taken from the opening of the movement.


Here, the double bass part is independent from the other parts both rhythmically and with its articulation as it is in *pizzicato*. This allows it to cuts clearly through the legato string texture. Ries uses this scoring twice in the opening of the movement to set up two cadenzas in the piano part. This can be seen in video example 86. The double bass writing helps to build tension and effectively emphasise Ries’ *grave* marking.

Video example 86: https://youtu.be/2BdZQ_1sZ-4

F. Ries: Quintet, Opus 74, Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio, bars 1-6. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
For these *pizzicato* figures, I worked on projection and tonal quality because I wanted to create the round, resonant colour that is most easily achieved with an orchestral section of double basses. Later in the movement, the double bass has another exposed line. In this instance, the legato scale passage in the double bass works with the piano part to set up a key change, seen in score example 34 and video example 87.


Video example 87: [https://youtu.be/ibXlJr2MuCQ](https://youtu.be/ibXlJr2MuCQ)

F. Ries: Quintet, Opus 74, Movement I: Grave – Allegro con brio, bars 111-117. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Although these moments of prominence for the double bass are not technically demanding, they highlight a small change in approach to double bass writing. This manner of featuring the double bass is similar to the symphonic repertoire of the period, where the cello and double bass often share material but the double bass is occasionally given exposed material independent to the cello part. An example of this is shown in score example 35, which has been taken from the cello and double bass score of the first movement of
Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. This work was composed between the years of 1822 and 1824, not long after Ries composed his piano quintet. In this excerpt, the double bass line, which is highlighted, begins in unison with the cello but then Beethoven changes the texture by having the double bass punctuate the cello line in *pizzicato*.

Schubert’s celebrated ‘Trout’ Quintet was composed in the same year as Ries’ quintet (1819). Though similar to Ries’ work in that it features virtuosic piano writing, the treatment of the strings is significantly different. The violinist is an equal partner to the piano, with a demanding solo part. The other string voices are independent of each other and all have opportunities to shine through the texture, albeit not as often as the piano and violin. Although the double bass is predominantly employed in a bass line role, it is largely independent and, therefore, has a significant impact on the overall balance of the ensemble. The double bass also has some opportunities to play melodic content. In the excerpt featured in score example 36, the double bass has melodic passagework, which it shares with the cello.
Lawson (2003) notes that as the piano quintet evolved throughout the nineteenth century, the way the instruments were employed changed significantly:

As the genre developed, blend and balance were explored in a variety of ways. Themes and accompaniments were often exchangeable between strings and piano, the latter frequently of motivic significance. More homophonic or theatrical styles could involve more extended solo writing and often a larger amount of doubling. The future history of the piano quintet would produce a variety of relationships of style to scoring, since the distribution of themes and their accompaniments and true integration of forces would present the greatest technical challenges to the composer (p. 323).

Lawson’s comments clearly apply to Farrenc’s second quintet, composed in 1840. The compositional style is clearly in a Romantic idiom, with long, lyrical lines and sweeping changes in range and dynamic. Unlike Hummel and Ries’ quintets, the piano is no longer the main feature. Quintet No. 2 feels more like collaborative chamber music and Farrenc is noticeably more egalitarian in her allocation of melodic material. Every player, including the double bass, has an opportunity to be prominent. In score example 37, the double bass has lyrical melodic content. In the context of the ensemble, this line is part of a three-voice
texture with the viola and cello, which works most successfully if each voice is prominent in the balance.


Even in bass line material, Farrenc allows the double bass to be more prominent and independent. In video example 88, it is obvious the role of the double bass has changed dramatically. Although the double bass part is technically the bass line of the texture, it is being treated as an equal member of a string trio with viola and cello and needs to project as an equal voice to the other parts.

Video example 88: [https://youtu.be/w73yBLkWvO4](https://youtu.be/w73yBLkWvO4)

L. Farrenc: Quintet No. 2 in E Major, Opus 31, Movement II: Grave, bars 27-30. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

In sections like that featured in video example 88, the double bass has more lyrical, melodic material and this places yet again different demands on the player. There is the expectation from the composer that the double bassist can play with a sustained, expressive tone similar to that of the other string instruments. This marks a change in approach from predominantly employing the instrument to provide rhythmic drive and support or a more simple harmonic foundation. As mentioned earlier, Farrenc had a working relationship with
virtuosic French double bassist, Gouffé. One does wonder if his influence had an impact on her more varied and independent writing for the instrument.

As mentioned earlier, Schumann’s Piano Quintet of 1842 revolutionised the piano quintet genre by establishing the standard scoring for two violins, viola and cello, and it also had an impact on piano quintets with double bass. Smallman (1994) describes Schumann’s work as “a reaction against the virtuoso piano style in chamber music” (p. 42). Lawson notes that “though the piano writing is sometimes athletic and allowed to dominate”, the doubling of voices is a notable feature in this quintet and “the organic development of material allows for integration of all the voices” (p. 323).

Similarly to Schumann’s work, Onslow’s Piano Quintet, Opus 70 (1846) integrates all the voices, while still allowing for pianistic display. Although retaining the crisp and light qualities of the early nineteenth century, Onslow’s writing also embraces Romantic style with its lyricism and dramatic shifts in dynamic and character. Onslow’s treatment of the double bass part is similar to that of Farrenc. Essentially, it remains mostly in a bass line role but is also given featured moments of melodic interest. One example of this is in the opening of the third movement, seen in video example 89, where Onslow writes a secondary melody in the double bass part.

Video example 89: [https://youtu.be/D7PPDeLAhvM](https://youtu.be/D7PPDeLAhvM)

A. G. L. Onslow: Piano Quintet, Opus 70, Movement III: Allegretto Molto Moderato, bars 1-27. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

The influence of double bass virtuoso Dragonetti is clear in this section, as Onslow explores a higher range on the instrument than is seen in the previous quintets. In score
example 38, Onslow has placed delicate melodic material in the double bass part, demanding a secure technique from the player.


Goetz’ 1874 Quintet is firmly entrenched in Romantic style with the use of the key of c minor and an aforementioned programmatic element, linking the music to his personal life. Goetz has the double bass doubling the cello for much of the fourth movement. At times, the two instruments function in a bass line role, but at other times they provide the main melodic content. It is clear from the double bass writing that Goetz was aware of the capabilities of the double bass and did not feel it needed to be purely relegated to a simple bass line. This is particularly obvious in the fugal entry made by the cello and double bass at the end of bar 76, seen in video example 90.

Video example 90: https://youtu.be/gISno6J72yU

H. G. Goetz: Quintet in c minor, Opus 16, Movement IV: Allegro Vivace, bars 76-81. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

This passage is quite technically challenging, requiring deft finger work from the double bassist. In this moment, the combined strength of the cello and double bass gives the
final entry in the fugue an extra burst of energy. Similar treatment of the double bass can be seen in score example 39, taken from the end of the movement.


Again, the double bass shares this material with the cello. This fast passagework is challenging to execute with accuracy and clarity and demands a strong technical approach to the instrument. However, it is still significantly removed from the virtuosic solo writing of Dragonetti and Bottesini, the two leading double bassists of the nineteenth century. It is impossible to know to what degree the skill of these masters and others influenced composers such as Farrenc, Onslow and Goetz, although there is evidence they had an awareness of their virtuosity. Whether they were influenced by specific double bass players or simply wished to write more substantial double bass parts as part of their compositional style, these composers contributed to the double bass finding a more independent voice in chamber music. However, there was still a long way to go before the full capabilities of the instrument were harnessed.

The final work on the programme by Vaughan Williams exhibits a total departure from the double bass writing of Hummel. The ambitious double bass part is independent from the other parts and explores the full range of the instrument. There are many exposed
moments and significant melodic content. In video example 91, the strings combine as equal partners to create a lush texture.

Video example 91: [https://youtu.be/5JSnVtt3M0A](https://youtu.be/5JSnVtt3M0A)

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 39-70. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Although the violin has the leading voice in this passage, every string player has important melodic content. The double bass part spans a wide range and demands a projecting tone and singing, lyrical style. In score example 40, Vaughan Williams places the leading voice in the double bass part.


This solo line in the double bass is supported by the left hand of the piano and accompanied by the upper strings. The melodic content in the double bass has previously been heard in each of the other string instruments. Vaughan Williams creates an entirely new colour by placing the final statement low in the double bass range and marking the passage *pesante*. This can be seen in video example 92.
Video example 92: https://youtu.be/w_UB2z8EIXM

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in C minor, Movement I: Allegro con Fuoco, bars 171-176. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Vaughan Williams also features the double bass at the end of the first movement.

Once again, the double bass has melodic content in the lower range of the instrument, seen in score example 41.

This lyrical material in the lower range of the double bass has a sparse accompaniment in the piano, which makes the passage atmospheric. Vaughan Williams places a lot of responsibility upon the double bassist to shape the end of the movement, as is evidenced in video example 93. It is worth noting that each movement of the quintet ends with some form of solo material in the double bass part.
Although Vaughan Williams provides the double bassist with significant exposed melodic material, there are still moments of the quintet where the piano is featured as a soloist. There are extended piano solos at the beginning of the second movement and during the third movement. There are also passages where the double bass mirrors the left hand of the piano in the same manner as in Hummel’s Quintet. In score example 42, the double bass part is a simplified version of the piano left hand.

This scoring not only helps the bass line to project, but also gives it added dimension and expression, as is clear in video example 94.

Video example 94: [https://youtu.be/vQ3Bm1VdZJY](https://youtu.be/vQ3Bm1VdZJY)

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement II: Andante, bars 30-41. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

In this excerpt, the double bass firstly punctuates the bass part of the piano with *pizzicato*. It then moves to *arco*, which creates a layer of support to the piano part and helps to bring out the bass line. This section is marked *espressivo* in the bass part, which encourages the double bass player to add warmth to the piano part.

One of the most obvious differences in Vaughan Williams’ treatment of the double bass compared to the other featured composers is his exploration of the full range of the instrument. The double bass part uses both bass and treble clefs and moves from the lowest note on the instrument to the thumb position range usually reserved for solo repertoire. In video example 95, Vaughan Williams again places melodic content in the lowest range of the instrument.

Video example 95: [https://youtu.be/rxdcotQ2AJM](https://youtu.be/rxdcotQ2AJM)

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement III: Fantasia Quasi Variazioni: Moderato, bars 36-40. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

This cello and double bass duo descends to the lowest note of both instruments. Later in the same movement, the cello and double bass share another duet moment, this time in a
higher range. This is reflected in score example 43, where the cello part is notated in tenor clef and the double bass part is in the ledger line range of bass clef.


The double bass part here, also shown in video example 96, requires the player to use thumb position, which is unusual in a chamber music context.

Video example 96: https://youtu.be/RH3K4IIPJ48

R. Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in c minor, Movement III: Fantasia Quasi Variazioni: Moderato, bars 142-146. Presented on 30/04/2015 at Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).
The only other work on this programme requiring thumb position technique was the Bottesini solo. However, although Vaughan Williams provides the double bassist with challenging and engaging material in his quintet, he does not employ the instrument in the same manner as Bottesini. In the context of this passage of Vaughan Williams’ quintet, thumb position is used for a few notes, whereas Bottesini’s writing demands the soloist remain in that range for much of the work. What is notable with Vaughan Williams’ double bass writing is that he engages the instrument in a diverse array of roles across the entire range of the instrument. It is not known if he worked with a particular double bassist during the compositional process but there is little doubt that he had a strong understanding of the capabilities of the instrument.

Rehearsing and performing this quintet programme enabled me to experience first-hand the development of double bass writing throughout the nineteenth century. It was surprising to note how overt the changes were, with each work presenting a double bass part with greater challenges and independence. This development was even perceptible for the audience, with audience feedback confirming that it was clear the double bass became more active in the performance as the recital progressed.
Summary and Conclusion

The *Anything but the ‘Trout’* programme allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of nineteenth century double bass history and repertoire. Using what is arguably the most famous of all chamber music works for the double bass—Schubert’s ‘Trout’ Quintet—as a point of reference, the programme explored a wealth of nineteenth century repertoire that certainly deserves greater exposure.

