

# Writing for Bass

An introduction to composition  
and arranging for bass.

Presented by Jonathan Dimond

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# The role of the bass

(i.e. why bass is the most awesome instrument)

 Harmony

 Rhythm

 Melody

## MAGHREB SHUFFLE

©J.Diamond March 2004

**BLUES** ♩ = 125

Electric guitar

Bass guitar

Drums

*afro "maghreb" pattern* *sim...*

3

6

9

11

FIRST AND LAST TIMES ONLY

A-7

G7

F7

E7#9

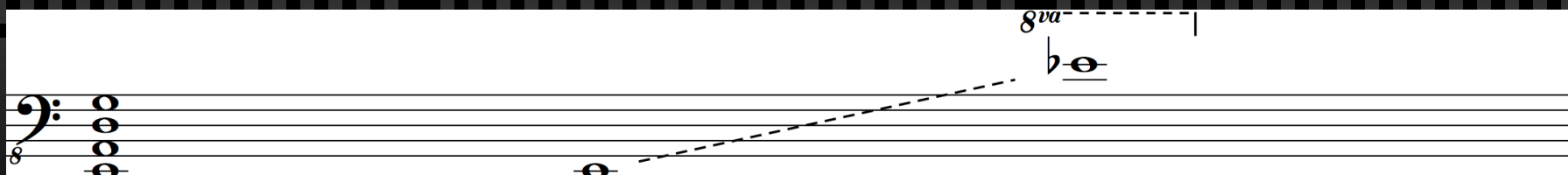
E7

F7

E7

# Initial Considerations: Range & Tuning

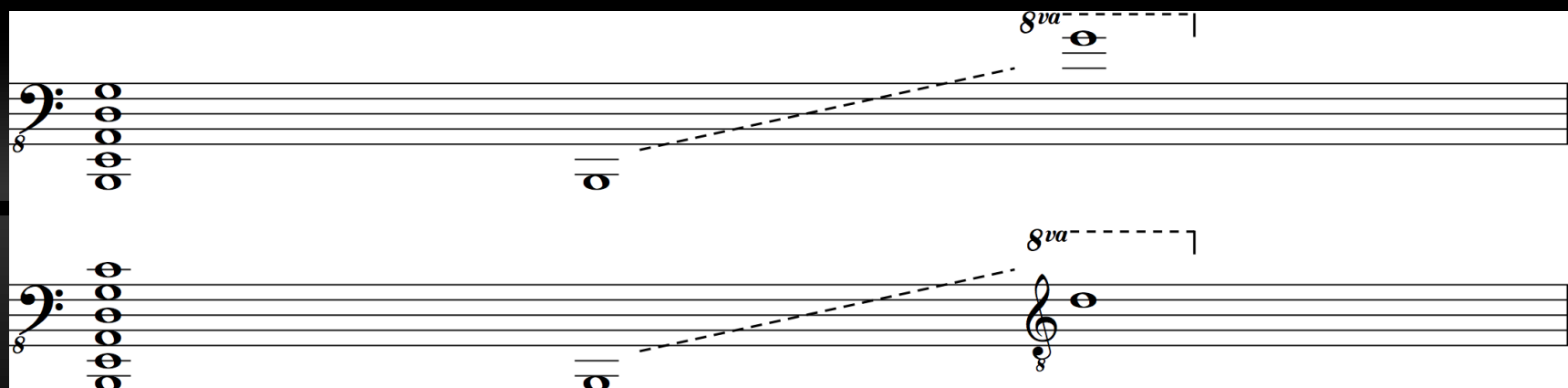
- 🎸 Note: All written pitches sound 8vb !
- 🎸 Standard 4-string electric (e.g. Fender Jazz / Precision)



- 🎸 20 frets  
(minimum standard range of fretboard)

