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A Stylistic Comparison into The Carmen Fantasy for Double Bass: Proto, Sankey, and DaXun

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ABSTRACT

This study compares the compositional styles of three different Carmen Fantasies by Stuart Sankey, Frank Proto, and DaXun Zhang. The majority of the “fantasy” genre for double bass was composed by Bottesini in the nineteenth century. In the mid-twentieth century, the reappearance of the “fantasy” genre, driven by Sankey, Proto, and Zhang, inspired many double bass players with its mixture of modern and Romantic elements. Many feel that these pieces capture the spirit of the double bass better than others before them.

The analysis compares how the famous themes and melodies from the original opera were adapted in each of these pieces, revealing aspects of each composer’s compositional style through the details of his treatment of Bizet’s themes. The ultimate purpose of this study is to provide performers with the context and inspiration to comprehend and interpret these three virtuosic fantasies.
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CHAPTER 1

The Development of a Modern Carmen Fantasy for Double Bass from the Romantic Fantasy Genre

The term ‘paraphrase’ is used widely in musical composition. Composers initially used the phrase for interpretive or symbolic purpose to indicate pre-existing melodies in especially well-known chants from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. In the nineteenth century, many composers used melodies from popular operas. The opera paraphrase gained popularity as a great virtuosic solo piece, and many composers of salon music produced paraphrases in large numbers (usually taken from popular operas). In this period, salon music was among popular music. The popular salon music of the time was defined by short and lightweight characters, performed for amateur and middle classes at home instead of at the concert hall, church, opera house, or theatre. Usually, operatic paraphrases and fantasias existed as subgenres of salon music.

The fantasia, formless and improvisatory, was dominated by rhetorical expression based on a late-eighteenth-century standard model from the Sturm und Drang movement. In the nineteenth century, the term “fantasia” came to be used as a large-scale virtuoso form.¹ Most virtuoso pianists and many successful opera composers wrote operatic fantasias on popular Italian opera melodies,² such as Franz Liszt, Frédéric Chopin, Sigismund Thalberg, and Henri Herz; typical concert programs between 1830 and 1860 included fantasias written by such prominent contemporary composers.³ In particular, Franz Liszt toured with his fantasias from

1839 to 1847,\(^4\) which is similar to Italian bassist Bottesini’s touring with fantasias based on Italian operas.\(^5\)

In this era of widespread dissemination of opera paraphrases, transcribed music for the other solo instruments gained great popularity. Giovanni Bottesini, known as a double bass player, composer, and conductor, wrote several operatic fantasias in the *bel canto* style of Italian opera which drew heavily on operatic paraphrase.\(^6\) The *bel canto* style of the Italian opera (and solo instrumental pieces quoting it) requires highly virtuosic technique. During this period musical theatre was experiencing the sudden rise in popularity of the spoken stage, which pursued a practical reinterpretation of feeling and passion for accessible for popular consumption.\(^7\) Bottesini usually played his transcriptions of arias on the double bass between acts on opera stages, largely building his repertory of paraphrases from the operas of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti, and Giuseppe Verdi.\(^8\) Bottesini achieved widespread acclaim as a great double bass player and composer, with which he tried to increase the popularity of the double bass. His compositions include a number of duets for double bass and other string instruments or voice, a series of operatic fantasies (mostly based on Donizetti and Bellini), as well as operatic themes and variations, melodies, elegies, concertos, and concerto movements. Given the extent to which he drew upon *bel canto* repertoire, an understanding of that style is of equal importance to technical brilliance in performing his music.

\(^4\) Ibid., 182.
\(^5\) Liszt and Bottesini composed fantasias based on the same opera: *La sonnambula, Norma*, and *I puritani* by Bellini and *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti. See also Jaime Ramirez-Castilla, “Musical borrowings in the music for double bass by giovanni bottesini” (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2007)
Bottesini’s reputation as a remarkable bassist and composer earned him the moniker “the Paganini of the double bass” after his performance at the court of the Duchess Maria Luigia of Parma in 1843.\(^9\) The prestigious double bass player Roy Watson comments:

This was attained by tuning his bass in fourths and using the sequential harmonic range, which he proceeded to integrate in melodic sequence with the middle and bass register. This was very much what Paganini did for the violin and is what contains the essence of their unique instrumental contribution.\(^10\)

Romantic pianists, such as Liszt, Schumann, and Brahms, attempted to transfer Paganini’s virtuosity into their own piano works. For example, the piano etude No. 3 “La campanella” by Liszt is based on the 3rd movement Rondo of Paganini’s violin concerto No. 2 in B minor, Op. 7. Like these pianists, Bottesini was influenced not only by Paganini’s technical virtuosity, but also his compositional methods, such as variation sets and operatic paraphrasing.

It seems likely that the majority of the “fantasy” genre for double bass from the nineteenth century was composed by Bottesini. Following his reign the genre was rarely continued, since opera paraphrases were merely a fashion of the time.

Romantic period fantasies are typically integrate three or four movements into a single-movement form including a contrasting figure and tempo. Most fantasies, as with multi-movement works, feature slow introductions of improvised cadenza and maintain a clear formal scheme. The next three modern fantasies for double bass more or less retained these characteristics of the nineteenth century fantasy.\(^11\)

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Three notable *Carmen fantasies* for double bass have been written since the beginning of the twentieth century. No notable *Carmen fantasies* for the double bass were composed until its reinvention by Frank Proto and Stuart Sankey in the twentieth century. The appearance of these two fantasies around the same time was welcome news to double bass players, who keenly felt the lack of double bass repertoire. After all, when we think of the title “*Carmen fantasy,*” the first thing usually conjured up is the virtuosic violin works of Sarasate or Waxman. The emergence of the first two *Carmen fantasy* works for double bass set into motion the instrument’s rise as a solo instrument worthy of prestige. Then, in the twenty-first century, one more *Carmen fantasy* was written by DaXun Zhang. This new fantasy was notable in employing an especially high register for the instrument. These three fantasies introduce a new, modern musical style to double bass players, while simultaneously harkening back to the Romantic fantasy genre.