The most interesting aspect of the historical research related to the connections between all of the quintet composers and double bass players, and the noticeable influence that the leading double bassists of the time exerted. Published articles from the nineteenth century and personal correspondence to Dragonetti provided an insight into the thriving chamber music scene of the time and the active contribution made by double bassists. It is clear that the programme presented for this recital barely begins to cover the repertoire available to the double bass community from this period. However, it does highlight some of the notable composers who included double bass in their quintets and the varied ways they employed the instrument.

Studying this repertoire from both historical and practical perspectives also allowed a more general examination of the development of the piano quintet genre across the nineteenth century. The transition from the piano-driven chamber music of Hummel, designed to be enjoyed by amateur string players, to the grand concert work of Vaughan Williams is significant. It not only represents the changing musical language of the era, but also the shift in the role of chamber music from the home to the concert hall. In addition, it reveals the similarities between the role of the double bass in chamber music and orchestral contexts during the nineteenth century.
The preparation of this programme allowed deep exploration of the challenges working in a piano quintet presents. It is common for pianists, violinists, violists and cellists to experience working in a regular chamber ensemble where they can deeply study a genre of music—usually string quartets or piano trios. However, for double bassists, chamber music is usually more of an ad hoc experience and it is relatively unusual to play a number of different works for the same instrumentation with the same personnel in a chamber music programme. In the rehearsal process, attention was paid to creating good balance and blend, playing with consistent intonation and having an organised and effective approach to leadership within the ensemble. It allowed every musician involved to consider effective rehearsal processes and to develop ensemble skills.

Finally, this quintet programme provided insight into the way that writing for the double bass in chamber music developed throughout the nineteenth century. The demands placed on the double bassist changed distinctly throughout this period, moving from simple bass lines which mirrored the pianist’s left hand part to technically challenging, independent writing that entrusted the double bassist with melodic material. This development of more independent and challenging double bass writing in chamber music throughout the nineteenth century reflects the similar development of the double bass in orchestral repertoire at the time.
Chapter IV: Duets with Double Bass from Recent Decades

**Introduction**

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen a surge of interest in double bass as both a solo instrument and a chamber music partner. In his study of twentieth-century chamber music (2003), James McCalla noted that the exploration of new timbral combinations by composers was as important to contemporary music as the breakdown of functional tonality (p. 103). No longer restricted to the paradigm of the string quartet and other traditional chamber music genres, composers have written for a seemingly limitless combination of instruments. Paul Nemeth’s comprehensive online catalogue, 4000 Chamber Works with the Double Bass, is a testament to both the increased interest in collaborative writing for double bass during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the diversity of instrument combinations employed by contemporary composers (2009).

As there is an inexhaustible breadth of modern chamber music repertoire available to double bassists, it became clear that I needed to set parameters for my recital programme. I wanted to include works that were not currently well known or often performed. It was also imperative that the double bass parts were independent, challenging to the performer and explored modern techniques.

I was already aware of John Tartaglia’s (1932-) *Fantasia on Themes of Marin Marais* for viola and double bass (1987) and Behzad Ranjbaran’s (1955-) violin and double bass duet, *Dance of Life* (1990). I had heard these works performed while I was a student in America and felt they both showcased the double bass effectively. Cathy Milliken had also alerted me in 2014 to a viola and double bass duet she had written in 2009, but which was yet to have its first performance. With these three works in mind, I decided to explore the
possibility of presenting a recital entirely comprised of contemporary duets for double bass and one other instrument.

In addition, I talked with a number of double bass colleagues both within Australia and internationally about their favourite contemporary double bass duets. A colleague in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra introduced me to Andrea Clearfield’s (1960-) *Three Songs for Oboe and Double Bass After Poems by Neruda* (1997), and I was struck by the manner in which the composer utilised the double bass. The idea of featuring Cathy Milliken as both a composer and as a performer (on oboe) in the programme was also appealing. Another work that I had already heard was Andrew Ford’s (1957-) *Chorales From an Ox Life* (2007) while I was a student at the Australian National Academy of Music. In particular, I enjoyed the work’s clarity and understated beauty. Paul Nemeth’s online chamber music catalogue for double bass (2009) made me aware of a duet by Erkki-Sven Tüür (1959-). Already familiar with some of his works for string ensemble, I was struck by his writing for the double bass and was excited to learn he had written a duet for violin and double bass, entitled *Symbiosis* (1996).

As discussed previously, earlier Collaborative Contrabass recitals featured works composed by virtuoso double bassists Domenico Dragonetti and Giovanni Bottesini. In his article on the diversity of double bass chamber music, Kurt Muroki comments on this trend of performers also contributing to repertoire for the instrument through composition, a practice that is becoming more prevalent in the current double bass community:

Bassists tend to be resourceful; they not only arrange and commission, but also quite frequently compose for their own instrument. In addition to Dragonetti himself, the bassist/composer list includes Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889), as well as our

For the modern programme, I chose to include a duet by Edgar Meyer (1960-) to represent this trend of virtuoso double bassists composing for the instrument. Described as “the most remarkable virtuoso in the relatively unchronicled history of his instrument,” Meyer is widely acknowledged as one of the most accomplished double bassists of this generation (Levine, 2000, p. 82). *Concert Duo* for violin and double bass was composed in 1998 for violin virtuoso Joshua Bell and was featured on Meyer’s album, *Short Trip Home* (Welz, 2001, p. 36). The work provides significant insight into Meyer’s mastery of the instrument and also highlights his unique compositional style.

Berio’s (1925-2003) short solo for unaccompanied double bass, *Psy* (1989), was selected as the featured solo work for the programme, as it is a staple of modern double bass solo repertoire. Commissioned in 1989 by Italian pedagogue Franco Petracchi for the Bottesini Competition, *Psy* is a re-working of a duet for two violins, entitled *Yossi* (Centro Studi Luciano Berio, 2010). Understanding the origin of this work impacted upon my interpretation—I found it easier to create continuous energy and drive imagining that there were two distinct voices in dialogue with each other throughout the work. The fact that *Psy* was initially conceived as a duet also made it the perfect choice to complete my modern programme. My finalised recital programme can be seen in Figure 3.

Entitled *Duets From the Modern Era*, the programme comprised one work for solo double bass, three duets with violin, three duets with viola and one work for double bass and oboe (see Appendix IV for full programme details). Despite the underlying duet theme, the programme was strikingly diverse and featured works that engaged the double bass in different ways and demanded much from the performer. Throughout my research and
Figure 3: Third recital programme

L. Berio  
_Psy_

J. Tartaglia  
_Fantasia on Themes of Marin Marais_

E. Tüür  
_Symbiosis_

A. Ford  
_Chorales From an Ox Life_

C. Milliken  
_Two Step_

B. Ranjbaran  
_Dance of Life_
  I: _Andante con espressione_

A. Clearfield  
_Three Songs for Oboe and Double Bass After Poems by Neruda_
  I _Body of a Woman_
  II _The Light Wraps You_
  III _Everyday You Play_

E. Meyer  
_Concert Duo for Violin and Double Bass_
  Movement I
preparation of the programme, some common themes emerged. The influence of solo double bass writing was obvious, as was the inspiration that leading double bassists provided for composers. Many of the works also had other external points of inspiration, drawing on poetry and other musical genres. Each composer used extended techniques in their writing for double bass and contemporary techniques were also incorporated to create new sound worlds. These commonalities drew the programme together and allowed for what I hoped would be an informative and enjoyable experience for the listener.
Commonalities

There is little doubt that leading double bassists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have influenced the way contemporary composers write for the instrument. Each duet on this recital programme was either composed by a double bass player or was written with a particular professional double bassist in mind. Also, a number of the works are the result of commissions.

This influence of virtuosic double bassists is also evident in one of the seminal works of modern chamber music for the instrument, Sergei Prokofiev’s Opus 39 Quintet for oboe, clarinet, violin, viola and double bass (1924). In his quintet, Prokofiev employs the double bass in both accompanying and melodic roles and makes considerable technical and musical demands on the player. He uses the full range of the instrument, double stops, fast passagework and rapid pizzicato passages. Webster Williams (1981) suggests the challenges of the double bass part were inspired by celebrated conductor and double bass soloist Sergei Koussevitzky, noting “it is certain that Prokofiev was aware of his legendary virtuosity, and [he] no doubt had influence on the intricate writing for the bass” (p. 722).

Double bassist William Schrickel is a passionate advocate for commissioning new works of chamber music including the double bass. His 1989 article “Commissioning Chamber Music” discusses his role as a founding member of The Minneapolis Artists Ensemble and some of the works the group has commissioned and premiered. One of these works is John Tartaglia’s Fantasia on Themes of Marin Marais for viola and double bass. Schrickel commissioned the duet in 1983, after listening to a recording of one of Tartaglia’s string trios (J. Tartaglia, personal communication, September 17, 2015).

Ranjbaran’s (1955-) violin and double bass duet, Dance of Life (1990), was written for and dedicated to former New York Philharmonic principal double bassist Eugene
Levinson and his son, Gary Levinson. Ranjbaran commented on the inspiration Eugene Levinson provided for the duet: “Eugene Levinson is a respected colleague of mine at Juilliard and in writing Dance of Life I was mindful of his virtuosity and lyrical performing style. It is not hard to see both characters in Dance of Life.” (B. Ranjbaran, personal communication, September 15, 2015).

Clearfield’s duet for oboe and double bass was also the result of a commission. Her Three Songs for Oboe and Double Bass after Poems by Pablo Neruda was composed for Philadelphia Orchestra double bassist, Robert Kesselman, and his wife, Jennifer Kuhns (Clearfield, 2012). Clearfield (2012) chose to connect the work to what she describes as “sensual love poems,” to reflect that she was writing for a married couple. Clearfield also created a version of the duet for violin and double bass for Edgar Meyer in 1998. She commented that hearing the work performed in its original form and the process of re-writing it for violin and double bass inspired a revised version of the work (A. Clearfield, personal communication, September 23, 2015). Cathy Milliken and I chose to perform from the revised version of the score for the recital.

Duets often offer the opportunity for both instruments to be featured in solo and collaborative roles. This is certainly the case for every duet featured in this programme. It is therefore unsurprising that some of the composers chose to write for a double bass in solo tuning (F♯1-B1-E-A), instead of a double bass in standard orchestral tuning (E1-A1-D-G).

Double bass historian Planyavsky (1998) explains how solo tuning emerged after Viennese tuning was abandoned at the end of the eighteenth century (p. 133). As described earlier, solo tuning refers to a tuning system used by double bassists for solo or concerted repertoire. The instrument is strung with thinner strings that are pitched one tone higher, creating a brighter tonal quality that projects more easily. Most contemporary solo repertoire
for double bass is written for solo tuning. A number of composers have also experimented with the use of solo tuning in chamber music, to allow the double bass to become a more equal partner to instruments that naturally cut through the texture and project more effectively.

Of the repertoire selected for the modern duets programme, Ranjbaran and Meyer both wrote specifically for a double bass in solo tuning. Clearfield also stipulated for the double bassist to use solo strings when she revised her duet for violin and double bass in 1998 for Edgar Meyer. This was most probably at the request of Meyer, as her original version for oboe and double bass uses orchestral tuning. The use of solo tuning for Ranjbaran and Meyer’s violin and double bass duets allows the double bass to match the brilliance of the violin sound. This can be observed in bars 26 to 29 of the first movement of Ranjbaran’s *Dance of Life*, in video example 97. Here, the brighter tone of solo strings on the double bass allows the interweaving violin and bass lines to blend more effectively.

