

Dialogues with Double Bass
Jeremy McCoy, double bass & Friends

Duetto per violoncello e contrabasso (13:05) Gioacchino Rossini

- 1** I Allegro (5:36) (1792-1868)
- 2** II Andante molto (3:19)
- 3** III Allegro (4:05)

Steven Doane, violoncello
Jeremy McCoy, double bass

4 The Root (3:19) John Patitucci
Jeremy McCoy and John Patitucci, double basses (b. 1959)

Sonata No. 2 (5:48) Georg Philipp Telemann


- 5** I Spiritoso (1:45) (1681-1767)
- 6** II Larghetto (1:36)
- 7** III Allegro assai (2:01)

Whitney Crockett, bassoon
Jeremy McCoy, double bass

Gran Duetto No. 3 (12:33) Giovanni Bottesini

- 8** I Andantino (3:51) (1821-1889)
- 9** II Presto (8:41)

Jeremy McCoy and John Patitucci, double basses



10 MacPherson's Rant (9:17) Martin Dalby
Laura Gilbert, piccolo, flute, alto flute (b. 1942)
Jeremy McCoy, double bass

11 Cradle Song (3:11) Reinhold Glière
Ira Weller, viola (1875-1956)
Jeremy McCoy, double bass

12 Duetto (:58) Edward Elgar
Demian Austin, trombone (1857-1934)
Jeremy McCoy, double bass

13 Grateful (4:21) John Patitucci
John Patitucci, six string electric bass
Jeremy McCoy, double bass

Duo Baroque (20:40) Jean Françaix
(1912-1997)

- 14** I Allegro vivace (3:28)
- 15** II Andante (7:15)
- 16** III Allegro (5:26)
- 17** IV Vivace (4:26)

June Han, harp
Jeremy McCoy, double bass

Dialogues with Double Bass

There were several specimens of the violone, the giant fiddle, the unwieldy double bass, capable of majestic recitative, whose pizzicato is more sonorous than the stroke of the kettledrum, and whose harmonics are a veiled magic of almost unbelievable quality.

From Dr. Faustus, by Thomas Mann

Although it spends much of its working life functioning as the foundation of the orchestra, the double bass also has a rich and varied solo and chamber music repertoire. History's most renowned composers, from the Baroque to the avant-garde, have exploited its versatile voice. Played with a bow, it combines the warmth of a cello and the dark richness of a viola. In its highest harmonic register, it has the lightness of a flute. Played pizzicato it can have the soulful earthiness of drums. Its sheer size can also create brilliant theatrical effects. For instance, it may play up its imposing physicality to great effect – performing surprisingly gymnastic musical feats up and down its expansive string length. Add to this the enormous vocabulary of non-traditional musical sounds that can be elicited from an "object" of this size and material, through the use of extended techniques, and the possibilities are seemingly limitless.

This recording highlights two particular themes. The primary notion is the concept of featuring the bass as an equal voice in instrumental duos that are diverse and interesting conversations. Notice how the personality of the bass changes in these musical dialogues. It speaks many languages, varying from composer to composer, and willingly adapts its voice to its partner of the moment.

A second theme of the collection is found in the vocal quality of the music. Although none of these duos are actually for bass with voice, (though there are some notable works in the repertoire) almost every work in the

collection has a close connection to the human voice ... the composer may have earned his reputation through a talent for vocal writing (Rossini, Glière), or he may have drawn on vocal music as his inspiration (Françaix, Dalby) or he simply may have conceived the music as a vocal idea (Patitucci). Bassist-composer, Giovanni Bottesini, spent much of his career playing in and leading an opera orchestra. His music is most often described as being in the bel canto style: literally, 'beautiful singing'. In *Dialogues with Double Bass*, we get to hear the singing voice of the bass.

Like Dragonetti and Bottesini, two of history's most famous bass virtuosos, who earned their livings in opera orchestras, Jeremy McCoy is a seasoned member of New York's Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. The influence of great singing can be heard in the lyrical quality of his playing, in the way he shapes a phrase and in the varied tonal colors of his sound. McCoy's wide experience as a soloist, chamber player and orchestral musician, and the expressive range of his instrument, finds him right at home in this engaging collection of eloquent and entertaining dialogues with the double bass.

