

2007

## Synchronisms for Double Bass

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### Recommended Citation

Baguyos, Jeremy C., "Synchronisms for Double Bass" (2007). *Music Faculty Publications*. 8.  
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The family of Scott LaFaro has created a beautiful, full-color commemorative poster taken from an original painting by Scott's brother-in-law, the painter Manny Fernandez, size: 38" x 24". All proceeds from sales benefit the Scott LaFaro Prize, given biennially as part of the ISB Double Bass Competition. Perfect for home or studio. Treat yourself or your favorite jazz fan. Send \$40 U.S. plus \$10 shipping and handling (international orders add an additional \$10 for airmail shipping.) Checks or money orders in U.S. funds, or MasterCard, Visa and American Express accepted.

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Composer Mario Davidovsky

### Synchronisms for Double Bass

Mario Davidovsky  
 Performed by Donald Palma

The Iowa State University of Science and Technology in Ames, Iowa, recently hosted the 2007 National Conference of the Society of Electro-acoustic Music In The United States (SEAMUS) from March 8th through the 10th. The annual SEAMUS conference brings together nationally recognized composers, performers, and researchers in the field of computer music for a half-week program of concerts and paper sessions. The 2007 conference featured the premier of *Synchronisms* No. 11 for Contrabass and Electronic Sounds by Mario Davidovsky (b. 1934). With coordination from SEAMUS, the work was commissioned by a consortium of various academic institutions. The work was composed for Donald Palma and was premiered by Mr. Palma at the SEAMUS 2007 National Conference on Saturday, March 10, 2007, at 8:00 p.m. in Martha-Ellen Tye Recital Hall.

The composition and premier of *Synchronisms* No. 11 for Contrabass and Electronic Sounds is a significant addition to the double bass solo repertoire because of the universally recognized historical significance of the composer, Mario Davidovsky. Active double bass recitalists in the 21st century no longer have to scrounge for double bass repertoire of artistic merit, but there is still a dearth of double bass compositions by composers of historical significance. Valiant hordes of virtuoso double bassists and tenacious composers have already advanced the double bass to the rank of solo instrument, but the addition

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of *Synchronism* No. 11 by Mario Davidovsky, a major composer, increases the legitimacy of the double bass.

Mario Davidovsky is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, director of the Koussevitzky Foundation at the Library of Congress, and Founder and vice-president of the Robert Miller Fund for Music. He received a Pulitzer Prize for 1971 for his *Synchronisms* No. 6 for Piano and Electronic Sounds, awards from BMI, and numerous fellowships including the Guggenheim Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Koussevitzky Foundation Fellowships. Highlights of his list of commissions include the Juilliard String Quartet, Yale University, the Philadelphia Orchestra, Speculum Musicae, the San Francisco Symphony, MIT, the Emerson Quartet, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Davidovsky is the Fanny P. Mason Professor of Music, Emeritus, at Harvard University. He is the former Director of the Columbia/Princeton Electronic Music Center.

The intermission that immediately preceded the premier of *Synchronisms* No. 11 was a sound canopy of nervous conversation mixed with the audible sounds of Donald Palma warming up on his double bass. The sense of anticipation was heightened due to the unusual circumstances regarding his instrument. Despite making special arrangements to ensure the safe and timely transport of his bass as oversized luggage, Mr. Palma arrived at Des Moines International Airport without incident, but the airline left his bass in Chicago. With less than twenty-four hours until the concert, he convinced the airline to deliver the bass before the afternoon dress rehearsal and practiced on a borrowed bass until his instrument arrived on a separate plane.

As one would expect in a work by Davidovsky, there are numerous instances of disjunct melodic gestures, abrupt dynamic con-

trasts, and varied articulations. Rather than drawing attention to the inherent technical difficulty of atonal leaps, Mr. Palma performed the difficult passages with the same ease of the computer performing its fixed audio part. This created a tightly coordinated interplay between bass and electronics, especially in the rhythmically activated sections of the work. In an exhibition of poise, eloquence, and mastery, he successfully navigated difficult technical passages that included artificial harmonics, double stops in the extreme upper register, and fast rhythmic passages. In addition to the measured intensification of dynamic and rhythmic gestures and the propulsions of short, disjunct melodic gestures, there were passages of subtle explorations of timbre where Mr. Palma seamlessly and surreptitiously blended the sound of the bass into the sound of the fixed audio. In these passages, the double bass and fixed audio were unified into one texture. In short, Don Palma gracefully and artfully handled the challenges of performing the premier of *Synchronisms* No. 11 in the same way that he handled the airline that misplaced his bass.

At the time this review was written, *Synchronisms* No. 11 was scheduled to receive its second performance by Don Palma at Merkin Concert Hall in New York City later in March 2007. Numerous additional performances and a recording are planned for this landmark work. After some modifications by Mario Davidovsky, it is hoped that *Synchronisms* No. 11 will go to press, so that the double bass community can add this important work by a major composer to their repertoire.

— Review by Jeremy Baguys

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