Video example 97: [https://youtu.be/UGxILzSNmWU](https://youtu.be/UGxILzSNmWU)


Berio’s *Psy* for solo double bass does not specify a particular tuning preference and, as it is an unaccompanied work, it can be played in either tuning. It was clear that I would need to perform on two different instruments for the recital so that I could change between solo and orchestral tuning with ease. I thought it would be interesting for both me as a performer and for the audience to perform Berio’s *Psy* twice, allowing it to be heard in two tunings. Listening back to the performance, I felt that it worked best in solo tuning. The
brighter timbre suited the energy of the music and the solo strings also lessened the physical demands of the work, particularly in passages with double stops. However, playing the exact same work on different instruments and in different keys within the same recital negatively influenced my consistency of intonation in performance.

Contemporary composers often draw from literature or visual art for inspiration. McCalla (2003) notes that in twentieth century repertoire, it is common to see the inclusion of “literary or dramatic programs in the previously ‘pure,’ absolute genres of chamber music” (p. 103). Ranjbaran and Clearfield both drew from poetry for their duets. In his notes on *Dance of Life* for double bass and violin, Ranjbaran comments on the influence of the poetry of Hafiz on the work:

> In *Dance of Life*, I was inspired by the dramatic lyricism and mystical imagery of a poem written by the great Persian lyric poet Hafiz (c. 1320-90). The poem is a celebration of life and expression of human emotions. For me the poetry created an intellectual atmosphere, and stimulated my creative process (Ranjbaran, 2004).

In Hafiz's poem, the phrase "I rise" is used repeatedly. Ranjbaran mirrors this in his opening statement of the first movement. The double bass has a phrase that ends in a rising gesture, a contour the violin then imitates, as seen in score example 44. This figure recurs many times throughout the movement. In our interpretation of this work, the violinist and I both tried to emphasise Ranjbaran's word painting by bringing this feature out of the texture. Approaching *Dance of Life* with an understanding of the influence of Hafiz’s poetry provided another dimension to our interpretation. For the full text of Hafiz’s poem, see Appendix IX.
It is clear from the title of Andrea Clearfield’s work, *Three Songs for Oboe and Double Bass after Poems by Pablo Neruda*, that she was strongly influenced by poetry in her compositional process. Each movement shares its title with one of Neruda’s poems: *Body of a Woman*, *The Light Wraps You* and *Every Day You Play*. The full text of these poems is available in Appendix X. In her programme notes on the work, Clearfield states: “The movements are loosely based on the images and energy emanating from Neruda’s passionate and evocative texts” (Clearfield, 2012). The unusual pairing of oboe and double bass is also intended to reflect Neruda’s texts. Clearfield explains that the strikingly different ranges, timbres and sizes of the instruments, “resonate with elements of Neruda’s love poetry, which plays on images of dark and light, night and day, masculine and feminine” (Clearfield, 2012).

Clearfield’s expressive writing brings the text of each poem to life. The first movement, *Body of a Woman*, captures the sensual quality of the poem with long melodic lines and expressive held notes, while chromatic harmonies create tension and interest. At one point in the score, Clearfield requests for the oboe to play with a “sexy, full sound” (Clearfield, 1999, p. 2). The second movement is entitled, *The Light Wraps You*. Here, the melodic contour of the oboe part rises and falls, conjuring an image of light enfolding a figure. In the final movement, *Every Day You Play*, Clearfield uses a fast tempo, jagged contours and fast pizzicato lines on the double bass to evoke a sense of energy and fun. This
playful spirit is captured particularly well in a *stringendo* passage from the middle of the movement featured in video example 98, where the double bass and oboe simultaneously gain tempo and energy.

Video example 98: [https://youtu.be/MjJWFBTBQc8](https://youtu.be/MjJWFBTBQc8)


The modern era has seen an unprecedented diversity of musical styles and it is common for contemporary composers to draw from other genres. The works featured in my modern duet programme reveal influences of Jazz, Tango, Bluegrass and Rock, as well as music from earlier periods of classical music. One clear example of this is Tüür’s duet for violin and double bass, *Symbiosis*. Tüür’s music career began in a progressive rock band in the 1970s and this background is ever-present in his vibrant and rhythmic violin and double bass duet, *Symbiosis* (Estonian Music Information Centre, 2015).

Tartaglia notes that *Fantasia on Themes of Marin Marais* for viola and double bass borrows much from the music of Baroque composer and viol player, Marin Marais (1656-1728) (J. Tartaglia, personal communication, September 17, 2015). Four of Marais’ themes are titled within the work: *L’Agreable, La Musette, La Matelotte* and *Le Basque* (Tartaglia, 1987). Tartaglia uses jazz techniques to contemporise this Baroque material. The work starts and ends with a Tango-style bass line and in the *La Musette* section, Tartaglia marks for the bassist to play snap and slap pizzicato. He even writes the direction *Jazzy* in the score (Tartaglia, 1987, p. 4). Tartaglia’s treatment of the bass part in this section of the work gives Marais’ theme a new life, as seen in video example 99.
Initially I was unsure whether this pizzicato should be subtle or more at the forefront of the musical texture. Eventually it was decided it was more effective when interpreted as a total interruption of the cantabile viola line. I found it much harder to project with the slap pizzicato and, in the performance, predominantly used a snap pizzicato technique throughout this section.

The clearest example of contemporary music that is influenced by non-classical genres on my programme is the first movement of Meyer’s 1998 Concert Duo for violin and double bass. Meyer is widely regarded as a virtuoso double bassist in both classical and bluegrass genres. His compositional style is reflective of this but he is resistant to being described as a “crossover” artist (Levine, 2000, p. 85). As Meyer explained in a 2001 interview, “Most types [of music] are an amalgam of many things – even Bach or Beethoven are to some degree composites of all the people around and before them” (Meyer, cited in Welz, 2001, p. 29). David Shifrin adeptly describes Meyer’s all-embracing approach to musical genres: “Edgar isn’t blending two or more worlds – he’s living in a single very large world” (Shifrin, cited in Levine, 2000, p. 85).

Concert Duo reflects aspects of both classical and bluegrass style. In his performing notes on the work, Meyer recommends that the movement be played with a strong emphasis on rhythm, purpose and direction and encourages referring to the recording to understand the intended style and interpretation (Meyer, cited in Welz, 2001, p. 36). The harmonic and
rhythmic language of the work are clearly rooted in bluegrass style, as is the inclusion of double stops, bent notes, virtuosic rapid passage work and prolonged periods of syncopated string crossings. Many of these musical devices can be seen in video example 100. Here, the syncopated double bass melody is littered with bent notes and is accompanied by an undulating violin line where string crossings create an uneven melodic contour.

Video example 100: https://youtu.be/7AbW2PcnXAg


Every duet featured on this recital programme demands much from the double bassist, utilising the same extended techniques employed in solo repertoire. All of the works explore the extremes of the instrument’s range, as well as extremes of dynamic. Tüür’s *Symbiosis*, in particular, has a dynamic range of *ppp* to *fff*. Ranjbaran’s double bass writing utilises the full range of the instrument and is quite acrobatic to execute. In score example 45, the double bass part starts in the lower range but moves to the highest range of the instrument within a couple of bars, changing into treble clef.

A longer excerpt from this section of the work is featured in video example 101. Here, Ranjbaran has the double bassist moving from one extreme of range to the other at a considerably fast tempo. This writing is not only aurally engaging, but is also visually exciting for the audience.

Video example 101: [https://youtu.be/aaRexgkmavM](https://youtu.be/aaRexgkmavM)


In addition to covering an extended range of the instrument, many of the featured composers write extended passages of lyrical melodic material in the highest range of the double bass. These passages demand a very assured thumb position technique from the double bassist. In my personal preparation, I found working on these passages slowly with a drone note as a tuning reference allowed me to develop more security and consistency. Much of the bass part of Edgar Meyer’s *Concert Duo* is in the higher range of the instrument, as seen in video example 102.

Video example 102: [https://youtu.be/8hXQEKeRfSE](https://youtu.be/8hXQEKeRfSE)

In this instance, the difficulty of playing with good intonation in the high register is compounded by the pp dynamic. It is also a challenge to blend well with the violin part, which is playing similar material. The violinist and I decided to use vibrato sparingly and to play with light, fast bow strokes to create an ethereal tone.

Double stops and chords have been a common feature of solo double bass repertoire since the eighteenth century. However, with the exception of some repertoire for the Viennese double bass, it was unusual to see them used heavily in collaborative repertoire until the twentieth century. Many of the featured duos include chords and double stops. The third movement of Clearfield’s duet uses double stops and chords in the double bass part to provide harmonic accompaniment to the oboe’s melodic line. This can be seen in the opening four bars of the movement below in score example 46.


Other extended techniques utilised in this recital programme are natural and artificial harmonics and very fast passagework. Ford’s duet for viola and double bass, Chorales from an Ox Life, has extensive use of harmonics, including long passages of harmonics in double stops. This work will be discussed in more detail in Case Study 1. The most challenging fast passagework is in Edgar Meyer’s Concert Duo. In video example 103, the double bass
writing is not only at a rapid tempo, but also is in a high register of the instrument. I devoted significant personal practice time to this passage, using rhythmic variations to gain command over the notes. Despite my personal preparation focusing primarily on the demands placed on left hand facility, in the performance context I found it helpful to focus on my bow technique. Playing with very short bows, into the string, helped give this passage diction and prevented it from losing tempo.

Video Example 103: https://youtu.be/D6Hn3TNMO30


In addition to the extended techniques discussed above, the recital repertoire also features a number of techniques specific to contemporary music. Much of the writing is rhythmically complex, with constant changes in time signature and tempo. Milliken’s viola and double bass duet Two Step, which will be explored in greater depth in Case Study 3, is very rhythmically challenging for both performers. The violist and I needed to devote significant private practice time to fully understand our parts individually. In the initial rehearsal stages, we played considerably under tempo to gain an understanding of how our two parts fit together.

In some works on the programme, the rhythmic language is infused with influences of jazz, bluegrass and rock music. Edgar Meyer and Erkki-Sven Tüür heavily use syncopation and cross rhythms in their duets. Bar 65 of the Edgar Meyer’s duo, seen in score example 46, is a clear example of the use of cross rhythms.
One of the most significant developments of twentieth century music was the rejection by many composers of traditional tonality. Although not all of the works on the programme would be described as atonal, all use complex and, at times, chromatic harmonic language. This poses significant challenges for the performers to play with good intonation. In my initial stages of preparation for this programme, I listened to recordings of each work to become aurally familiar with each of the duets. In rehearsals, we devoted substantial time to fine tuning intonation and ensuring that each duet was as accurate as possible.

The final contemporary technique used in the featured duets is the exploration of different sound worlds. Composers stipulate for passages to be played near, on and above the bridge and use harmonics and glissandi to create different timbres on the double bass. In one section of Tartaglia’s viola and double bass duet, col legno adds a percussive quality to the sound, as seen in video example 104.

Video example 104: https://youtu.be/xHGYwcr9lHA


The featured composers also explore the different timbral possibilities of double bass pizzicato. Some works require Bartok, slap and snap pizzicato techniques and many write
extended passages of pizzicato in the bass line. The clearest example of this is in *Symbiosis* by Tüür, which is featured as Case Study 2.

Of the three Collaborative Contrabass programmes presented, this was the most diverse in both musical language and the employment of the double bass. Common themes did emerge, including the influence of high profile double bassists, the inspiration of visual art, poetry and different musical styles and the use of extended and contemporary techniques. However, each work has its own distinct style. This diversity is representative of music from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries more generally. In many ways, the most overt commonality these works share is that they are unique and not governed by a shared concept of sound or style.