Notes on the Musical Works:

One of the most highly esteemed composers of Italian opera, Gioacchino Rossini's (1792–1868) closest connection to the double bass came via his interactions with Domenico Dragonetti, a virtuoso player who spent most of his formal career playing at the King's Theatre, London. His *Duetto* was commissioned in 1824 by Dragonetti's close friend and amateur cellist, Sir David Solomons, for a performance at a social soirée in his home. Rossini was a celebrated figure in London society and commissions such as this one, along

with private lessons for the children of aristocrats and commercial barons, allowed the composer to retire to a life of considerable wealth and leisure. The influence of opera is immediately discernible in the *Duetto*, its opening *allegro* serving as the overture, and the lyrical andante, with its florid ornamentation is reminiscent of an aria. The final *allegro* makes use of the accelerating musical device now commonly referred to as a "Rossini crescendo". It has been said that "Rossini's ear for the colors of [Dragonetti's] three-string bass, and his sense of its capacity for expressing a kind of grumbling good humour, is as evident...as is his success in distinguishing between the somber colors, the black and several rich purples, of the two instruments in their various registers." The original manuscript for this piece remained in the possession of the Solomons family, and was not published until 1969.

Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1959, John Patitucci began to play electric bass at age ten and acoustic bass at 15, quickly developing a taste for a wide variety of musical genres, from soul and rock to blues, jazz and classical music. Today, he is one of the most prominent names in jazz. *The Root* is the result of Patitucci's experimentation in combining the rhythmic elements of African and South American music with sophisticated counterpoint. The piece has had previous incarnations for jazz combos of three to five instruments. The melody was originally designed for either flute or guitar. In this arrangement, the challenge lay in reducing the larger instrumentation down to a duo for basses while still preserving the visceral quality of the original. Written in a moment of reflection and thanksgiving after a nearly fatal family accident, *Grateful* was first conceived for double bass and piano. Patitucci explains: "It was challenging to adapt the harmony I had written for piano to the six-string electric bass. This was the first time I've paired these two instruments together and I was

surprised at how well they blend."

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) is one of the most prolific composers in the history of music. In more recent years, his career and output have been greatly overshadowed by his contemporary and rival, J.S. Bach, but in their own time, Telemann's skill and ingenuity as a composer was more highly revered. His oeuvre is not only vast, but it encompasses a huge range of styles and genres—something that is quite unusual for a composer of his time. Telemann spent a considerable amount of energy writing music that would have been technically accessible to amateur players, members of Europe's ever-increasing middle-class society, who eagerly bought up collections of music to play in their homes. The Sonata #2 comes from Telemann's 1738 publication *VI Sonates en Duo*, a collection of 18 canons (where the identical music is played by two players, the second starting a few notes after the first). The composer did not designate these pieces for a particular instrument, simply claiming they were appropriate for the likes of "flutes, violins or violas da gamba," a clever marketing ploy, which almost certainly did enable him to sell more copies. Thus, one may safely speculate that Telemann would most certainly have approved of this adaptation for double bass and bassoon.

Perhaps the most celebrated virtuoso in the entire history of the double bass, Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889) during his lifetime, significantly extended his instrument's technical capabilities and earned the nickname, "the Paganini of the double bass." Though his reputation as a soloist burgeoned in Italy, part of Bottesini's renown is surely due to the fact that early in his career, he held the position of principal bass (albeit the only bassist) with the Italian Opera Company, a traveling band that visited many important musical centers all over the globe, and which in particular had a strong influence on the emerging musical

life of the United States, with stops in New York, Boston and Philadelphia as well as a residency in Havana, Cuba. During this time, Bottesini availed himself of the opportunity to perform solos between the acts of the operas. Many were compositions of his own and based on melodies from the opera being staged. Bottesini's music is much indebted to the world of opera, even if not based directly on someone else's tune. Of the *Third Gran Duetto*, double bassist and Bottesini expert Thomas Martin writes: "This enjoyable work comes from the years the young Italian virtuoso spent at the recently opened Conservatorio in Milan and is dedicated to his revered professor Luigi Rossi. A number of works from Bottesini's conservatory years are among his most difficult as he discovered how far he could go with his newly found friend." The first movement is structured as a solo aria with the lower voice filling out the harmony in an accompanying role. The second movement is more of a duet, with the lower part now discovering its own melodic voice and sharing in the ornate coloratura passagework. Apart from his triumphs as a player, Bottesini later in his life also came to be lauded as a conductor. His name appears prominently in history books for his musical direction of the 1871 premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aidi* in Cairo.

