TWO MOZART VIOLIN SONATAS TRANSCRIBED FOR THE DOUBLE BASS

by

THOMAS PATRICK HILDRETH

(Under the Direction of Milton Masciadri)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to add two Mozart violin sonatas, K. 301 and K. 305, to the available solo repertoire for the double bass. Performance editions of the works with piano accompaniments in keys for the double bass in both orchestra and solo tunings will be a pedagogical resource as well as an additional source of material for well-rounded recital programs. The document begins with a justification for the project, including an overview of the available solo repertoire for the double bass. The historical background of Mozart's early works for keyboard and violin, including K. 301 and K. 305, provides an understanding of why these two pieces were chosen for the project. Detailed explanations of all changes made from the original pieces during the transcription process allow for informed decisions with regard to performance and pedagogical options.

INDEX WORDS: Double bass, Mozart, K. 301, K. 305, Orchestra tuning, Performance edition, Solo repertoire, Solo tuning, Transcription, Viennese Classical Style, Violin sonata
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Due to the importance of Mozart as a composer in the Viennese Classical style, it can be argued that studying and performing his solo works should be included in a comprehensive performance curriculum for any instrument. Of the solo works by Mozart, there are fewer than thirty choices currently available for the double bass and piano, all of which are transcriptions of works originally written for other instruments.\(^1\) Given these circumstances, the aim of this project is to add to the current repertoire by transcribing two sonatas for violin and piano by Mozart, K. 301 and K. 305.

These two sonatas are part of a group of seven sonatas written by Mozart in 1778 which represent the beginning of his mature sonatas.\(^2\) Both sonatas were chosen for transcription because of their suitability for adaptation to the double bass. This suitability comes in part from the commonalities between the double bass and the violin. Often inappropriately grouped with the viol family of instruments, the double bass is actually the largest commonly utilized member of the violin family.\(^3\) Even though they are related instruments, the differences between the two in many ways overshadow their similarities. In spite of these differences however, Mozart’s treatment of the violin in the two sonatas chosen for this study is such that they can be adapted to the double bass without adversely affecting the musical substance of the works.

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The Lack of Classical Period Solo Double Bass Works

Unlike violinists and cellists, the double bassist does not enjoy a large body of solo literature by the established composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\(^4\) This is due largely to the view that the double bass was primarily an orchestral instrument, not suited for solo work. Singleton states in 1917 that:

> We seldom hear a solo from the double-bass; for composers do not encourage him. His voice in spite of his huge size lacks substance. We cannot imagine the double-bass whispering a tender love-song, or indulging in any sweet sentiment. It is essentially an orchestral instrument. Its notes are for the good of the community. They help make a fine, firm background for the melodies and harmonies of the more delicate instruments.\(^5\)

For much of the instrument’s history, this attitude towards the double bass was not undeserved. Standards of performance on the double bass were poor for two reasons. First, the instrument was physically demanding to play. The strings used during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were generally rough and very thick. This required a high bridge to prevent the strings from rattling against the fingerboard. The result was excessive string travel and the requirement for significant pressure from the left hand in order to press the string down to the fingerboard.\(^6\) Stopping notes with this type of setup was so difficult that it was not uncommon for players to wear leather gloves in order to protect their hands.\(^7\) The difficulties associated with playing the bass were not resolved until the twentieth century. David Walter, formerly with the Julliard and Manhattan Schools, explains:

> Part of the reason for the increase in literature and the elevation of performance standards lies with technology. We used to play on heavy gut strings with inordinately high bridges. It was simply too awkward and difficult to play numerous works that we play

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\(^4\) Ibid, 95.


\(^7\) Ibid., 82.
today with comparative ease, as for example, the Hindemith Sonata and the Bottesini Concertos.8

A second factor contributing to the point of view that double bassists were inferior musicians when compared to players of the other members of the violin family was the lack of any systematic pedagogy for the instrument before the nineteenth century.9 Prior to the establishment of state sponsored music schools and the publication of comprehensive method books, the double bass was for the most part played and taught poorly.10 The well known double bass pedagogue Stuart Sankey points out that this lack of skill was a direct influence on the dearth of literature featuring the double bass in earlier times: "If only bass players living around 1800 played with the level of proficiency we have today, no doubt the use of bass in chamber music would have been infinitely increased."11

Even with orchestral playing, allowances were made for the low standards of performance set by double bassists. The standard practice for composers well into the nineteenth century was to write one bass part that was to be played by both the violoncellos and double basses. The expectation was that the bassists would then simplify the parts that were too difficult to perform on the bass. Another option often chosen by conductors called for the double basses to drop out altogether during difficult passages, leaving the bass line to be played only by the violoncellos.12 This less than ideal situation led composers such as Berlioz to call for the writing of specific bass parts better suited to the limitations of the instrument.13

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The second half of the twentieth century has seen incredible advancement in the competence of double bassists. While the foundations of this improvement were laid in the nineteenth century, the greatest strides forward for the instrument came about in the twentieth century through the technological improvements of steel strings and adjustable bridges. Improvements in recording techniques have also helped raise awareness of the current, much improved stature of this instrument.

In spite of all this, the body of solo and chamber literature for bassists is still lacking when compared to instruments such as the violin or violoncello. To illustrate this, F. A. Echlin, in 1940, remarked in an article:

Music for the double bass is practically confined to orchestral parts. The instrument is only occasionally used in chamber music (although with great effect in Schubert’s and Dvorak’s quintets and some other works); and solos are quite exceptional, being more a tour de force on the part of the soloist than a musical exposition.15

The Viennese Violone

Before discussing solo works for the double bass, it is necessary to address the issue of the Viennese violone, the body of solo works written for it, and their relationship to the double bass repertoire. For the reasons cited above, solo works for the double bass by master composers of the 18th and 19th centuries are rare. The aria Per Questa Bella Mano by Mozart and a number of concertos by Dittersdorf are often cited as examples of works from this period featuring the double bass.16 There are also solo passages for the bass in symphonies 6, 7, 8, 31, and 72 by Haydn.17 These compositions came about because of the rise of virtuosic bass playing in and around Vienna during the second half of the 18th century. Some of the players associated with

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14 Ibid., 92.  
16 Applebaum and Roth, eds., The Way They Play, Vol. 6, 77.  
this school of virtuosity were Joseph Kämpfer, Friedrich Pischelberger and J. M. Sperger. It is important to point out, however, that the instrument played by these men was in many ways quite different from the modern orchestral double bass.