The scope of this thesis does not allow for each of the selected contemporary duets to be discussed in detail. Instead, the technical and collaborative challenges of Ford’s *Chorales from an Ox Life*, *Symbiosis* by Tüür and Milliken’s *Two Step* will be examined more deeply in the following case studies. These works have been selected as they all employ the double bass in strikingly different ways and thereby highlight the diverse potential of the double bass as a collaborative instrument.
Case Study 1: Andrew Ford (1957-) *Chorales From an Ox Life* for Viola and Double Bass (2007)

Australian composer Andrew Ford wrote *Chorales from an Ox Life* for viola and double bass in 2007. The duet was commissioned by Australian double bassist Robert Nairn and his wife Heidi von Bernewitz (A. Ford, personal communication, September 22, 2015). *Chorales from an Ox Life* shares its material with a scene from Ford’s opera, *Rembrandt’s Wife*. Ford describes the inspiration behind the music and its title in his programme notes:

Near the end of my opera, *Rembrandt's Wife*, Sue Smith's libretto has the eponymous artist at work on his famous painting of a slaughtered ox hanging up in an abattoir or butcher's shop. His work on the painting is obsessive, at one level an escape from the problems of daily life. In the context of this particular painting, our Rembrandt refers to his work - the secret, driven, obsessive work of any artist, which, partly through its solitary nature, non-artists sometimes find hard to understand - as his "ox life". While sketching ideas for the opera in late 2007, and thinking about this crucial scene, I came up with a sequence of chords which I found myself repeating over and over at the piano, rather like the painter dabbing away at his canvas. The chords found their way into the opera, but they also form the basis for the gently obsessive music of this duo (A. Ford, 2007, cited by Australian Music Centre, 2016).

The music evokes the compulsive behaviour of Rembrandt at work. To achieve this, the harmony often remains stagnant and the material is repetitive, particularly in the opening where the same chords recur incessantly. Reading Andrew Ford’s programme notes and understanding the inspiration behind this duet was integral to my interpretation. The full score of this work, reproduced with the permission of the composer, is available in Appendix XI.
This work was challenging to perform both technically and conceptually. The double bass opens with a lengthy passage of harmonic double stops, as seen in score example 48.


Although each harmonic in this section is not difficult to pitch accurately, it is a challenge to play the double stops consistently. The angle of the bow has to be carefully planned to ensure both notes speak at the exact same time. Good bow control is also essential to maintain good sound quality throughout the phrase. In my personal preparation of this section, I worked on the upper and lower lines separately to build consistency. I also worked on establishing the start of each phrase accurately and finding the harmonic chords from different positions. A small excerpt from this material is included below in video example 105. Although the contour of this phrase is essentially flat, the violist and I tried to bring out the more interesting harmonies to make it less one-dimensional.

Video example 105: [https://youtu.be/Z9vGNq1DvLE](https://youtu.be/Z9vGNq1DvLE)

A. Ford: *Chorales from an Ox Life for viola and double bass*, bars 31-38. Presented on 27/09/2015 at Basil Jones Orchestral Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Abbreviated sections of this double stop material return at the end of the duet, as seen in score example 49.
These shorter statements were more difficult to play consistently, as the flow is continually disrupted. I needed to work on the transitions into the first chord of each passage to feel confident.

In my personal correspondence with the composer, I was very interested to learn that he revised the duet to be played as trio in 2009, with an added cello part. He noted that after hearing the work performed, he realised how difficult it was for the bass part to be played consistently in tune and consequently simplified the part (A. Ford, personal communication, September 22, 2015). Ford also observed that the performance of Chorales from an Ox Life that I had heard performed at the Australian National Academy of Music in 2009 was the trio version (A. Ford, 2015). This eased my mind as I had been struggling to play the bass part with the clarity and accuracy I remembered watching in that performance. In the revised version, the double bass no longer has double stops, as the upper note of each chord is covered in the cello part. To compare the two versions I have included the first seven bars of each below in score examples 50 and 51. It should be noted that the cello part is written one octave lower, to reflect the octave transposition of the double bass.
In the trio version, the double bass part is significantly easier to execute. As can be seen in score example 51, the double bass remains on the same harmonic note for the first seven bars. Although the notes in the trio are exactly the same as those in the duo, it would not offer the exact same timbral effect. In the duo version, the viola and double bass parts are matched with both playing double stops. As mentioned earlier, when I heard the trio version performed in 2009 I was struck by the accuracy and clarity of the performance, which is certainly harder to achieve in the duet. However, one can also clearly hear three separate parts, which was not what Ford originally intended. When I approached Ford regarding performing the work he was very intrigued to hear how I coped with the harmonic double
stops and requested that I let him know whether the performance was successful (A. Ford, 2015).

After the opening chordal section, the duet moves into more melodic material. Here the double bass provides the leading voice comprised of single harmonics. The double bassist often has to change string and position to play every note as a natural harmonic. I used long, light and fast bow strokes close to the bridge to create a well-phrased, legato melodic line, despite the disjointed movement of the left hand. This can be viewed in video example 106.

Video example 106: https://youtu.be/ku4qRud0JY8


As the melodic material featured in video example 106 continues, it becomes more difficult to execute. In particular, the passage is complicated by the addition of G sharps in bars 54, 59 and 60. (See score example 52.) This note can be played as a natural harmonic but it is positioned much higher up the string than the notes surrounding it. I decided to avoid large shifts by using an artificial harmonic. Although this solution was generally reliable, the artificial harmonic needed a firmer bow stroke and very sure left hand placement.

The material commencing in bar 74, seen in score example 53, is the first time the double bass alternates between harmonic and real notes. In this theme, the viola line remains entirely in harmonics and is very still. The double bass ostinato is more active and rhythmic.


At one point, the line includes double stops, as seen in score example 54. I found these double stops very difficult to execute with consistent intonation and without disrupting the longer sense of phrase the passage requires.


As a solution, I found the more lyrically I strove to play this line, the easier it was to blend the timbres of harmonics and real notes. The violist and I experimented with vibrato in
this section as well. We decided that the viola line should be played without vibrato to accentuate its clarity. With my part, we chose to use vibrato when the line was moving but to keep the held notes, which are all available as harmonics or open strings, pure and bell-like. This contrast between vibrato and non-vibrato playing can be seen in video example 107, taken from when the same material returns later in the work.

Video example 107: https://youtu.be/7q_HdwODH08

A. Ford: Chorales from an Ox Life for viola and double bass, bars 141-148. Presented on 27/09/2015 at Basil Jones Orchestral Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

The final musical material introduced by the composer provides a significant contrast. The viola and double bass are both suddenly much more active, playing tremolo and ponticello figures that swell dynamically. One excerpt of this material is included below in video example 108.

Video example 108: https://youtu.be/tS-7A8OTmPA

A. Ford: Chorales from an Ox Life for viola and double bass, bars 107-110. Presented on 27/09/2015, at Basil Jones Orchestral Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia).

Here the nervous quality of the tremolo is exaggerated by changing time signatures and irregular-length phrases. We worked on this section with the metronome to ensure good ensemble. We also decided that as this passage was by far the most active material featured in the duet, it was important to be quite visually active. This also aided the ensemble precision. As the passage is quite long and repetitive, we found it difficult to maintain interest. To
counteract this, we tried to exaggerate the dynamic contrasts as much as possible to create interesting contours. Listening back to our performance, I feel that we could have had even more dynamic contrast in this section and that the ponticello sound could have been more marked and abrasive.

Ford’s duet is very static for the most part and contains a lot of repetition. Initially we struggled to develop a strong concept of how we wanted to perform the work so it maintained the listener’s interest. We decided to think of it as a musical palate-cleanser and to celebrate its clarity and minimalism. It was placed in the programme between duets by Tüür and Milliken, which both exhibit very modern and active musical language. I believe it provided an appropriate aural reprieve for the listener in this position of the programme.

After the performance, I provided Ford with a recording of our performance. He was very enthusiastic about the result and noted that it proved the work is successful in its duet format and does not require a simplification of the double bass part (A. Ford, personal communication, April 14, 2016).

The manner in which Chorales from an Ox Life employs the double bass is unusual and, whilst it does present challenges for the player, it is quite effective when executed successfully. I had not encountered double bass writing before with extended passages of harmonic double stops. As a result, learning this work provided me the opportunity to become more confident executing high harmonics and to more deeply understand the best approach to bowing in regards to both harmonics and double stops.
Case Study 2: Erkki-Sven Tüür (1959-) *Symbiosis* for violin and double bass (1996)

As highlighted earlier, some of the featured duets draw inspiration from poetry, visual art and other musical genres. Tüür’s violin and double bass duo is inspired by the scientific concept for which it is named, *Symbiosis*. In my correspondence with Tüür, he explained that the concept refers to the complex connections between two different species, which cannot exist without each other (E. Tüür, personal communication, September 22, 2015). He described how he approached the violin and double bass pairing in a similar spirit: “Speaking in terms of color and character I was trying to create a ‘superinstrument’ with this piece. Violin and bass are forming through this ‘symbiotic situation’ as inseparable partners a new sounding coherent whole” (E. Tüür, 2015). The full score of *Symbiosis* is available in Appendix XII, reproduced with permission from the composer.

Tüür achieves his intended sound world by using the full dynamic and pitch ranges of both instruments, as well as different sound effects. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *fff* and there are also directions to play near and on the bridge. Tüür uses double stops, chords, fast string crossings, *pizzicato* and harmonics to create a diverse array of timbres on both instruments. In the opening of the work, he writes a harmonic glissando in the double bass line, seen in video example 109.

Video example 109: [https://youtu.be/t3CQslhQjI](https://youtu.be/t3CQslhQjI)

The effect of the changing harmonic series on the double bass is offset by a stable harmonic on the violin and the resulting eerie sound immediately captures the listener’s attention.

*Symbiosis* constantly changes from bursts of frenetic energy to more stagnant material, where both instruments sustain double stops. These chordal passages are sometimes in a soft dynamic range, evoking a sense of clarity and stillness, and, at other times, are written with loud dynamics, becoming more dense and incessant. An example of the latter effect is featured in video example 110.

Video example 110: https://youtu.be/vLiLFhycz0E


In this excerpt, also featured in score example 55, the chordal writing grows out of a descending melodic line in the double bass and crescendos from forte to fortissimo. We tried this passage with and without vibrato, deciding that a limited use of vibrato helped the sound to be more strong and sustained.

The more energetic material is often characterised by fast string crossings in both instruments. These string crossings are notated to be played with one arpeggiated bow stroke, as seen in score example 56.


In our rehearsal period, we experimented playing these passages with separate bows and using the marked bowing and decided that the rhythm and phrasing worked more easily with the suggested bowing. It also allowed for ease of ensemble, as we could visually match our bow changes. This can be seen in video example 111.

Video example 111: https://youtu.be/q-Xq20GamZw


In this example, the arpeggiated figures in the violin and double bass move in contrary motion. Although the notes don’t change, Tüür creates variety by moving the position of the bow, firstly to sul pont (near the bridge) and then to directly on the bridge. A diminuendo to al niente (no sound) accentuates these sound effects. Although this passage is uncomplicated for the left hand, the changes in bow placement and dynamic place demands
on the bow arm. I particularly had to work to sustain playing on the bridge. I found purposefully relaxing my right shoulder helped my arm to extend further and allow for ease of playing in that unusual position.

Tüür’s writing employs syncopation and cross rhythms. The most overt example of cross rhythms is in bars 52 to 65, seen in video example 112.

Video Example 112: https://youtu.be/XkyIxQHGj4


In this climactic passage, the violin and double bass need to maintain precise ensemble, although they are independent rhythmically and tonally. The violinist and I worked on this passage with the metronome, isolating bars that were particularly difficult to execute. Without the metronome, we found physical cues were imperative. In performance, the violinist clearly marked the beats with her head to help us stay together. This section ends with the double bass and violin on notes a semitone apart. I found myself automatically adjusting to match the violin note and needed to consciously fight this impulse to maintain the harmonic tension.

As mentioned earlier, Tüür was a member of a progressive rock ensemble, *In Spe*, from 1979 to 1983 and this early influence continues to pervade his musical style (Estonian Music Information Centre, 2015). This is clearly seen in the middle section of *Symbiosis*, where the pizzicato double bass line draws from rock music. The opening of this section is available in score example 57.
For this material to be well executed, I felt it was important to get a good sense of “groove”. Although there is a metronome marking of crotchet = 100, we decided to take it a little slower as we felt it lost its character if it felt rushed. I also arranged to play with my bow down so I could make a rounder pizzicato sound and have greater dexterity. A short excerpt of this section is featured in video example 113.