# Initial Considerations: Range & Tuning (cont' d)

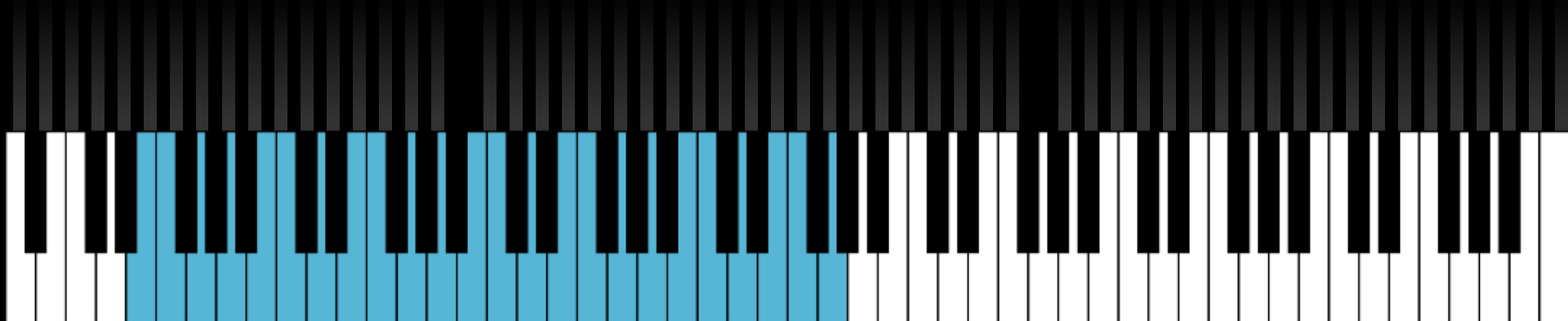
Extended range 4-string, 5-string, 6-string



22 - 26 frets

Double Bass range E1 – G4 (written), tuned per standard 4-string electric

# Initial Considerations: Sounding Range on a piano



# Initial Considerations: Finger Technique

♩ 1 finger per fret (L.H.) gives an accessible compass of a minor 3<sup>rd</sup> (3 semitones) per string

(Double bass technique only uses fingers 1, 2 & 4 to thumb position)

♩ Plucking (R.H.) uses (mostly) alternating fingers 1 & 2

♩ Changing positions (L.H. shifts) takes time and requires adept technique

# Chord Symbols in bass lines

- ♭ Bassists are trained to realize chord symbols in given rhythmic feels/styles
- ♭ Jazz “walking” bass lines – swing
- ♭ Various Latin bass lines – *tumbao*, *bossa-nova*, *samba*, *lando*, etc
- ♭ Pop, Rock & Fusion bass lines
- ♭ Realize rhythmic figures based on style or given ostinati

# Chord Symbols in bass lines:

## Examples



🎵 Track 9 Songo (Mauleon)

🎵 Amor (Dimond)

🎵 Kopanitza (Milev)


🎵 Whispering Ivor (Ball)

🎵 Ya'ale (Starr)



# Notation in bass lines:

## Examples



- ♭ Greg by Fluoro (Dimond)
- ♭ Yes and No (Shorter arr. Stagnaro)
- ♭ Don't Get Around (Ellington arr. Dimond)

# Notation in bass lines:

## Symbols and their usage

- ♩ Slashes / / / / indicate interpretive activity under a chord symbol
- ♩ Repeat bar % means repeat the last bar
- ♩ Sim. (*simile*) means “play in the same manner as what I have written, using the provided chord symbols”
- ♩ Diamond notation is for rhythmic hits
- ♩ Don't overuse any short-hand symbol!

# Errors in bass parts: Examples



- ❏ The following student arrangements have errors in their part writing. What are they?

# Arrangement / Orchestration



- 🎵 Consider introductions, bridge passages, codas and how the bass may play a different role from the normal accompanying role
- 🎵 Avoid the “repeat the bass line 4 times then add the melody” cliché
- 🎵 Work towards balancing prescriptive notation with interpretive chord symbols

# Tasks to improve your bass line writing

- 🎵 Go out and see bass players performing live
- 🎵 Listen to recordings with a bass focus
- 🎵 Transcribe bass lines of different styles
- 🎵 Read transcriptions of good bass player's bass line and solos, and study them with recordings
- 🎵 Practice writing and having a bassist read it
- 🎵 Buy or borrow a bass and learn to play a little

