

NINA BERNAT

Technique Essentials



DOUBLE BASS

About the Course

Master the tools that make bass playing feel effortless. From extensions to memorization tips, Technique Essentials breaks down the core techniques every bassist needs. Whether refining your bow hold, unlocking better mobility, or sharpening your memorization skills, this course helps you play with more ease, precision, and expression.

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If you have any corrections, comments, or critiques relating to this workbook, please send them to marek@tonebase.co. We strive to deliver the highest quality enrichment experience.

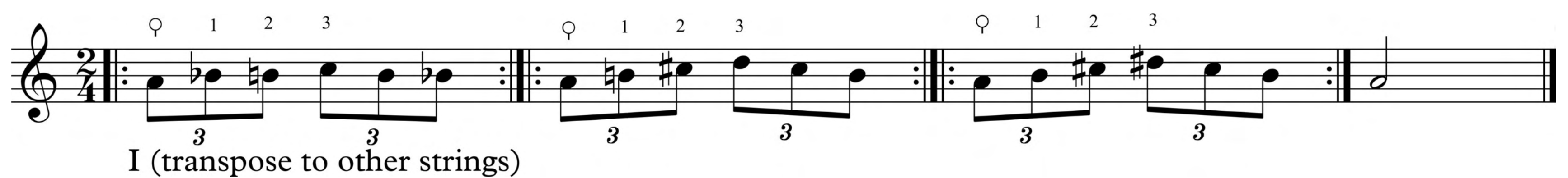
Thank you!

Extensions

Mastering extensions is crucial in bass playing. It allows us to access more notes within a single hand position. This is especially important when performing repertoire not originally written for the bass, where we often need to come up with creative solutions to make passages playable.

- Some players incorporate the thumb more frequently for this purpose, but Nina prefers to minimize its use, as it requires more arm and elbow movement.

Mobility Exercise:



- Limit flexibility exercises to just a few minutes per day to avoid overuse injuries. Similarly, avoid prolonged practice in extended positions and take breaks often!
- Use the wrist to position the hand and fingers for maximum flexibility.
- Develop flexibility so extensions can serve as a tool to bring out a special note (e.g., in a chord).



Bow Contact

Producing a clear, resonant sound on the bass requires more work than on other string instruments.

- Think of down-bows and up-bows as pulling and pushing the string from side to side.
- For string crossings, particularly with the German bowhold, focus on engaging the inside and outside edges of the string to maintain clarity.



Benefits of Standing

- In orchestral playing, Nina prefers sitting for consistency.
- She stands for solo playing and/or with pieces in higher registers, as it allows for greater freedom of movement.
- Standing enables you to adjust the angle of the bass more easily, making the instrument feel more manageable, especially in upper positions.
- Maintain mobile feet and flexible knees; Nina's left foot moves the most when covering long distances across the fingerboard.
- In lower positions, angling the bass slightly into the left hand allows the instrument's weight to assist in pressing the string down.

German Bow Hold

A German bow hold varies based on hand shape, palm size, and finger length.

- With “unnecessary” fingers removed, Nina feels the bow’s weight centered on the middle finger.
- The thumb and middle finger guide the direction of the bow.
- Other fingers provide support and nuance.



- Maintain a “ping-pong ball”-sized space between the edge of the frog and the cup of the palm.
- To achieve smooth bow changes, anticipate the following motion just before the direction shifts.
- For smoother string crossings, isolate the finger motions; practice changing strings using only right-hand flexibility without engaging the arm.
- The bow doesn’t always need to be parallel to the bridge; different angles create distinct colors and techniques.
- Vary the amount of hair on the string and the distance between the bow and bridge to explore different timbres.

Memorization

There are multiple approaches to memorization:

1. Playing without the music to test recall.
2. Singing the piece in Solfege to process it in a different cognitive space.
3. Memorizing shapes and harmonies rather than individual notes.

Nina's Memorization Tips:

- *Break the piece into sections, then practice backward, starting from the end and working toward the beginning.*
- *Even when a piece feels solid, switch up your approach to test the strength of your memory.*
- *Establish anchor points so you can confidently jump to the next section if you have a lapse.*
- *When repeating a passage, play it differently to reinforce both musicality and memory.*