



## **PROJECTE FINAL**

*Ricercando tra i Registri*

The evolution of the musical language and style of the Jazz double bass in the modern composition

3.5.2013

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**Curs:** 2012/2013

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*Sometimes you have to play a long time to be able to play like yourself*

*Miles Davis*



## *ENGLISH*

My final project is to show the development of the language and the style of the double bass and its change of role through different influences. To accomplish this I decided to make an analytic overview of those double bass players that started to use a different and not traditional approach on the instrument. Later, I focused on the bassists and composers who influenced me the most in the latest period of my study career by partly analysing their playing and their composition. Another part of my work was concerned with creating a personal connection with those musicians, who I consider idols of mine. I did this through interviews, to try to understand their creative process on the instrument and in the composition and to deeply comprehend their personal point of view about the evolution of the double bass. At the same time my interest for the compositional aspect was growing together with the necessity to discover my own voice as a musician. Subsequently I made an analysis of my compositions to underline and to get conscious about my personal influences and evolution. Concluding from this, I have created a complete overview and deepened my understanding for the modern approach in Jazz double bass.

## *SPANISH*

Mi proyecto final era para mostrar el desarrollo del lenguaje y el estilo contrabajístico y además el cambio del papel a través de influencias diferentes. Para lograr esto, decidí hacer un resumen analítico de los contrabajistas que comenzaron a utilizar un enfoque diferente y no tradicional en el instrumento. Más tarde, me he centrado en los bajistas y compositores que me han influenciado más en el último período de mi carrera como estudiante, mediante el análisis de parte de sus maneras de tocar y sus composiciones. Otra parte de mi trabajo se refiere a la creación de una conexión personal con los músicos que considero ídolos a través de entrevistas que tratan de entender su proceso creativo en el instrumento y la composición y para comprender en profundidad su punto de vista sobre la evolución del contrabajo. Al mismo tiempo, mi interés por el aspecto

compositivo fue creciendo con la necesidad de descubrir mi propia voz como músico, hice un análisis de mis composiciones para destacar y ser consciente de mis influencias personales y mi evolución. Al final he creado un panorama completo y he profundizado mi comprensión de la concepción moderna del contrabajo jazz.

## ***CATALAN***

El meu projecte final era per mostrar el desenvolupament del llenguatge i l'estil del contrabaix i a més el canvi del paper a través d'influències diferents. Per aconseguir això, vaig decidir fer un resum analític dels contrabaixistes que van començar a utilitzar un enfocament diferent i no tradicional en l'instrument. Més tard, m'he centrat en els baixistes i compositors que m'han influençat més en l'últim període de la meva carrera com a estudiant mitjançant l'anàlisi de part de la seva manera de tocar i les seves composicions. Una altra part de la meva feina es refereix a la creació d'una connexió personal amb els músics que considero ídols a través d'entrevistes que tracten d'entendre el seu procés creatiu en l'instrument i la composició i per comprendre en profunditat el seu punt de vista sobre l'evolució del contrabaix. Alhora, el meu interès per l'aspecte compositiu va anar creixent amb la necessitat de descobrir la meua pròpia veu com a músic, vaig fer una anàlisi de les meves composicions per destacar i ser conscient de les meves influències personals i la meua evolució. Al final he creat un panorama complet i aprofundit la meua comprensió de la concepció moderna del contrabaix jazz.

## ***PREFACE***

Since the beginning of my studies in Jazz at the ESMUC, my priorities were to discover my own personality in music, understanding what I was really looking for, who I wanted to become and how I had to work to discover it.

I wanted to develop together with the technical evolution approach on the instrument a more conscious knowledge of the music I really wanted to play.

I well remember that at the early beginning of my studies at the ESMUC I was somehow concentrated on the skills of the more “traditional” Jazz music trying to explore and learn as much as I could from all the great lessons given by double bass players like Oscar Pettiford, Paul Chambers, Ray Brown, Sam Jones, Ron Carter and many others.

At the same moment, through human contact with other students and with great musicians, experiences with different bands in the city and numerous live concerts of international vanguard musicians, I developed a big personal interest for all the other kinds of Jazz music that I was somehow missing. It was like getting to know another musical dimension. I was immediately captured from this new aspect in Jazz, even though I was still convinced that it was really worth spending all that time on analysing and transcribing the “older/traditional” musicians.

Everything started from this traditional music approach: sound, timing, groove, and structures. Looking at important contemporary bass players it shows that these traditional elements remain in their playing.

It seemed that it was already clear from the very beginning how my final thesis would look like. All four years of my studies I was completely focused on investigating and discovering the development of this evolution of the stylistic and technical modern double bass approach in the contemporary music composition.

There were some names of contemporary bass players that were catching my attention right away, for instance Larry Grenadier, Omer Avital, Avishai Cohen, Ben Allison, Ben Williams, Ben Street, Thomas Morgan and many others, all of them have such a great personality as instrument players and also as composers.

I started to develop a high interest, transcribed and analysed their playing and I was constantly collecting all new albums where they acted either as sideman or bandleader. I felt that somehow this was the direction I would like to take. I always loved to play “standards” and I do still but together with the pleasure of walking and keep swinging it was more about the interplay aspects which caught my attention. This somehow brought me to have a different view on a more interactive and creative approach with the instrument.

Sound, timing and form were always and will be the paradigm I will keep in my approach to the instrument. I am here adding an expressions of my biggest idols, Larry

Grenadier, *“The first bass player’s role is to make the other instruments in the band feel and sounds better”*, or the great John Patitucci, who told me before a concert in Barcelona at Jamboree *“At a certain point, even in the most modern musical approach, someone has to be the traffic cop...this is the double bass player’s first role”*.

I appreciate the chance to write this thesis to connect the described personal musical development with an in-depth analysis of music and playing of my greatest idols.

I want to thank my teachers Horacio Fumero and Mario Rossy for motivating me all the time during this process. Furthermore, I want to thank the director Lluís Vidal for supporting and guiding me during the composition process. I thank Andrew Ackermann for his strict attitude and methodology that resolved most of my technical problems I had when entering the school. I also want to thank Albert Bover for introducing me to the world of playing Piano.

Last but not least I would like to thank my mother and my father who always believed in me and gave me a great support. In addition, thanks to Mareike who was always at my side and never let me down. Thanks also to Garry Fimister (who is probably one of the biggest fans of Scot LaFaro) for passing me useful information and materials.

Many thanks also to WALK TALL, my band whose members are making work really enjoyable through their good mood and Octavio for being loyal friend. Thanks to all my friends and family.

***Giampaolo Laurentaci***



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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose and objectives**

The chosen topic is an analysis about the evolution of language and style of the Jazz double bass with a special emphasis on the modern composition. With the appearance of two emblematic characters Scott LaFaro and Charlie Haden, the Jazz double bass experienced an evolution that changed the way of playing during the construction of the solo and as well during the comping.

This in some way affected the techniques of composition and interpretation of the modern Jazz repertoire. The double bass was not anymore limited to keep merely the rhythmical harmonically pulse, known as “walking”, but gained more freedom in the interaction process with all the members of the band. This stands in contradiction with the historic role of the instrument.

Based on these givens facts and backgrounds, I decided to write this thesis to explore the topic further and link it to the personality and the musical development as a professional double bass player in composing and playing.

One of the main purposes of this work was to analyse and get more in contact with the technical and stylistic elements related to the modern interpretation and composition of contemporary Jazz double bass players who mostly influenced me as a musician in the latest period of my musical experience.

Another objective or purpose of this thesis was to start moving myself towards the modern Jazz composition world by also analysing and describing my own compositions and the approach I have used during my creative process.

This personal aspect is strongly connected to the purpose of understanding in what direction my individual music development is moving and what has influenced my creative approach until now as a player and composer. This means that analysis and personal scope are closely connected and presented coherently.

## 1.2 Structure of work

Getting to the structure of this work, first of all, I have analysed and compared two artists, Charlie Haden and Scott LaFaro with a special focus on a certain historical period, which I chose because I consider it to be a very interesting and significant. After a short biographical overview of both artists I went more into their playing and analysis. Secondly, I paid attention to some other contemporary double bass players who are currently my idols. I collected information from various internet-sources, videos, interviews, books, transcriptions and other kinds of materials, which help to justify and explore the evolution of the history of Jazz. The analysis included solos performing and composition techniques for instance.

Thirdly, I established personal contacts with double bass players by conducting in depths interviews. Among them, I chose local and widely known international artists to investigate on their personal career evolution as performers and in some cases as composers. The highly qualitative material collected through these interviews helped to elaborate on my topic.

Subsequently, a section in this thesis was added about an analysis of my own compositions and playing as I mentioned before.

Lastly follows a conclusion that summarizes the results of the conducted analysis in a holistic way.

## **SECTION 2: SCOTT AND CHARLIE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the following section I am going to explain and analyse two of the most influential double bass players in history: Scott LaFaro and Charlie Haden. They are particularly interesting because according to my personal opinion, the entire *revolution* of double bass playing started through them. Although, Scott and Charlie had different technical approaches on the instrument, both of them emphasized a big interest for the *motivic and melodic line* during the comping and in the solo construction.

Interesting is also, how this two characters have shown some similarities by sharing certain musical and life experiences. Scott and Charlie were even housemates for a while and also both of them got the chance to cooperate in the double quartet of the great saxophone player Ornett Coleman.

I wrote this section by first giving a general overview of their biography (and significant experiences) and then analysing parts or solos of their music, always focussing on my thesis' topic.