To compare the compositional style of the three fantasies I first examine their thematic structures, considering how each composer arranged the melodies from the *Carmen* opera. I compare how the same themes are in each fantasy recast with changing key schemes, melodic developments, and rhythmic profiles.

**Scordatura in the Three Fantasies**

All string instruments, including the violin, lute, guitar, and viol families, have their own scordatura systems. Applying scordatura offers new varieties of tone color, timbre, sonority, harmonic possibility, and range extension. Further, it facilitates string crossings, shifting wide intervals, and double stops which would be difficult or even impossible in standard tuning.¹²

Scordatura as a technical device has developed with the varied history of string instruments, and means “the returning of the instruments to some standard other than the one commonly used.”\textsuperscript{13} Theodore Russell writes regarding the violin (although his comments apply equally well to other bowed strings):

For the violin, the scordatura was employed to produce three different results, often achieved simultaneously; (1) to make certain types of passages easier to play, such as those involving large intervals, rapid passages in double-stops of various intervals, and even whole compositions written in difficult keys; (2) to vary the tone color of the instruments by changing considerably the tension of one or more strings; (3) to extend the range of the instrument by lowering the G string, thus oftentimes providing a fair bass for chords.\textsuperscript{14}

In the seventeenth century, use of scordatura was remarkably trendy within German violin circles. The great German violinist Heinrich Franz Biber (1644-1704) applied scordatura in profound ways. The tunings he devised for his sonatas has hardly ever been equaled (Example 1.1).\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Example 1.1} Heinrich Franz Biber’s ingenious scordaturas

German violinist Thomas Baltazar, born in Lübeck in Northern Germany at about 1630, was the first great violin performer heard in England. He was the first leader of the King’s


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 87.
celebrated band of twenty-four violins, an ensemble that Charles II founded in imitation of the French court.\textsuperscript{16}

The scordatura had been in fashion in eighteenth century France and Italy as well—there exists both a standard tuning and scordatura version of Mozart’s Adelaide concerto. The latter scores the orchestra in E-flat major and the solo violin in D major, simply tuning all four strings one half step higher than standard tuning. The soloist can perform it with much less demanding fingerings than are necessary when tuned in D, since they can rely on the open strings to a much greater extent.\textsuperscript{17}

Similar to the Adelaide concerto, Mozart’s sinfonia concertante for violin, viola and orchestra in E-flat major, K. 364 also employs scordatura. The score for the viola requests the strings to be tuned one half step higher than normal; the violinist and orchestra play their own scores in E-flat major. Mozart made an attempt to lead the viola to a brighter tone, challenging the violin; however, after the nineteenth century, this piece was published in E-flat major while the instrument’s pedagogical system adopted the use of stronger and louder steel strings instead of gut strings. For these reasons, the violin family’s frequent use of scordatura gradually decreased during the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{18}

In the nineteenth century, use of scordatura was almost extinct; however, Niccolò Paganini used scordatura with masterful skill. In Carl Guhr’s book, \textit{Paganini’s art of playing the violin: with a treatise on single and double harmonic notes}, he describes Paganini’s tuning:

My critique on Paganini’s performance... “With regard to the tuning of his instrument, it is quite peculiar... Sometimes he tunes the three upper strings a semitone higher while the


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.,

G is a minor third higher than usual: [this was an error, as the lower string was also only tuned to Ab]. Sometimes, by a single turn of the screw, he retunes them with certainty and firmness, and the intonation is hit, surely, correctly, and at once. Those who are aware how much strings give when only the G string is tuned somewhat higher and how, in general, they lose their correct tension of tone in a rapidly-altered tuning... In the concerto of the evening, the G string broke, between the Andante and the Polacca, and the new string, although afterwards tuned to Bb [an error!] stood as firm as a wall.”... His first concerto, which he played to us (one of the most excellent, grand compositions ever written for the violin), was written in Eb major. For this he tuned thus: ab-eb-bb’-f’ which he retained throughout the three movements, and which produced a surprising and enchanting effect. We were thrown into astonishment (for he never tuned the violin within hearing) when we heard the covered tones of the Eb scale vibrate clearly and full, even in the highest position.  

![Example 1.2 Niccolo Paganini’s tuning](image)

Paganini’s famous violin concerto in D major was originally performed in Eb major by the orchestra, again with the solo violin raising all four strings a half-step higher. As well, his variation on the air *Di Tanti Palpiti* was originally in Bb major. Similar to the above, the solo violin played the A major score tuned up a half step higher.  

In the case of the viola, there is the scordatura part for the principal viola solo in Richard Strauss’ *Don Quixote*, in which the C string is tuned down to B to express the comic character. In the twenty century, it may be fairly said that scordatura disappeared. Notwithstanding its relative extinction, the scordatura was employed for special effects. Previously, scordatura

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19 This extract is taken from Guhr’s original preface of Carl Guhr. *Paganini’s art of playing the violin: with a treatise on single and double harmonic notes*. London: Novello, 1915.

was used to simplify double stops, produce new tone colors, and extend the range of the instrument. Stravinsky added to this list a new function, open harmonics, in his the *Firebird* suite.

In the case of the cello, two prominent tunings in the 1650s for the violone, the forerunner of the violoncello, were prevalent: Bb-F-c-g and C-G-d-a. The former was called church tuning, and the latter called normal tuning, having three open strings in common: g, d, and a. This tuning system results from the fifth relationship used by the violin family. The bass violin used Bb-F-c-g, tenor violin used F-c-g-d, alto violin (viola) used c-g-d-a, and treble violin used g-d-a-e. The common tones g-d-a are shared by the upper two members of the family. The so called normal tuning was more appropriate for ensemble playing with the other members of the violin family, rather than the church tuning. In the 1660s a new tuning system emerged from cello luthiers in Bologna, who employed a C-G-d-g tuning which lowers the “a” string to “g” from the normal tuning. This new tuning practice prevailed in Modena, Rome, Venice, et cetera. Brent Wissick called it Bolognese tuning, and Mark Chamber called it Italian tuning. As an emerging new scordatura against modern tuning, the C-G-d-g tuning, called Italian tuning, was more prevalent than other tunings in Italy. The Seven Ricercari for solo violoncello in 1687 by Domenico Gabrielli and Suite No. 5 for unaccompanied violoncello in C minor, BWV 1011 in 1720 by Johann Sebastian Bach were originally composed with the Italian tuning, so not employing scordatura. Stravinsky’s ballet music, *The Rite of Spring*, also requests the principal

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cello to employ a scordatura tuning C down to B, similar to the viola principal in Strauss’s *Don Quixote*.  