Usually fitted with five relatively thin strings, the smaller Viennese violone was fretted and had a bass bar carved from the belly slab. This style of construction places the instrument in the gamba family rather than the violin family, and the resulting sound, while more responsive, lacks depth and volume. Another major difference is the system of tuning the open strings (fig. 1). This tuning system, combined with the use of frets, allowed for writing that exploited chord figuration, but that was limited to a few keys centered around D Major.

Fig. 1 – Viennese violone open string tuning.

Compositions for this instrument are not well suited to instruments tuned in fourths. As the English bassist Rodney Slatford states:

There is a problem with Viennese double bass music of the 18th century that is virtually unsolvable unless the player resorts to a period instrument. 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. While many of the pieces written for the Viennese violone have become standards in the repertoire, it is appropriate to categorize them as transcriptions because the instrument they were written for is so far removed from the standard double bass of today.

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18 Ibid., 99.
19 Ibid., 100-101.
20 Ibid., 105.
21 Ibid. 103.
Therefore, it is fair to state that established composers only began to show interest in the double bass as a solo instrument in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Sources of Solo Repertoire for the Double Bass}

Double bassists who wish to play solo music rely on three sources for material. The first source comprises works written by established composers, the second is made up of works by double bassists, primarily for their own use, and the third source is transcriptions of pieces written for other instruments.\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Works for the Double Bass By Established Composers}

Reinhold Gliere, Nina Rota, Paul Hindemith, Gunther Schuller, Lalo Schifrin, Hans Werner Henze and Paul Ramsier are some of the more notable composers who have written for the instrument.\textsuperscript{25} While this has resulted in much needed contributions to the repertoire, contemporary pieces do not comprise a sufficient body of literature for study and performance in terms both of quantity and quality, as illustrated by the remarks of Stuart Sankey:

\begin{quote}
In our century Hindemith wrote a sonata for double bass with piano accompaniment, but frankly, I consider it to be “bottom drawer” Hindemith. Then there is a concerto by Henze which I do not believe will receive wide acceptance. Several worthy pieces have been written for Gary Karr by Giannini, Paul Ramsier, and Alexander Brod, I believe. And a host of avant-garde pieces have been written for Bertram Turetsky. But for all the sizeable list of 20\textsuperscript{th} century bass solos, in terms of wide audience appeal, the pickings are slim.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

The comments of Barry Green, former principal bass with the Cincinnati Symphony, reinforce this idea:

\begin{quote}
First of all, let us remember that there is a dearth of good compositions from the Romantic period up to about 1920, written exclusively for the bass. And bass technique
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23}Brun, \textit{A New History of the Double Bass}, 95.
\textsuperscript{24}Applebaum and Roth, eds., \textit{The Way They Play}, Vol. 6, 77.
\textsuperscript{25}Brun, \textit{A New History of the Double Bass}, 97.
\textsuperscript{26}Applebaum and Roth, eds., \textit{The Way They Play}, Vol. 6, 78.
has advanced tremendously in recent years, there is a great vacuum waiting to be filled. Of course, that does not mean that all contemporary works are worthy. This has never been the case in any period of musical history. But bass players today are badly in need of new works.27

Works for the Double Bass Composed by Double Bassists

This lack of compositions by master composers prior to the twentieth century resulted in the second source of solo works for the bass. Those few individuals who were able to overcome the inherent difficulties of the instrument and pursue careers as double bass virtuosos and pedagogues were obliged to fill the void in the repertoire with their own works.28 Three important figures that stand out as double bass composer-performers are: Domenico Dragonetti (1763-1846); Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889); and Serge Koussevitsky (1874-1951). Along with a few other less well-known bassists, these virtuosos provided the bulk of the solo literature for the instrument until the first part of the twentieth century.29 While these pieces often appear on recitals by bassists today, Stuart Sankey’s observations echo the sentiments of many as to their musical value:

The best known 19th century work is the Dragonetti concerto which was probably actually composed by Nanny. Most of the 19th century bassists wrote for their own instrument, and much of their product is highly forgettable. Bottesini’s music has much charm, and audiences are generally captivated by the technical razzle-dazzle of his larger pieces when they are well played. But essentially his music is quite repetitious and slight, as are a legion of theme-and-variation concoctions by Sturm, Simandl, Findeisen, etc. One of the better works by a bassist is the concerto by Koussevitsky, though I believe he had some help in the composition from Reinhold Glière, who himself has written some small pieces for bass.30

Transcriptions for the Double Bass

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30 Applebaum and Roth, eds., The Way They Play, Vol. 6, 78-79.
Because master composers did not provide for the bass in a solo capacity, and the quality of the compositions by double bass composer-performers is considered by many to be lacking, bassists must look to the third source for solo works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Stuart Sankey illustrates why transcriptions are so important for the double bassist:

This is my thesis—since the double bassist cannot draw upon a standard body of literature to compare with that of violinists or cellists, he must therefore utilize existing compositions which are profitable, in the musical sense, as well as appealing to the ear. Certainly there is more to be learned from the music of Bach, Handel and Schubert than that of Vanhal, Schwabe, Sperger or Dragonetti. I feel that bassists must create a new body of bass literature predicated on the works of the masters.31

Even the three most well-known double bass composer-performers saw the value in the use of transcriptions. One story, recounted by Thayer, describes an incident involving Dragonetti and Beethoven:

Beethoven had been told that his new friend could execute violoncello music upon his huge instrument, and one morning, when Dragonetti called at his room, he expressed his desire to hear a sonata. The contrabass was sent for, and the Sonata, No. 2, of Op. 5, was selected. Beethoven played his part, with his eyes immovably fixed upon his companion, and, in the finale, where the arpeggios occur, was so delighted and excited that at the close he sprang up and threw his arms around both player and instrument.32

Dragonetti also made use of transcriptions in the genre of chamber music, substituting the double bass for other string parts. Along with violoncellist Robert Lindley, he frequently performed sonatas by Corelli and Handel.33 Dragonetti’s transcriptions for the double bass that were published during his lifetime include Mozart’s Grand Waltz, Two Celebrated Pollacas by Jaeger and Himmel, and some arrangements of Bach organ fugues.34

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31 Ibid., 82.
Many of the works of Bottesini were derived from operas, and he was well known for performing transcriptions of arias on the bass between acts of the operas he conducted. His list of transcriptions and paraphrases includes works by Bellini, Verdi, and Rossini. Koussevitsky also produced a number of transcriptions including works by Handel, Galliard, Eccles, Mozart, Bruch, Bach, Richard Strauss, and Scriabin.

In addition to the special circumstances that justify transcriptions to expand the repertoire of the double bass, there is ample precedent for transcriptions in general. Ferrucio Busoni responded to critics of transcription by stating:

The moment that the pen takes possession of it, the thought loses its original form. The intention of writing down an idea necessitates already a choice of time and key. The composer is obliged to decide on the form and the key and they determine more and more clearly the course to be taken and the limitations. Even if much of the idea is original and indestructible and continues to exist this will be pressed down from the moment of decision, into a type belonging to a class. The idea becomes a sonata or a concerto; this is already an arrangement of the original. From this first transcription to the second is a comparatively short and unimportant step. Yet, in general, people make a fuss only about the second. In doing so they overlook the fact that a transcription does not destroy the original; so there can be no question of loss arising from it. The performance of a work is also a transcription, and this too—however free the performance may be—can never do away with the original. For the musical work of art exists whole and intact before it has sounded and after the sound is finished.

While arrangements and transcriptions have often been met with criticism, there are numerous examples of master composers arranging their own works as well as the works of others. These include, but are not limited to, J. S. Bach, Liszt, Brahms, Wagner, Beethoven, Ravel, and Bartok. Mozart himself, whose compositions are the subject of this project,

35 Ibid.
reworked his own material as well as that of other composers.\textsuperscript{39} The fugues of Bach that he arranged for strings, sometimes inserting his own introductions, indicate that Mozart was not opposed to adapting the works of other composers.\textsuperscript{40} In fact, the title Mozart used for the group of sonatas containing K. 301 and K. 305 indicates that he was flexible with regard to the instrumentation. The six sonatas were published in 1778 as \textit{Six Sonatas for Harpsichord or Fortepiano with Accompaniment of a Violin}.\textsuperscript{41} In addition to the freedom afforded in the choice of keyboard instrument, there is some evidence that the use of the violin to play the other voice was not always solidly established. Indications in the autograph of K. 301 show that Mozart considered the possibility of flute or violin for at least this sonata.\textsuperscript{42}

Transcribing K. 301 and K. 305 for the double bass is justified for a number of reasons. First, there is a long tradition of the use of transcriptions by double bassists. Then we have the fact that Mozart himself was not opposed to transcribing and adapting his own music, as well as the music of other composers. Finally, there is the lack of repertoire for the double bass written by important composers of the Viennese Classical style. These two transcriptions will provide performers, teachers and students with much needed material from one of the most important composers from that period.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{40} Warren Kirkendale, “More Slow Introductions by Mozart to Fugues of J. S. Bach?” \textit{Journal of the American Musicological Society}, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1964), 44.
\textsuperscript{41} Loft, \textit{Violin and Keyboard: The Duo Repertoire}, 234.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibib, 235.
\end{flushleft}
CHAPTER 2

MOZART AND THE SONATAS FOR KEYBOARD AND VIOLIN

The Early Sonatas

Late in the year 1763, Leopold Mozart and his son Wolfgang arrived in Paris as part of the young prodigy’s earliest tours of Europe. Friedrich Melchior Grimm, a fellow Bavarian who lived in Paris, introduced them to the court at Versailles and aided them in their first publishing venture.\(^1\) The resulting Opus 1 and Opus 2 comprised a set of four sonatas, K. 6-9. These were dedicated to the second daughter of the king, Madame Victoire de France, and to the Comtesse de Tessé respectively.\(^2\)

At that time the accompanied sonata was a popular genre, especially in the larger cities where young ladies were expected to be moderately skilled at playing a keyboard instrument and young gentlemen were expected to be somewhat less skilled at playing either the violin or the flute.\(^3\) In these works, the keyboard is primarily responsible for the melodic material, while the violin or flute is relegated to the subordinate role of accompanist.\(^4\) As this type of sonata would sell better than works for keyboard alone, Mozart simply reworked keyboard music he had already written to accommodate an optional violin part. The pieces were published with the title \textit{Sonatas for Harpsichord, Which Can Be Played with the Accompaniment of a Violin}.\(^5\)

\(^3\) Ibid., 54.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid.
In addition to his father, the composers who influenced the formal and stylistic approach used by Mozart in these earliest sonatas were Johann Gottfried Eckard (1735-1809) and, even more importantly, Johann Schobert (c. 1735-1767). Each sonata is in a major key and consists of three movements ending in a double minuet. The opening allegros are all in three sections, with the first subject always beginning the recapitulation. The trio movement for all the minuets except the first is in a minor key.

By 1765, six similar sonatas, K. 10-15, had been published as Opus 3 in London. These works, entitled *Six Sonatas for Harpsichord, Which May Be Played with the Accompaniment of Violin or Traverse Flute*, were dedicated to Queen Charlotte of England. In addition to the influence of Schobert, these sonatas begin to show the influence of another figure from the Mannheim school, Johann Christian Bach. K. 10, 11, 13 and 14 are all in three movements, although K. 14 is comprised of two allegros followed by a minuet; K. 12 and 15 consist of two movements. There is a violoncello part that was included in the first edition of this set, but it merely doubles some of the bass notes in the piano part. This was probably done so that the pieces could be sold as piano trios.