### **2.2: The legendary Scott LaFaro**

#### *2.2.1 PRE BILL EVANS EXPERIENCES*

In this section I will report about LaFaro's early life and playing before he met Bill Evans.

Rocco Scott LaFaro was born in Newark (USA) on the 3rd of April in 1936. Being of half Italian and half Scottish origin, his father was an active violin player in New York. Scott first studied clarinet and saxophone at the Ithaca Conservatory. When he left the school in the spring of 1955, he decided to concentrate his energy on the study of double bass.

Scott basically taught himself to play the double bass even though he took some lessons with one of the most influencing double bass player in that area, Red Mitchell. Since the

beginning, he demonstrated a great facility on the instrument together with a serious attitude. He was dedicating his life to this purpose and avoided anything that could interfere with his success for instance drugs or any other senseless activities, which he saw as a waste of time.

It seemed like he somehow felt that he had little time left to live his musical life. Unfortunately, he died at the age of only 25 years during a car accident. Even though his career was particularly short, he asserts himself as one of the most legendary bass players of all time.

I want to add a personal note that Charlie Haden once stated in an interview organized by Wayne Darling in Austria on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November of 1986. This personal statement confirms Scott's attitude and dedication for the double bass:

*"We first met in L.A. at an after hours lounge (Peacocks Lounge) in Hollywood. (...) He really impressed me. I believe he was with Chet Baker's group and the band broke up. So he got stranded in L.A (...) I offered Scotty a place to live. At this time he was practicing the whole day. He would wake up early in the morning and go out in the garden and work out, (push ups, sit ups, gymnastics), have breakfast, and be at it all day with the bass. He would copy Sonny Rollins solos of records and transpose them into bass clef for study. Sonny was one of his favourite musicians. Sometimes he would be sad because he was so frustrated in that he couldn't play the music he heard in his head. (...)" (Bany, 1988:40).*

Being an admirer of Paul Chambers, Charles Mingus, Percy Heath and Ray Brown, LaFaro became professional in the summer of 1955 when he started to collaborate with different rhythm and blues bands. In 1956 he joined the Chet Baker band, whose drug addiction he strongly disliked. When he was not playing, Scott spent all the time practicing in semi-seclusion. (Bany, 1988:40).

In this period Scott met Vic Feldman, one of the most interesting vibes players with whom he played together and soon recorded an album called *"The Arrival of Victor Feldman"*. This was one of the first record works of Scott. The album is in trio format with Vic on the vibes and piano, Scott on the double bass and Stan Levey on the drums. During this recording session, Scott had not yet developed the particular way of playing that he will adopt later with the Billy Evans trio (and that inspired several bass players after his death) but I consider it crucial enough to keep a focus on it.

Scott collaborated with other great musicians like Pat Moran with who he recorded the album retitled "*The Legendary Scott LaFaro*" in 1957 and another one titled "*Beverly Kelly with the Pat Moran Trio*". In 1958, he recorded with Stan Getz, with who Scott collaborated till his early death. On the 1<sup>st</sup> December of the 1960ies, LaFaro took part in the recording session of the "doublequartet" of Ornette Coleman on the side of his housemate Charlie Haden.

The material recorded in that session was used for the two albums "*Free Jazz*" and "*Twins*". Later, in 1961, Scott replaced Charlie Haden in the recording of "*The Art of the Improvisors*" and "*Ornette!*".

I am focussing on this mentioned early phase of Scott LaFaro's life, because as I stated already in the preface of this thesis, the evolution of any stylistic and technical approach is strictly related to the tradition of Jazz. This relation to traditional Jazz is in my opinion a precondition and a basis in order to develop an own modern and free style on the instrument.

By listening to the album of Victor Feldman, the strong and mature talent of Scott truly came to my attention. The album was recorded in 1958 and it is extremely impressive how, after less then three years of playing, LaFaro already had developed an impressive technical ability on the instrument.

### 2.2.2 ANALYTIC APPROACH TO HIS EARLY PLAYING (example "*S'Posin*")

From listening to his playing in the example "*S'Posin*" one hears his solid time feeling with a clear and powerful pulse. His sound is extremely well defined with an impressing projection. His way to "*walk*" is extremely fluid and stable but full of embellishments. He moves in all the ranges of the bass and even when he plays the upper part of the instrument the notes remain clear and powerful. At that time he had already developed a particular technique on the right hand, similar to that one used by a flamenco guitar player. This ability gave him the chance to have a faster articulation on the *pizzicato*, alternating the index and the middle finger of the right hand. As the bass player Jim Atlas reports in an interview "*He'd play Charlie Parker heads, we'd never heard anything like that on a bass...Scotty showed me how to use the two-finger technique (...)* After that, playing extremely up- tempo tunes was a lot easier" (Bany, 1988:39).

Scott's solos are brilliant and astonishing in his facility to build musical periods. His articulation is fluid and similar to the one of a saxophone player. Looking deeper into the solo of LaFaro in "*S' posin*", the strong bebop influence he had in the construction of the phrases is easily recognizable. After the exposition of the theme, LaFaro is the first to start the solo and Victor Feldman switches from vibes to the piano during the entire bass solo.

From the first note, the entire solo in "*S' posin*" is a clear example of rhythmic and melodic coherence full of stylistic characteristics of the bebop era. After a two bars break of only bass, a three notes pattern built on the arpeggio is easily recognizable, which indicates the beginning of other phrases like in the example in bar 3 and 6:



This rhythmic example is strongly present in the first chorus of the bass solo like in bars 11, 19 and 23:



The entire first chorus is articulated in the middle range of the instrument. The periods are built in such a melodic way and look clearly defined with the beginning and the end of the phrases. In the solo there is only one rhythmical motif in bar 12 that he repeats also in the following bar. This is one of the most known licks of LaFaro.





In the second chorus LaFaro explores the upper range of the instrument. He constructs phrases with an exciting ability that expresses technical skills concerning intonations and coordination between left and right hand like in the following examples:



While transcribing this solo, I realized how many connections one can find between Scott and Paul Chambers, one of the most relevant and active double bass players in Jazz music. It is visibly clear how much LaFaro was focusing on that musical approach. The faster articulated phrases are somehow more defined and the notes played in all the range of the instrument are clearly recognizable.

### 2.2.3 THE BILL EVANS TRIO

In my personal opinion, the most interesting music period of Scott LaFaro is linked to the collaboration with Bill Evans. LaFaro's approach to ensemble playing is probably his most important contribution to the art of Jazz bass playing. This approach is often described as being "conversational".

The formation of the Bill Evans trio is one of the most interesting events in the history of Jazz music. This trio built a new way of thinking about the group improvisation, having a more counterpointed and polyphonic attitude.

Evans wanted that bass and drums were not regarded as time-keeping *machines*. As he told Brian Hennessey in an interview: *"I wanted to make room for the bass and try to leave some fundamental roles empty so that the bass could pick them up. If I am going to be sitting there playing roots, fifths and full voicing, the bass is relegated to a time machine... Contrast is [also] important to me. I even thought that drums would be a problem and we might be better without them (...) I was astounded*

*by his [Scott] creativity (...) there was so much music in him, he had a problem controlling it... he certainly stimulated me to other areas, and perhaps I helped him contain some of his enthusiasm (...)*” (Shadwick, 2002:82).

The meeting between Bill, Scott and Paul Motian was fascinating from the beginning. Bill had just finished the collaboration with Miles Davis in 1958 and had therefor some strong input to create his own trio. Bill decided to work with Jimmy Garrison on the bass and Kenny Dennis on the drums. The trio got a booking at the Basin Street East club (New York) as an intermission group. In that period, Benny Goodman was living his triumphant return and was the big star in the scene. In contrast to that, the trio of Bill Evans did not receive any kind of support especially from the owner of the Basin Street Club. This situation brought Jimmy and Kenny to give up the band and in a few weeks Bill was forced to change a big amount of drummers and bass players. (Bany, 1988:46)

In the same period Scott LaFaro was working in a club nearly located and sometimes visited the Basin Street club. One day, Bill offered him work and called Pol Motian. Since the first moment, the main goal was to build a trio for working out and getting ready for a record because Bill was already winning some more attention after the work with Miles Davis. (Bany, 1988:46)

After a few gigs in another club in Greenwich Village, the trio was recorded and the first album *“Portrait in Jazz”* came out. Scott was only 23 years old and already showed in that occasion the ability to play melodies and lines in the upper part of the instrument. About this, Bill Evans said in an interview: *“Other guys would hit a couple of high notes and then come down. But Scott made it part of the total plan. As young as he was, and only having played for four or five years, he brought a great, mature organization to what he was doing”* (Bany, 1988:48).

#### 2.2.4 ANALYSIS OF SCOTT’S COMPING IN WITCHCRAFT

In relation to the *“Portrait in Jazz”* album and the polyphonic approach of LaFaro, it is necessary to focus on some aspects that could help to justify and describe this developed technique. Analysing the transcription of the bass comping in *Witchcraft*, already in the theme exposition there are countless examples that could be defined. LaFaro is constantly looking for rhythmic figures variety able to develop the

counterpoint that makes his way to play so “special” and different from the “old-fashion” style. He might play quarter notes, although he preferred to explore the range of the instrument moving with a distinct ability and using different rhythmic patterns as we can see in the following example:



Another interesting aspect is the counterpointed figure he built from the pick up of the B section while Bill Evans continues to play merely the melody giving him enough space to interact with the theme and avoiding almost entirely the piano left hand comping.