For playing J. S. Bach’s Suite No. 5 for unaccompanied violoncello in C minor, the modern cello and viola tune the A string down to G, as the Italian tuning can produce a deep tone and rich chords. The meaning of lowering the top string down one step is that the tension of the top string is weaker than before, and the player can play with less physical force from the fingers.

Similar to cello tuning system in the seventeenth century, the double bass also adopted fifth tuning C-G-d-a, although fourths tuning system came from two different instruments in the contra bass range. One was *Contra bass da gamba* in the gamba family, and the other was *Violone gross* in the viol family. So, the E-A-d-g fourths tuning existed simultaneously.

The three-string bass was prevalent in Europe until the second half of the eighteenth century, due to heavy and thick second-rate string’s bad quality. Bass players who already accustomed to the three string bass had the trouble of struggling to play on the middle strings of the bass with four strings without touching a neighboring string.

There were other instruments coexistent with the three or four string basses, such as the eighteenth century violone, called the five-string contrabass. The violone was tuned F-A-d-f#-a. Actually, the F-A-d-f#-a tuning is a scordatura of the tuning E-A-d-g-c’ in connection with a ‘Gross bass viol de gamba’ of the early seventeenth century. From the middle of the eighteenth century, the violone continued to gain prominence. The F-A-d-f#-a scordatura was no longer viewed as a scordatura anymore, but rather as a regular tuning. This so-called Viennese tuning

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*literature for unaccompanied violoncello in the 20th century: Historical background, analysis of works, and practical considerations for composers and performers.”* (2005) Doctoral, Rice University.

25 Chiang, I-Chun. “A Historical Technique from a Modern Perspective: The Transcription Scordatura in Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra in E-Flat Major, K. 364.”

was used in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially in Vienna, and is useful for playing in D major, A major, F# minor, and related keys like b minor. Famous Classical virtuosi, such as Johann Matthias Sperger, J. B. Vandal, or Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, composed many solo pieces for double bass solo with the Viennese tuning.\textsuperscript{27}

In the early nineteenth century Domenico Dragonetti, the first celebrated bassist, established a double bass school with a tuning system in fourths in London. Finally, the four-string bass in fourths was established as a modern bass instrument alongside the newly improved low woodwinds and brass. The modern orchestral ensemble no longer needed the powerful three-stringer, rather preferring the smoother tone of a Handel bass. Playing with three-strings bass in orchestra is awkward. When double bassists play low passages on these instruments, anything lower than their available register must be played an octave higher, producing a ridiculous effect, and furthermore ignoring the composer’s intent. Since the four-string bass projects less powerfully, its use enables a smoother and warmer bass line when used in combination with the other low instruments, such as bass trombone tuba, bassoon, and cello. Other winds’ sound can cover the modern bass enough although the four-stringer is weak technically.\textsuperscript{28}

The four-string double bass in fourths of the E-A-d-g tuning was ultimately inadequate in its role in the modern orchestra. Especially when playing unison with cello, and playing notes under low E, the double bass must be played an octave higher. According to Theron McClure:

There are a number of instances where Brahms does not take the 16’ bass line below E in octaves beneath the cellos in these manuscripts. These occur in two types of situation: -During quiet moments and during diminuendos, when the addition of bottom weight would interfere with the effect of diminuendo.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{28} Paul Brun, A New History of the Double Bass (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Yorke, 2000), 113-144.
\end{flushright}
-During woodwind passages, where the deep contra tones would not balance well with the woodwinds.\(^{29}\)

For these limitations of the E string, two alternative possibilities hail from the late nineteenth century. One is the adoption of a five-string bass of B-E-A-d-g based on the five-string bass invented by Carl Otho of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1880. The other is the C-extension device invented by Bruno Keyl, principal double bass at the Dresden Opera. The C-extension, by extending the fingerboard, can be applied to common basses, so most orchestral bass players have the double bass installed with the C-extension.\(^{30}\)

Since the twentieth century, for double bass solo pieces, most players have used the solo scordatura of F#-B-e-a pitched whole step higher than standard tuning, although in nonconformity with the current trend, the Canadian double bass virtuoso Joel Quarrington tuned his instrument in fifths like cello tuning instead. The twentieth-century double bass virtuoso Gary Karr says regarding the brighter tone of the solo tuning:

It competed better with the brilliance of the piano sound and had a more focused voice with orchestra.\(^{31}\)

The sound of the solo tuning is desirable for solo pieces for double bass, and stands out through any accompaniment by piano or orchestra.

Most solo pieces can be performed with this solo scordatura in the twentieth century, but some contemporary composers request other unique scordatura. For example, the Hungarian composer Vilmos Montag requests the unusual scordatura E-B-e-a in his Sonata instead of common solo tuning for double bass and piano in e minor.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 147.  
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 156-165.  
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 169.
Example 1.3 Vilmos Montag’s solo tuning for his Sonata for double bass in E minor

To lend more brightness to the tone and achieve clearer articulation, most solo pieces for double bass require the use of scordatura. Each of the three Carmen fantasies, as with many virtuosic pieces, requires different scordatura tunings. I will examine the purpose and impact of each fantasy’s scordatura.
CHAPTER 2

Proto’s Carmen Fantasy

Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1941 Frank Proto initially studied the piano, but switched to the double bass at the age of seventeen. As a composer, he was completely self-taught. He was an arranger for dance bands in high school, and continued to arrange and compose pop music during college. Proto entered the Manhattan School of Music, graduating in 1966 with both an MM in double bass and a Master of Music Education. His interests covered a wide spectrum, and his 1963 graduation recital contained an avant-garde composition using electric tape. Unable to find enough contemporary American music featuring his instrument, he finally decided to compose his first sonata for double bass in 1963.32