Scottish composer Martin Dalby was born in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1942. After studies at the Royal College of Music, London, he was appointed a music producer to the BBC and in 1971, he returned to his homeland as professor of composition at the University of Glasgow and as the BBC's Head of Music in Scotland. Commissioned in 1971 by British publisher and performer Rodney Slatford, *MacPherson's Rant* is, in Dalby's words: "a virtuoso piece for piccolo, flute and alto flute (played by one player) and double bass. It is a good-humoured tribute to Scottish traditional music and in particular to Scots fiddle

music." MacPherson, a cattle thief and leader of a gang of outlaws was arrested in 1700. Legend has it that the original *MacPherson's Rant* was composed by the condemned outlaw, and performed by him on his fiddle to the crowd of spectators awaiting his execution. The tune has been part of the Scottish folk canon ever since. In this current rendition, Dalby pairs the tune with two other Scottish dance tunes: *Feargon* (a reel) and *Mackenzie's Rant* (a strathspey).

After studies in violin and composition at the Moscow Conservatory, Reinhold Glière (1875-1956) was hired as a professor of composition, first in his hometown of Kiev, and subsequently, at the Moscow Conservatory, where over the course of his career he taught a large number of the most distinguished of the Soviet-era composers, including Aram Khachaturian and Sergei Prokofiev. Glière's own output is richly varied, and includes scores for the opera and ballet as well as a prodigious amount of instrumental music. Double bassists typically know him for the four pieces he composed for the bass with piano which show that he was clearly well versed in the capabilities of the instrument. The lilting *Cradle Song* is a work originally conceived for violin and cello, but is played here, on viola and bass in a transcription by Frank Proto of Liben Music.

Until very recently, almost nothing was known about the *Duetto* by Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934). The piece had languished in complete obscurity until it was discovered and published by Rodney Slatford of Yorke Editions in 1970. Though the details are rather sketchy, Elgar evidently presented this curious little piece as a gift to his friend, the Rev. Fr. Frank Weaver, at breakfast on his wedding day, August 1, 1887, inscribed, "with personal respect for my old friend Frank, the only one I know who really interprets my compositions." At the time, the 30-year old Elgar (who was not yet a celebrated composer) was living

outside London, playing and teaching the violin, directing the Worcester Instrumental Society and an ensemble at the County Lunatic Asylum at Powick, and also playing bassoon in a wind quintet. Many of his early compositions were intended for amateur performance in the homes of his family and friends and one eye-witness claimed to have heard Elgar himself play the trombone part for this *Duetto*, with a local amateur friend, on the bass. The music is charmingly simple, in a contrapuntal style that is surely reminiscent of Henry Purcell, with whose work Elgar would undoubtedly have been well acquainted.

The final work of the program brings the recording full circle through its reference to a bygone era and its use of vocal melody. *Duo Baroque* was written in 1980 (premiered in 1982 by Gisèle Herbet, harp and Günther Klaus, bass) by the prolific French composer, Jean Françaix (1912-1997) who, in his youth, was a student of Nadia Boulanger at the Paris Conservatoire. Many of Françaix's works may be said to be stylized within the classical tradition, some of them showing the influence of Maurice Ravel. In this vein, *Duo Baroque* centers on a traditional four-movement sonata structure, each imbued with the charm, wit and elegance typical of music of the Baroque era. Though unidentified by name, the work is packed with song fragments and the light-hearted texture belies the extreme technical challenges for both instruments! The first movement presents the instruments in a conversational manner with the use of tight contrapuntal writing. The reflective second movement is divided into two sections. The first section, repeated da capo, is a melancholic harp solo while the middle section features the bass, in an unusually high tessitura, to haunting effect. The dance-like third movement has a somewhat ironic flavor. With scales, arpeggios and

harmonics, a spirited and whimsical fourth movement seemingly flutters to a close.