The last four bars of the B- section are the only ones in all the theme exposition where LaFaro is *walkin'*. After that, in the C part of the song, there is another counterpoint example that emphasizes the great level of communication reached by the trio. In bar 34 Scott filled the space left from Bill as a sort of answer to the melody like also in bar 39. It seems that he would start to play the solo first but surprisingly in bar 40 it is Bill Evans who launches his improvisation.



His playing was evolving tremendously since the time he collaborated with Chet Baker and through Bill Evans Scott was winning the discipline he needed. These level of counterpointed interplay was possible because of Pol Motian’s role, who is constantly aware on listening and keeping the other two musician’s ideas solid. They reached the “(...) *three person voice—one voice (...)*” as remarked from Pol in an interview (Bany, 1988:48).

## 2.2.5 “EXPLORATIONS” AND “VILLAGE VANGUARD”

After some months of distance, when Scott was involved in the collaboration with Ornette Coleman, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1961, the Bill Evans trio recorded another album called “*Explorations*”. The conditions under which the trio recorded were not ideal. There were several tensions in that time between Scott and Bill caused through for example the drug use of Bill Evans and also because both musicians were at the same time collaborating with other artists. (Shadwick, 2002:86)

LaFaro was playing in that occasion with a borrowed bass and the sound was darker and different from the previous recordings. However, the result was extremely brilliant and the connection between the members came out. (Shadwick, 2002:86)

Bill Evans said: “*Scott was just an incredible guy about knowing where your next thought was going to be. I wondered, how did he know I was going there? And he was probably feeling the same way*” (Shadwick, 2002:86). In the theme *Sweet And Lovely* the counterpointed approach between bass and piano is extremely recognisable while the drums are kind of directing the organization of the entire theme.

The Bill Evans’ trio was winning a lot of attention from the public but also from musicians and critics. In the mid of June in 1961 the group was booked for fifteen days at the club “*Village Vanguard*” in Greenwich Village. It seemed that it was the right

moment for a live record since the band developed an extraordinary feeling for the big amount of gigs and rehearses they had over the months (Shadwick, 2002:88).

On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1961, the band was playing a full day concert. They were recorded by *Riverside*. The whole session included different versions of the same repertoire that later was appropriately selected from Bill and his manager. From that Sunday there was enough material for two albums: “*Sunday at the Village Vanguard*” and “*Waltz for Debby*”. The result of those records was impressive, not only for the great interpretation of the musicians, but also for the technical results reached from the recording process. As the producer Orrin Keepnews remarked, the sound of the recording was crisp and undated for the ability of the sound engineer Dave Jones and also for the fact that, maybe for the first time, Bill got the chance to play a record on a tuned and high quality piano. In relation to this recording Scott LaFaro said: “(...) *I’ve finally made a record that I am happy with*” (Shadwick, 2002:88).

#### 2.2.6: ANALYSIS OF SOLO IN GLORIA’S STEPS

Focusing on the tune “*Gloria’s steps*” (take 2), written by Scott shows noticeably a considerable amount of information. LaFaro wrote this song for a dancer named Gloria. His song has an irregular form with a two-five bars A- section and a ten-bar bridge. It is somehow clear by listening to the two albums that LaFaro was lowering the bridge. It definitely helped him to have more technical facility and agility on the instrument. However, the general result of the bass sound is impressive concerning volume, attack and definition. Mainly, while he plays triplets and faster phrases, the sound produced from his strong articulation and powerful touch is crackling and extremely definite. Already in the beginning of his solo one can notice an example of these characteristics.

S. LaFaro

In addition, it is important to notice the great coordination between right and left hand. A powerful action of the right fingering, without an appropriate articulation of the left hand, could not obtain the same result. During the whole solo, there are several examples of this effect especially when Scott moved on the upper range of the instrument.

Another aspect to consider is LaFaro's ability in building phrases. They often do not start on the first beat's strong point of the bar and are not confined by the bar's lines. A strong melodic feeling in a "question and answer" format connects the periods.

When the phrases climb higher there is a stronger dynamic that emphasizes and creates excitement and tension. Often Scott builds rhythmic ideas from the higher notes.



The entire solo presents rhythmic variations. LaFaro has an extreme ability to change from quarters to triplet notes. Together with all the other aspects noticed in advance, this quality makes it particularly interesting to follow the evolution of the periods that result always original and never foregone.



In this solo, the ability of Scott playing through the chords' changes is considerably stressed and his awareness to find all the notes that fall outside of the basic major triad is shown, which adds character to a chord, also called "colour notes". Looking for example at the top of the second chorus, Scott creates a beautiful descending melodic line through the chords' changes. The line starts on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Fma7, moves the 9<sup>th</sup> of Fma7, which then becomes the 3<sup>rd</sup> of EbMaj7 etc. Looking closely at the phrase, we can notice the whole tone scale. Even if this scale is associated to dominant 7 chords and altered chords, played slowly and displaced over the three bars of major 7<sup>th</sup> chords, LaFaro managed to hit all the "pretty notes". Then, in the fourth bar, Scott grabs the altered notes of the C7#9 chords.



Ten days after the last Sunday at the Vanguard, on the night of July 4, 1961, Scott died in a car accident. He is considered one of the biggest losses of the history of Jazz music. His support to the Bill Evans trio was inestimable and marked one of the most important collaboration of Bill Evans. The trio reached in few months the higher communication level and earned without any doubt the own voice it was looking for.

After the death of Scott, Bill changed formation several times and always collaborated with the most relevant musicians of the Jazz scene, but in my opinion, the trio never reached that particular level on intensity and enchantment again.

### 2.3 Charlie Haden, a double bass poet

Charlie Edward Haden was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1937 in Shenandoah (Iowa). He was raised in a musical family that often performed all together on a radio program playing country music and American folk songs. When he was only 22 months old, Charlie appeared on the radio, singing a “yodel” song with the family. Since that time, he performed as a singer with the family band until the age of 15. In that time he got polio that paralyzed his throat muscles and his vocal cords. He was unable to control his intonation and was forced to give up with singing. Most of the time Charlie was listening to a lot of music on the radio: classical, country and Jazz from which he got fascinated. As Haden remarked in an interview with Amy Goodman for the show “Democracy now”, his decision to become a Jazz musician had come after seeing a concert with Charlie Parker, Billy Holiday and Lester Young. (Goodman, 2006).

In the Haden’s house, Charlie got the chance to practice the double bass of his older brother. He started working towards that goal and refused a scholarship from Oberlin



Conservatory in Ohio. Later, he decided to move to Los Angeles in the Westlake College of Modern Music. The main aspect that moved Charlie to go to Los Angeles was that his favourite piano player, Hampton Hawes was living there. Charlie got the chance to meet and work with him and the sax player Art Pepper. After his first recording with the piano player Paul Bley, Charlie began to collaborate with an enormous amount of legendary musicians like: Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett, John Coltrane, Don Cherry and Archie Shepp. He found his “American Quartet” with Paul Motian and Dewey Redman, he played in the collective “Old and New Dreams”, founded with Carla Bley the “Liberation Music Orchestra”. After that, Haden set up the “Charlie Haden Quartet West” and recorded in duo with Kenny Barron, Hank Jones and Pat Metheny. He collaborated with Joe Henderson and Al Foster, Billy Higgins, Lee Konitz, Brad Mehldau and many other great musicians from the Jazz scene. Haden won countless music awards and two Grammys; he remains being one of the most active musicians of the century.

Being a brilliant composer and player, he continuously surprises all his followers until today with different stylistic works like his album “Rambling Boy”, a Country-American folks album recorded in 2008 as tribute to his roots with the collaboration of the entire Haden’s family and friends.

In my opinion, the thing that makes Haden unique as a musician and bass player is his strong connection with the melodic approach present in any kind of music and collaboration he had. He gained a distinct voice that makes him recognizable from the first moment. His music is heartfelt and he is one of the most influential characters that contributed to the evolution of the modern double bass approach.

As Haden confirmed also in an interview for Barnes & Noble, having been a singer in the early period, impacted surely on his way to play the bass later on because it showed him the importance of beautiful melody and also harmonies. The deep sense of melody is constantly present in all the works Charlie makes, from the most radical collaboration with Ornette to the most songlike conception. Like Charlie remarked “(...) *It’s just growing and getting deeper into melody and deeper into beauty (...)*.”

He also added and told his students: “*Don’t think of yourself as a Jazz musician and don’t think of the instrument you are playing (...) you won’t discover your own music.* (Barnes&Noble, 2002).