Porto worked for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra from 1966 to 1997 as a composer, double bassist, and music advisor. He dealt with the opera Carmen several times. The first setting was for an eight piece jazz ensemble in 1976. Later he arranged to include full orchestra. The next was a suite for trumpet player Doc Severinsen and jazz group with orchestra in 1985. Later, Severinsen asked Proto again to record a new Carmen fantasy, which Proto made with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra in 1990.33

In 1978 Proto met contemporary French double bass player Francois Rabbath. A friendship grew between them while they shared their musical experiences. The Cincinnati Symphony asked Proto to make a double bass concerto for Rabbath in 1980. Concerto No. 2 for double bass and orchestra was premiered by Rabbath with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 1981. The Houston symphony also asked Proto to compose a Fantasy for double bass and orchestra especially for Rabbath, which was premiered in Houston in 1983. Porto thought that

32 Jorma Katrama, Liner Notes, Contrabasso Concertante, Jorma Katrama (double bass), Kuopio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Atso Almila. Finland: Finlandia Records 3984-21450-2. CD.
33 Ibid.
Rabbath would play the music of Bizet, and Proto wrote *Carmen fantasy* exclusively in solo scordatura. Rabbath again premiered the *Carmen fantasy* for double bass and piano at the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati in July of 1991, and Rabbath asked of Proto that the fantasy might be arranged for orchestra. Rabbath performed the new orchestral version with the Toulouse Chamber Orchestra in 1992\textsuperscript{34}, and subsequently recorded this orchestral version with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra in 1993.

Proto’s *Carmen Fantasy* is composed of: Prelude, Aragonite, Nocturne-Micaela’s Aria, Toreador Song, and Bohemian Dance. Liben music’s program note says:

> The material was selected more or less at random. The Aragonaise, Toreador Song and Bohemian Dance are included in the standard suites frequently heard at symphony concerts, but Micaela’s Aria from Act III is a lovely melody that is rarely heard outside of the opera. The Prelude is original and serves as a sort of overture to the suite.\textsuperscript{35}

Proto already knew Rabbath’s musical style and performance technique from premiers of Concerto No. 2 and Fantasy for double bass and orchestra. The first section of his *Carmen Fantasy*, Prelude of melancholic moods, begins with a long unaccompanied cadenza. The fast sixteenth note sextuplet patterns are related to the flowing eighth notes of the next movement, Aragonaise (Example 2.1).


Example 2.1 Similar patterns from Prelude and Aragonaise by Proto

The juxtaposition of two different lines has reciprocal effects on each. The double stops of varied intervals, from the dissonant major second to the perfect fourth, evoke Spanish guitar effects (Example 2.2).  

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Example 2.2 in Prelude of Proto’s Carmen Fantasy

The artificial harmonics of the last part, including a modified double stop to create a pedal tone effect, are rarely seen in the nineteenth century. The reason for their use by Proto in the Carmen Fantasy was that Proto already knew of Rabbath’s personal style\textsuperscript{37} (Example 2.3).

Example 2.3 Double stop and artificial harmonics in Prelude by Proto

\textsuperscript{37} Rabbath was a self-taught double bassist. He has strongly influenced many double bass player and composer with his using double stop, artificial harmonics, and other technique. See Marcos Pereira Machado, “Francois Rabbath Applied: An Analysis of His Technique for a Successful Performance of Frank Proto’s Music” (D.M.A. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2005), 61-63 and 77-81.
The Aragonaise comes from the last Entr’acte between Act III and Act IV.

Example 2.4 Entr’acte between Act III and Act IV in opera *Carmen*

The Aragonaise is the longest of the five movements. In the middle part of this section, the cadenza from the Prelude returns. Proto inserted the cadenza again to give the melody line requisite components of the contemporary style. The material of the cadenza is indicated before the next section Nocturne-Micaela’s Aria. This small motive of the cadenza is reminiscent of the Promenade from *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky (Example 2.5).
Proto gave the player an opportunity to improvise in the “ad libitum” section. Proto’s musical spectrum was wide enough to contain every genre, from Baroque to Romantic, electronic tape music, and American contemporary styles such as jazz. Although improvisation is an important element in most jazz music, the improvisation section is optional in Proto’s Aragonaise movement (Example 2.6).

Example 2.6 The section “ad libitum” in Aragonaise by Proto’s Carmen

The Nocturne-Micaela’s Aria movement is derived from the opera’s No. 22 Air to Act III. There are three marks of “ad libitum” in the score, but since the marks each span only a single bar, the “ad lib” instruction need not be taken so far as to obstruct the accompaniment. A remarkable aspect of the passage is that in the last two measures of the section the ascending four-note motive is derived from No. 10 Seguidilla of Act I. Proto brought the small motive into this section, although he did not create a complete Seguidilla movement. The first four notes Bb,
Eb, F, G in Proto’s Nocturne-Micaela’a Aria form pitch class set (0247), as do the four notes C#, F#, G#, A# of the Seguidilla from the Carmen opera\(^{38}\) (Example 2.7).

Example 2.7 The first four notes’ pitch class set is (0247)

The last two bars of Nocturne-Micaela’s Aria use artificial harmonics, as does the last part of the Prelude. These harmonics function somewhat as a bridge to connect to the next section.\(^{39}\)

The fourth movement, Toreador Song, is adapted from entering Escamillo scene of No. 14 Couplets in Act II. In the Toreador Song, Proto changes rhythms such as syncopation to reflect his jazz influences (Example 2.8a & 2.8b).

Example 2.8a The opera Carmen’s No. 14

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This artificial harmonics sound a 12th higher than the stopped bottom note. The source comes from International Society of Bassists Year: 1992 Title: International Society of Bassists - Vol 18 #2 - Fall. Reviews by Dr. David Neubert
Example 2.8b Proto’s Toreador Song in mm.57-66

In letter C an accustomed figuration appears. These eighteen seriate notes are reminiscent of the Prelude of cello suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007 by J. S. Bach, in what seems to be an attempt to fuse the Baroque style into contemporary music (Example 2.9).