Video example 113: https://youtu.be/AEUFLfF1bw0

E. Tüür: Symbiosis, bars 84-89. Presented on 27/09/2015 at Basil Jones Orchestral Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)

One of the aspects of this pizzicato section that I found challenging was creating dynamic contrast. The excerpt featured in video example 113 has a dynamic range of piano to fortissimo and also includes accents. I placed my thumb against the edge of the fingerboard to gain more strength for the accented notes and this did work quite well. However, I would have liked to bring out the dynamic details more effectively in performance.
As this pizzicato passage continues, it becomes more complex. At times, the composer specifically marks for the double bassist to play on specific strings. In score example 58, each ‘a’ is to be played as an open string and all other notes are to be played on the E string. This enunciates a simpler ‘bass line’ from the passagework, continuing the feeling of a rhythmic ‘groove’.


In these passages, I tried to consistently keep one finger on each string to maintain tempo and to prevent rhythmic irregularities.

Tüür gradually begins to intersperse the pizzicato figures with short bursts of bowed material. The violin and double bass parts make these transitions together and although they aren’t strictly in rhythmic unison, the material is very similar and requires tight ensemble to be effectively executed. One of these transitions is provided in score example 59.

Throughout this section of the duet, the violinist and I tried to create a feeling of perpetual motion where the music is incessant and never loses its rhythmic drive. We tried to highlight the tessitura of our respective lines with dynamic contrast. This became more exaggerated as the higher notes became more disparate. This can be seen in video example 114.

Video example 114: https://youtu.be/w7U9VVybKc


In this excerpt, accents exaggerate the syncopated rhythms. The fast transitions between arco and pizzicato were hard to co-ordinate and required slow practice during the preparation period.

The ending of Symbiosis, seen in video example 115, combines two earlier themes: the slower chordal material with fast bursts of syncopated pizzicato.

Video example 115: https://youtu.be/HY1NcwV-4QU


In this section, the chords are marked in softer dynamics. We decided to use very little vibrato and aim for a pure sound. I found it very difficult to make the chords speak precisely
in a softer dynamic, particularly those on the lower two strings. Listening back to the performance, I would have liked to achieve a more extreme dynamic range, as it would have made the *pizzicato* statements more vital and surprising. The duet ends with the double bass playing a harmonic glissando figure similar to the opening, which gives the work a nice sense of symmetry.

After the performance, I provided Tüür with a sound recording of the performance. He was very positive about our “lively” interpretation and commented that he was particularly pleased with the energy we brought to the work (E. Tüür, personal communication, April 19, 2016). His comments eased my concerns regarding taking the faster section at a tempo slightly below the metronome marking.

Tüür’s duet presents a number of challenges for the double bassist, including double stops, complex rhythmic material and fast passagework in both *arco* and *pizzicato*. The influence of rock music is particularly evident in Tüür’s rhythmic language and his use of the double bass. I had not previously played a work that demanded such diversity in sound and dynamic using *pizzicato*. This work allowed me to investigate the timbral possibilities available to me on the double bass without the bow and revealed how much further I can develop dexterity and variety within this aspect of my playing.

In Milliken’s viola and double bass duet, *Two Step*, the two instruments represent two characters engaging in a dialogue. We were fortunate to work closely with the composer during our preparation of this work. In our conversations, she explained how the title was a play on words, referencing people being ‘in step’ or ‘out of step’ with each other. The work is centred around two main themes, one passive and one boisterous. At times both instruments are in the same sound world and in other moments, they have very different material, reflecting agreement and disagreement. In Milliken’s words:

*Two Step* is a duo-dance, a type of instrumental contemporary dub-step intended as a sparing dialogue between the two instruments. The themes of the piece feature the duality of vigour and passivity as reflections on the characters of Florestan and Eusebius (C. Milliken, personal communication, September 16, 2015).

Milliken uses floating figures, often in harmonics, to evoke her passive theme. One such figure, seen in score example 60, opens the work.

The boisterous figures are rhythmic, accented and often in double stops. Score example 61 provides a short excerpt where both instruments are playing such material.


At times Milliken has the double bass and viola playing similar material and at other times, they are in opposition. In video example 116, the viola is playing the passive theme, which is dominated by the boisterous material of the double bass.

Video example 116: https://youtu.be/6eoG6umZAY8


Although the double stops in the bass line are in lower positions and not technically difficult, I found it challenging to achieve the clarity and strong rhythmic drive I wanted while playing entirely in double stops. I found it helpful to play directly at the frog and to use a short bow stroke, remaining into the string. We spent a lot of our rehearsal time rehearsing under tempo and with a metronome to achieve rhythmic accuracy.
When both instruments are playing the boisterous theme, the sound becomes more competitive, evoking an argument. This can be seen in video example 117.

Video example 117: https://youtu.be/vv-5dCRZjnw


Co-coordinating the rhythmic material in this excerpt was a challenge, as the intermittent statements in the double bass have to fit into the constant rhythm of the viola part. I found that if I tried to simply react to the viola part I would sound late and that it was important for me to be very assertive rhythmically to achieve good precision of ensemble.

In the passive material, Milliken evokes a sense of timelessness with irregular rhythms. One example of this is in score example 62.

Here, the difficulty of playing each harmonic accurately is exacerbated by the complex rhythm. We needed to work out exactly how our parts fit together in this section and marked in the score the rare moments where our notes lined up. Our execution of this material can be seen in video example 118, where both viola and double bass are in the passive sound world and have complex rhythmic material.


Occasionally, the viola or double bass have solo outbursts of material that seem almost like short tantrums. The detail demanded of the double bassist in this solo material is evident in score example 63, which has a number of articulation and dynamic markings, in addition to being rhythmically complex.

This solo, which involves double stops with *tremolo* bowing and *pizzicato* interjections, is featured in video example 119. None of the separate elements here are particularly difficult but it was challenging to successfully execute this passage in its entirety. I found that it was helpful in my personal preparation to isolate the different elements – for example, playing the passage without *tremolo* or *pizzicato* and then adding it when I felt confident with the rhythmic and melodic aspects of the passage.

Video example 119: https://youtu.be/nqfJ7dsdgCk


Written in 2009, Milliken’s duet is the most recently composed of the works on the programme and the most contemporary in its language. The composer creates a diverse sound world by using such devices as glissandi, Bartók *pizzicato*, strumming, *tremolo*, harmonics and double stops. The rhythmic language is complicated with constantly changing time signatures. The viola and double bass parts fit together very intricately and we needed to read from a score to stay constantly aware of each other’s part. One interesting contemporary feature of *Two Step* is its inclusion of aleatoric elements. The clearest example of this is in bar 92 shown in score example 64, where the viola and double bass are instructed to freely play a series of harmonics. There is no set rhythm provided—players are simply instructed to alternate and to hold their note until the other enters and the passage is notated as lasting for approximately 1.5 minutes. Milliken also stipulates that if the wrong harmonic is played that players should not adjust to the correct note, as different results are welcome.
When we played this passage for the composer, she shared with us an anecdote from an experience she had with John Cage. She had worked on a similarly aleatoric passage from one of his works and performed it for him in two different ways to see which he preferred. He commented that both were equally beautiful and what was important was that every performance was different. It was clear that we needed to have a similar exploratory approach to this passage, feeling free to risk mistakes and to perform it differently each time. We worked on it strictly in time so we felt in control and then experimented with playing it with a free concept of rhythm and ensemble.

Although there are clear challenges throughout Two Step for both players, there are some passages that are particularly virtuosic. One such example, featured in video example 120, is in the double bass line, where the rhythmic language is complex and the melodic material rapidly moves between the low and high ranges of the instrument. Obviously, this passage required significant personal attention. I also found it helpful to clarify each element separately, including rhythm, pitch, dynamics and articulation, before trying to put it all together.
Video example 120: https://youtu.be/35oWCN0qBy8


The most challenging passage for ensemble precision was near the end of the work, when the viola and bass share cascading chromatic figures. One short excerpt of this section is available in score example 65.


Initially we found it difficult to fit this material together rhythmically and spent significant rehearsal time playing it under tempo. When we played it for the composer, she explained that this passage was a climactic point of the ‘disagreeing’ material and that we
should feel free to interrupt each other in our entries. Playing in this spirit really helped us to develop a better sense of continuous line and not be too inhibited by the complexity of the rhythm. A short excerpt from this passage can be seen in video example 121.

Video example 121: https://youtu.be/s4miCp3oqdU


Working on Two Step with the composer not only allowed the violist and I to gain insight on the work but also provided Cathy Milliken the opportunity to make some revisions to the score. The full revised score is available in Appendix XIII, reproduced with permission from the composer. Milliken’s revisions were predominantly adjustments to the dynamics to allow for appropriate balance. An example of the adjustments made in the revised score can be seen in score examples 66 and 67.

Here, the composer altered the dynamics so there was greater contrast between the material she wanted in the forefront and the accompanying figures.

Milliken’s double bass writing in Two Step is quite ambitious. The part has complexities in its pitch, as it is atonal, as well as in its rhythmic language. It is also highly detailed, often containing multiple articulation or dynamic directions in a single bar. It required a significant rehearsal commitment to execute well together. The composer was very pleased with the rehearsal process and the performance, commenting that we communicated the concept of passivity and aggression convincingly (C. Milliken, personal communication, September 27, 2015). As she was in attendance at the recital, we preceded our performance of the work with some comments from the composer. This was much appreciated by the audience, many of whom commented that Milliken’s comments allowed them to more deeply understand and enjoy the performance.

Studying this work allowed me to improve my contemporary skills on the instrument. However, the most valuable aspect of preparing and performing Two Step was the opportunity to work closely with the composer and benefit from the insights she provided.
Summary and Conclusion

More so than any other collaborative format, duets allow both players to simultaneously function as soloists and chamber musicians. As Edgar Meyer commented:

I love duos—I like to be part of a dialogue. And I don’t mean just the musical dialogue … I enjoy the entire thing—spending time with interesting personalities, talking about music or working things out (Edgar Meyer, cited in Welz, 2001, p. 33).

After preparing and presenting my recital of modern duets for double bass paired with viola, violin and oboe, I heartily share Meyer’s sentiments. I was very fortunate to collaborate with three exceptional musicians who made the process of assembling each work a pleasure and a valuable learning opportunity.

This project allowed me to considerably improve my collaborative skills. Duets present a different type of collaboration to other chamber ensembles, as both players have to work very well as partners, while also maintaining some qualities of a soloist. With only two parts, it is obvious if the sound or intonation is not matching or if the ensemble is not polished. In comparison to previous chamber music recitals, this project required a greater time commitment for rehearsals over a longer preparation period. This allowed us to discuss musical decisions at length and work in detail on balance and matching pitch and sound. It was necessary for each musician to have a strong knowledge of both parts to play with good ensemble. For a number of the works, we decided to read from scores so we could directly refer to the other musician’s part. This was especially necessary for Two Step, where the abstract nature of the work made precise ensemble a challenge.

Although the programme was very diverse, clear correlations between the different works emerged. It is little surprise that the double bass parts for every duet were challenging
and engaging, as every work was written for an accomplished professional double bassist. The featured composers drew inspiration from diverse sources, including poetry, visual art, science and other genres of music. Every work employed significant extended and contemporary techniques, including natural and artificial harmonics, double stops and a wide array of pizzicato and arco sound effects. The double bass was showcased completely, covering its full pitch and dynamic range and exploring its infinite timbral possibilities.

Learning and executing the programme was a significant personal challenge. Of the four Collaborative Contrabass recitals I presented, this was by far the most demanding. There were many notes to learn and the featured works pushed the boundaries of my technique, often requiring newly acquired skills. Technical challenges included rapid passagework, high harmonics, extended modern techniques, fast pizzicato passages, double stops and extremities of range, volume and tempo. Several of the works were atonal and presented challenges with pitching passages correctly and playing with consistently good intonation. I found that listening to recordings of each work and having a very strong aural knowledge of my part was essential. Learning these works allowed me to develop new technical skills and generally improve my playing.