Consulting another interview from Ethan Iverson, piano player of *The Bad Plus*, published on Downbeat and reported on the web page “Do The Math”, I had the chance

to get some information about those bass players who influenced Charlie in the early beginning of his career. Above all, the characters named during the interview were Wilbur Ware, Percy Heath, Curly Russell and Tony Potter, Oscar Pettiford, Charlie Mingus and many others. Haden affirmed without any doubt that who was really distinctive to him was Paul Chambers

*(...)! He had a way of playing chromatic notes in his bass lines that was just unreal. He would go up into the high register, and then skip down, tying it together... He had this great sound, and this great time. He and Jimmy Cobb really got it together for Kind of Blue, with fire and subtlety. Bill Evans' comping is so inspiring on that record, too. That's why those heavy horn players played so great on that record: Bill Evans, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb. (Iverson, 2008).*

Another aspect to underline about the personality of Charlie Haden is the fact that he is one of the most politically outspoken personalities of Jazz music of this time. *"During the middle of the Vietnam war, Haden formed the "Liberation Music Orchestra" that mixed songs from the Spanish Civil War, anti war songs and a tribute to Che Guevara. He recently reformed the group to respond to the Bush administration and the invasion of Iraq. He titled the new album "Not in Our Name"(Goodman, 2006).*

In another interview on the web page taken by Jim Roberts for the magazine *Bass Players*, Haden states an experience he had during a European Tour with Ornette Coleman in Portugal. Charlie wanted to refuse to make that gig in that festival because he was rejecting the politic situation of the country. Finally, he attended the gig also because he did not want to put Ornette in an embarrassing situation with the festival's organization but only under the condition of dedicating his song named *"Song for Che"* to the black liberation movements in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau. It was in 1971 when Charlie stepped out on the microphone to introduce one of his compositions and dedicated his song to the cause of freedom. The next day, Haden was arrested and after a night of interrogation he was released and forced to leave the country immediately. This decision remarked the whole career of Charlie and underlines his commitment to the cause of human rights. Like Haden remarked in the interview: *"I never sat down and said, 'Well, I'm going to become politically involved,'" he explains. "I grew up in the Midwest and the South, and all around was evidence of racism. I felt the injustice, and I just followed my feelings and tried to tell people how I felt."*(Roberts, 2011).

It was extremely difficult for me to select the material to analyze Haden. Not only for the huge amount of collaboration the artist had but also because he is one of my favorite

musicians. Synthetizing, without missing all the crucial aspects of this artist, made me somehow afraid. However, since my work is supposed to be an overview on different musicians that influenced me and that contributed to the evolution of the double bass, I was forced to take a decision. In the next section, I will present Haden's approach about his first most important collaboration with the sax player Ornette Coleman, an example about the trio with Pat Metheny and Billy Higgins and about the album in duo with Pat named *Beyond the Missouri Sky*.

### 2.3.1 THE MEETING WITH ORNETTE AND THE SHAPE OF JAZZ TO COME

The meeting between Charlie Haden and the sax player Ornette Coleman is probably one of the most extraordinary experiences in the history of Jazz music. The two musicians were in that time the activists of a new revolutionary movement, "The New Things". This is the beginning of *Free Jazz* and the two characters were impacting the world in the same way that Parker and Gillespie did some years before.

Charlie met Ornette the first time in a club in Los Angeles called "The Hague". He was there listening to the concert of Gerry Mulligan's band. In an interview, Haden remembers that a young alto player was invited on the stage to share the session. He was playing a plastic alto. As soon as he started to play the band asked him to stop so he got his sax and went away from the back door out of the club. Charlie was astonished. He never heard anything like that, it was totally different and that player had such a personal human voice on the instrument. The next day, talking with Lennie MacBrowne, drummer of Pould Bley group, Charlie asked: *"I heard this guy play, who was brilliant, and played like the human voice." And he said, "Was he playing a plastic horn?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "That was Ornette Coleman. I'll introduce you to him." He brought him in.*"(Goodman, 2006).

This is how everything started. They first began to rehearse in duo and later added Don Cherry at the trumpet and Billy Higgins on the drums.

Charlie learned a lot through the experience with Ornette Coleman, first of all about the importance of listening. He remarked that the composition from Ornette included also changes and structure. All of them had beautiful melodies. He remembered that Ornette told him always to play the changes written until when he would leave the structure of

the song. In that moment Charlie was constantly following him and exploring the new changes creates during the solo. More or less the same thing was happening while Don Cherry was playing.

Sometimes Charlie was performing what he heard instead of playing what was written and most of the times Ornette accepted it. Charlie also remarked the importance in his role to wait for Ornette playing first and later taking the decision to contrast or playing with him. Haden stated also the ability of Ornette of writing beautiful songs with an interesting structure: intro, ending, changes of time. He also remembered how much Don Cherry was involved in organizing all the parts of the tunes during the rehearsal's time. It is extremely interesting to realize how the band was ready to play so crazy and free but be always tied together. The structures of the tunes were always clear. (Iverson, 2008)

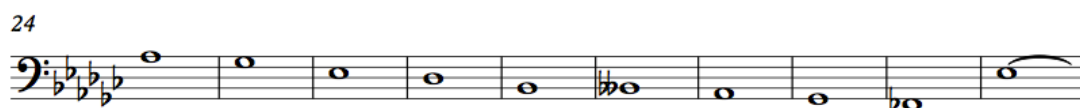
One of the most revolutionary albums was without any doubt "*The shape of Jazz to come*" recorded in 1959 and released from *Atlantic Record*. Regarding this album, I would like to focus on the 3<sup>rd</sup> song named "*Peace*".

In my opinion, this song is particularly interesting for many aspects one is the entire compositional as such. The song follows the A – A – B – A structure and is in Eb- even if the melody moves sometimes in closer tonality like Bmaj for example when the sax and the trumpet play the first line of the theme. In the form of the tune there are several anomalies. Focusing in the A part of the theme exposition, it is possible to notice one of the most characteristic points of Haden's playing, the interaction with the melody. The A part is also distinct from the use of the *fermatas* like in the following example:



Those *fermatas* are used to emphasize the *answer- question* aspect that lead the melody in the A part. The same phrase is played half tone down (bar 8, 9). In bar 10 there is the resolution of the motivic line that marks strictly the end of the first A played unison from bass sax and trumpet. In the following two bars Charlie plays a kind of *walkin'* until the beginning of the next A- section.

The entire B- section, progressed for 10 bars, is played only from bass and drums. Billy Higgins marks a swing comping while Charlie Haden passes to the bow and plays a descending line with whole notes:



Later, there is the last A- section. The priority given to the melody is a constant permanent in all the execution. Any kind of anomalies and pauses are used with the function to stress the great lyricism of Ornette and Don.

During the solo section, Charlie starts directly to walk and uses the theme's line to connect the different members of the band. The A- sections count 11 bars in total, but this is not a permanence structure. Charlie follows the solo players harmonically using substitutions in relation to the tonal center investigated from Ornette and from Don. The B- section is used as landmark and Charlie plays the same descending line of the melody with some variation and with quarter notes. In the B- section, during the solo, there is a softer dynamic reflected also in the theme's exposition. After the solo of sax

and trumpet there is the theme exposition once more and the song finishes with a small coda where Charlie plays freely bi- chords.

### 2.3.2 REJOICING

The following example I want to introduce is a Charlie Haden's solo in the song "Blues For Pat" from the album *Rejoicing* of Pat Metheny. Those two great musicians got the chance to collaborate during their careers countless times. *Rejoicing* was released in 1984 by the ECM label. It is an album in trio format with Pat Metheny on the guitar, Charlie Haden on the bass and Billy Higgins on the drums. The album is a mixture of original songs and partly covers. The first tune in the album is "*Lonely woman*", a composition by Horace Silver, then there are three compositions by Ornette Coleman, "*Tears inside*", "*Humpty Dumpty*" and "*Rejoicing*", one composition by Charlie Haden dedicated to the guitar player titled "*Blues for Pat*", two songs written by Metheny "*Story from a Stranger*", "*The Calling*" and an other one written by Pat and Charlie named "*Waiting for an Answer*".

After the album *Bright Size Life* (1976), *Rejoicing* is the second trio work of Pat Metheny. In the entire album, a strong elegant atmosphere remains where the leader passes from the acoustic guitar to the electric one and to his synth guitar. Haden's lines are strong and built with a beautiful time feeling while Billy is decorating the entire sound structure of the trio. The trio built a big variety of *climax* full of interactions. Looking deep into Haden's solo in *Blues for Pat* there are aspects I consider important to mention. Charlie is the first one to take the solo.

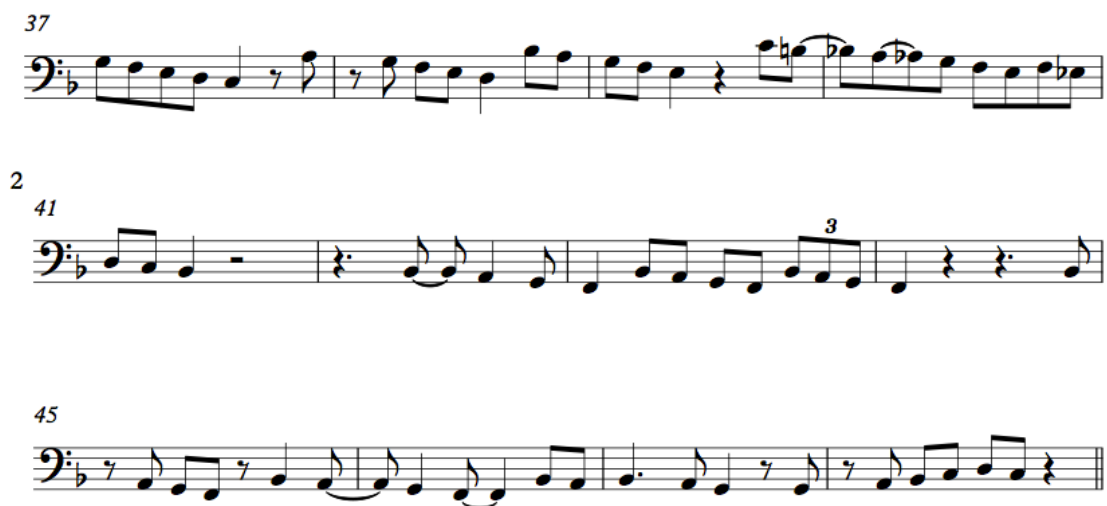
His sound is full and dynamic. Every note he plays has a specific importance and heart-full feeling. He improvises for 6 choruses on the regular blues form. Since the first note, the motivic development is a priority expressed by the bass player. During the first chorus of the solo, as we can see in the following example, Charlie repeats and adapts the same melodic line to the blues changes with some rhythmic variations full of empathy:



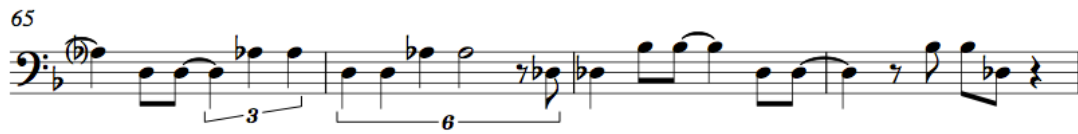
This melodic motif continues till bar 7 where then another one starts and continues through the second chorus till bar 16. Charlie elaborates a uniform concept by breaking the bar lines that limit the blues structure in this way:



Charlie's phrases often do not start with the strong movement of the first beat. Looking at the 4<sup>th</sup> chorus, we can recognize this other strong component that characterizes this beautiful poetic double bass player. His way to move creates a tension and release effect. His music just breathes on the changes:



On the last chorus there is a clear example of how Charlie plays some rhythmic variations from bar 65 till bar 68 catching the attention of the listeners. His ability to float on the time is impressive just as any choice of the notes he makes.



