WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Don Wright Faculty of Music

Music 2886R/T: Class DOUBLE BASS

Instructor: Filip Stasiak, fstasia@uwo.ca

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

You are directed to the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness found at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html. Accommodations not covered by the policy will be handled on a case by case basis.

Please note the University Statement regarding Mental Health: Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwcom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

This course should enable you

1. To develop enough performance ability to correctly demonstrate basic techniques for beginning students. You will find that playing the double bass is physically demanding, and consequently some daily practice, and regular attendance (and therefore monitoring) is essential to build strength and avoid pain. Please consult me if you experience any physical discomfort from playing, beyond the feeling of having done mild exercise.

2. To develop the capacity to recognize beginners' performance deficiencies quickly, prioritize them, and convey effective solutions; and to appraise more advanced students.

3. To understand some abstract principles of fingering and bowing, and to apply them in editing music appropriate for beginning and intermediate players.

4. In general, then, to launch a beginner successfully; and to be knowledgeable about the double bass as an orchestral instrument, to the level of a secondary school or youth orchestra.

The course is not designed to explore the history of the instrument, its solo literature, or its leading historical and contemporary performers, except incidentally. You are, however, encouraged to read the article and related links in New Grove Online, and to listen to recordings by such artists as Joel Quarrington, Gary Karr, Thomas Martin, Ludwig Streicher, Francesco Petracchi, and Edgar Mayer. While
jazz repertoire and improvisation are not explicitly part of this course, the basics that we do concentrate on underpin fluent performance of all styles of music.

You will need a key for the bass padlocks, and a copy of Essential Elements for Strings Double Bass Book 1.

**Marking scheme**

**Performance** (65% of final mark)

Even thought this is not a performance based class, a minimum standard must be reached in order to help better understand the learning process and problems that a beginning student will encounter. The performance material will be taken from the Essential Elements series that is used by many local secondary schools. It is very likely that you will encounter this series (or one very similar to it) in your future jobs as music educators. Every day we will work from the book and divide the grading in the following manner:

- 3 short performance tests chosen from Essential Elements book, worth 15% each. One test each week beginning in the 3rd week of classes. Test material will be announced one week ahead of time.
- 1 group assignment (duets) from Essential Elements book (possible substitutions and additional options may be considered). Worth 20% and can be performed in class at any time during the 6 week course.

Since we have very limited classroom time together, I will post online links to example videos and extra tutorials to help explain content of all the material required for this course. Please review and familiarize yourself with the content prior to each class in order to maximise our time together.

**Analytical writing** (20% of final mark)

There will be two assignments during the semester, each worth 10% of your final mark.

**Assignment 1**: You will be given photos or a video recording of one or more players, and asked to write a constructive critical appraisal of the players’ strengths and weaknesses. You will need to write basic comments on posture, bow hold, and hand positions, as well as offer suggestions for exercises or strategies to remedy the deficiencies.

**Assignment 2**: For several excerpts chosen from standard youth orchestra parts (which I will provide towards the end of the term), give a complete set of your preferred fingerings and bowings, and write a short essay describing (1) any plausible alternative bowings and fingerings, and why you do not prefer them; (2) what you would expect to be the main technical and musical challenges; (3) how you would give the introductory lesson on the piece, including, if you like, exercises you might compose to facilitate certain passages. This will be a take-home assignment that will be due at the end of the semester.
Attendance, teaching, coaching (15% of final mark)

As often as possible through the term, individual students will be called upon to teach a partner, and coach the whole class as a section.

Attendance Policy:

An unexcused absence will result in a loss of 2 marks from the attendance component of your overall evaluation (i.e., one unexcused absence equals 2 out of 10). Failure to appear for a scheduled exam session (without documented medical evidence) will result in a mark of zero for that test/exam. Students with 4 or more unexcused absences will be referred to the Chair of the Department and will be in jeopardy of failing the course.

Absences will be excused only if: 1) Student is involved in official UWO business that has been approved by the chair or the instructor; 2) Documented Family issue; 3) Documented family or personal illness.

Tardiness: Arriving late for two classes is equivalent to one unexcused absence.