Through preparing and performing this recital, I was also able to develop my contemporary performance techniques. Ford’s Chorales from an Ox Life had extended passages of double-stop harmonics, which demanded greater bow control and left hand security in the highest positions of the double bass. Tüür’s Symbiosis had extended passages of rapid pizzicato with detailed dynamic changes. In my preparation of this work, I had to experiment with different pizzicato techniques and fingerings to effectively execute these sections. Symbiosis also required different bowing effects, allowing me to explore my bow placement and the different sound worlds possible on the double bass. Milliken’s viola and
double bass duet was rhythmically complex and allowed me to develop this aspect of my playing. Meyer’s *Concert Duo* was one of the greatest challenges on the programme, particularly in its sections of rapid passagework. This work allowed me to develop greater left hand facility, endurance and strength.

In my experience, the most rewarding aspect of learning contemporary repertoire is the opportunity it presents to communicate directly with the composers. I was fortunate to have correspondence with almost every featured composer. Their advice and insight into their compositions was a valuable resource in my recital preparation and helped me to more deeply understand their musical intentions. Working directly with Cathy Milliken on her viola and double bass duo *Two Step* was particularly beneficial, as understanding the context of the work helped us grapple with the abstract nature of the writing. In our correspondence, Tartaglia expressed his gratitude that his work continues to bring double bassists joy (J. Tartaglia, personal communication, September 17, 2015). I feel fortunate that I had the opportunity to share this repertoire with the wider musical community through my Collaborative Contrabass project.
Chapter V: Conclusion

Project Overview

Robin Nelson outlines the clear process required to transition from a practitioner to a practitioner-researcher. A practitioner should specify a research inquiry, set a timeline for a project, build moments of critical reflection into the timeline, document the process, locate their research within similar practice, relate their enquiry to a broader contemporary debate or discussion and, throughout the process, capture moments of insight (Nelson, 2013, p. 29). The Collaborative Contrabass project has certainly afforded me the opportunity to explore the practitioner-researcher role in such ways and to develop skills in both disciplines.

My initial research inquiry was inspired by my desire to source, perform and promote chamber music for the double bass. This grew into a two-year project involving musicological research, recital programming, rehearsal, performance and reflexive practice. The timeline of recital preparation and performance for the project provided structure and direction. Musicological research uncovered a wealth of chamber music repertoire available to double bassists from the eighteenth century to today. This repertoire employs the instrument in virtually every possible manner and presents a myriad of technical and musical challenges to the double bassist.

Each recital programme was designed with a specific research concept in mind and offered different insights into double bass chamber music and collaborative practice. Learning the first programme in both standard and Viennese tuning systems created a unique opportunity to not only experience playing the selected repertoire in the tuning for which it was intended but to also make comparisons between the two approaches. Performing chamber works by composers including Mozart, Franz Joseph Haydn, Dittersdorf and Vanhal in Viennese tuning provided me with a fresh perspective on this repertoire and informed how
I will approach similar repertoire in the future. The second recital programme allowed me to deeply study the piano quintet genre and the development and function of the double bass within it. The rehearsal period for this recital allowed a comprehensive examination of collaborative practice within the piano quintet context. The final programme was comprised of duets for double bass with violin, viola or oboe that were all conceived for and inspired by a specific professional double bassist. The preparation of this repertoire enabled me to further develop extended and contemporary techniques on the double bass. Working closely with composers throughout my preparation was a particularly valuable aspect of this recital process.

Throughout both my individual and collective preparation for each recital programme, I reflected upon all aspects of the process in the form of a written journal. I considered how successfully the aims of each recital had been achieved and what I would want to improve in future performances. This analysis of my preparation and performance was documented, as was the real-time experience of each recital performance with sound and video recordings. This reflexive practice allowed me to explore my own creative process, both individually and within the collaborative context. It also allowed me to improve my ensemble skills and, at times, my leadership skills. Approaching chamber music performance with an awareness of my own individual preparation as well as an awareness of the needs of the ensemble allowed me to harness my embodied musical knowledge and assess which aspects of my playing and knowledge could improve.

As noted earlier, Nelson (2013) highlights the importance of artistic research in capturing moments of insight (p. 29). Each recital programme within the Collaborative Contrabass project allowed me insight into my own playing and chamber music practice more generally, and widened my knowledge of specific areas of chamber music repertoire.
and its historical context. As the project is now completed, I am able to observe trends and commonalities that emerged across all four recitals.
Trends and Correlations

Nelson (2013) observes that artistic research typically provides substantial insights rather than offering definite conclusions or answers (p. 30). Looking back on this research project in a holistic sense, trends emerge from all three recital programmes and four performance processes. Although each recital showcased significantly different repertoire and had a distinct research angle, there were clear commonalities. These included the profound influence of virtuosic double bassists on composition for the instrument, the new insights created by different tuning systems and the potential for works of chamber music to push the boundaries of technique and artistry on the instrument.

Each recital programme featured works composed by or for prominent performers on the double bass. The Viennese tradition in the second half of the eighteenth century inspired an entire school of virtuoso performers who stimulated unprecedented interest in the double bass as a solo instrument and chamber music partner. The first recital programme presented a selection of these works alongside a solo quintet for double bass and strings by Domenico Dragonetti. Few double bassists throughout history have had the impact of Dragonetti as a performer or as an advocate for the instrument. His influence on collaborative music for the double bass as a composer was highlighted in the first programme with a rare performance of one of his string quintets. The piano quintet programme revealed Dragonetti's impact as a performer and promoter of the double bass.

The featured piano quintets also drew attention to the impact of two other players: French double bass virtuoso Achille Gouffé and Italian double bass player, Giovanni Bottesini. Today, Bottesini is most recognised for his concerti and virtuosic showpieces, which remain staples of double bass repertoire. However, his impact on collaborative writing for the instrument is less widely known. Bottesini regularly included chamber music in his
celebrated public performances and, as such, he was able to bring these works considerable exposure and promote his instrument as a collaborative partner. Gouffé was a strong advocate for the inclusion of the double bass in chamber music performance. His contribution is twofold. He was a source of inspiration and knowledge for the leading chamber music composers in France and he also hosted a regular series of chamber music soirees and regularly commissioned works for these events.

The final programme particularly celebrated the influence of virtuoso double bassists, with each duet written for and, in some cases, commissioned by a specific professional double bassist. Learning the first movement of Edgar Meyer’s 1998 Concert Duo for violin and double bass provided insight into Meyer’s creativity and complete command of the instrument.

Learning to play compositions by celebrated players such as Edgar Meyer, not to mention Sperger, Dragonetti and Bottesini, was one of the most satisfying aspects of the recital processes. Studying works by these virtuosic double bass players allowed me a deeper understanding of their skill on the instrument. It also revealed the vision they each had for the double bass; in their own way, they have all raised the standard of double bass playing and improved the perception of the instrument during their lifetimes and beyond. There is significant historical information available on Sperger, Dragonetti and Bottesini, including accounts attesting to their command of the instrument. As Meyer is currently active as a performer and composer, it is possible to not only hear him perform but also to understand his music from his own perspective through interviews and his own writing. I found all of these resources invaluable in achieving a deeper understanding of these important figures in double bass history and their musical output. However, experiencing their compositions first-
hand in rehearsal and performance offered the ultimate insight into their technique and musicianship.

Sperger’s duet for viola and double bass was one of the most challenging works showcased throughout the Collaborative Contrabass project. The melodic content is evenly divided between the viola and double bass, demonstrating that Sperger believed his instrument to be more than capable of performing the role of the leading voice. Learning this work, I found it particularly difficult to play the melodic lines with good intonation, while maintaining good phrasing, because the difficulty of the left hand technique often dominated my focus. After experiencing Sperger’s writing for the double bass first-hand, it is clear that he was able to comfortably play melodic content across the full range of the double bass and had an innate knowledge of the geography of the instrument.

Dragonetti’s Quintet is a tour de force for the double bass. Performing this work, I was immediately struck by the extraordinary stamina Dragonetti must have had as a performer—it is very tiring to perform as the double bass writing is full of rapid passagework and offers very little respite throughout. In his solo quintets for double bass, Dragonetti demonstrates his progressive vision for the instrument. At a time when his professional life was dominated by opera, symphonic and chamber music repertoire that principally utilised the double bass in accompanying and bass line roles, he composed a wealth of repertoire that promoted the double bass as the undisputed focus. It is unsurprising that he became such a strong champion for the instrument, inspiring more complex orchestral and chamber writing.

Bottesini’s solo repertoire for double bass continues to challenge and inspire double bassists more than a century after his death. His soaring operatic melodies extend across the full range of the instrument and demand a sure left hand technique and a flexible and well-developed bow arm. Experiencing Bottesini’s writing physically on the double bass, one
realises that he had absolutely no inhibitions regarding what was possible on the double bass. The operatic language that surrounded him inspired him and he translated it to his instrument, apparently relishing the technical challenges it presented. There is little doubt he must have had an impressive command of the instrument to conceive of these works.

Anyone who has had the privilege of seeing Edgar Meyer perform live understands his complete mastery of the double bass. I can attest to this, having both watched him live in concert and played with the University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra when he performed Bottesini’s second concerto. In his *Concert Duo* for violin and double bass, he makes no concessions for the double bass, writing similar material for the double bass as for the violin. This is despite the fact that the bluegrass language that inspired him transfers over to the violin more naturally. The challenges for the double bass include double stops, winding melodies in the highest range of the instrument, very fast passagework and acrobatic, rhythmic passages with rapid and constant string crossings. I found it to be particularly challenging to learn and, similarly to the Dragonetti Quintet, it required significant stamina in performance. The fast passagework was particularly difficult and in performance we played at a slightly slower tempo than that of Meyer’s recording to allow for the best execution.

Learning works by Sperger, Dragonetti, Bottesini and Edgar Meyer allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of their considerable virtuosity. One can read about their skill on the double bass but actually playing the notes they wrote and experiencing firsthand what they were able to imagine and execute on their instrument provides a new perspective on the unique impact they have each had on shaping double bass technique and repertoire. One characteristic these performers all share is that they did not impose limitations on the instrument. They all employ the double bass as an equal partner that will act as a leading
voice as often as any other member of an ensemble. The melodic content given to the double bass demands a surety of virtuosic technique and demands imaginative musicianship.

Observing the impact of individual players on the composition of chamber music for double bass throughout each musical era clearly demonstrates the responsibility we all have to encourage quality composers to write works for our instrument. No group of musicians should be more invested in growing and promoting repertoire for the double bass than double bassists themselves. It is our collective responsibility to champion our instrument as an equal partner in chamber music, in the way that Dragonetti, Bottesini and Meyer, to name just a few, have already.

While it is unrealistic and impractical to expect that every work of chamber music for double bass be as challenging and virtuosic as the featured works by Dragonetti and Meyer, composers should be encouraged to not simply include the instrument in collaborative writing but employ it as an equal member of the ensemble. This would not necessarily mean that the double bass lead the entire ensemble, as in Hoffmeister’s quartet or Dragonetti’s quintet, or even that it have significant melodic content, as is evidenced in many of the works featured throughout the project. It simply suggests that the double bass be employed in a meaningful way that is representative of the potential of the instrument and its players, rather than relegating it to a purely supportive role. One work featured in the Collaborative Contrabass project that achieves this balance is Vaughan Williams Piano Quintet in c minor. The double bass writing in this work is a significant departure from the simplicity of Schubert’s ‘Trout’ Quintet and pays homage to the full range and expressive possibilities of the instrument.

