

DOUBLE BASSES

AT TWENTY PACES

by Pauline Oliveros, 1932 -

**a theater piece for two
double basses, their seconds,
and a referee (conductor)**

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A M E R I C A N M U S I C

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

MUSIC LIBRARY/ 787.41 048d3 oversized General Directions

Procedure: 1) Enter seconds, carrying bass stools. Go directly to center stage, face each other and bow, then turn and stand back to back. Walk 10 paces each, forward, then place the stools in position for the players. Go off stage, then return, carrying music stands. Repeat the above procedure for the music stands. Place them to the side, up stage of ready position, to be adjusted later when players are in position. Go off stage again and return, carrying a selection of bows. Go directly to your respective positions and wait for the players.

2) Enter referee. Go to center stage, bow to the audience, then take your place up stage center, facing the audience. Music stand must be pre-set.

3) Enter players with basses. Go to center stage, bow to each other, turn and stand back to back. Seconds come forward with a selection of bass bows. Players choose your weapons. Seconds return to your positions.

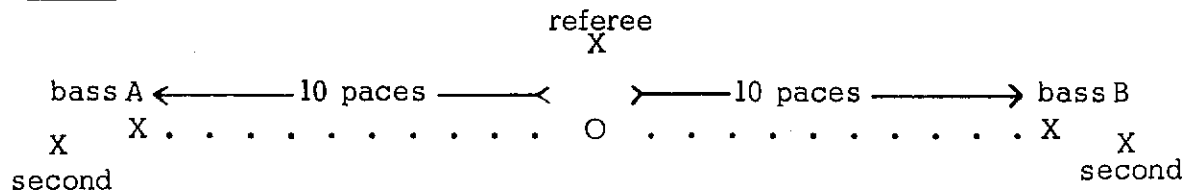
4) Referee sound A440 on a pitch pipe. Players tune carefully, as if your life depended on it! When the tuning is completed, referee signal the players. Players begin simultaneously to walk forward 10 paces each. When you reach your respective positions, turn on a signal from the referee and salute your opponent in the following manner: raise the bow to the center of your forehead, with the bow sticking straight up above your head; then straighten your arm out in front of you, so that the bow points directly at your opponent; then bring the bow back smartly to normal resting position at your side. Do this salute simultaneously with your opponent. Then take your position ready to play. Seconds adjust stools and music stands for the players. On signal from the referee, players begin your parts.

Referee: Signal the beginning of each section. Give cut-offs when necessary. There must be no pause between sections; passages in progress must blend smoothly to the new passage or overlap when appropriate, unless a cut-off is indicated. The stopwatch timings are approximate and may be adjusted slightly at the discretion of the referee.

Attitude: All participants must devote undivided attention to the given tasks, maintaining at all times a serious professional manner.

Materials: score, referee cue sheet, Bass A and B parts, tape, slide. Referee needs a pitch pipe, stopwatch and the score to Beethoven's Symphony No. 5.

Staging: (O = center stage)



audience

CONCERNING DOUBLE BASSES AT TWENTY PACES

Perhaps more than any other sport, fencing demands a keen eye, quick reflexes, and agility. Like boxing, it also demands an aggressive and competitive spirit.

During the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe it became the custom for men to carry swords, and quarrels were usually settled on the spot with cold steel. Duels were fought with sword in one hand and dagger in the other for warding off blows. Later a cloak took the place of the dagger and finally with the adoption of the slender, needlepointed rapier even this protection was abandoned.

But today fencing is conducted as a harmless sport, and every precaution is taken to prevent accidental injury. The weapons have dulled edges and blunted tips capped with buttons. The fencers wear protected padded jackets, gloves, and wire masks. Points are scored merely by touching the opponent.

For greater safety the convention was very early arrived at that no hits should count in a fencing-bout except those landing on the breast. Thus sword play soon became so unpractical as to lose much of its value as a training for war or the duel. For hits with "sharps" take effect whenever they are made and many an expert fencer of the old school has been seriously wounded or lost his life in a duel, through forgetting this very simple fact.

