

Viennese Bass Method

Lesson 12. Thumb Position: Reverse Shift

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With this lesson we conclude the period Viennese Bass Method section and introduce the most advanced technical element of the Viennese solo literature - the Reverse Shift. The previous lessons have explained the use of upper harmonics in arpeggio and double stops passages and this lesson will demonstrate the period mastery of using harmonic on the entire melodic phrases. The term Reverse Shift was selected in order to describe this procedure accurately, as it is absent from the standard bass repertoire and contra-intuitive to the modern practice.

In the modern technique we are accustomed to approach the shifting in a linear way, where the higher pitches are approached from the lower strings and positions regardless of the register. In the Viennese technique this rule is an exception in the higher positions where sometime we approach the higher pitch by switching to the lower string - or respectively in descending passages "shift in reverse" from lower to higher string.

This practice is most evident on the 19th position thumb register, in which almost the entire A major scale can be played on the harmonics in a single position, thus offering an exceptional speed and ease of execution once mastered. Most of the Vanhal high register figurations will use this technique and so will also the advanced Sperger concerti. This technique can indeed offer an agility of high register performance on par with solo violoncello and violin practice, and was certainly responsible for the outstanding reception of period performances.

In order to demonstrate the proper register and fingerings, the A major scale is first presented on the top A string (starting on the octave harmonic), and than repeated over the top 3 strings with common period fingerings. In the descending scale you can slowly try to accustom yourself with the Reverse Shift fingerings at your own pace. Once you master them sufficiently, you will be able to reach the pinnacle of Sperger's technique and afford yourself a truly authentic performance of Vanhal and other virtuoso concerti in their original register and tempo. Enjoy, and share with the others if you like it!

Exercise 92. A major scale on top A string

8^{va}-----

Exercise 93. A major scale across the strings - Reverse Shift demonstration

8^{va}-----

Exercise 96. Hoffmeister, Solo Quartet no.3, 3rd Movement, Variation 3

8va-----

III II I _____ II I _____ II I III III II

(8va)-----

I III II _____ III II III II I III II III I II III I II III II I III

Exercise 97. Sperger, Concerto No. 13, 1st Movement

8va-----

II _____ I _____ II I _____

(8va)-----

I _____ I _____ II I _____ II

(8va)-----

I II III _____ IV III _____ II I _____ II III II III

(8va)-----

II III I _____ II I _____ II I II III I II III IV III _____ II III II

(8va)-----

II _____ II I _____ II I II I II _____ I

Exercise 98. Spenger, Concerto No. 13, 1st Movement (included are the original Spenger's markings which indicate the Reverse-Shift technique)

8va-----, Loco 8va----- Loco

1 4 1 2 1 4 2 3

III II I II I III

IV III II I II I

Spenger's markings → ○ ○ 1

I II I III II III II III IV

Exercise 99. Vanhal, Concerto, 1st Movement

8va----- RS

(1 2 3) 3 2 3 3

III II I II I II I II

(8va) V simile I

II I II I II III II I II simile I

(8va) (V) simile

II III II I II simile III I III II I II simile

(8va)

II III II I II simile II III II I

Exercise 100. Vanhal, Concerto, 2nd Movement

8^{va}-----

I ——— II I II I II I II I ——— II I —

(8^{va})-----

I ——— II I ——— II I ——— I —

(8^{va})-----

I ——— II I ——— II III II III II —

Exercise 101. Sperger, Concerto No. 18, 1st Movement, Sight-reading sample

8^{va}-----

I ——— II I ——— II III II III II —

Loco

(8^{va})-----

I ——— II I ——— II III II III II —

(8^{va})-----

I ——— II I ——— II III II III II —