For double bassists to undertake this equal role in chamber music, they require advanced technique, musicianship and leadership skills beyond what is typically expected
from them in orchestral playing. This disparity is not as striking for other instruments. For example, the violin writing in Meyer’s *Concert Duo*, while certainly not easy, transfers techniques from a bluegrass fiddle style in a manner that fits comfortably enough within the level of technique violinists regularly encounter in their standard orchestral repertoire. However, transferring similar material to the double bass requires a significant step beyond what players usually encounter, except in virtuosic solo repertoire. I have little doubt that, given the ever-rising standard of playing, the current double bass community is ready for this challenge.

Another commonality that emerged across several of the recital programmes was the possibilities made available to double bassists by exploring different systems of tuning. Tuning was a particular focus for the first recital programme. Re-learning this repertoire in Viennese tuning offered insights into specific technical aspects of playing including resonance, fingering and projection and presented a new perspective on Viennese Classical style generally. It became clear that the repertoire composed for the Viennese double bass is innately suited to the thirds-fourth tuning system for which it was written. Not only does this tuning system produce a distinctly different timbre and resonance on the instrument, the greater technical ease enables a performer to bring this repertoire to life more effectively than is possible on a standard modern double bass.

The other tuning system explored throughout this research project was solo tuning, where the double bass uses strings tuned one tone higher to create a brighter tone more suited to solo repertoire. In the piano quintet programme, the only work written in solo tuning was Bottesini’s showpiece, *Introduction and Variations on the Carnival of Venice*. This is typical of the clear divide during the nineteenth century between solo writing for the double bass and writing for orchestral and chamber music. In performance, I decided to play the Bottesini
work in orchestral tuning to allow me to perform the entire recital on the same instrument. However, I believe the Bottesini performance would have been more successful in solo tuning, as I would have been able to project a bright, soloistic tone with greater ease.

Solo tuning was more fully explored in the final recital programme of modern duets. For this programme, two of the works were written specifically for a double bass in solo tuning: the duos with violin by Ranjbaran and Meyer. In both of these works, the brightness of the solo tuning enables the double bass to more easily compete with the brilliance of the violin and thus be a more equal partner.

Using solo tuning on the double bass for works of chamber music significantly broadens the possibilities of the double bass as a chamber music instrument. The increased brilliance and projection that solo tuning brings to the double bass affords it a different voice and character. The thinner strings are also less taxing under the fingers, allowing the player greater agility. Finally, solo tuning allows the double bass to cut through the texture more easily, making it a more suitable choice for melodic content or enabling it to become a leading voice in the ensemble.

Outside of chamber music, the use of different tuning systems is well established within the double bass community. Most double bassists are familiar with the use of solo tuning in solo repertoire and it is becoming more common to experiment with Viennese tuning. Tuning in fifths is also becoming more widely used. Joel Quarrington, celebrated soloist and principal double bassist with the London Symphony Orchestra, is an advocate for fifths tuning. Commenting on the advantages of this tuning system, he notes:

For the first time in my career, I understood the intonation of the other instruments in the orchestra and the other stringed instruments in particular. I suppose I had always tried to play a sort of “tempered” intonation, especially with piano, but suddenly I had
an instrument whose intonation is determined by harmonic function and response to itself, and a whole new world of intonation opened up to me (Quarrington, 2017, 7th paragraph).

I think that the possibilities opened up to the double bass in chamber music by exploring different tunings are well worth further exploration. Though some composers such as Meyer and Ranjbaran have already harnessed the advantages of using solo tuning for chamber music, there remains more potential to be investigated. It would also be fascinating to explore the impact of a double bass in fifths tuning, particularly in the context of a string ensemble. Furthermore, it would be worth investigating if using fifths tuning for all string instruments has a significant effect on the overall intonation and tone of the ensemble.

I would also encourage contemporary composers to explore writing for double bass in Viennese tuning in chamber music. This has been explored in contemporary solo repertoire, with Heinz Holliger composing Preludio e Fuga for solo double bass in Viennese tuning in 2010 for Edicson Ruiz, double bassist with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. In this instance, the marriage of Viennese tuning with contemporary writing is very effective. The recital of chamber music in Viennese tuning demonstrated that this tuning system opens up significant opportunities for resonance, projection and virtuosity. That possibility, combined with the creativity and vision of contemporary composers, could result in some exciting new chamber music repertoire for double bass.

The final trend that emerged from each recital programme was the potential for chamber music repertoire to push the technical and musical boundaries of the double bass. As mentioned above, if double bassists wish to perform a more equal role in chamber music repertoire, they will require technical facility well beyond what is normally encountered in current ensemble and orchestral repertoire.
Although some of the selected works within this project employed the double bass in a relatively simple manner, every programme featured writing with challenges that are usually reserved for virtuosic solo repertoire. The repertoire composed for the Viennese bass explored the full range of the instrument and included double stops, chords, arpeggiated writing and fast passagework. Although composing for an instrument in fourths tuning, Dragonetti continued this tradition of virtuosic writing in the context of chamber music, replacing the first violin of the string quintet with an ambitious solo part for double bass requiring a high level of technical prowess and stamina.

The piano quintet programme demonstrated a significant change in approach to the double bass in chamber music when compared to that of the Viennese double bass. Throughout the nineteenth century, the role of the double bass in chamber music was very similar to its role in orchestral repertoire and remained quite removed from the virtuosic display offered by solo works from the same period. Having said that, the double bass writing in the selected piano quintets did increase in difficulty and substance as the nineteenth century progressed. The Vaughan Williams Quintet from the early years of the twentieth century features a degree of independence and expressive writing for the double bass not present in the earlier piano quintets.

The modern duets featured in the final recital programme featured the double bass in every possible manner, exploring a range of extended and modern techniques on the instrument. This programme highlighted the influence double bassists can exert on composition for their instrument, with each work being composed specifically for a particular performer and exploiting the varied possibilities of the instrument.

The chamber works showcased in the Collaborative Contrabass project feature some of the most challenging writing for double bass I have experienced. The technical demands of
this repertoire were compounded by the collaborative challenges of playing in a chamber ensemble. To be able to focus on achieving the best collaborative result in rehearsals and performance, I needed to have a strong command and understanding of my own parts. This combination of challenging technical preparation and demanding collaborative rehearsal processes provided an invaluable exercise in developing all aspects of my playing as well as my musicianship. There is little doubt of the significant benefits of playing high-level chamber music for all double bass players.
Chamber Music Practice

This research project has allowed me to deeply examine my chamber music practice. Most violinists, violists and cellists have at some stage in their musical education experienced being part of a regular chamber ensemble, usually a string quartet or piano trio. In contrast, double bassists are often only able to participate in chamber ensembles as occasional guests. It is therefore difficult to delve deeper into their chamber music skills as they are usually only working with a specific group of players for a single work. Having the opportunity to prepare and present four full recitals of chamber music with experienced chamber musicians provided me with many insights into the value of participating in chamber music practice as an equal and, at times, leading partner.

Chamber music demands much from the musician. In many ways, it magnifies all of the challenges one experiences in solo performance. In preparing the parts individually one encounters the same challenges found in solo repertoire—playing with good intonation and sound, executing technical passages and staying faithful to the details of articulation and dynamics, all while evoking the appropriate style and character the music demands. Within the ensemble, all of these aspects of music making need to be reassessed in a new context. This project allowed me to work on my sound, intonation, dynamic range and general musicality. Within the ensemble context, it also helped me to develop my listening skills, nonverbal communication and leadership skills.

The concept of leadership within the chamber ensemble was explored throughout each recital process. Double bassists are rarely in a position of leadership within an ensemble, other than leading their own section in an orchestral context. As I was curating the entire project, I was in many ways leading the rehearsal process, especially in an administrative sense. I was responsible for sourcing and preparing the musical material including scores,
organising the schedule and venues and ensuring rehearsals were run efficiently so we could be as well prepared for each performance as possible within the time available to us. As I drove each recital process, the other players deferred to me for musical decisions more than would be usual. Although it was a fully collaborative process, I was allowed significant artistic input and subsequently was afforded a strong sense of ownership for the final product.

As previously highlighted, the repertoire featured throughout the Collaborative Contrabass project employed the double bass in varied roles. For some works, I performed a typical bass line. For these works, the first violinist often provided leadership for the ensemble, although it was important to support this with a forward projecting bass line. Duets were featured in both the Viennese programme and the contemporary programme. For these works, each player shared the leadership responsibility, depending on our individual parts. In many ways, these works had us performing in a solo role, particularly in relation to our sound and projection. For some repertoire, the role of leader was fluid. In Vaughan Williams’ Quintet, for example, each instrument has opportunities to play melodic content and perform the role of leading voice. To execute this work effectively, we all needed a strong understanding of each other’s parts to achieve good ensemble.

Occasionally, the double bass was placed in the unusual position of leader of the ensemble. In Dragonetti’s solo quintet and Hoffmeister’s solo quartet, I had the experience of leading in a manner usually reserved for the first violinist. I needed to become more aware of visual cues in order for the ensemble to be able to play well together. It was also important for me to develop a strong concept of how I wanted to shape the melodic line and the work as a whole so I could communicate this to the other musicians. Leading the ensemble made me much more aware of my movement and breathing as I was playing and how best to use these physical aspects to provide clear and inclusive leadership. The experience of leading the
ensemble also gave me a different perspective on the support required from the accompanying instruments and made me consider what I could do to better support the melodic line as a double bass player generally.

I feel that I grew in confidence as a leader throughout each of the recital processes. This was in no small way aided by the strong examples of leadership I was able to observe from Rebecca Seymour, Caroline Hopson, Rachael Beesley, Lucy Warren and Jenny Khafagi, who all performed the role of first violin throughout the project. Much of what I learnt can be applied to any collaborative playing experience, no matter the size of the ensemble. It was clear that one of the most important things a leader can bring to the ensemble is a strong understanding of the work and a clear concept of their interpretation.

This experience highlighted to me the importance for double bass students to prioritise good quality chamber music making throughout their education. In my tertiary study experience, it was often very difficult to create chamber music opportunities. This was often because my peers were focused on repertoire for more established chamber ensemble formations such as string quartets, piano trios, wind quintets and brass quintets. The double bass players were occasionally included for iconic works like Schubert’s ‘Trout’ Quintet or the Dvorák String Quintet but, most often, we were left to create opportunities amongst ourselves. Many times, this led to us playing repertoire created exclusively for double bass players, such as double bass duets, trios and quartets. These works have great educational value and are enjoyable to play but do not offer the same opportunities for learning to blend and balance with different types of instruments.

Again, the responsibility for creating these chamber music opportunities lies predominantly with the double bass community. Young double bassists and their mentors need to be aware of the repertoire available to them and assertive in creating performance
opportunities to showcase it. This project is evidence of the diversity and breadth of chamber music available to double bassists, much of which is of great musical and educational value to all musicians.
Conclusion

I embarked on the Collaborative Contrabass project hoping to uncover and promote chamber music for the double bass that was challenging, rewarding and of strong musical value not only to double bassists, but also to collaborating musicians and audiences. There is little doubt in my mind that many of the works presented are worthy of future performances and further study by myself and other double bass players. Throughout the project, I was able to develop a stronger sense of the history of the double bass and its repertoire while improving my skills as a double bassist, a collaborative musician and a leader.

The recitals presented were far from perfect but they were all well attended and received positive feedback, with many members of the double bass community interested in the repertoire featured and eager to do further research and performances of their own. In fact, I am already aware of a number of performances of works I presented being planned by other Australian double bassists.

Many double bassists who attended the recitals were struck by the wealth of repertoire available to them from each of the musical periods represented. When one considers how few works of chamber music including double bass have reached the musical mainstream, the body of chamber music available to the instrument is surprising. Although the Collaborative Contrabass project showcased a significant cross-section of repertoire, it barely scratched the surface of the wealth of repertoire that is available. In most cases, I performed a single movement of the selected works and many of the featured composers have a significant number of other works that include, or indeed showcase, the double bass. Dragonetti’s chamber music repertoire alone fills nine volumes in the British library. The repertoire of the composers featured throughout this project could fill hundreds of chamber music recitals and
it demonstrates the myriad of recital programming options available to double bassists who are enthusiastic about collaborative playing.