Although the solo does not remark virtuosic technical skills, Charlie's emphasis is stressed in a distinct way that underlines his extraordinary musicality.

### 2.3.3 THE DUO'S ATMOSPHERE

"*Beyond the Missouri Sky*" was the album that made me move the first step into the double bass world. In that time I was used to play the electric bass and I still remember the emotions that the listening of that music created in me. I was astonished from the beautiful sound of Charlie Haden; it was just a pure example of "beauty". Recorded and released in 1997, the album is full of intimate and tender lyricism. Metheny plays acoustic and classical guitar and in some tracks he overdubbed some texture using also the midi guitar and synthesizers to shape an orchestral details. The lines of Haden twine through the guitar's melody in a complete balance. The strong supporting time feeling given from Haden and his deep and harmonic sound prove the strict connection he keeps with the traditional role of the bass.

His minimalistic approach makes the music sound better. The entire album is a trip into the poetic aspect of Metheny and Haden's playing. *Beyond the Missouri Sky* contains three compositions from Charlie Haden: *Waltz for Ruth*, *Our Spanish Love Song* and *First Song*. Looking into *Waltz for Ruth*, we find another strong example that confirms the great melodic approach of the double bass player. The entire solo is constructed on the low- middle range of the double bass. His solo follows an impressing logic elaboration. The melodic cells are built in a question-answer method, trailing the



conversation approach that characterizes Haden. He stresses the rhythmic idea and adapts it through the chord changes in a descending- ascending line:



In the first chorus we can find another example of this specific technique like in the next extract from the transcription:



It is interesting how Charlie decides to play quadruplets notes on the waltz tune. This creates a special effect emphasized by the comping support of Metheny.



The same approach is repeated in the second chorus where it even seems as they move in a 4/4-swing feeling because also Metheny reacts to the rhythmic suggestions of Charlie:



Haden avoids the use of patterns and leaks that are typically related to the bebop era. In contrast to this, he still keeps the sound characteristics of the traditional double bass

players, refusing to use pick ups or electronic devices that could somehow influence the natural acoustic sound of the instrument.

He assembles his instrument's strings with a higher action than Scott LaFaro. This technical characteristic had also a strong influence on his technical approach with the instrument giving him the possibility to keep *old fashion* sounds. On the other hand he got the chance to develop a dynamic sense in all the ranges of the instrument stressed from his ability to create melody full of lyricism.

It seems obvious to me, after looking at some details from transcriptions and listening sessions, that Charlie never worried about the quantity of notes but about the quality of each one of them. His minimalistic approach, the way he floats on the time and his interaction with the music amazed the listeners as much as the virtuosity of LaFaro.

I would like to end this part of my work with one brief description that Charlie made about the important components of music that explain his attitude and value in the music world more than anything: “(...) *It's about spirituality...It's about creation...It's about spontaneity (...)* really what we do when we improvise is we touch these deeper places inside of us (...) *the very important thing in improvisational music is to discover your sound...when I play it's very important to me to bring out the sound like the tree of the bass...I like to sound like a rain forest*” (The Mole, 2009).

## **SECTION 3: MY RECENT PERSONAL INFLUENCES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the following section I want to present a brief analysis of the contemporary Jazz double bass musicians and composers that played a crucial role in my own development. As I already pointed out in the preface of my thesis, I had started studying

and analysing the *traditional* musicians and their contribution to the history of Jazz music and later my attention moved to the modern contemporary Jazz bass players.

Once more, transcriptions, emulations and analyses helped me to collect information on their stylistic musical approach. In order to do so, an important aid was given by my school experiences. Teacher's support and the possibility to constitute combo classes under the guide of the professors, gave me the chance to get deeper into the modern aspect of Jazz that I was interested in.

I decided to focus in this section of the thesis on three more of my favourite musicians (in addition to Scott LaFaro and Charlie Haden) trying to underline the aspects that I considered relevant about them being performers or composers. I therefore focussed on Larry Grenadier's performing ability especially during the solo's construction and on the compositional aspects of Ben Allison and Omer Avital. In addition, I got the chance to establish a personal contact with them as remarked in the Interviews section. Their support in these interviews was crucial to understand their personal development and gave me suggestions on how to create the right focus for my thesis.

### **3.2 Larry Grenadier**

Talking about one of my strongest influences in the latest period of my school career, I need to mention Larry Grenadier who is one of the most active sidemen in the contemporary history of Jazz music. Larry was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1966 in San Francisco (USA) in a musician's family. The father was a trumpet player and the two brothers were playing drums and trumpet. He started to get close to music at the age of ten when he began to study trumpet with his father. Later, Larry started playing the electric bass and got part of a rock cover band with his two brothers. In the same period, his older brother Phil got closer to the Jazz music. Larry soon was influenced from the taste of his brother and got fascinated from the sound of the double bass.

As remarked in the interview section (see section 4) Larry's passion for the double bass was stimulated early when he was only 11 years old, after watching a live performance of the legendary bass player, Ray Brown. Larry was astonished from the big sound produced by Ray. Through this experience he started to focus more on other bass

players like: Charles Mingus, Paul Chambers, Wilbur Ware, Oscar Pettiford, Charlie Haden and many others.

When he was 12 years old, he started to take classical and Jazz private lessons with several local bass players like: Chris Poehlor, Paul Breslin, Frank Tusa, Michael Burr and Steven Tromontozzi. When Larry turned 16 he was already starting to work professionally by getting the chance to play with numerous famous artists performing in the area of the San Francisco Bay, where he lived. Among these artists there were Johnny Griffin, Bobby Hutcherson, Art Farmer and many others.

As Larry comments on his personal web page, he got the chance to collaborate with more veteran musicians through playing with Larry Vuckovich, a great piano player from San Francisco.

Larry's potentials grew tremendously. In my interview, he stated that most of the time he was the worst player in the band and that he learned very much how to organize his practice in order to deal with the difficulties of the repertoire. He never pursued formal Jazz studies in music school but he studied English Literature at the Stanford University. There in Stanford Larry got the chance to meet and work with two legendary musicians: Stan Getz and Joe Henderson (Grenadier Biography, 2013).

After graduating in 1989, Larry moved to Boston and started a tour around the world with Gary Burton. In 1993, Larry met Brad Mehldau with who he established a long collaboration until today. They formed the Brad Mehldau Trio, collaborating first with the Spanish drummer Jorge Rossy and later with Jeff Ballard. This trio in my opinion is one of the most vanguard experiences in the contemporary Jazz music. The musicians shared their creative ideals in a personal development, finding the characteristic sound that distinguishes them from others.

While continuing to work with Brad Mehldau, Larry collaborated also with other Jazz giants such as Pat Metheny, John Scofield and Paul Motian. In 2000, Larry formed the "Fly Trio" with Mark Turner on the sax and Jeff Ballard on the drums. With this formation the three musicians presented an original repertoire in which all of them are involved as composers. Until now Larry does not regard himself as the leader of a band. As he stated in an interview on his personal web page: *"(...) I haven't felt strongly*

*moved to do it, because I already feel so satisfied with what I'm doing. I feel so lucky to be surrounded by great musicians who I'm continually inspired by, which is all I ever wanted out of music"* (Grenadier Biography, 2013).

Through online sources and interviews, I collected information about important aspects and experiences that Larry considered crucial about his own development and inspiration.

In an interview with Marta Ramòn done last year, Larry remarked how much those bass players who played Miles Davis had influenced him. Grenadier strongly mentions also the collaboration with Gary Barton and with Joe Henderson. Those two experiences were extremely important for the learning experiences as much as the collaboration with the guitar player Pat Metheny. About this last one Larry says: "*(...) He's totally immersed in music; he's completely given himself to searching the musical world and I think it's very inspiring. I have played a lot with him so you can get to know somebody in a deeper place and you can participate in that. Those concerts showed me what I want to work on. Those experiences are very helpful in many ways. It's great*" (Ramon, 2012).

In my opinion, Larry presents a strong balance between the traditional and modern approach; that is why I decided to focus on him intensively. He continuously keeps the role of traditional bass playing supporting the band, but somehow Larry is still able to have an original and personal style.