Unlike the earlier set of sonatas, these works include some places where the violin or flute actually interacts with the keyboard rather than simply accompanying it. These include the Andante and the first Menuetto of K. 13 and the Andante maestoso movement of K. 15.

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10 Abert, *W.A. Mozart*, 62.
11 Ibid.
of the increased activity on the part of the second voice however, all these pieces can stand alone as keyboard sonatas.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1766, Mozart’s Opus 4, K. 26-31, entitled \textit{Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord With the Accompaniment of a Violin}, was written for the festival of the Prince of Orange at the Hague and dedicated to the Princess of Nassau-Weilburg.\textsuperscript{14} In contrast to the first two sets, the title for the Opus 4 sonatas suggests that the violin is not optional. While the interaction between the violin and the keyboard makes the violin a necessary element of these works, it is still the keyboard that is the dominant voice in the music.\textsuperscript{15}

It is in this set that the influence of Bach, especially his \textit{Six Sonatas de Clavecin} Op. 5, can clearly be seen.\textsuperscript{16} All of Mozart's sonatas in the set are in two movements except for the first, which is in three. This sonata, in E flat, has a triple meter first movement and a slow movement which is written in the key of the relative minor. Of the two movement sonatas, the first movements are all in a rounded binary form, some fast and some slow. The final movements are mostly rondos or minuets. The finale of K. 30 is a rondo-minuet, and that of K. 31 is a minuet with variations.\textsuperscript{17}

In all of these early sonatas, the keyboard is clearly the dominant instrument. While there are instances in which the violin is allowed some independence, these are rare and fleeting. It is mostly relegated to accompanying the piano in thirds, staying in the middle register below the

\textsuperscript{13} Loft, \textit{Violin and Keyboard: The Duo Repertoire}, 232-233.
\textsuperscript{15} Loft, \textit{Violin and Keyboard: The Duo Repertoire}, 233.
\textsuperscript{16} Abert, \textit{W.A. Mozart}, 63-64.
\textsuperscript{17} Sadie, \textit{Mozart: the Early Years}, 106.
right hand of the keyboard part. While they serve as the precedent for the following works in this genre, the lack of real participation by the violin suggests that it would be more appropriate to consider them as works for the keyboard alone rather than as chamber works.

**The First Mature Sonatas**

Mozart did not compose again for violin and keyboard until 1778 when he composed a group of seven sonatas, which marks the beginning of his mature sonatas. Known as the Mannheim Sonatas, five were composed in that city and the other two, K. 304 and 306, were written in Paris. Six of these, K. 301-306, were grouped together and published in Paris as *Six Sonatas for Harpsichord or Fortepiano with Accompaniment of a Violin*. The dedication was to Maria Elizabeth, the Electoress of the Palatinate in Mannheim. K. 296, the seventh sonata, was published with the same title in 1781 along with five others, K. 376-380. The inspiration for these works probably came from Joseph Schuster (1748-1812) the Dresden Kapellmeister. Schuster was a successful composer of both opera and chamber music and Mozart was familiar with his work. In a letter to Leopold dated March 6, 1777 Mozart writes:

> I send my sister herewith six duets for *clavicembalo* and violin by Schuster, which I have often played here. They are not bad. If I shall stay on I shall write six myself in the same style, as they are popular here. My main object in sending them to you is that you may amuse yourselves à duex. Addio.

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
These sonatas are historically and musically important because, for the first time with Mozart, the violin is no longer relegated to the position of accompanist, but instead interacts on an equal footing with the keyboard. The elevation of the status of the violin in these works is further confirmed through Mozart’s correspondence. In a letter to Leopold dated February 14, 1778 he writes, “as a diversion I compose something else, such as duets for clavier and violin.” The use of the word “duets” indicates the development of his concept of the violin sonata.

When Mozart composed these sonatas he was also working on a commission for a Dutch amateur musician named Ferdinand De Jean for three flute concertos and two flute quartets. It may be that this commission, or simply the precedent of his earlier sonatas, led Mozart to consider making the second part playable by either the violin or the flute. Evidence for this is found in the autograph of the first movement of the violin part for K. 301, where indications of octave transpositions for the flute as well as the words “or flute” at the top of the page were initially included. These however were crossed out, and the word “violin” is underlined.

Only two of the sonatas, K. 296 and K. 306, have three movements; the others have two. In these, the second movements show the transition Mozart was making away from the Italian style and towards the French style in that they are dance forms. The one exception is K. 305, where Mozart uses a set of variations for the second movement. The Mannheim style is especially evident in the first movements, where there are a large number of themes and contrasting dynamics.

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30 Abert, *W.A. Mozart*, 441.
31 Ibid, 442.
The variety of forms, time signatures, tempos, and stylistic features found in K. 301 and K. 305 is one reason why they were chosen for this project. The remainder of this chapter provides a general description of both sonatas.

**K. 301- Movement 1**

The first movement, in sonata form, is marked *Allegro con spirito*, and is in 4/4 time. The texture is generally light, usually consisting of three simultaneous voices. Four simultaneous voices is not uncommon, but only rarely does Mozart increase the texture beyond this.

The melodic material, when not doubled in both instruments, is assigned to the two instruments fairly evenly. The exposition of this first movement provides a good example of the ways in which Mozart handles the interaction of the violin and the piano, not only in this sonata but also in K. 305. One of the approaches used is to assign complete melodic ideas to one instrument or the other. Often when this occurs, the idea is presented by one instrument and then is presented later by the other instrument. For example, the melody in the opening phrase group is played by the violin over a simple single note bass line and Alberti style arpeggiation played by the piano (fig. 2).

![Fig. 2 - Opening of K. 301, movement 1.](image-url)
Four measures later the same melody is repeated. This time however, the piano has the melodic line in the right hand, the bass line stays the same, and the violin provides the Alberti style arpeggios (fig. 3).