Example 2.9 Proto’s Toreador Song mm. 49-51

From letter H, another melody of Toreador is based on the middle part of the Prelude to Act I as well as the No. 14 Couplets of Act II (Example 2.10).
Example 2.10 Proto’s Toreador Song based on Prelude of Act I and No. 14 of Act II

The last Bohemian Dance comes from No. 12 Chanson Bohemian to Act II. Proto chose it as the ending (Example 2.11).
Example 2.11 Bohemian Song’s two main melodies
The repeated fast sixteenth rhythm drives into the virtuosic finale like a violently raging blizzard. Proto maximized tension going towards the closing with changing meters, such as 6/8, 3/4, 4/4, 6/4, and 5/4, with accelerando.

**Sankey’s Carmen Fantasy**

Stuart Sankey (1927-2000) was a great double bass pedagogue who worked in the United States, China, and Japan. He studied under Frederick Zimmermann, who is known as the father of double bass pedagogy in the United States. Sankey’s notable pedagogical career also led him to teach at several schools, such as the University of Texas in Austin, Indiana University in Bloomington, University of Michigan School of Music, etc. He also taught at the Aspen Music Festival and School, and worked as a guest teacher in China and Japan as well. In 1990 he received the instrument’s “Outstanding Teacher Award” from the International Society of Bassists. In addition, he was honored by the China Society of Double Bass in the same year. Sankey had many experiences playing principal or section bassist under world-class conductors, such as Koussevitzky, Bernstein, Karajan, Zubin Mehta, Casals, Copland, and Previn, to name some. He also contributed articles to several magazines, including the Journal of the International Society of Bassists, and the American String Teacher. His many students are in activity as eminent double bass soloists, such as Gary Karr and Edgar Meyer.

He composed a number of transcriptions in order to increase the repertoire for double bass, although not all have achieved widespread fame within the double bass community. With regard to transcription, his thesis is:

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“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 Vandal, Schwabe, Sperger or Dragonetti. I feel that bassists must create a new body of bass literature predicated on the works of the masters.”

Sankey published a large number of transcriptions and editions for double bass. He also wrote several original pieces, such as a concerto, Carmen Fantasy, Guitarrone for solo double bass, and the Trio with clarinet and guitar. Sankey completed his Carmen Fantasy four years before it was published in 1993. Gary Karr, to whom Sankey dedicated the piece, gave the world premiere at the Johansen Festival in Victoria, British Columbia. This piece is written for solo scordatura, similar to Proto’s fantasy. Sankey wrote it like Sarasate’s Carmen Fantasy for violin. Sarasate used only four melodies from the opera Carmen, and Sankey also chose three of the same melodies (Habanera, Seguidilla, and Gypsy dance) from the opera. Sankey added his own cadenza as the introduction, used Toreador instead of Aragonaise, and added Carmen’s Aria from No. 20 Trio in Act III that is found in Waxman’s Carmen Fantasy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sarasate’s Carmen</th>
<th>Sankey’s Carmen</th>
<th>Waxman’s Carmen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aragonaise</td>
<td>Cadenza with Toreador</td>
<td>Habanera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habanera</td>
<td>Habanera</td>
<td>Carmen’s Aria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from No. 20 Trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seguidilla</td>
<td>Carmen’s Aria</td>
<td>Aragonaise with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from No. 20 Trio</td>
<td>element of Habanera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bohemian Dance</td>
<td>Seguidilla</td>
<td>Seguidilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bohemian Dance</td>
<td>Bohemian Dance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Theme of two violin fantasies and Sankey’s fantasy

Each section of Sankey’s fantasy further develops and varies the primary melody. The rhapsodic introductory cadenza is also developed from a small motive, pressing the performer for complicated performance technique with simultaneous *accelerando* and changing meters, including 3/4 and 5/8.

In the first Toreador Song from the No. 14 of Act II, the opening starts with grace notes and triplet-sixteenth notes, which are extremely difficult to perform with exact articulation on such a low-register instrument (Example 2.12a & 2.12b).

![Example 2.12a Toreador from the original opera](image-url)
Example 2.12b Toreador from Sankey’s fantasy in mm. 37-45

A remarkable aspect of Sankey’s style in the fantasy is the use of both natural and artificial harmonics. Natural harmonics was prevalent in the nineteenth century, but artificial harmonics were not in widespread use in double music until the twentieth century. In this Toreador, the natural harmonics are indicated for the melody mm. 70-73 (Example 2.13). Sankey uses artificial harmonics in the next movement.
Example 2.13 The second theme of Toreador Song

The last section, Bohemian, is the highlight of the whole piece as a finale. The Habanera section requires playing with a more delicate left-hand technique, like in the previous Bohemian Song. The Habanera is based on No. 5 of Act I (Example 2.14)
Example 2.14 Habanera from the opera and Sankey’s Carmen in mm. 84-90

The next melody adapted is from the slow aria sung by Carmen in the No. 20 Trio of Act III. Proto did not take the famous melody, Michaela’s aria, in Act III used in Carmen Suite No. 2 and Proto’s Carmen Fantasy. The No. 20 Trio aria is not the opening song for a scene, namely
No. 20. This song is found in the middle part of the No. 20 Trio, and is also adapted by Waxman and Zhang (Example 2.15a & 2.15b)

Example 2.15a Carman’s Aria in No. 20 Trio of Act III

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44 The opera Carmen has numbers for each of individual pieces. This fashion was prevailing until the mid-nineteenth century. In this time, most opera genres, including opera seria, opera buffa, opera comique, ballad opera, singspiel, and grand opera, followed this trend. The Carmen’s genre is opera comique.
Example 2.15b Sankey’s new theme based on Carman’s Aria in No. 20 Trio of Act III

The next Seguidilla section is adapted from the No. 10 of Act I. This is waltz-like, elegant dance music (Example 2.16a & 2.16b).

Example 2.16a Carmen’s No. 10 Seguidilla of Act I
The last section is the Bohemian dance—the same as Proto’s last section. Sankey attempts a wide leaping figuration in the score, so the performer needs to add accents on the main melody while crossing each of the strings (Example 2.17).