His sound is powerful and his way to approach the music is transparent and extremely clear. This aspects make the music flow in total relax, supporting the ideas of the musicians who interact with him. As he reported in several interviews, including mine, Larry tries to relate with the music always remembering that the most important role of the bass is to make everybody sound as good as possible.

This attitude makes him one of the most requested bass players in the contemporary scene of Jazz music. A very interesting statement was in my opinion a specific answer during the interview with Marta Ramòn. She asked Larry about the balance in music between intellect and soul. Larry's answer was the following: "*It's a good question. We were talking about this last night, Jeff [Ballard], Mark [Turner] and me, [about how] it's too easy to over-intellectualize everything and also the way Jazz is taught now at schools. So we have to verbalize at first and then play the instrument and see what's going on. This is an intellectual process. But for me, what I learned wasn't like that. It was like, you listened to*

*something and you tried to play it, pretty intuitive ... so I think [in] my favorite music, [within the] intellectual process another thing happens that makes the music work, and it's pure. With a really good technique you can express yourself but the way to make contact is not about technique, it's about emotion. So in a way, the ultimate music experience is zero intellect, but you know that without the intellect you cannot move on with all the process"* (Ramon, 2012).

Another aspect that makes Larry's playing so interesting to me is his personal approach to music. He keeps a strong clear supporting attitude in the band even if his way to interact shows a strong freedom component.

Grenadier can break the time structure of a tune exploring the whole instrument and interact with the other musicians but still sounds extremely solid. This aspect is strongly related with his outstanding time feeling in constructing the bass lines. As he also underlined in an interview with Mila Burzotta for the web page Jazzview, he likes finding freedom within a strict format. In the same interview Larry stated that his attitude in music changes depending on whom he plays with. Playing in trio together with a pianist, usually gave him more freedom because the piano has a stronger harmonic presence than a sax or a guitar (Burzotta, 2001).

I got the chance to meet Larry personally and to spend some time with him before one of his concerts with the Fly Trio. In that time I borrowed him my bass. I was amazed about how he could play another instrument settled in a totally different way and still keep that particular touch that sounds just like Larry.

He is an extremely generous and helpful person always ready to answer any of my questions. I think that these personal attitudes are also reflected in his music and in his way to support the band.

For this section I decided to present two examples that emphasise the great performing ability of Larry Grenadier. Also in this case, it was hard to select the material among numerous transcriptions I did about this bass player. Since my thesis aims to be a description and analysis of the evolution of the stylistic approach of the double bass, I needed to synthesize the big amount of information I have collected till now. In this section I will focus on the solo taken from the song *"Unrequited"* of the album *"The Art of Trio vol.3"* with the Brad Mehldau Trio. Another focus lays on the solo in *"Waltz for Ruth"* from a live concert with Pat Metheny. In this last one I want to compare the

two different ways of playing between Larry Grenadier and Charlie Haden by finding analogies and differences in relation to the previous example reported in the section about Charlie Haden.

### 3.2.1 THE ART OF TRIO VOL.3

Released by the Warner Bros Records in the 1998, "*The Art of Trio Vol.3 (Songs)*" is in my opinion one of the most beautiful works of the Brad Mehldau Trio. The album is a celebration of "songs" just like the subtitle already shows.

The album is a mix of original songs written by Brad Mehldau but also includes American standards, a song of the rock band Radiohead and another composition from Nick Drake.

In my opinion the Mehldau trio reaches a strong emotional melancholic atmosphere with this work expressed by intensity, which is maybe comparable with the legendary trios of Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett.

Listening to the album one can detect a dense level of interplay built from the solid interaction of Larry and the drummer Jorge Rossy by constantly supporting the ambiances proposed by the piano player. Focussing on Larry one can easily detect his firm pulse in comping with a strong and impressive sound and a rhythmic presence. He always attends the music necessities of the trio but when it is time to play a solo he emerges with all his personality and creativity.

Next, looking at the Mehldau's composition titled "*Unrequited*", one can detect the strong balance feeling expressed by Larry already in the theme's exposition. He supports the melody played from the piano player with a minimalistic approach playing merely half notes. Since Brad Mehldau's approach has strong baroque components marked from the lines and built by the left hand in a *fuga* aesthetic, Larry decides to support the entire melody using rhythmic variations only sometimes to leverage the lines of the theme. The song is furthermore "through composing". After the theme's exposition Larry is the first to take solo. During the first chorus Mehldau decides to give the whole space to the bass and to the drums. I want to underline the extreme conviction and sureness remarked from Larry's phrasing in building the solo. He is always aware

of proposing the motivic development through technical abilities that never replace the musical instinct. The phrases are built with a strong rhythmic form and notes are played with a constant transparency and clarity. When Larry builds the phrase out of the strong beat, he decides to fall in the strongest point of the following bar, remarking the stable ideas in this way:



The entire concept of the solo follows and reflects this rhythmic idea in a constant tension- release suggestion.

Another individuality of Larry is to propose and adapt to the changes of a specific rhythmic pattern. We can find an example of this concept from bar 11 till bar 16 in the solo's transcription I have made:



Larry's phrases are built in an ascending- descending form going through the chords of the tune with scales and arpeggios.

Grenadier usually uses stable notes to jump to the upper octave of the instrument remarking the same musical idea:



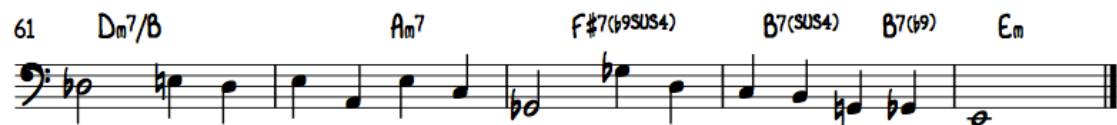


Brad starts to comp Larry from the second chorus. Also in this occasion, from the firsts bars of the transcription, I noticed the tendency of Larry in pointing out rhythmic patterns like in the following examples:



In these last three bars, Larry emphasises a rhythmic development close to the aesthetic of “*latin music*”.

The whole solo is built following an exceptional strong approach till a descending tension ending that underlines Larry’s coherences and clarity in attitude.



### 3.2.2 WALTZ FOR RUTH

Searching in *YouTube* for Larry Grenadier’s solos, I found one video of a beautiful duet with Pat Metheny and Larry Grenadier. I cannot define from which concert it has been taken, but probably it was a concert in Italy since it was promoted by Rai Sat, an Italian famous TV channel. The duet is performing a song by Charlie Haden named *Waltz for Ruth* that I have already analysed in the section about Haden.

I felt motivated to make a transcription of Larry's solo in this video as I did for Haden with the intention to visualize the different approaches of the two bass players in interpreting the same song.

Once more I was fascinated by Grenadier's playing. The music like also in Haden's case, develops in a natural atmosphere. There are of course differences between the two bass players, especially concerning their different technical way to relate to the music but somehow there is a strong component they both keep in their playing. I am talking about the big priority of the two musicians in building melodic phrases and avoiding traditional patterns from the Jazz music vocabulary. Another aspect the two bass players have in common is that both of them try to catch the most acoustic and natural sound of the bass. Most of the time Larry plays without amplifier and pick-ups. He prefers to use a microphone and a normal monitor on the stage to keep the feeling to play acoustically.

Like in Haden's case, also in Larry's playing one can figure out his affectation in building melodic lines that follow answer- question cells, trailing the conversational approach:

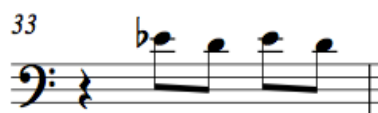


This aspect is strongly present during the entire solo and highlights a solid logic development of Larry's lines.

Another characteristic emerged already in the previous example: Larry's ability in marking a rhythmic specific pattern adapting it through the chords changes of the tune:



The same rhythmic idea is proposed again at the beginning of the second chorus in bar 33:



Another characteristic of Larry, underlined already in the previous analysis (Unrequited) is his tendency to articulate the same melodic line moving in the upper octave range of the instrument. There is a clear example of this ability that remarks once more the conversational approach developed by the bass player:



Once more one can realize how Larry developed the rhythmic melodic line, this time by creating an unstable feeling, breaking the eight notes figure by resting with a quarter note sometimes in the second or in the first beat of the bars:



Again, a rhythmic ostinato, characterises the last part of the solo. One can see how Pat Metheny remarks and interacts during the comping with Larry's idea, emphasising the solo development:



### 3.2.3 CONCLUSIONS

Sound and timing, in my personal opinion are the most distinctive elements in Grenadier's playing. By listening to the records I first had the impression that Larry was putting a lot of power in the action of the right hand to produce that particular sound that characterises him. However, attending one of his live concerts, I figured out that it was principally a matter of energy and coordination, which produced this sound.

His playing is extremely relaxed even when he plays technical difficult passages on the instrument. Surely his pulse is characterized through a strong energy and attitude but, like in the examples regarding LaFaro, it is his impressing coordination with the left hand that gives him this characteristic attack of the notes. Larry articulates his left hand with a distinct precision on the whole range of the instrument.

During a conversation I had with him at one of his concerts, Larry told me that he tries as much as he can to study arpeggios and scales, first with the bow, focusing on intonation and the left hand. Later, he repeats the same practice by using pizzicato and focuses on the right hand by trying to develop the same sound with the index and medium finger. This practice helps him to produce a balanced sound in any position or combination that somehow improves his even- eights aspects during the solo's interpretation.

