



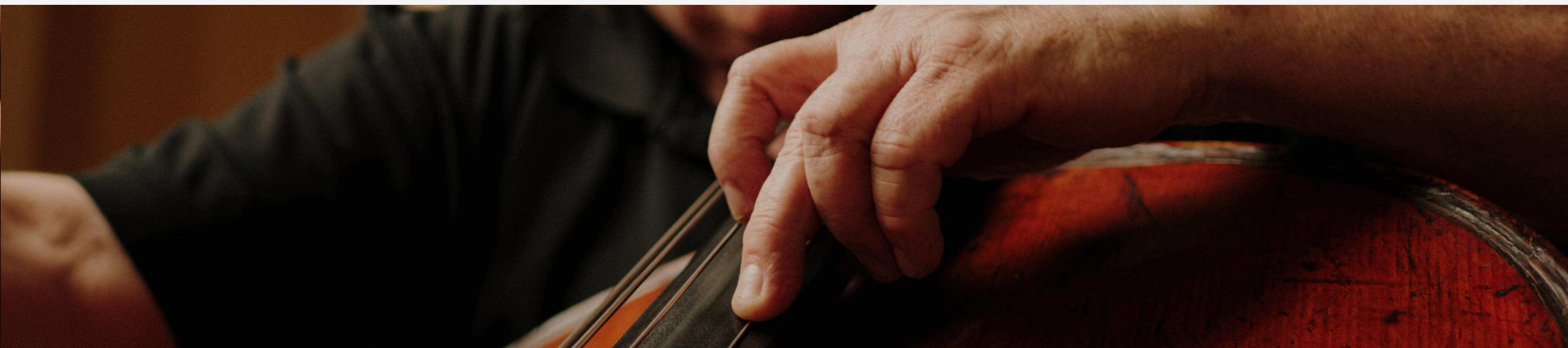
THE DOUBLE BASSIST'S

ULTIMATE DAILY WARM-UP ROUTINE

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About the Author

Joel Quarrington

In late 2023 Joel Quarrington was awarded the “Order of Canada”, which recognizes his artistic contribution to Canada’s cultural life.



For over forty years, Joel Quarrington served as the Principal Double Bassist of many ensembles including the Canadian Opera Company, the Toronto Symphony, Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra, and most recently, the famous London Symphony Orchestra. He has won the Geneva International Competition and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s National Talent Competition.

He has been a guest teacher at schools all around the world and he holds annual masterclasses in the summers at Quebec's Orford Arts Centre. He is a professor at the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal, and at the Royal Academy of Music in London where he is a Visiting Professor.

Joel has made several solo recordings, which have won both the prestigious JUNO and Opus Prizes. Joel has received a Special Recognition Award for Outstanding Solo Performance and for Outstanding Orchestral Performance from the International Society of Bassists.

He performs on an Italian bass made in 1660 by the Italian master Santo Paolo Maggini.

Introduction

The way I teach the double bass, it's all about **learning how to BALANCE!**

That means learning how to drape yourself on your instrument and just being all “jellyfish” with your body: zero tension, zero flexed muscle, zero pressing, zero grabbing... just effortless playing.

To do that you need a posture that supports freedom and a technique that allows very flexible, supple wrists so you can literally “hang” your arms and fingers on the bass. I make the claim to my students that once they learn how to “hang” (balance) themselves they don't really have to practice any mechanical technique anymore.

The purpose of the warm-up I am presenting is to directly address the motions and balances to wake up the fluidity and avoid the natural human reaction to press down and grab when intensifying one's activities.



Exercise #1

This is playing open strings and finding the weight of your bow arm to be able to start and stop the string with the bow throughout its length without ever pressing down. The bottom string is the hardest, so when I warm up, I usually focus on that string.

Please make sure you start this exercise without rosinning your bow! Warm up the residue rosin first and if you really need it, then add the least rosin possible. Adding rosin will defeat the whole purpose of hanging your total arm weight and learning how to use speed (slow) to control the string.

Every bow change should show the right wrist motion of pull/push in every exercise I am mentioning today.

Exercise #1 (cont.)

Sheet music for Exercise #1 (cont.) in bass clef, 4/4 time. The exercise consists of 50 measures, divided into eight systems. Measure numbers 7, 13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, and 49 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, slurs, and articulation marks.

Measure 1: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 1 contains a half note G2, marked with a square articulation symbol (□). Measure 2 contains a half note G2, marked with a 'V' (accusative) symbol. Measures 3-6 continue with half notes G2, A2, B2, and C3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Measure 7: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 7 contains a half note G2. Measures 8-12 continue with half notes A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Measure 13: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 13 contains a half note G2, marked with a square articulation symbol (□). Measures 14-18 contain half notes A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol. Measures 19-24 contain eighth notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Measure 25: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 25 contains a half note G2. Measures 26-30 contain half notes A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Measure 31: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 31 contains a half note G2. Measures 32-36 contain half notes A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Measure 37: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 37 contains a half note G2, marked with a square articulation symbol (□). Measures 38-42 contain half notes A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Measure 43: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 43 contains a half note G2. Measures 44-48 contain half notes A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Measure 49: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measure 49 contains a half note G2, marked with a square articulation symbol (□). Measures 50-54 contain half notes A2, B2, C3, D3, and E3 respectively, each marked with a 'V' symbol.