When neither instrument is leading with the melody, Mozart typically does one of two things. The first involves the presentation of the melodic rhythm in both instruments simultaneously. The four voice texture is most commonly found in passages such as this (fig. 4).
The transition to the second theme demonstrates another approach to material where neither instrument is dominant. Here we can see a rapid exchange between the two instruments (fig. 5).

![Fig. 5 - Melodic exchange between violin and piano in mm. 28 - 32.](image)

Mozart also scores some melodic passages homorhythmically using parallel thirds. With few exceptions, these sections have the top staff of the piano part a third above that of the violin (fig. 6).

![Fig. 6 - Parallel thirds, mm. 20 - 23.](image)
K. 301 - Movement 2

The second movement of K. 301 is a dancelike ternary form in triple meter marked Allegro. One feature of this movement is the frequent use of double stops as a way to elevate the interest in the violin part when it plays an accompanying role (fig. 7).

The middle section of this movement modulates from G major to G minor. Here the violin is featured in its presentation of the ornamented melody. The piano accompaniment consists of a combination of scalar patterns and arpeggios over a simple bass line (fig. 8).
The return of the first part in G major is a literal repeat until the coda, which begins at m. 188. The dramatic ending of this movement is one of the few places where the texture expands beyond four voices (fig. 9).

![Expanded texture at the end of K. 301, movement 2.](image)

**Fig. 9 - Expanded texture at the end of K. 301, movement 2.**

**K. 305- Movement 1**

While K. 301 is fairly representative of the entire group of sonatas with regard to form, meter, and stylistic approach, it is in K. 305 that we find the variety sought for this project. Other than parts of the third movement of K. 306, the 6/8 meter is unique to the first movement of K. 305. Unsurprisingly, it is in sonata form, and is marked Allegro di molto. While this sonata is characterized by the same stylistic approach as K. 301, the opening statement is more emphatic. In K. 301, the first measures have the violin in the superior position with the melody while the piano accompanies. In K. 305, Mozart begins with an arpeggiated melody presented in three octaves for four measures, followed by a homorhythmic section in parallel thirds (fig. 10). Neither instrument takes the lead until m. 16, when the violin assumes the melodic duties while the piano accompanies.
While the texture in this sonata is still primarily three or four voices, there are more departures from this standard than in K. 301. In addition to thicker textures, Mozart is also more willing to reduce the number of voices to two, or even one (fig. 11).
K. 305- Movement 2

The theme and variation form of the second movement is unique among the six sonatas in this group. The theme, marked Andante grazioso, is presented by the piano, with homorhythmic material played by the violin. As expected, the violin doubles the piano at the octave, or else the top voice of the piano is a third above the violin.

Variation 1 is given to the piano alone, with the melody made up of nearly constant thirty-second notes in the upper voice. The second variation brings back the violin playing a highly ornamented melody over the piano accompaniment. It is in this variation that we find one of the few spots where the violin has the upper voice in a passage of parallel thirds (fig. 12).

![Fig. 12 - Parallel thirds with the violin in the upper voice, variation 2, mm 45-47.](image)

The third variation is characterized by the rapid interchange of melody between the voices. While written in 2/4 time, the use of triplets throughout the variation give it compound metric feel (fig. 13).
Variation 4 has the violin playing a straightforward melody accompanied by the piano. This is followed by a short cadenza-like adagio played by the piano (fig. 14).

Variation 5 mostly consists of a doubled melody between the piano and violin, with accompaniment in the left hand of the piano part. The final variation in many ways resembles the final movement of K. 301. It is a dancelike allegro in 3/8 time, with complete melodic ideas passed back and forth between the two instruments. The dramatic ending of the variation is also
similar to the ending of the final movement of K. 301, but with triple stops instead of double stops in the violin (fig. 15).

Mozart began his career as a composer with works for the keyboard and violin. While the earliest examples of these works treat the violin part as an accompaniment to the keyboard, the first mature sonatas allow for true interaction between the two instruments. The four movements that make up K. 301 and K. 305 provide for a number of forms, meters, and textures. This variety is one important reason why these particular works were chosen for transcription.
CHAPTER 3

TRANSCRIBING THE SONATAS FOR THE DOUBLE BASS

The process of adapting the violin part for K. 301 and K. 305 to the double bass involved a number of considerations, which are discussed in general terms at the beginning of this chapter. The rest of the chapter is a discussion of each change from the original, addressed in the order that it appears in the music and referencing the untransposed written part.

Additionally, fingering and bowing suggestions from the double bass part are discussed where appropriate. Roman numerals, when used in fingerings, indicate which string the fingering relates to: I refers to the G string, II refers to the D string, III refers to the A string and IV refers to the E string. A circle by itself indicates an open string. When used in conjunction with a fingering, the circle indicates the sounding pitch of a natural harmonic. Left hand fingering indications are as follows: + refers to the thumb, 1 refers to the index finger, 2 refers to the middle finger, 3 refers to the ring finger, and 4 refers to the pinky.

Orchestra and Solo Tuning for the Double Bass

While there has always been a certain amount of diversity among double bassists with regard to tuning, and even to the number of strings used, a majority of contemporary bassists employ a system of tuning their open strings in fourths.\(^1\) The open strings themselves are most commonly tuned one of two ways. The first tuning, referred to as orchestra tuning, has the

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written E₂ as its lowest open string on a four string instrument with each pitch sounding an octave lower than written (fig. 16).²

![Fig. 16 - Written pitches for double bass open strings in orchestra tuning.](image)

The second commonly used tuning transforms the double bass into a transposing instrument. While the written part for a double bass in solo tuning remains the same, the sounding pitches are a minor seventh lower (fig. 17).³

![Fig. 17 - Sounding pitches for double bass open strings in solo tuning.](image)

Solo tuning came about through the use of very thin gut strings for soloists, enabling quick response and a clear brilliant tone that was not possible with the thick gut strings used for orchestral playing. The increased tension required to keep these thinner strings from rattling on the fingerboard resulted in the solo *scordatura*.⁴

⁴ Ibid.
With the advent of modern string technology, there is no appreciable difference in tension between orchestra tuned strings and the thinner solo tuned strings. For the contemporary double bassist, the choice between the two is now a matter of taste.⁵

The common use of two tunings presents a problem with regard to producing a performing edition of any accompanied work for the double bass. With the goal of making these transcriptions as relevant and accessible to the modern double bassist as possible, the standard practice of presenting the piano parts in two keys to accommodate either tuning option is followed. In the orchestra tuning version, the key of the piano part matches that of the double bass. In the solo tuning version, the key of the piano part is one whole step higher than that of the double bass, which then becomes a transposing instrument.