~Notes by Joëlle Morton
Toronto, 2004

Joëlle Morton performs throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe on a variety of period instruments, including Renaissance and Baroque violas da gamba, violone and double bass. Joëlle also maintains an active international career as a musicologist and clinician, specializing in the history and evolution of bowed instruments and period performance techniques. She is general editor for the International Society of Bassists and her research and articles have appeared in a wide variety of publications.

Jeremy McCoy was born in Toronto, Canada in 1963. He received his earliest musical training on the piano and as a boy chorister at St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Ottawa. After a brief introduction to the double bass in middle school, he began studying privately at age fourteen. Under the guidance of his principal teacher, David Currie, McCoy won top prizes at regional music competitions and spent two summers at Interlochen, working with Oscar Zimmerman and Winston Budrow. Mr. McCoy spent three subsequent summers with Canada's National Youth Orchestra, where he received private instruction from Swedish pedagogue, Torvald Fredin.

With the assistance of grants from the Canada Council and other arts organizations, Mr. McCoy continued his studies with Roger Scott at the Curtis Institute of Music, from which he holds a Bachelor of Music degree. At age twenty, he won a position with the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada and embarked upon a professional career. In 1985, at the end of his first season at the National Arts Centre, McCoy won a position with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. In 1990, he was winner of the Olga Koussevitzky Competition for Strings. Currently in his twentieth season at the Met, Mr. McCoy is the orchestra's Assistant Principal bassist.

In addition to a demanding orchestral schedule, Mr. McCoy is active as soloist and chamber musician. He has appeared as a recitalist in New York City and on CBC Radio, as a concerto soloist at the National Arts Centre, with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the Atlantic Chamber Orchestra and Musica Viva (New York) and at festivals such as Marlboro, Kneisel Hall, Banff and the Grand Tetons. He has collaborated with many distinguished artists including members of the Cleveland, Guarneri, Juilliard and Tokyo string quartets. Mr. McCoy is also frequently engaged for commercial session work in the

film, recording and advertising industries. As a performer of new music, McCoy appears regularly with Speculum Musicae, Sequitur and Ensemble Sospeso and has recorded for Koch Classics, CRI, Albany and Mode Records.

Mr. McCoy has taught at Japan's Affinis Festival, a chamber music seminar for young orchestra professionals, and most recently spent three summers as double bass instructor and chamber music coach at the Bowdoin International Music Festival. He serves on the music performance faculty at Columbia University.

Mr. McCoy plays an exceptional instrument made by the celebrated Venetian luthier Domenico Busan in 1749.

A member of the Eastman School of Music cello faculty since 1981, **Steven Doane** has earned an international reputation both as performer and teacher. Formerly principal cellist of the Rochester Philharmonic and a member of the Naumburg Award winning New Arts Trio during the 1980s, Mr. Doane has since built a performance career as soloist and chamber musician. He travels frequently to the United Kingdom for concerto performances, recitals, clinics and master classes. A Bridge recording with pianist Barry Snyder of works by Benjamin Britten and Frank Bridge won a 1996 Naird award in the US press and the Bridge Sonata was declared "the best performance on record" by the BBC. An earlier disc, also on the Bridge label, of the complete works for cello and piano by Fauré received a "petit Diapason d'Or" from the French recording press. Aside from his Eastman position, Mr. Doane has also held positions at the Royal College of Music in London and been appointed visiting professor at the Royal Academy. In addition to his recordings for Bridge Records, Mr. Doane has recorded for Pantheon, Daedmon, Gasparo and Sony.

John Patitucci has been at the forefront of the jazz world for the last twenty years and is active in all styles of music. He is a two-time Grammy Award winner and has been nominated fifteen times. As a member of the Wayne Shorter Quartet, Mr. Patitucci won the 2003 Downbeat critic's poll for Best Acoustic Jazz Group and Best Jazz Recording. He has performed with jazz giants such as Dizzy Gillespie, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Stan Getz, Freddie Hubbard, Roy Haynes, Wynton Marsalis, Michael Brecker, John Scofield, Joe Lovano, Kenny Garrett and Victor Feldman. Mr. Patitucci is an active composer with eleven recordings of his own and commissions to write for various chamber music groups, most recently for the New York based string

quartet, Elements. In 2003, Mr. Patitucci received a Grammy nomination for Best Instrumental Arrangement and the previous year was nominated for Best Instrumental Composition for a work entitled *Communion*. Mr. Patitucci has been involved in education for many years, writing books, making instructional videos and giving master classes around the world. He is former director of the Bass Collective and currently Associate Professor of Music at the City College of New York (CUNY).