The word "fencing" comes from the same Latin root, fendere, as the words "offense" and "defense." On offense, the fencer attacks by lunging. On defense, he returns his opponent's blade with a parry, and then may counter-attack with a continuing movement called a riposte.

There are three simple attacks, each starting with the weapons crossed in the "engaged position." The coup droit is a straight lunge with extended arm. In dégagé, the attacker passes his point under the other's blade and then lunges. In coupé, the attacker passes his point over the other's point before lunging. Each of these is designed to score a touch, or touché, before the opponent can parry. If the parry is successful, the opponent follows through with his riposte.

It is extremely important that only one fencer lunge at a time. If the opponents lunged and scored touches together, their foils might arch to the snapping point.

Colonel Flamboyer,
Program Notes

DOUBLE BASSES AT TWENTY PACES

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SCORE

Referee 1 - 1 minute

Player A Try to play exactly in tune with Player B for one minute.

Player B Sustain a complex (with many partials which are not integral multiples of the fundamental) sound for 1 minute. Try to vary tuning, but make the changes as imperceptibly as possible and not more than a quarter tone higher or lower.

Referee 2 - 1 minute 30 seconds. Conduct the Second Movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C Minor.

Player A Discourse: *"I use the (German) bow because. . . ." Illustrate or demonstrate your reasons.

Player B Discourse: *"I do not use the (French) bow because" Illustrate or demonstrate your reasons.

*Revise to suit performers.

Referee 3 - 1 minute 15 seconds

Player A Play (pizz) the changes to "Stardust" in D^b, slow and sentimental.

Player B Play (pizz) the changes to "Sweet Georgia Brown" up tempo in G.

Referee 4 - 45 seconds. Conduct Third Movement of Beethoven.

Player A Discourse: "My bass is a (what kind). I bought it because. . . ." Stop in mid-sentence once and play a long, slow downward glissando, mp, then resume sentence.

Player B Discourse: "My bass is a (what kind). I bought it because. . . ." Stop in mid-sentence once and play an mp, long, slow upward glissando, then resume sentence.

Referee 5 - 1 minute 45 seconds

Player A Try to play the same harmonics as Player B.

Player B Try to play different harmonics from Player A.

Referee 6 - 1 minute

Player A Sustain a complex sound for 1 minute. Try to vary tuning, but make the changes as imperceptibly as possible and not more than a quarter tone higher or lower.

Player B Try to play exactly in tune with Player A for 1 minute.

Referee 7 - conduct $\text{♩} = 72$ in $\frac{2}{4}$ 35 measures, cut off on downbeat of measure 36.

Player A Follow conductor

March-like

$\text{♩} = 72$ arco seco

3X
softer than B
Louder than B
softer than B
Louder than B and add voice for reinforcement.

Player B Follow conductor

March-like

$\text{♩} = 72$ arco seco

2X
softer than A
Louder than A
softer than A
Louder than A
softer than A
Louder than A and add voice for reinforcement.

Referee 8 - 1 minute

Player A Play pre-selected fast movement of a Dragonetti Etude.

Player B Play pre-selected slow movement of a Dragonetti Etude.

(No substitutes)

Referee 9 - 45 seconds. Conduct First Movement of Beethoven (continue through section 10)

Player A

Player B Name and explain all parts of the bass.

Referee 10 - 45 seconds - (continue conducting Beethoven)

Player A Name and explain all parts of the bass.

Player B

Referee 17 - Each player plays a pizz tremolo (classical guitar style) on his or her open G string from inaudible to as loud as possible. The loser quits first. Declare a winner or call a draw if neither quits and a steady dynamic is prevailing.

When players have reached the loudest point in their crescendo, cue the lights for imitation lightning. Then a total blackout must occur. One second later the tape begins. (Thundercrash and finale to Beethoven's 5th Symphony.) The slide begins as an out of focus blur, appearing over the conductor's head. It is very gradually brought into focus and dimmed up to peak brightness then faded out slowly. The lights come on as trumpets flare the end of the symphony on the tape. The players end their tremolo with the tape. They may be aided by their respective seconds.

Players A and B Pizz tremolo from inaudible to as loud as possible, continuously on open G. Loser quits first. Add voice if necessary.