**General Considerations**

One reason that K. 301 and K. 305 were chosen for this project had to do with their suitability for adaptation to the double bass. The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* defines arrangement (transcription) as: “The adaptation of a composition for a medium different from that for which it was originally written, so made that the musical substance remains essentially unchanged.”⁶

Using the octave designation system employed by the Acoustical Society of America, where middle C is designated as C₄, the range of the violin in the two sonatas extends from G₃, its lowest open string, to E₆, which is one octave above its highest open string, encompassing a range of two octaves and a sixth (fig. 18).

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⁵ Ibid, 168-169.
Further, the vast majority of the violin part is written in or below the treble clef staff.

As the written double bass part in the transcription of both sonatas is in G Major, a similar tessitura, adjusted for the double bass, would begin with the written G2 and go up to the written E5 (fig. 19).

While this upper limit is generally observed, there are instances in which the double bass part does exceed it. In these cases, the passage is almost always playable with the use of natural harmonics, which allows for good intonation in this upper range of the instrument. Fingering suggestions are provided where appropriate.

There were a number of considerations that resulted in changes from the original violin sonatas. The first issue concerned the suitability of the lower register of the double bass for the presentation of melodic material. Technical demands were weighed against the need to place the double bass part in a register that would maintain the lightness in character that these pieces require. Also the problems of melodic material falling below the top line of the accompaniment as well as objectionable changes to chord inversion were taken into account.
Often inappropriately grouped with the viol family of instruments, the double bass is actually the largest commonly utilized member of the violin family.\textsuperscript{7} In spite of being from the same instrument family however, the differences between the two often overshadow their similarities. Thus, the second factor affecting how much change would be required to adapt these pieces to the double bass was the difference in size and the tuning of the open strings between the two instruments.

The vibrating length of a double bass string ranges from approximately 41 to 42.5 inches.\textsuperscript{8} The vibrating length of a violin string is just under 13 inches. From the lowest string to the highest, the violin is tuned in ascending perfect fifths, while the double bass is tuned in ascending perfect fourths. The two instruments occupy the two opposite extremes in terms of range for stringed instruments. In addition to the great difference in the standard playing ranges of the two instruments, there is a disparity in the amount of left hand shifting needed to play the instruments within their respective ranges. Considerably more shifting is required for the double bass than for the violin.

Finally, there were issues of bowing and agility that needed to be addressed. The modern violin bow is based on the model standardized by François Tourte around 1785, employing a concave bow and measuring approximately 29.5 inches in length.\textsuperscript{9} The Italian 'sonata' bow commonly used in the first part of the eighteenth century had a straight or convex stick with a length of 24-28 inches.\textsuperscript{10} The Cramer model violin bow bridged the gap between these two

\textsuperscript{7} Brun, \textit{A New History of the Double Bass}, 21.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 200.
styles and would be most appropriate for these sonatas. It had a concave stick and was slightly shorter in length than the Tourte model, but longer than the earlier bows.\textsuperscript{11}

In contrast to modern violin bows, which are now fairly standardized in length, double bass bows are quite variable with regard to weight, length, and shape. The German style bow is held with an underhand grip, and the French style bow is held with an overhand grip.\textsuperscript{12} Bow length has ranged from as little as 15.75 inches up to 28.75 inches.\textsuperscript{13} A bow length of 25.5 to 26.25 inches represents the compromise that is typically used by most contemporary bassists.\textsuperscript{14}

Because double bass strings are longer and heavier than violin strings, more energy is required to set them in motion. This fact, combined with the use of a shorter bow, requires that bassists must often employ more bow strokes than violinists to produce a similar amount of sound. Therefore, some bowings have been adjusted to allow for comparable and consistent dynamics in the double bass part.

In spite of all these differences, Mozart’s treatment of the violin in K. 301 and K. 305 is such that they can be adapted to the double bass without adversely affecting the musical substance of the works. In the case of each change, the goal was to allow for a satisfactory performance while remaining as faithful to the original as possible. The source used for creating these transcriptions was the Urtext edition containing both sonatas published by Edition Peters and edited by Cliff Eisen. To avoid unnecessary confusion from transpositions, all references and examples of changes from the original works were made with regard to the written double bass part, sounding an octave lower, and the orchestra tuning piano part.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 206-208.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 39.
K. 301- Movement 1 Changes

K. 301 was originally written in the key of G Major, and keeping the written double bass part in that key allows for the presentation of melodic material in an appropriate register, while mitigating many technical difficulties through the use of open strings and natural harmonics that would not be possible in other keys. Taking the written double bass part down one octave from the original in the first twelve measures maintains the proposed range of the double bass given earlier in this chapter. This change however, results in a third inversion seventh chord in the second half of m. 7. To remedy the problem, the first half note of the bass part in m. 7 was split into two quarters, the second of which was raised an octave to finish the phrase above the piano's lowest note. Additionally, the slur is broken into two bow strokes to maintain fullness of sound (fig. 20).

![Original and modified versions of mm. 7 - 8.](image)

That this octave leap fits in stylistically with the original is evident when compared to similar material found in the original version (fig. 21).
The Alberti style figuration played by the double bass from m. 13 through the first half of m. 22 works best when left in the original written octave, allowing for the use of the open G string and the octave harmonics on the D and G strings. The double stop in m. 20 can be achieved by using the open G string while stopping the G in thumb position on the D string (fig. 22).