Principal bassoon of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra since 1998, **Whitney Crockett** began studying the bassoon in his native Miami, Florida with Michael Finn and Luciano Magnanini. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School where he studied with Stephen Maxym. Prior to joining the Met, he was principal bassoon of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra for six seasons, during which time he was on the faculty of McGill University. He has also served as principal of the Florida Orchestra, the South Florida Symphony and the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional of the Dominican Republic. As an active chamber musician, Mr. Crockett performs regularly with the double-reed ensemble Kammermusiker and the Met Chamber Players. He has appeared as soloist with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Florida Orchestra and les Violons du Roy. Mr. Crockett serves on the faculties of the Juilliard School, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Domain Forget Academy of Music and Dance.

Laura Gilbert has performed throughout North America, Europe, South America, Japan and Korea. Ms. Gilbert has appeared as a soloist with the Brandenburg Ensemble, the Heidelberg Chamber Orchestra, the Korean National Orchestra, Colorado Orchestra, Philharmonia Virtuosi and the

Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic. She has participated in the Marlboro, Casals, Norfolk and Aspen music festivals and has recently appeared as a guest artist touring the USA with "Musicians from Marlboro". She has performed with violinist Jamie Laredo in the Chamber Music at the Y Series in New York and with the Bach Aria Group, St. Luke's Ensemble and Orchestra, Speculum Musicae, the Dorian Quintet and the Brentano and St. Lawrence string quartets. Ms. Gilbert is a member of Three Flute Moms and the trio Aureole which has won numerous chamber music awards and been nominated for three Grammy Awards. Ms. Gilbert serves on the faculty of the Mannes College of Music, SUNY Purchase, CUNY Queen's College and Saint Ann's School.

Ira Weller received a Bachelor and Master of Music from the Juilliard School where he studied with Ivan Galamian. Now a member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Weller has a wide range of performing experience and is highly regarded as a soloist and chamber musician. He plays regularly in New York with the Festival Chamber Players on their Merkin Hall series, in the "Collection in Concert" series at the Pierpont Morgan Library, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and with the Bard Music Festival Quartet. A regular guest of the Bard Festival and Kneisel Hall, Weller has also appeared with Bargemusic, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Music from Marlboro and Chamber Music Northwest. His vital interest in contemporary music has led to premieres of works by Rorem, Laderman, Dello Joio, Picker, Ran and Zwilich. As founding member and violist for the first ten years of the Mendelssohn String Quartet, Mr. Weller recorded works by Dvorak, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schoenberg, Weber and Ran. Mr. Weller is on the viola faculties of SUNY Purchase, the Mannes College of Music and the new

Conservatory of Music at Bard College.

Demian Austin has been principal trombone of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra since 1994. He received a Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College, where he was a student of Raymond Premru, and continued his studies at the Juilliard School with Per Brevig, receiving a Masters degree. Mr. Austin has played with the Met Chamber Players since its inception and is currently developing repertoire for a new brass quintet comprised of fellow members of the Met Orchestra. He can be heard on the GM Recordings issue "Gunther Schuller conducts Beethoven and Brahms". Aside from his career in music, Mr. Austin has a keen interest in film and has attended several intensive seminars on screenwriting.

June Han holds a Premier Prix for harp and chamber music from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, a Master of Music and Artists Diploma from the Yale School of Music and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from the Juilliard School. An active proponent of chamber and contemporary music, she has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Orpheus, Speculum Musicae, Ensemble Sospeso, Sequitur and Ensemble 21. Ms. Han is also an active orchestral player and has worked with the Orchestra of Paris, the Kirov Opera Orchestra, the New York City Opera Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic. Ms. Han has participated at the summer festivals of Aspen and Tanglewood and has been a member of the faculty at the Bowdoin International Music Festival since 1996. Her recordings include works by Webern, Schoenberg, Carter, Musgrave, Scelsi and Meltzer, to name but a few.

She has premiered works by her mother, Young-Ja Lee, Charles Wuorinen and Hyo-Shin Na, among many others. Ms. Han currently teaches at Yale and Columbia universities.

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