Example 2.17 The melodic line with accent in Sankey’s Bohemian Dance

DaXun Zhang

Double bassist DaXun Zhang, born in 1981, comes from a family of double bass players in China. After studying the double bass at the Indiana University School of Music, he took the first prize in the International Society of Bassists competition in 2001, and was the first double bassist to win the first prize in the Women’s Auxiliary of the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra competition, which led to a performance with the Minnesota Symphony under Osmo Vanska. He
is also the first double bassist to win the Young Concert Artists International Auditions. He was also a recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2007. Now, he is teaching as a professor at the University of Texas at Austin.\textsuperscript{45}

Zhang received a standing ovation and an encore from the audience after performing an arrangement by Waxman at his debut recital at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., \textsuperscript{46} of which he says:

I first played Sankey’s version, then I did an arrangement of the [sic] Waxman’s version, but neither of them were wholly satisfying. When I got a chance to play with an orchestra in Korea, I decided to write my own version. The video you saw is the result of that.\textsuperscript{47}

DaXun Zhang’s arrangement was made for double bass, string orchestra and percussion. I asked him of the arrangement. He says:

... I took what I thought was suitable for the double bass, made a few alternations, and added a bit of my own taste. I also arranged the orchestra to a string orchestra so that the bass can project better without all that brass and woodwinds...\textsuperscript{48}

The \textit{Carmen}, I arranged, begin with Sarasate edition. My old arrangement was mainly based on Waxman, but also had elements from Sankey and Proto. However, it has little to do with the new one (the one I sent you), ... The new one is mainly from me, and I borrowed some ideas from both Sarasate and Waxman.\textsuperscript{49}

I also asked the tuning system for the new \textit{Carmen Fantasy}. He says:

The bass in my \textit{Carmen} is tuned with a high c string on the top, followed by g, d and A.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{47} DaXun Zhang, E-mail message to author, May 21, 2013. His performance is available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNj-lmufK-g and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgy4GSmrcak. He played his fantasy in Korea in 2009
\textsuperscript{48} DaXun Zhang, E-mail message to author, May 21, 2013.
\textsuperscript{49} DaXun Zhang, E-mail message to author, August 12, 2014.
\textsuperscript{50} DaXun Zhang, E-mail message to author, May 21, 2013.
\end{flushright}
That scordatura is not a common solo tuning, so I asked about how he decided to employ the unique tuning. He says:

As for the tuning, I decided to use A-d-g-c’ mainly because it allows me to play higher notes with less difficulty. Carmen is a woman, and when the bass gets too low, it sounds like an old man. To bring Carmen to life, I have better chance if [it’s] played in higher register. It is difficult to keep playing high all the time physically, so by tuning it higher, I can still achieve the high sound without bending down too much. Very practical reasons.\(^{51}\)

Commonly, the tuning of using C, G, D, and A is suggestive of cello tuning. I wanted to make sure whether his tuning is possible to play or not. He says:

Yes, it is different from the cello tuning. For the bass, C is the high string; it is where normally G is when tuned in orchestral tuning. For the cello, it is the opposite.\(^{52}\)

I checked the note that he played on the lowest open string in his Carmen Fantasy performance on YouTube with a tuner device. The equipment indicated “A” — it was true.

Daxun Zhang’s Carmen Fantasy is composed of the five sections, including Aragonaise, Habanera, Carmen’s aria from No. 20 Trio, Seguidilla, and Bohemian dance. The order is mostly the same as the Carmen Fantasy pieces by Sankey and Sarasate, and the third section (Carmen’s Aria based on No. 20 Trio) is even influenced by Sankey’s Carmen Fantasy. However, Zhang’s virtuosic elements suggest his own style, engendering a different enough interpretation to necessitate his own solo piece.

Unlike the other two fantasies of Proto and Sankey, there is no introduction with cadenza. Zhang’s first section begins directly with Aragonaise, like Sarasate’s Carmen Fantasy. The distinct features of Zhang’s version are playing in a high register and sudden shifting of the left hand. Zhang is not a prolific composer, but after playing Waxman’s Carmen, composed this as a

\(^{51}\) DaXun Zhang, E-mail message to author, August 12, 2014.
\(^{52}\) DaXun Zhang, E-mail message to author, March 26, 2015.
piece befitting his high level of competence in performance techniques for a concert in Korea (Example 2.18).

Example 2.18 Zhang’s *Carmen Fantasy* in mm. 272-278 and 450-454
CHAPTER 3

Compositional Style of the Three Fantasies

The three Carmen Fantasies have five sections each and use many of the same themes from the opera, albeit in different orders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Proto’s Carmen</th>
<th>Sankey’s Carmen</th>
<th>Zhang’s Carmen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuning</td>
<td>F#-B-e-a</td>
<td>F#-B-e-a</td>
<td>A-d-g-c’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>Long cadenza with</td>
<td>Aragonaise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Toreador Song</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Aragonaise</td>
<td>Habanera</td>
<td>Habanera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>Nocturne-Micaela’s</td>
<td>Carmen’s Aria from</td>
<td>Carmen’s Aria from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aria</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 20 Trio</td>
<td>No. 20 Trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td>Toreador Song</td>
<td>Seguidilla</td>
<td>Seguidilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5</td>
<td>Bohemian Dance</td>
<td>Bohemian Dance</td>
<td>Bohemian Dance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Sections and tuning of the three fantasies

In this chapter, I compare movements from all three fantasies which adapt the same melody from the opera. The idiosyncratic elements of the three composers’ styles will stand out through this comparison.

Aragonaise

In the Aragonaise of Proto, the first theme is repeated twice. The second repeat is transformed with sixteenth and triplet notes, also employing a rhythmic change of the “hemiola” effect with accent in mm. 49-50 (Example 3.1).
Example 3.1 The second repeat of the first theme of Proto’s Aragonaise

In Zhang’s Aragonaise, the fast sixteenth notes provide the melodic line with an ornamented melisma effect in mm. 36-37, a sprightly grace note in measure 39 demanding even further virtuosity. Zhang’s two bars in mm. 47-48 follow the original opera’s figuration (Example 3.2), in contrast with Proto’s descending two bars in mm. 49-50 of Example 3.1.