The second half of m. 22 through the first eighth note of m. 24 is taken down one octave as is the similar material in mm. 26 - 28. While it is possible to play these two sections using harmonics in the original written octave, the forte dynamic is better achieved in the lower octave. That the piano part was originally written above that of the violin is another argument to justify this change. The double stop is best achieved by using the thumb on the D string octave harmonic while stopping the B with the third finger on the G string (fig. 23).
From m. 29 through m. 120 the written double bass part is taken down one octave. The slurs in mm. 59 - 61 and in mm. 64 - 65 were taken out to maintain the forte dynamic. In m. 121 the double bass again plays an Alberti bass pattern that works best in the original written octave. Beginning with beat 4 of m. 129, the double bass part comes down one octave and remains there for the rest of the movement. The one exception to this octave displacement is in mm. 135 - 136, which is the same as mm. 7 - 8. The slurs in mm. 169 - 171 and m. 174 were removed, again to help maintain the forte dynamic.

**K. 301 - Movement 2 Changes**

The second movement of K. 301 begins as written and no changes are necessary until the third beat of m. 8. From this point through m. 36, the written double bass part is taken down one octave. From m. 37 through m. 43 the original written octave is easily played if the thumb is used to play the octave harmonics on the A, D and G strings (fig. 24).
The double bass part again drops down an octave in m. 44, but returns immediately to the original written octave in m. 45. Violinists can play this seven measure section of double stops by using the open A string and fingerling the moving notes on the D string. Using the open A string on the double bass would require either that the moving notes be played in the lowest register of the instrument, or that the drone be placed below the moving notes. However, by playing the A harmonic on the D string with the thumb, the moving notes can be played in the original written octave on the G string which puts the entire section in a more suitable register and maintains the original relationship of the drone to the moving notes (fig. 25). To avoid a change in the chord inversion in mm. 41 - 45, the left hand of the piano part is taken down one octave.

![Fig. 25 - Fingering for mm. 45 - 51.](image)

The double bass part drops down an octave when it returns in m. 53. The double stops in mm. 67 - 69 present a similar problem to those described above. In this instance, the best solution was to use the thumb on the octave D harmonic and invert the relationship between the moving notes and the drone (fig. 26). The fact that the piano part lies above the violin part in the original mitigates the negative effect of this change. As in the previous example, the left hand of the piano part is taken down one octave in this section to avoid changes in chord inversions.
The double bass returns to the original written octave in mm. 70 - 74. In mm. 71 - 72 the lower octave of the double stops has been made optional. On the violin, these double stops would be played using the open G string against a stopped G on the D string. To achieve this on the double bass requires that the upper G be stopped in thumb position on the D string while the lower G is played with the open G string (fig. 27).

The written double bass part for the entire trio section, mm. 75 - 114, is taken down one octave. Otherwise there are no changes to this section. The return of the A section in m. 115 is a literal repeat until m. 188, so all the changes previously discussed will also apply here. From this point until m. 193, the original written octave is maintained. Here the double bass drops an octave until the double stops that end the movement. These are played in the original written octave using the thumb on the octave D harmonic (fig. 28).
K. 305 - Movement 1 Changes

K. 305 was originally scored for the violin in the key of A major. As with K. 301, scoring the written double bass part in the key of G major allows for the use of natural harmonics and open strings. Discussion of all changes will assume this transposition to maintain consistency with the examples that are provided. Therefore, if a change indicates dropping a part one octave, this would in actuality be a change of a major ninth from the original. Performers who wish to present the sonata in its original key can do so by using solo tuning in conjunction with the solo tuning piano part.

In the first 16 measures the piano either doubles the written double bass part or it plays parallel thirds above it, and no changes are called for. With the pickup to the second beat of m. 16 however, the double bass takes control of the melody, while the piano plays an accompanying role. Maintaining the original written octave at this point would place the bass above the proposed range given earlier, so the part is taken down one octave, with the option of taking it up to the octave indicated in the score. This option is provided because the section can be played, with the exception of the grace notes, using natural harmonics (fig. 29).
The double bass part returns to the written octave in m. 27, but is lowered again in m. 30, where it remains until the second half of m. 43. The sixteenth notes in mm. 44 – 49 work best in the original written octave, but represent a technical challenge for the double bassist due to the tempo and the required string crossings. Even on the violin this is considered difficult to execute, and Abraham Loft suggests setting the tempo for the entire movement based on the speed with which this passage can be cleanly played.\textsuperscript{15} Starting the passage with an up-bow will help mitigate the string crossing issue (fig. 30).

\textsuperscript{15} Abrams Loft, 	extit{Violin and Keyboard: The Duo Repertoire}, 246-247.
Use of the thumb below the first octave harmonic on the G string will allow mm. 56 – 57 to be played without string crossings or the need to shift into and out of thumb position (fig. 31).

![Fig. 31 – Fingering for mm. 56 – 58.](image)

Beginning in m. 60, the written double bass part is again taken down one octave, returning to the original octave with the second eighth note of m. 66. This octave is maintained until the chord at the end of the exposition. By removing the middle note of the triple stop, the chord can be played in the original written octave with natural harmonics on the G and D strings. The third of the chord, which was originally only in the violin part, has been placed in the right hand part of the piano (fig. 32).

![Fig. 32 – Double bass fingering and added note in piano, m. 73.](image)
The low F in the double stop that begins the development section is optional, as the piano already has this note in its first chord. It can be played by using the thumb on the A string (fig. 33).

![Fig. 33 – Fingering for optional double stop, m. 74.](image)

From this point up through m. 109, the double bass part remains in the original written octave. This leads to two instances where the proposed upper limit to the bass part is exceeded. In both instances, the benefits of keeping the part as written outweighed the technical demands of the exceptions to the limit. The first case occurs in m. 76, where the line goes above by only a half step. The high F is preceded by a repeated D, which can be prepared by using the natural harmonic as a point of reference (fig. 34).