Larry's playing reflects a mix of many of the giant exponents of the Jazz double bass. Listening to him made me detect the strong rhythmic elements in soloing that remind me of Wilbur Ware, a bass player who was famous for the collaboration with the great piano player Thelonious Monk. In addition, it is crucial to mention Larry's ability to develop melodic lines, an aspect probably inherited from Charlie Haden's playing and last but not least his powerful solid sound that reminds me on bass players like Paul Chambers, Ray Brown and Sam Johnes.

### **3.3 Ben Allison**

Ben Allison was born in 1966 in New Haven (Connecticut). He is a Jazz double bass player and an eclectic composer. He performed and collaborated with a stylistically variety of musicians including oudist Ara Dinkjian, kora player Mamadou Diabate, saxophonists Lee Konitz, Joe Lovano and many others. Ben recorded over 50 albums with various artists and wrote music for television, movies and radio. In addition to that, in 2005 and 2008 Allison worked for the Jazz Sinfonica Orchestra in Sau Paulo (Brasil) as composer, arranger and performer. In 2005 Ben received the "*Bird Award*", the highest honour prize in Holland and uncountable worldwide citations as best musician, bandleader and composer. From 1996, Ben has been adjunct professor at the New School Jazz and Contemporary Music Program of New York.

As reported in many interviews including the one I have conducted for this thesis, Ben had his first approach to the music through playing the guitar. In that time he was enjoying exploring the different sound's characteristic of the instrument without taking formal lessons with private teachers or schools. While he was attending the "Performing

Art High School in New Haven”, Ben became more serious about music and started also to study West African drumming traditions.

As reported in an interview I have found on the web page “Talk Bass”, Ben was getting interested in Jazz music through his band teacher Bill Brown who showed him the potentials of the double bass. Allison found the fusion between guitar and percussion in that instrument and soon realized that this was the sound he was looking for (Fuqua, 2004).

Later Ben studied at the New York University, a college where he could continue to focus on music. Anyways, he always refused to attend formal conservatories and soon found in New York an ideal city to improve his music ability through the collaborations with several artists.

Ben got influenced from bassists like Charles Mingus, Dave Holland, Scott LaFaro, Charlie Haden, George Duvivier, Oscar Pettiford, Milt Hinton and Wilbur Ware and as he stated in my interview, he was especially attracted to the bass players that were usually bandleaders and composers.

Again in my interview, Allison remarked that the collaboration with Lee Konitz was probably the music experience that brought him towards a more professional dimension. In my opinion, more than his playing (virtuosity approach on the instrument), it is the composition of his music that strongly underlines the professional career of this wonderful bass player.

As Ben stated in my interview, one of the most influential musical experiences was the foundation of the Jazz Composer Collective in 1992. Ben was the Artistic Director and one of the Resident Composers of this association. He organized several workshops, festivals, recordings and more the 100 concerts through this experience over 13 years of activities. The Collective was a non- profit musicians’ and composers’ organization. As Ben reminds in an interview, the first aspect that motivated him and some other colleagues to build this organization was a “sense of frustration”. They felt disconnected from what was happening in that time in New York’s Jazz scene. In the 90ies, there was a strong conservative movement concerning Jazz and Ben felt the necessity to constitute the Collective as a sort of reaction to what was going on. As Ben stated in the interview: *“We didn’t want jazz to be “America’s classical music.” Jazz is not a repertory art*

*form. It's a living, breathing, vibrant art form that continues to evolve and expand".* (Liebman, 2011).

Ben and the other participants found a creative space to build new collaborations and to present vanguard compositions in this Collective. Any artist could exercise his ideals of creating and risking through the development and the exploration of a new music aesthetics.

It seems that composition had a strong impact on the development of Allison's musicality. As remarked in my preface, the composition experience could be one of the passages that bring musicians to develop their music style and technical approach on the instrument. I found confirmation about my opinion also in a statement of Ben Allison during an interview where he said that his approach on the instrument is an outgrowth from the compositional aspect. Ben affirms that playing and composing are strongly related since he sees in improvising a spontaneously composing process. (Fuqua, 2004)

Concerning Allison, I decided to focus on the *composition aspect* because in my opinion is one of the most relevant qualities that brought this musician to the worldwide consideration. Ben is well known for his inspired arrangements, intensive grooves and attractive melodies. His characteristic way of composing has several influences from Jazz, Classical, Rock and Folk music. His personal way to mix those characteristics gave him a personal distinct "voice" in the music world. The magazine "JazzTimes" called Ben a "*visionary composer, adventurous improviser and strong organizational force on the New York City jazz scene*" (Allison, n.d.).

Ben produced ten albums under his name; nine of them have original repertoire written by him. The last one, "*Action Refraction*", is the only cover work arranged by him. On the realization of his albums, Ben works as bassist, composer, arranger, mix engineer and producer. As he stated in the interview for *Jazz Italia*, he really likes to see himself more as a composer than as a bass player and he likes to take care about all the producing aspects of his works because he sees the whole personal creation process in it (Fugaldi, 2009).

During the creating composition process, as he also stated in my interview, Ben starts usually with a collection of fragments that could be melodic ideas, rhythmic or

harmonic in nature, timbres or references about a particular musical genre. Later he tries to mix those ideas assembling them in an interesting specific form. Ben also said that he tries to avoid cliché and to include surprise elements. The last orchestrating process is in my opinion probably the most interesting one, since it helps to define the entire creation activity, giving that particular characteristic sound to Allison's compositions.

I started to listen to Ben Allison some years ago when a friend gave me his album titled "*Buzz*". For me it was a revelation since I never had the chance to hear something like the Ben Allison's group. The themes were structured in such an original way where melodies and improvisations' part were coexisting in such a strong balance feeling. I was surprised from Ben's sound and way to groove so originally, which I could not detect in any other example of my previous listening collection. For the first time I was listening to a bass player's album and forgetting to focus on specific technical abilities since my attention was caught from the general sound of the band and the compositional and orchestration aspects. In the following section I will present an analysis of Ben's composition named "*Respiration*" from the album "*Little Things Run the World*".

### 3.3.1 LITTLE THINGS RUN THE WORLD

Because Ben Allison was also interested in science, this album (published in 2008) was inspired by a quote from a biodiversity expert named E.O. Wilson and reflects an interdependency structure as much as the social organism studied from Wilson.

Before to go through the musical analysis of this album and the song *Respiration*, I would like to focus on a social aspect integrated in this album of Ben Allison. As I could realize in an interview conducted by Wendy Butler, Allison used this album to express his political ideals, disliking some certain strategies and events. He stated how much this aspect is reflected in the music and in the choice of the title of all his songs. (Butler, 2008).

In *Little Things Run the World*, Ben is the leader of a band named *Man Size Safe*. He chose this title to express his dissatisfaction with the current political situation, as also Charles Mingus and Charlie Haden did it in the previous Jazz era. Both of them could



be called “socially active jazz bassists” I think. Allison expressed his frustration through the music with a great emotional work.

In the album, a bittersweet melody component, together with strong contrapuntal harmonies and complex syncopated elements is present. The band includes Michael Blake on the sax, Ron Horton on the trumpet, Steve Cardenas on the guitar and Michael Sarin on the drums. In *Little Things Run the World*, the strong *Pop* and *Rock* influences and characteristics, as much as the *R&B* and *Blues* elements are detectable and reflected for example in the reinterpretation of John Lennon’s song “*Jealous Guy*”.

The song I am going to analyse in this section is *Respiration*, a reinterpretation and orchestration of another version presented already in the album *Buzz* in 2004. The two versions keep the same melodic counterpointed idea but with a different groove elaboration. While I was transcribing the tune, I realized that there were different ways to interpret the structure and metric of the song. Since from the artist’s web page it was possible to buy the music sheet, I decided to purchase it to be sure to not misinterpret the original version of the composition.

*Respiration* is built in a cyclic counterpointed motivic line where the instruments interact intersecting their voices in the melody development. The song is build on an A – B form followed from a solo section and a C- section used as coda. The tune starts with an intro where the guitar plays a descending line that characterized the entire theme:

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Electric Guitar and Upright Bass, in 3/4 time. The Electric Guitar part is written in treble clef and features a descending melodic line with eighth notes. The Upright Bass part is written in bass clef and provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth notes. The score includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a time signature of 3/4. The Electric Guitar part is labeled 'Upper Voice 2X Only' and the Upright Bass part is labeled '2x Only'. The notes for the Electric Guitar are: F, Gb, Db, F, Gb, Db. The notes for the Upright Bass are: F, Gb, Db, F, Gb, Db.

In the second repetition, the guitar plays also the upper voice’s counterpoint while bass and drums mark a strong and powerful groove similar to the aesthetic of *Jungle* music. This part is used as an introduction and transition between B and A part and the last theme exposition before the solo section.

During the A part, bass, guitar and drums follow the same motivic lines of the introduction while the trumpet plays the theme of the song:

7 **A**

I focused on the orchestration part. While the guitar plays this ostinato, one can see how Allison interacts with the melody, building a bass line in contrast with the trumpet and creating a counterpoint effect.

The B- section follows the same aesthetic approach but this time the guitar line marks only the descending line, adapting it through the chords' change while the bass groove appears more relaxed:

31 **B**

After the repetition of the entire form comes the solo section.

