

**Touch Wood (hit string)** for three double basses  
(two as drummers)

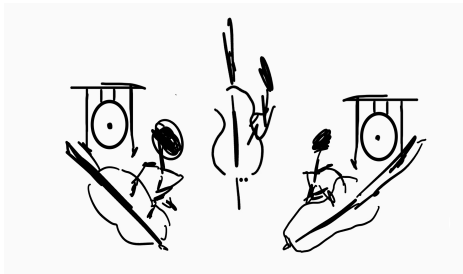
*Stephen de Filippo | 2021*

# Performance Notes

## general

- The score is sometimes metred, sometimes presented as timed durations.
- When time is used, the durations are suggestive and not exactly precise.
- Each system has a different duration. Timed measures are proportional to their respective system.

## stage layout



- Db.1 is standing, centred, framed by Db.2+3 [bass-drummers] who are kneeling/sitting on the floor, their basses on the floor, positioned in such a way that frames Db.1.
- Db.. 2+3 frame the Db.1
- Db.2+3 use a gong each. The gongs should be positioned in such a way that does not obscure the visual of the drumming – behind the bass preferably.

## bass 1

The material presented in your part is unspecified in pitch. Instead, broader gestures and techniques are notated, with the vertical placement of note heads referring to a general pitch area. Sometimes your actions are flexible, that they can occur somewhere within a timed duration. Other times, measures are metred and your rhythms strict.

There are often moments in the score where you are required to quickly transition from bowed gestures to a flurry of pizzicati, or even a mixture of the two. As pitch is never specified, do not feel the need to perform conventionally attractive classical sounds. Focus instead on the gesture, the exertion, and the jagged nature these moments over the purity of your sound.

## bass 2+3 (bass-drummers)

The double bass is laid on its back. You perform kneeling, or seated with a stick and mallet. The bodies of the frame Db. 1. Both players face outwards, towards the audience. This means that one drummer must have their bass *upside-down* to achieve the desired staging. A small gong is also used by each player.

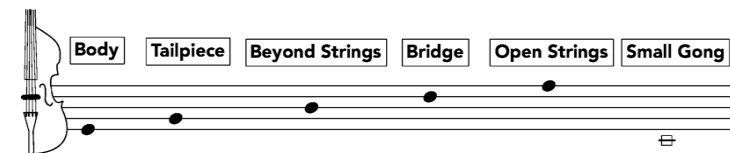
The bass is prepared with pegs or blue tack on the lowest string. When hit with a mallet, the paper should activate against the strings and produce a buzz.

To perform this role, do not need to touch or finger pitches on the fingerboard. Instead, you will be instructed to strike specific open strings or other areas of the bass. Isolating specific strings to strike with a mallet may be difficult, or outside your experience. However, if other strings are hit incidentally then that is ok, but ensure that your ambition is to only strike the desired strings.

Additionally, this part requires some choreography to be performed in unison with your partner. The ambition is to mimic the symmetry of the staging. Sometimes you may be directed to raise your hand over a timed duration, and this should be done in sync with your partner.

Perform using mallets with a soft head, you will also use the stick of the mallet.

## Clef



- In ascending order, the staff goes up the instrument – from its body to the strings.
- There are many points to strike within these broader terms like **tailpiece** and **body**. Both points have a large surface area to hit. Explore producing different resonances from these broader regions of the bass.
- **Beyond Strings** refer to the strings after the bridge.
- **Open Strings** and **Beyond Strings** will be specified by a string name or number.

# Touch Wood (hit string)

Stephen de Filippo | 2021 for three double basses (two as drummers)

**General Notes**  
 Time durations for each measure are suggestive, not prescriptive  
 Measures are proportional to their respective system. Each system has a different duration.  
 Db.2+3 prepares E & A strings w/ piece of wood between string and fingerboard, this should sound equal parts pitch and noise

**A** 5-8" 9" 7"

**Double Bass 1**

**Double Bass 2+3 bass-drummers**

**Tailpiece + Body**  
 soft mallets  
 hitting btwn under the tailpiece & body w/ one hand  
 slowly raise free hand

**E String**  
 drop hand suddenly

**Strings Beyond Bridge**  
 db.2 db.3

1. pizz. harm (any pitch, same pitch both times) 2. strum (mix of harm. and norm pizz.)

ringing

strum arco

pizz. trem. moving freely strumming

**B** short, disjointed outbursts 14" 8" 27"

**Db. 1**

**Db. 2+3**

6

jazzy pizzes, played high on the fingerboard, sometimes as harmonics, sempre

arco. pizzes, descending snap pizz

f outburst p f secco together

drop hand suddenly E String

Body soft mallet trem. Beyond Bridge Small Gong db.2

strum

p cresc poco a poco, quasi-visceras

db.3

**C**

solo:  
 beginning as sparse high pizzicati, sometimes harmonics, sometimes strummed chords  
 begin to get faster and faster - individual pizzes becoming small flurried gestures by the time the Db. 2+3 are introduced,  
 begin to incorporate short bowed pitches half-way through the measure,  
 by the end of the measure you should be performing one continuous flurried gesture of all techniques

10" 13" 7"

**Db. 1**

**Db. 2+3**

9

snap pizz, any pitch

arco pizz

flurry of pizz + bow pizz. arco pizzes

ff p f

flurry of pizz + bow

pizz. trem. pizz + bow flurry, descending

ff p ff

Strings Beyond Bridge tutti soft mallets improvise rhythms freely

E String

Tailpiece + Body like [A] raise hand

**D** = ca. 54 separated, pointilistic

**D** = ca. 46 meno mosso

**D** = ca. 54 a tempo

12

Db. 1

pizzes flurry

*f* molto agitato

arco

*p* *sfz*

*p*

5

pizz flurry

*f*

strum

*f*

again

4

pizz flurry

*f* secco

arco pizz.