Example 3.2 The second repeat of the first theme of Zhang’s Aragonaise

Zhang’s melodic line and rhythm are also changed, but most things are not perverted. In example 3.3, the melody can be recognized as reading the score in mm. 75-81 (Example 3.3).
However, in Proto’s score, the famous melody is hidden beneath complex rhythmic figuration in mm. 79-88 (Example 3.4).

Zhang’s piece flows with the only slight alterations to the original melody, whereas Proto attempted to give the piece a more contemporary sensibility. In measure 52, the simple eighth notes appear after changing to different figurations (Example 3.5). This percussive bowing stroke leaves a strong impression. As mentioned of Proto’s fantasy in chapter 2, it provides an impression as if these figurations are similar to the Promenade of *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky. For a change of mood, this figuration is used before entering new sections, such as the long cadenza in the middle of the Aragonaise section, or the end of that same section.
Example 3.5 Derived figurations from measure 52

Toreador Song

The Toreador Song is adapted in the Carmen Fantasy of Proto and Sankey. In Sankey’s, the main melody is antiphonal between solo bass and the accompaniment (Example 3.6). The overall flow of Sankey’s Toreador Song is, naturally, evocative of the Romantic style. The accompaniment plays between the solo melodies, shown with rectangles in Example 3.6.
Example 3.6 The Toreador melody from Sankey’ Carmen

In his Toreador Song, Proto evokes jazz rhythms through cross-accents and syncopations (Example 3.7). Proto utilized jazz elements frequently in his pieces, other notable examples being *Duets for double basses* and *Sonata 1963*.53

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Example 3.7 Proto’s Toreador Song. Using syncopation and accent shows jazz elements.

Proto attempted to fuse contemporary material with older elements of the Baroque style in mm. 49-55 (Example 3.8). The shape of the arpeggio figuration closely resembles the Prelude figuration of cello suite No. 1 by J. S. Bach.
Proto inserted elements of contemporary music in the middle of this movement, developing the first two notes related and the semitone of the main melody. Proto composed a small contemporary song in the Toreador Song with this motive. The main theme’s semitone in measure 5 is used as a motivic kernel out of which Proto grows the passage in mm. 78-113 (Example 3.9a & 3.9b).

Example 3.9a Proto’s Toreador Song in measure 5

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Example 3.9b Proto’s Toreador Song

In this short contemporary section, Proto used double stop technique in mm. 115-118.

Traditionally, the double stop for double bass, such as the third or fourth, is easy, but Proto treats
the double stop technique more virtuosically in his music for Rabbath. In this part, unison and dissonance double stops are found with the sustained note “d” (Example 3.10).

![Example 3.10 Proto’s Toreador Song in mm. 115-118. Using double stop technique](image)

**Habanera**

In Zhang’s Habanera, the soloist plays only the habanera rhythm in the opening (Example 3.11), the main melody being located in the accompaniment. In his performance on YouTube, the main melody is played in turns by the principal cello and violin with Zhang’s playing the accompaniment rhythm

![Example 3.11 The opening of Zhang’s Habanera](image)

The main melody comes out with grace notes and rhythmic alterations in measure 166, in which duplets alternate with triplet eighth notes (Example 3.12).

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Example 3.12 Zhang’s Habanera in mm. 166-182

On the other hand, Sankey delineates the melody with artificial harmonics in the second repeat after the first theme. The second theme is performed with double stops and large leaps. The successful performer needs to combine fast and accurate shifting in the left hand with bow motion when playing the wide-leap parts. In this Habanera section, a highly virtuosic technique is needed despite relatively tame tempo (Example 3.13). From rehearsal H, wide leaping figuration demands fast and accurate technique in mm. 110-116.
Example 3.13 The artificial harmonics in mm. 94-100 in Sankey’s Habanera

Sankey employs natural harmonics, inherited from Dragonetti or Bottesini in the Romantic era\(^57\) (Example 3.14). The use of natural harmonics for arpeggiation is one of the more interesting features of nineteenth century double bass writing.

Example 3.14 Sankey’s Habanera in mm. 146-147

Carmen’s Aria from No. 20 Trio

This aria is less famous than the rest of melodies used in the three *Carmen Fantasies*, not even having been used in Carmen Suite No. 1 or 2 compiled after Bizet’s passing. This beautiful

\(^57\) Dragonetti’s concerto for double bass and Bottesini’s most pieces, including concertos, have this arpeggiated harmonics.
aria was set in Waxman’s *Carman Fantasy*, then adapted in their fantasies of Sankey and Zhang. These movements of Sankey and Zhang are composed in slow tempo without any particularly virtuosic techniques.

**Seguidilla**

The seguidilla is set in the two fantasies by Sankey and Zhang. The contour of the melodic line and the rhythmic patterns are almost the same, even coupling the harmonics with a similar rhythmic figure; however, Zhang places it one octave higher than Sankey (Example 3.15).

**Example 3.15** The same patterns in Seguidilla of Sankey and Zhang

With ascending figurations, Sankey achieves a kind of humorous reversal of this pattern’s descending shape in measures 289-290 against measures 227-233 (Example 3.16). It would be more natural, and like the original melody, if his version skipped from measure 288 to 293.
Example 3.16 The descending patterns in m 289-290 in Sankey’s Seguidilla

Bohemian Dance

The last movement, Bohemian Dance, is adapted by the three composers (it is used in violin fantasies by Sarasate and Waxman as well). The fast tempo and dance-like character lend it a sense of excitement appropriate for the finale of a virtuosic suite. Zhang’s Bohemian Dance follows the Carmen opera’s music as is. In the opera, No. 12 Chanson Bohemian in Act II begins with the accompaniment as a prelude before the song, and then the soprano Carmen sings. The Carmen fantasies by Sankey and Proto use the melodies of both the accompaniment and song, but Zhang’s double bass solo part plays only the second melody in Example 2.11. The opening is performed by orchestra like the original opera in Zhang’s Carmen Fantasy. The reason why Zhang set his own scordatura, in which the highest string is “c”, is that Zhang wanted to evoke the female Carmen’s soprano voice. Unlike other Carmen fantasies, including not only Sankey’s and Proto’s but even Sarasate’s and Waxman’s, in Zhang’s piece the soloist only plays Carmen’s
vocal melody in the Bohemian dance, resting while the accompaniment plays through the first theme of the Bohemian song in Example 2.11. Instead, the bass solo plays an accompanimental interlude following the first vocal melody (Example 3.17).