![Fig. 34 - Fingering for mm. 75 - 76.](image)

The second case involves m. 84, where the high G can easily be played as a natural harmonic. The double stops in mm. 108 - 109 can be played with the thumb on the D string octave harmonic and the first and second fingers on the A string (fig. 35).

![Fig. 35 - Fingering for mm. 108 - 109.](image)
Fig. 35 - Double stop fingering, mm. 108 - 109.

From the pick-up to the second beat of m. 110 through the first quarter note of m. 112, the double bass part is again taken down one octave from the original. The double stops in mm. 112 - 113 can be played on the violin by using the open A string. Using the thumb on the octave harmonic on the G string affords the double bassist a similar approach to playing this passage in tune (fig. 36).

Fig. 36 - Fingering for mm. 112 - 113.

Maintaining the original written octave in m. 121 again causes the proposed range of the double bass part to be exceeded. In this case the passage can be played using natural harmonics (fig. 37.)

Fig. 37 - Fingering for mm. 121 - 123.
The sixteenth notes in the double bass part in mm. 144 - 149 offer the same technical challenge that appeared in mm. 44 - 49. Starting with an up-bow and using the thumb on the D string below the octave D will help facilitate playing this passage (fig. 38).

![Fig. 38 - Bowing and fingering for mm. 144 - 149.](image)

The final change in this movement has the written double bass part taken down one octave from m. 160 to the first beat of m. 165. The final chord triple stop can be played by barring the thumb across the octave harmonics on the D and G strings while stopping the B on the A string (fig. 39).

![Fig. 39 - Fingering for m. 173.](image)
K. 305 - Movement 2 Changes

To avoid creating second inversion chords in mm. 5 - 6, the double bass part is raised one octave from the original. This change continues through m. 8 in order to maintain the continuity of the line. The original written octave returns in the double bass part beginning in m. 9. The notes in mm. 11 - 12 that exceed the proposed range of the double bass are played using natural harmonics (fig. 40).

Fig. 40 - Fingering for mm. 11 - 12.

Beginning with pick-up to m. 15, the written double bass part is raised one octave from the original. In addition to avoiding changes in chord inversions, this adjustment prevents an unsatisfactory sound that would result due to the proximity of the left hand of the piano part and the double bass part.

The first variation is for the piano only, so no changes were necessary. In the second variation, the written double bass part in m. 40 and the first half of m. 41 is taken down one octave. The rest of this variation remains in the original written octave.

In the third variation at m. 61, the written double bass part is taken down one octave from the original. While all of the notes in the measure can be played as natural harmonics, there is a string crossing for each note. Because of the interplay between the voices here, lowering the
passage makes more musical sense, as this allows for the legato articulation while maintaining the timbre of the stopped notes occurring in the rest of the section.

The double bass part again drops one octave in mm. 63 - 68. As in m. 61, the high notes could be played as natural harmonics to maintain the higher octave, but with the forte dynamic and the interplay between the voices, the passage is more satisfactory when played in the lower octave. In addition to the change in octave, the slur in m. 64 has been broken up to help facilitate the forte dynamic (fig. 41).

![Fig. 41 - Original and modified bowing for mm. 63 - 65.](image)

The written double bass part for all of the fourth variation, mm. 73 - 91, is taken down one octave from the original. The fifth variation has the bass part back in the original octave until the pick-ups to m. 94. Here the double bass part is raised one octave, again to avoid changes in chord inversions and prevent an unsatisfactory sound that would result due to the proximity of the left hand of the piano part and the double bass part. While this change causes the double bass part to exceed the upper limit of the proposed range, it does so only by a minor third. The first note of this passage can also be played as a natural harmonic, which then acts as a pitch reference for the rest of the line (fig. 42).
Beginning in m. 100, the double bass part returns to the original written octave, where it remains for the rest of the variation. The written double bass part in the final variation is taken down one octave from the original for the entire variation. The only other change involves the triple stops at the end of the movement. These have been reduced to double stops and modified to preserve the originally intended chord inversions (fig. 43).

All of the changes described above were implemented with two primary objectives. The first was to produce works that would provide for a satisfactory result when performed. This objective is achieved through careful attention not only to the range of the double bass part, but also to the technical demands on the performer. The second objective was to remain as faithful
as possible to the original intentions of the composer. The way in which Mozart initially handled
the interaction between the violin and piano allows for adaptation of these two pieces for double
bass and piano without losing the overall tone intended in the originals.
CHAPTER 4

K. 301 AND K. 305 TRANSCRIBED FOR DOUBLE BASS AND PIANO

The following transcription was typeset with Finale 2011, using the Maestro music font. The size, spacing, and general layout of the music were designed to facilitate performance of the works rather than the economical use of paper. Fingerings and bowings in the double bass part are suggestions of the author, and should be treated as such. Individual performers who can achieve a better musical result by diverging from these markings are encouraged to do so.

Each sonata is presented with the double bass part first. This is followed by the piano part in orchestra tuning and then the piano part in solo tuning.
Sonata for Double Bass and Piano
K. 301
W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Trans. and ed. by Tom Hildreth

Allegro con spirito

Double Bass - Orchestra Tuning:

Trans. and ed. by Tom Hildreth
\textbf{p} [\textit{ia:}]

\textbf{p}  

\textbf{cresc.}  

\textbf{f}  

\textbf{f}
Sonata for Double Bass and Piano

K. 305

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Trans. and ed. by Tom Hildreth

Allegro di molto
THEMA
Andante grazioso
dolce

f
pia:
cresc.
Sonata for Double Bass and Piano

Allegro di molto

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Trans. and ed. by Tom Hildreth

K. 305

Double Bass - Solo Tuning:
VAR. II

[Music notation with annotations]

195
A tempo

VAR. V
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS


**CD ROM**


**DISSERTATIONS AND THESES**


**ESSAYS AND ARTICLES**


WORKS


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