In many ways, the double bass might be considered an ideal chamber music instrument. It is diverse in its sound qualities and the functions it can fulfil and it is well suited to a number of different musical styles. Composers should find the current high standard of playing conducive to not only including double bass in their collaborative writing but also providing double bassists with ambitious writing that is equal to that of other parts. The interest in writing for the instrument is growing rapidly and the onus is on double bassists to encourage and support composers to explore new frontiers with the instrument. Whilst it is certainly important to continue celebrating and performing key works of chamber music for double bass, we must also shed light on less performed works, whether they be newly composed by contemporary composers or rediscovered repertoire from the eighteenth century.

I hope the Collaborative Contrabass project has contributed to a greater awareness of the availability of high quality chamber music for the double bass and encouraged more double bass players to become active chamber musicians. As evidenced from my experience throughout this project, the process of rehearsing and performing chamber music is of enormous benefit to musicians at any level. There has never been a greater exploration of double bass technique and solo performance than is happening in the current era and the standard of playing and pedagogy continues to rise. By embracing chamber music practice as a norm, the double bass community will continue to strengthen and extend the possibilities of our instrument and its perception within the wider musical community.
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Appendix I: Recital Programme 1, Standard Tuning

DMA Recital 1

Collaborative Contrabass: Double Bass Chamber Music from the Classical Era
June 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2015

Performers:

Caroline Hopson & Rebecca Seymour – Violin
Charlotte Burbrook de Vere & Tara Houghton – Viola
Katherine Philp – Cello
Emma Sullivan – Double Bass
Kathy Sander – Piano
Daniel Smerdon – Bass Voice

Programme:

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus (1756 – 1791)
\textit{Per questa bella mano}, K.612 (March 8, 1791)

Carl/Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739 – 1799)
Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: \textit{Thema con Variazioni}

Johannes Matthias Sperger (1750 – 1812)
Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: \textit{Romanze}

Michael Haydn (1737 – 1806)
Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E flat major, Movement III: \textit{Presto}

Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739 – 1813)
Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, Movement II: \textit{Menuetto}

Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754 – 1812)
Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: \textit{Rondo}

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)
Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5, Movement I: \textit{Presto}

Domenico Carlo Maria Dragonetti (1763 – 1846)
Quintet No. 26 in Bb Major, Movement I: \textit{Andante con Moto} & Movement II: \textit{Allegretto}
Appendix II: Recital Programme 1, Viennese Tuning

DMA Recital 2

Collaborative Contrabass: Double Bass Chamber Music from the Classical Era
October 31st, 2014

Performers:
Rachael Beesley & Francesca Hiew – Violin
Merewyn Bramble & Matthew Laing – Viola
Michael Dahlenburg – Cello
Emma Sullivan – Double Bass
Leigh Harrold – Piano
Nick Dinopoulos – Bass Voice

Programme:

Performed in Viennese Tuning:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)
Per questa bella mano, K.612

Johannes Matthias Sperger (1750 – 1812)
Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze

Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739 – 1813)
Divertimento für Violine, Viola und Kontrabass G-Dur, Movement II: Menuetto

Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754 – 1812)
Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)
Divertimento in C Major Hob II: C5, Movement I: Presto

Double Bass tunes up 1 semitone – 2 movements for string quartet

Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739 – 1813)
String Quartet in C, Movement III: Adagio

Franz Asplmayr (1728 – 1786)
String Quartet in D Major, Opus 2, No. 2, Movement II: Minuetto

Carl/Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739 – 1799)
Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: Thema con Variazioni

Michael Haydn (1737 – 1806)
Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E flat major, Movement III: Presto

Performed in Orchestral Tuning:

Domenico Carlo Maria Dragonetti (1763 – 1846)
Quintet No. 26 in Bb Major
Quintet for Solo Double Bass, Violin, 2 Violas & Cello
Movement I: Andante con Moto & Movement II: Allegretto
Appendix III: Recital Programme 2

DMA Recital 3

*Collaborative Contrabass: Anything but the ‘Trout’ – Piano quintets from the 19th and early 20th centuries*

April 30th, 2015

Performers:

Stewart Kelly & Therese Milanovic – piano
Lucy Warren – violin
Beatrix Pickett – viola
Katherine Philp – cello
Emma Sullivan – double bass

Hummel, Johann Nepomuk (1778 – 1837)
Quintet in Eb minor, Opus 87 (1802), Movement IV: *Allegro Agitato*

Ries, Ferdinand (1784 – 1838)
Quintet Opus 74 (1819), Movement I: Grave – *Allegro con Brio*

Farrenc, Louise (1804 – 1875)
Quintet No. 2 in E Major, Opus 31 (1840), Movement II: *Grave*

Onslow, André George Louis (1784 – 1853)
Piano Quintet, Opus 70 (1846), Movement III: *Allegretto Molto Moderato*

Goetz, Hermann Gustav (1840 – 1876)
Quintet in c minor, Opus 16 (1874, published 1878), Movement IV: *Allegro Vivace*

Bottesini, Giovanni (1821 – 1889)
Introduction and Variations on the Carnival of Venice

Vaughan Williams, Ralph (1872 – 1958)
Piano Quintet in c minor (1903)
I *Allegro con Fuoco*
II *Andante*
III *Fantasia Quasi Variazioni: Moderato*
Appendix IV: Recital Programme 3

DMA Recital 4

Collaborative Contrabass: Duets from the Modern Era
September 27th, 2015

Performers:

Jenny Khafagi – Violin
Tara Houghton – Viola
Cathy Milliken – Oboe
Emma Sullivan – Double Bass

In Orchestral Tuning:

Berio, Luciano (1925 – 2003)
Psy for Solo Double Bass (1989)

Tartaglia, John (1932 -)
Fantasia on Themes of Marin Marais – Duo for Viola and Double Bass (1987)

Tüür, Erkki-Sven (1959 -)
Symbiosis for Violin and Double Bass (1996)

Ford, Andrew (1957 -)
Chorales From an Ox Life (2007)

Milliken, Cathy1 – WORLD PREMIERE
Two Step – Duo for Viola and Double Bass (2009)

In Solo Tuning:

Berio, Luciano (1925 – 2003)
Psy for Solo Double Bass (1989)

Ranjbaran, Behzad (1955 -)
Dance of Life for Violin and Double Bass (1990), Movement I: Andante con Espressione

Clearfield, Andrea (1960 -)
Three Songs for Oboe and Double Bass After Poems by Neruda (1997)
I Body of a Woman
II The Light Wraps You
III Everyday You Play

Meyer, Edgar (1960 -)
Concert Duo for Violin and Double Bass, Movement I (1998)

1 For reasons of privacy, Cathy Milliken did not provide her birthdate.
Appendix V: Dittersdorf Duetto, Movement V

Carl/Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739 – 1799)
Duetto for Viola and Violone in Eb Major, Kr. 219, Movement V: *Thema con Variazioni*
Double bass part arranged in D Major by Emma Sullivan

Duetto Movement V - Theme & Variations

Moderato

Thema

Variation I

Variation II

Variation III

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Appendix VI: Michael Haydn Divertimento, Movement III

Michael Haydn (1737 – 1806)
Divertimento for Viola, Violoncello and Double Bass in E flat major, Movement III: *Presto*
Double bass part arranged in D Major by Emma Sullivan

Divertimento for Viola, Cello and Double Bass

Michael Haydn

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Appendix VII: Sperger Sonata in D Major, Movement II

Johannes Matthias Sperger (1750 – 1812)
Sonata in D Major for Viola and Double Bass, Movement II: Romanze
Double bass part arranged in orchestral tuning by Emma Sullivan

Romanze

Johann Matthias Sperger
Appendix VIII: Hoffmeister Quartet No. 2, Movement IV

Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754 – 1812)
Double Bass Quartet No. 2 in D Major, Movement IV: Rondo
Double bass part arranged in orchestral tuning by Emma Sullivan

Quartet No. 2 IV Rondo

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Appendix IX: Hafiz Dance of Life

Hafiz (c. 1320-90)
Dance of Life
Translated by Michael Boylan - Mage Publications Inc.

Waiting, straining to hear- your voice that I may rise.

I am heaven’s dove that from the earthly cage will rise.

If I am bid but to be your slave I gladly shall foreswear

Dominion over worldly things as now I rise.

Let the rain fall from your cloud of grace, oh Lord;

Before, to dust I would be changed-I rise.

Bring a minstrel to my grave and a bottle of good wine. Your fragrance presence

Shall lift me dancing full of joy as I rise.

Hold high your lordly stature that I may see. You draw me nigh.

With clapping hands I leave this life, and I rise.

Though I am old yet in a night-from your embrace

In Dawn’s new light a youth will rise.

On the day that I die, a glimpse of you may I behold and, as Hafez

From life’s desire leap into eternity, and I will rise!
Appendix X: Neruda Poems

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973)

*Body of a Woman; The Light Wraps You and Every Day You Play*
Available at https://hellopoetry.com/pablo-neruda/ (2017)

*Body of a Woman*

Body of a woman, white hills, white thighs, 
you look like a world, lying in surrender. 
My rough peasant's body digs in you  
and makes the son leap from the depth of the earth.

I was lone like a tunnel. The birds fled from me, 
and night swamped me with its crushing invasion. 
To survive myself I forged you like a weapon,  
like an arrow in my bow, a stone in my sling.

But the hour of vengeance falls, and I love you.  
Body of skin, of moss, of eager and firm milk. 
Oh the goblets of the breast! Oh the eyes of absence! 
Oh the roses of the pubis! Oh your voice, slow and sad!

Body of my woman, I will persist in your grace. 
My thirst, my boundless desire, my shifting road! 
Dark river-beds where the eternal thirst flows 
and weariness follows, and the infinite ache.

*The Light Wraps You*

The light wraps you in its mortal flame. 
Abstracted pale mourner, standing that way 
against the old propellers of the twighlight 
that revolves around you.

Speechless, my friend, 
alone in the loneliness of this hour of the dead 
and filled with the lives of fire, 
pure heir of the ruined day.

A bough of fruit falls from the sun on your dark garment. 
The great roots of night 
grow suddenly from your soul, 
and the things that hide in you come out again 
so that a blue and palled people 
your newly born, takes nourishment.

Oh magnificent and fecund and magnetic slave 
of the circle that moves in turn through black and gold:
rise, lead and possess a creation
so rich in life that its flowers perish
and it is full of sadness.

_Every Day You Play_

Every day you play with the light of the universe.
Subtle visitor, you arrive in the flower and the water,
You are more than this white head that I hold tightly
as a bunch of flowers, every day, between my hands.

You are like nobody since I love you.
Let me spread you out among yellow garlands.
Who writes your name in letters of smoke among the stars of the south?
Oh let me remember you as you were before you existed.

Suddenly the wind howls and bangs at my shut window.
The sky is a net crammed with shadowy fish.
Here all the winds let go sooner or later, all of them.
The rain takes off her clothes.

The birds go by, fleeing.
The wind. The wind.
I alone can contend against the power of men.
The storm whirls dark leaves
and turns loose all the boats that were moored last night to the sky.

You are here. Oh, you do not run away.
You will answer me to the last cry.
Curl round me as though you were frightened.
Even so, a strange shadow once ran through your eyes.

Now, now too, little one, you bring me honeysuckle,
and even your breasts smell of it.
While the sad wind goes slaughtering butterflies
I love you, and my happiness bites the plum of your mouth.

How you must have suffered getting accustomed to me,
my savage, solitary soul, my name that sends them all running.
So many times we have seen the morning star burn, kissing our eyes,
and over our heads the grey light unwinds in turning fans.

My words rained over you, stroking you.
A long time I have loved the sunned mother-of-pearl of your body.
Until I even believe that you own the universe.
I will bring you happy flowers from the mountains, bluebells, dark hazels, and rustic baskets
of kisses.
I want to do with you what spring does with the cherry trees.