Name	Artist	Composer	Album	Genre
You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To (Rudy Van Gelder Edition) (2007 Digital Remaster)	Paul Chambers	Cole Porter	Bass On Top (2007 Rudy Van Gelder Edition)	Jazz
Better Get It In Your Soul	Charles Mingus	Charles Mingus	Mingus Ah Um	Jazz
Hoe-Down	Oliver Nelson	Oliver Nelson	The Blues And The Abstract Truth	Jazz
Day Tripper	The Beatles	Paul McCartney/John Lennon	1962-1966 [Disc 2]	Rock
Funkallero	Bill Evans	Bill Evans	The Bill Evans Album	Jazz
What Is Hip?	Tower Of Power	Tower Of Power	What Is Hip? Anthology [Disc 1]	R&B
Actual Proof	Herbie Hancock		Thrust	Jazz
Zores Mores	Albert Mangelsdorff, Alphonse Mouzon & Jaco Pastorius	Various Artists	Trilogue - Live!	Jazz
Come On, Come Over	Jaco Pastorius		Jaco Pastorius	Jazz
Continuum	Jaco Pastorius	Jaco Pastorius	Jaco Pastorius	Jazz
Portrait Of Tracy	Jaco Pastorius	Jaco Pastorius	Jaco Pastorius	Jazz
Talk To Me	Joni Mitchell	Joni Mitchell	Don Juan's Reckless Daughter	Pop
Havona	Weather Report	Jaco Pastorius	Heavy Weather	Jazz
Jumpin' In	Dave Holland Quintet	Dave Holland	Jumpin' In	Jazz
Mojo Highway	Marc Johnson, Bill Frisell, John Scofield & Peter Erskine	Marc Johnson	Bass Desires	Jazz
Got A Match?	Chick Corea Elektric Band		The Chick Corea Elektric Band	Jazz
Babooshka	Kate Bush	Kate Bush	The Whole Story	Rock
One Step Ahead	Split Enz	Neil Finn	History Never Repeats - The Best of Split Enz	Rock
Caravan	Wynton Marsalis	Duke Ellington, Juan Tizol, Irving Mills	Standard Time Vol. 1	Jazz
54 Duncan Terrace	Allan Holdsworth	Allan Holdsworth	Secrets	Jazz
Blue In Green	John McLaughlin	Miles Davis	Live At The Royal Festival Hall	Jazz
Rehumanize Yourself	The Police	Sting & Copeland, Stewart	Message In A Box: The Complete Recordings (Disc 3)	Rock
pad thai	Steve Coleman And Five Elements		Def Trance Beat	Jazz
I'm Coming Home	Christian McBride	Linda Creed/Thom Bell	A Family Affair	Jazz
L'Arkha Li Jeya	Nguyễn Lê	B'net J. & Karim Ziad & Nguyễn Lê	Maghreb & Friends	World
Last Chance To Dance Trance (Perhaps)	Medeski, Martin & Wood	Medeski, Martin & Wood	Last Chance To Dance Trance (Perhaps) Best Of (1991-1996)	Jazz
Up There	Ray Brown		Live at Starbucks	Jazz
Fingerprints	Chick Corea	Chick Corea	Past, Present & Futures	Jazz
The Baseball Card Song	Ben Wendel	Ben Wendel	Wendel	Jazz
Yes and No	Oscar Stagnaro		Mariella's Dream	Jazz
Blues Jog	Jonathan Dimond	Jonathan Dimond	Journeys: People, Places	Jazz
Luta Rakia	Jonathan Dimond & Milen Kirov		BG Moonshine Co	World
As We Speak	Mark Egan		As We Speak	Jazz
Parhelia	Anthony Jackson & Yiorgos Fakanas		Interspirit	Jazz
Concerto Movement #1 - Westward Expansion	John Patitucci		Heart Of The Bass	Jazz
Remembrance	John Patitucci	John Patitucci	Remembrance	Jazz
Heart of Steel (feat. Irma Thomas)	Galactic	Ben Ellman, Brandon Arnovick, James Greer, Jeff Raines, Robert Mercurio & Stanton Moore	Ya-Ka-May (Deluxe Edition)	Rock
Kreutzer Studies for Solo Violin no.29	Jonathan Dimond		Classical Studies for Electric Bass Guitar Vol.1	Classical

# Extended techniques / other sounds



- 🎸 Arco and Pizzicato (double bass)
- 🎸 Harmonics (natural and artificial)
- 🎸 Double stops and chords
- 🎸 Slap
- 🎸 Glissandi
- 🎸 Dead notes
- 🎸 Fretless electric bass
- 🎸 Effects processing (octave, distortion, wah)

# Solo Transcriptions



- ♭ *54 Duncan Terrace* - bass solo by Jimmy Johnson (Alan Holdsworth “Secrets”)
- ♭ *Saturday Night* – bass solo by Paul Chambers (Hal McKusick “Triple Exposure”)



# Excerpt from “Farewell” (Performed by Loops)

55

THREE TIMES

Voice

El. gtr

Bass

THREE TIMES

Dr.

This musical score excerpt, measures 55-60, is for the song "Farewell" by Loops. It features four staves: Voice, Electric Guitar (El. gtr), Bass, and Drums (Dr.). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. Measures 55 and 56 are marked with a repeat sign and the instruction "THREE TIMES". The Voice part in measure 55 has a whole rest, while in measure 56 it plays a descending eighth-note triplet (G4, F#4, E4) followed by a quarter note (D4). The Electric Guitar and Bass parts play eighth-note triplets throughout the measures. The Drum part features a consistent eighth-note triplet pattern on the snare and bass drum, with occasional hi-hat patterns indicated by 'x' marks.

# Bibliography



🎵 Jonathan Dimond. *Bass Riyaz 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, 2007

🎵 <http://andrewhugill.com/OrchestraManual/basses.html>

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