Example 3.17 Zhang’s Bohemian Dance in mm 383-387. DaXun Zhang used only this melody based on the song by Carmen from No. 12 Chanson Bohemian in Act II.

Although the beginning the end begins tame, highly virtuosic techniques are upcoming the ending of the Bohemian. For producing a clear tone, the articulation of the left hand through the complicated and large-interval leaps must correspond to the bowing of fast spiccato and string crossing (Example 3.18).

Example 3.18 Zhang’s ending part of Bohemian Dance in mm. 441-467
Sankey and Proto used the melody of the accompaniment from the opera; however, Sankey’s beginning is different than the opera. The melody, based on Carmen’s song, opens first with double stops, and then proceeding to very large leaping (Example 3.19).

![Example 3.19](image)

**Example 3.19** The opening of Sankey’s Bohemian Dance in mm. 311-316. Originally Carmen sings this melody in No. 12 of Act II

In the middle of this movement, the accompaniment melody from No. 12 of the opera comes out, also with double stops and the fast string crossing technique used in the first movement of Dragonetti’s double bass concerto (Example 3.20).

![Example 3.20](image)

**Example 3.20** Sankey’s the second theme of Bohemian Dance in mm. 354-357. Originally, this theme is the first opening theme in No. 12 Chanson Bohemian of the opera.

Proto’s Bohemian looks as if there is no high register playing on the score, but Proto’s musical style is found in the middle of the movement. Rabbath is a unique double bassist and also jazz bassist blending classical music with modern jazz\(^\text{58}\). Proto also studied across classical and contemporary genres. Their polystylistic music contains contemporary elements, including jazz improvisation, modern rhythmic patterns, and *ad libitum* involving *rubato*. Take for instance

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Proto’s long *ad libitum* insert in the middle. The fast Bohemian is suddenly disturbed by the slow tempo, *fermatas*, and *ad libitum* markings. Proto poured various materials of contemporary music into the last movements, other techniques being ponticello playing and natural harmonics (Example 3.21).

Example 3.21 Proto’s Bohemian Dance using contemporary materials in mm. 79-121
Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, the Fantasia genre was prevalent in Europe. Most pianists usually capitalized on the commercial success of popular operas by writing operatic fantasias. In this period, the form of the operatic fantasia was extended both thematically and emotionally. In addition, the paraphrase gained popularity as a virtuosic compositional technique for solo works. Many composers produced paraphrases in large numbers, usually taken from popular operas in the *bel canto* style. Notable within this widespread trend of operatic paraphrase and operatic fantasy was the double bass player Giovanni Bottesini. Well versed in double bass performance and composition techniques, his operatic fantasies are typical of the double bass fantasy genre, and still performed by many players today.

In the late twentieth century, the appearance of the three *Carmen Fantasies* is perhaps the most important occurrence for modern bass players. Many bass players, feeling the drought for double bass, are able to quench their thirst for new (especially fantasy) repertoire. These pieces have a widespread effect on many bass players and composers alike because all three *Carmen Fantasies* were composed by double bass players who have profound firsthand knowledge of performance techniques.

The scordatura device is still in use for double bass solo pieces. Given the nature of the low-pitched instrument, it is desirable to use the device to stand out through any accompaniment. Solo pieces employing solo scordatura, then, are literally only able to function as solo pieces, since not only is the instrument typically tuned a step higher in solo performances, but a separate set of strings whose timbre is brighter and louder are employed (the process of switching strings takes between 40 minutes and an hour). The composers Frank Proto, Stuart Sankey, and DaXun Zhang, employed scordatura in their solo pieces, Proto and Sankey adopting F#-B-e-a tuning,
and Zhang adopting a very idiosyncratic A-d-g-c’ tuning. The highest c’ string of Zhang’s tuning is more brilliant than any other. Most bass players, including myself, may wish to at least try his scordatura, to break out of the traditions of the fixed orchestral E-A-d-g tuning and solo F#-B-e-a tuning. It is attractive to be able to play with higher register, beyond the common range of the double bass community.

Self-taught bassist Frank Proto was versed in most genres, from Baroque to American contemporary styles, including avant-garde composition using electric tape. Yet, he composed a piece for self-taught bassist Francois Rabbath which crosses the line between Baroque and jazz music. Proto’s Carmen Fantasy displays his relatively broad compositional influences. He frequently inserts ad libitum or cadenza—in every movement except the Nocturne-Micaela’s Aria. He reinterpreted the Carmen Fantasy corpus from his modern viewpoint, including such things as the conventional rhythms of jazz and artificial harmonics. He fused the Baroque and the contemporary with the Romantic fantasy genre.

The great double bass pedagogue Stuart Sankey dedicated his Carmen Fantasy to his virtuoso student Gary Karr. Sankey’s Carmen is not entirely a Romantic fantasy. It has also modern sensibility; the first Prelude’s rhythm is very complicated with groupings of multiplets, including triplet, quintuplet, sextuplet (or called double triplet), and septuplet, in addition to the artificial harmonics. Besides, Sankey requires highly virtuosic-performance techniques for the double stops and wide leaps (frequently appearing in fast tempo), which cannot be found in Bottesini’s nineteenth century fantasy.

Lastly, DaXun Zhang is young double bassist still actively innovating. His idea of founding a new performance device for solo practice produced a new fantasy with a higher
register than any other. Zhang’s *Carmen Fantasy*, with his unique scordatura, is enough to outstand even an orchestral accompaniment.

The three *Carmen Fantasies* share popular source material, spinning three unique creative interpretations around those themes. They have Aragonaise, Habanera, Toreador Song, Seguidilla, Carmen’s aria from No. 20 in Act III, and the Bohemian Dance in common. In a continuation of the free fantasy form established in the nineteenth century, each of these composers channels Bizet’s Carmen through their own compositional style, the result being a series of related but individual modern master works for the solo double bass.
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