Exercise #2

Do this as close to the bridge as you can; the closer you do it, the more you get out of it.

Use the wrist or just fingers to change between the strings; try for no arm motion up and down at all.

The sound should be full, focused and beautiful, and the fundamental note should pop out without any pressing at all.

I have written it out so that a group can do this together, but feel free to repeat slurs without regard to time signatures if you want.

Exercise #2 (cont.)

♩ = 60

etc.

Exercise #3

This exercise really does warm up the fingertips! Learning how to hang on the 1st finger sets up all the others so it is the most important.

Do this without vibrato at the beginning to make sure your balance is good, and then play with varied vibratos that are non-stop.

It's a good time to practice your most intense vibrato.

Note In my fingering system, the dash above a finger number indicates a shift up (towards the bridge); the dash below indicates a shift down (towards the scroll).

The musical score for Exercise #3 consists of five staves. The first staff begins in the bass clef with a key signature of one flat (F major or D minor). It contains four measures of music, each with a half note and a quarter note beamed together. The first two measures are marked with a '1' above the first note and a '1̄' above the second note. The third measure is marked with 'etc.' and the fourth with 'etc.'. The second staff continues in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat, containing five measures of music. The third staff continues in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat, containing six measures of music. The fourth staff continues in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat, containing six measures of music. The fifth staff continues in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat, containing four measures of music. The score includes various fingering and vibrato markings throughout.

Exercise #5

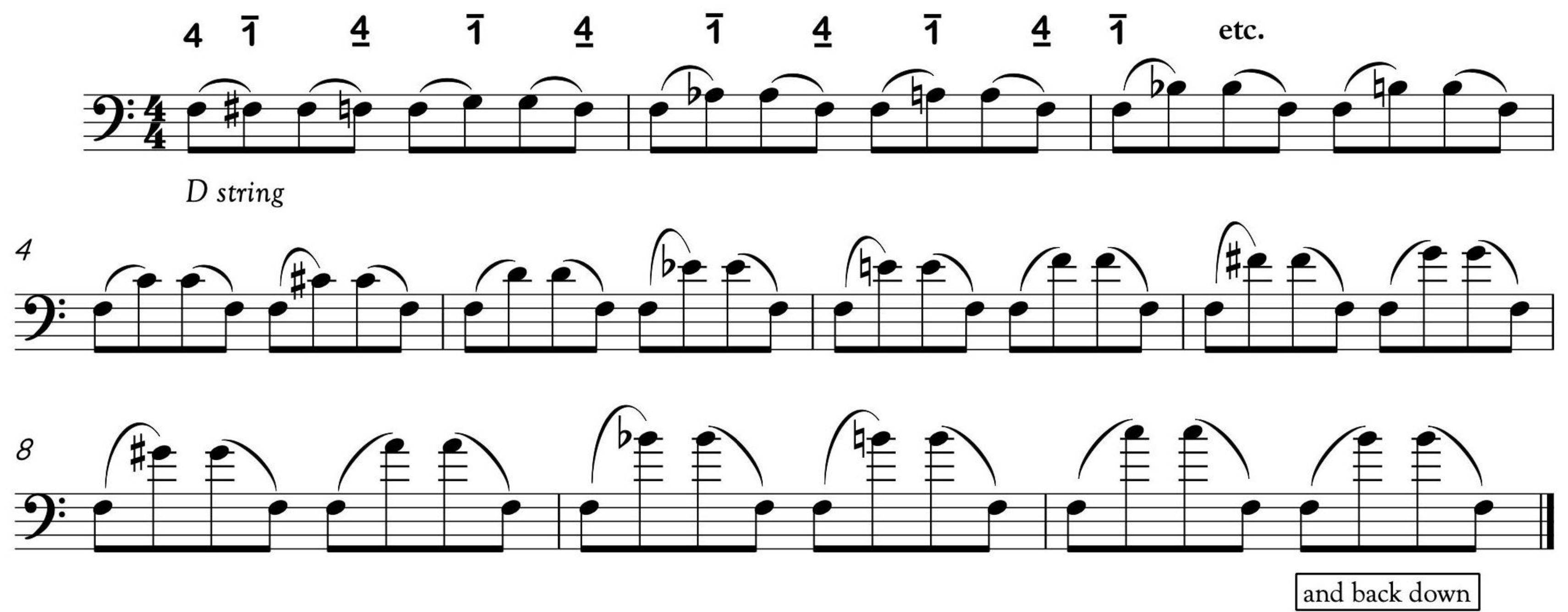
This is a more difficult way to do exercise 4. It is great for ear-training, and I have shown it on the D string for added challenge.