Db. 2

E String

Strings Beyond Bridge

pizz.

*f*

pizz.

*ffz*

*f*

Strings Beyond Bridge

strum all strings

hit all strings

Db. 3

E String

Strings Beyond Bridge

*p*

E String

*f*

**E** 20"

15"

quick flurries

solo:  
arco, harmonies, well-spaced, not too long  
sometimes w/ harmonic pizzes at the onset or cut-off  
grace notes indicate pizzes

21

Db. 1

*p*

*ff* sub outburst

*p*

3/4

Strings Beyond Bridge

soft mallets

pick a single string, improvise rhythms

continue gesture, . . . changing between string freely,  
creating harmonies w/ Db. 3 and interacting against Db 1

sticks

hitting anywhere beyond  
bridge & body

Db. 2

*pp* twinkling

*f* outburst

3/4

Strings Beyond Bridge

play the same string as Db. 2,  
improvise rhythms using both mallets

continue gesture, . . . changing between string freely,  
creating harmonies w/ Db. 2 and interacting against Db 1

hitting anywhere beyond  
bridge & body

Db. 3

*pp* twinkling

*f* outburst

3/4

**F** = ca. 46  
separating, falling a part

♩ = ca. 42  
meno mosso

26

Db. 1

pp *f* *sim. . .*

Strings Beyond Bridge  
pizz.  
III  
3 3 3 3

Db. 2

secco *p* *f*

Strings Beyond Bridge  
pizz.  
III  
IV

Db. 3

secco *p* *f*

32

Db. 1

*p* *ff*

pluck all 4 strings

pluck all 4 strings

Db. 2

Db. 3

9" G 17"

rall. . . . .

39

Db. 1

III

pp sub

plucking strings freely w/ left hand, short fast gestures, close to the bow  
stop bowing briefly if necessary

*f secco*

pizz. trem. moving freely

Db. 2+3

continue plucking in any order, fall out of time with each other

becoming snaps if possible

stick hit all strings

slowly raise free hand

*sfz*

*fp*

*p*

*ff*

H 20"

41

Db. 1

again

flurries of pizz + arco

like [C], but incorporating bow from the beginning slow, sparse gestures, getting fuller and faster

*f*

*p*

*sfz*

*p*

*f*

*p*

5+5 16

Db. 2+3

hit all strings

Small Gong soft mallet

5+5 16 <

**I** = ca. 96  
rhythmic, almost ritualistic

rall. . . . .

42

Db. 1  $\frac{5+5}{16}$  *ff*

Db. 2  $\frac{5+5}{16}$  *f* **E String** w/ both mallets

Db. 3  $\frac{5+5}{16}$  *f* **E String** w/ both mallets

stick trem

4

8

**Strings Beyond Bridge** pizz, in any order

**Small Gong, Strings Beyond Bridge**

arco

*p*

*f* *secco*

*ff* *f*

*p*

**Strings Beyond Bridge** pizz, in any order

$\frac{5+5}{16}$

**J** a tempo

[♩. + ♩]  
bow + pizz flurry

any pitch, moving freely btwn ord. pitch and harmonic

52

Db. 1  $\frac{5+5}{16}$  *f* **outburst**

*ppp* *impure, grainy*

*p*

*poco*

*p*

*p*

*ff* **outburst**

stick

4

*f* *sub.*

*pp*

*ff*

$\frac{5+5}{16}$

a tempo

3.5"

bow + bow flurry

60

Db. 1  $\frac{5+5}{16}$  *p*

stick like before

*f* *p* *ff*

*ff* **outburst**

*f*

*ff*

*f*

soft mallets

4

$\frac{5+5}{16}$

K 7" = ca. 96

68

Db. 1

Db. 2+3

E String  
improvise rhythms

wide double stop  
(w/ open E string)

f

pp

ff

ff

f

ff

15" 40"

79

Db. 1

Db. 2+3

pauses getting longer

dbl stops also getting longer

p

longer, smoother

Small gong  
soft mallets

f at db.1's cut off

18" 35"

82

Db. 1

Db. 2+3

on bridge III

ppp

E String  
soft mallets

Small Gong

gong roll becoming slower and slower, rall.....

exchanging gong hits between db2 & db3

db.2 db.3

musical notation = ca. 76 (exchanging)

rall.....

strum

strum open strings

ff

becoming dramatically slow

~ 7'00"

Guildford, Western Australia  
Bunbury, Western Australia  
November 2020 - February 2021



**premiere:**

10<sup>th</sup> April 2021, UCSD Experimental Theatre,  
La Jolla, California, USA

-

**UC San Diego Bass Ensemble:**

Mark Dresser, Kathryn Schulmeister, Matthew Henson

**with thanks to:**

Mark Dresser, Jessica Flores, Matthew Henson, Rebecca Lloyd-Jones,  
Jeremy Olsen, Roger Reynolds, Kathryn Schulmeister, Matthew Wilson,  
Jeffrey Xing

--

**[www.stephendefilippo.com](http://www.stephendefilippo.com)**