I don't bother repeating these exercises with every combo possible; but if I had to prioritize them, I would do 4-1, 1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 4-2.

Long Shifts Chromatic

Slowly

4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 etc.



Exercise #6

The hand rotation that allows you to balance on all the fingers is practiced here. These patterns should sound even, fast, and brilliant!

When I must warm up quickly, I always play examples E and N. Don't overdo these and if you ever feel pain, stop!

Exercise #6 (cont.)

A

0 1 2 4 1 to the octave and back down

B

0 4 2 1 4 etc.

C

0 1 2 4 2 1 1 etc.

D

0 4 2 4 1 4 4 etc.

E

1 2 4 2 1 4 2 4 1 etc.

F

2 4 2 1 2 etc.

G

4 2 1 2 4 etc.

H

2 1 4 2 2 1 4 2 and continue up a fifth

I

1 4 3 4 (extension) 1 4 2 4 and down a minor third

1 4 2 4 1 4 3 4 and down a minor third

Exercise #6 (cont.)

J

1 4 2 4 (no extensions) 1 4 1 4

K

1 4 2 4 1 4 2 4 and down to a minor 3rd below

L

+ 1 2 3 + 1 2 3 + 1 2 3 + 1 2 3 to the octave and back down

M

+ 3 2 1 3 2 1 etc.

N

+ 3 2 3 + 3 1 3

O

+ 2 1 2 + 3 2 3 and down

P

1 2 3 2 1 3 2 3 to the octave and back down

Q

+ 3 2 3 1 3 etc.

R

+ 1 2 3 2 1 + 1 2 3 2 1 etc.

Exercise #7

Keep the 1st finger down and pay attention to the fingering around the break of the bass (the octave harmonic area). This is the best exercise for a balanced hand in double stops. Notice how much the elbow's positioning affects the intonation and comfort between fifths and thirds as in Variation 1.

Variation 2 is virtuoso level. Don't allow holes in the sound between the double stops.

Exercise #7 (cont.)

This musical exercise is written in bass and treble clefs. The bass staff begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. It contains six measures of music, each with a slur over a series of eighth notes. The first measure has a fingering of 1 4 2 4 2 4. The second measure has a fingering of 4 1. The third measure has a fingering of 1. The fourth measure has a fingering of 1. The fifth measure has a fingering of 1. The sixth measure has a fingering of 1. The treble staff begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and contains six measures of music, each with a slur over a series of eighth notes. The first measure has a fingering of 1. The second measure has a fingering of 1. The third measure has a fingering of 1. The fourth measure has a fingering of 1. The fifth measure has a fingering of 1. The sixth measure has a fingering of 1. The exercise concludes with a double bar line and the word "etc.".

Var.1

This variation is written in bass clef. It contains six measures of music, each with a slur over a series of eighth notes. The first measure has a fingering of 1 4 2 4 2 4. The second measure has a fingering of 4 1. The third measure has a fingering of 1. The fourth measure has a fingering of 1. The fifth measure has a fingering of 1. The sixth measure has a fingering of 1. The exercise concludes with a double bar line and the word "etc.".

Var.2

This variation is written in treble clef. It contains six measures of music, each with a slur over a series of eighth notes. The first measure has a fingering of 1 3 2 3 2 3. The second measure has a fingering of 3 1. The third measure has a fingering of 1 3. The fourth measure has a fingering of 3 1. The fifth measure has a fingering of 1 3. The sixth measure has a fingering of 1 3. The exercise concludes with a double bar line and the word "etc.".

Exercise #8

This is a little diddle I made up to sort of condense the entire Zimmerman bow book into a 30 second Vivaldi-like tune. The ultimate objective is to improve the down-up motion from lower string to higher string as in the Mozart 40 excerpt starting with the Eb-major arpeggio, exemplified in example H (I don't like to turn the bowing backwards).

Practice these on the other pairs of strings as well. There is something great about the nice expansion/contraction of the left hand that is a great warm up. If the minor-6th is too much of a stretch for your hand in first position, then start this in a higher position that is more comfortable for you.

Exercise #8 (cont.)

[illegible]

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We hope you have enjoyed this guide to warming up! Ready for more helpful bass resources?

Stay tuned for the release of tonebase Double Bass! Over the next few months, we'll be sharing updates ahead of the launch including new artists added our roster, courses we're filming, and more. Whether you play professionally or just for your own enjoyment, there's going to be something for you on tonebase!

Feel free to write to team@tonebase.co with questions, comments, or corrections. We can't wait to share with you all what we've been working on!



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