Looking at the original charts, I was surprised to realize that there were no metric changes. The structure of the solo part follows the  $\frac{3}{4}$  subdivision without adopting any odd meters bars. The unstable effect is because the musicians mark different strong accents sometimes falling on the second beat of the bars:

49 **SOLO** Guitar melody 2x then open solo, background on cue 2x

54

After the solo section follows the C- section of the theme. Characterized by a *rallentando* form, the C- section presents that odd meters bars form that I was wrongly detecting in the solo part before. Probably Ben decided to use this technique to let the trumpet melody breathe, adding in this way lyricism to the intervallic fragment presented in the A exposition:

59 **C** ♩ = 96 Open

62

Repeat and fade

### 3.3.2 CONCLUSIONS

While I was mainly concentrated on the compositional aspect when I analysed Ben Allison's work, I figured out many interesting characteristics. First of all "*Respiration*" clearly demonstrates his orchestration ability. He often tries to use the different instruments in the band for a distinct and specific role in the theme's development. In this case bass, guitar, trumpet and drums, play a strong function in the motivic construction. It is fascinating how much importance the melody of the theme has. In many examples of Jazz music, the theme is used for building a structure to let the musicians improvise and show their technical abilities bringing the listener's attention merely to the improvisation aspect. In Ben's compositions it looks like the opposite is done. The solo is a small component of the musical aspect and he privileges without any doubt the song above any other properties. This remarks for sure the strong relation Ben Allison has with classical, rock and folk music adapting this creation into a different and always original aesthetic.

### 3.4 Omer Avital

Omer Avital was born in 1971 in Giv' atayim (Israel) from a half Moroccan and Yemeni family. He is a Jazz double bass player and composer. Equally to Ben Allison I will also concentrate on his composing abilities.

When he was 11 years old he started to get close to music through the study of classical guitar at the conservatory of his own town. Later, when Omer went to the High School of Arts, he changed to the double bass and he started to focus his studies on Jazz double bass and arranging. Omer soon started to cooperate with various artists of the region, playing in different orchestras of Jazz, Pop and Folk music, working for the national Television, radio and numerous Jazz Festivals.

However, the arriving in New York marked his career with an international dimension. In 1992, as soon as Omer reached the American territory, he started to collaborate with great and legendary names of Jazz music such as: Roy Haynes, Jimmy Cobb, Al Foster, Kenny Garrett, Steve Grossman, Wynton Marsalis, Brian Blade and many others. In 1994, Omer started the collaboration with the piano player Jason Lindner with who he

formed different original music projects. In 2002, Avital returned to Israel where he started to study classical composition, Arabic Musical Theory, Oud (traditional lute) and Israeli music. He spent three years there to improve his knowledge and when came back to New York in 2005 he released three albums.

Avital won the Prime Minister's Award as the most prestigious Israeli Artist and currently works with many projects such as: *"Yes!"* a trio with Aaron Goldberg and Ali Jackson Jr., *"Band of the East"*, influenced from North African and Middle East music, a trio with the trumpet player Avishai Cohen, the *"Omer Avital Quintet"* with Jason Lindner, Avishai Cohen, Joel Frahm and drummer Ferenc Nemeth and numerous traditional orchestras where Omer plays double bass, oud and where he is composer and arranger.

A recent project included the *"Debka Fantasia Cycle"*, *"Arab Roots"*, *"Songs of Devotion"*, a Concerto for Bass and Orchestra and a large piece for his Ensemble- *"Song for a Land"*. All this activities brought Omer to be considered an active force of the world music scene. The LA Times wrote about Avital: *"a pioneer in combining jazz with myriad world music elements"* and NY Times stated: *"Mr Avital and his group are producing some of the most original music being heard in New York"*(Avital About, n.d.).

The fact that Omer Avital was surrounded since early age by different musical and cultural landscapes brought him to have a special attitude in composing and performing his music. By listening to him, apart from the traditional American Jazz and Blues elements that remind me on the bass player and composer Charles Mingus, I detected strong elements from Israeli Folk Songs, Yemenite Jewish Liturgical music, Arabic and Mediterranean popular music and ancient Andalusian music.

Omer's music saves a strong swing component incremented with a convincing spiritual sustenance including in some examples Funk, Pop and Rock influences. The study of classic guitar made him develop particular techniques in playing the double bass. Omer often appeals to play chords over the neck of the bass. As Ben Ratliff stated in an article for New York Times: *"He can be fleet and Jazz- melodic in the style of Oscar Pettiford, then buzz around the tonic like a devotional singer; he grew up in Tel Aviv in a Moroccan- Yemenite family and the Arabic and the Spanish comes together with the blues in his music. Proper*

*technique isn't all; he punches and twangs the strings, knocking fresh slang out of the bass. (...) such a dramatic violence on the instrument is hard to come by"* (Ratlif, n.d.).

The music of Omer is full of that particular cultural dynamism coming from the melting pot of his life experiences. In his playing we can find in addition, specific techniques coming from the attraction Omer had for instruments like the oud. Often he explores this technique on the double bass, playing oriental scales with a microtonal approach that characterizes his own style. Omer is without any doubt one of the most brilliant contemporary bass players, composers and arrangers. His music is characterized through strong rhythmic components mixed with an intensive energetic groove typical for the traditional dances of his cultural background.

In an interview from Maurizio Zerbo conducted during a tour through Italy, Omer stated how much he likes to study compositional techniques and traditions from Jazz, Arabic and classical music. He uses these devices trying to find a balance between all these elements. In addition, Omer remarked that his creative compositional process is extremely spontaneous and natural. He dislikes thinking too much about the form and style of the song, which he is going to create. Omer said that the composition process for him is similar to the approach he uses in performing a solo. He added that he is used to listen a lot of different kinds of music and that he avoids putting them into categories (Zerbo, 2011).

Listening to different records from this artist, one can underline the strong supporter tendency Omer has in relation to the band and the music he approaches. Usually he tries to keep the traditional role of the bass in a band, being closer to conservative tendencies that make him one of the most requested post-bop bass players. The moment where Omer shines the most is during improvisation intros or solos but during the comping he remarks a strong solid pulse that allows the music to drive in a natural and stable expression.

As much as for Ben Allison, also for Omer Avital I found it important to focus rather on his *compositional aspect*. In the next section of my work I will present compositional characteristics that came to my attention by listening to the album "*Free Forever*", one of my favorite works from this impressing double bass player.

### 3.4.1 FREE FOREVER

Released in 2011 by “*Small Records*”, *Free Forever* is a live recording from a concert in Marostica (Italy) in 2007. In the recording we have Omer Avital on the bass and as composer, Joel Frahm on the tenor and soprano sax, Avishai Cohen on the trumpet, Jason Lindner on the piano and Ferenc Nemeth on the drums. I decided to take this album above all the others as an example since it reflects in a clear definition all the characteristic elements that define the personality of Omer Avital.

In addition to that, being a live recording, this album reflects the natural emotive and joyful atmosphere remembered from the live performing of this beautiful band with distinction. All the compositions underline that Middle East and Mediterranean sound in the continuous evolution of the theme’s melody full of crescendo and diminuendo to stress the full emotional motivic line. On the other side, during the solos, the band adopts that characteristic strong texture of Jazz that reminds me on the atmospheres reached in the historic album of the great John Coltrane named “*A Love Supreme*”.

The song I would like to comment on it is named “*Free Forever*” that gives the name to the album. It is important to focus on the Bass Interlude that precedes the theme in question. Omer plays a beautiful intro for more than six minutes with an extreme facility. In this occasion one can notice the great technical and expressive virtuosity of the bass player. Omer builds the bridge to the next theme with a very logical approach. There are several elements I consider important to mention, first of all his bluesy feeling that distinguishes the hippest moments of the performance and that remind me on bass players like Ray Brown and Charles Mingus. In addition to this, one can detect Omer’s relation with the classic music moving through arpeggios and scales with lines that seem to build in a baroque way and that end in a more bebop aesthetic.

Mediterranean and humoristic components, like the citation of the song *Blowing in the Wind*, a classic from Bob Dylan, mix and balance all this huge variety of influences that come out from the interlude. Later, Omer plays the bass pedal on what will develop then into the beautiful theme *Free Forever*. The rhythm constructed from the musicians, seems to be related to an old Andalusian groove following the metric 6/8 – 6/8 – 2/4. The form of the song is: A- A1- B- C.

During A, A1 and B, the rhythm section plays the groove in a constant way while trumpet and sax play the melody in unison. The melodic line is developed through a driving motor pedal in a crescendo dynamic, full of lyricism:

The image shows a musical score for four systems. Each system consists of four staves: Sax Tenore, Tromba in Sol, Piano, and Contrabbasso. The first system is marked with a 'C' and the last three are marked with 'Bb/C'. The piano part is mostly silent, with some notes in the first system. The bass part plays a steady eighth-note groove. The sax and trumpet parts play a melodic line in unison.

The A1 presents some little melodic variations and follows the same harmony progression and rhythmic pattern.

In my opinion the B part is used as a bridge, constructed on a melodic epic line. In the second repetition of the B part, a unison line played from piano and bass in bar 47 marks the passage to the C- section breaking that “*mantra*” ambiance built on the previous sections of the theme:



37 C

40 Bb/C

43 F/C

46 C

Sax. Tr. P. B. Dr.

The C- section is built on a different metric pattern. The composition moved to a 4/4 *Pop Rock* feeling in an explosion of intensity with a continuous change of rhythm direction. The song comes back to the previous groove until when there is a similar unison line in bar 56, this time played in 6/4, remarked the 4/4 feeling once more:

Gradually, the intensity of the theme goes down and Joel Frahm develops his solo on the pedal on CMaj while bass and drums continue keeping that Mediterranean groove moving to reacting sometimes with a swing feeling. The sax player explores different tonalities while the drummer texts a feeling following an aesthetic that reminds me on Elvin Jones, full of variations and interplays. At the end of the improvisation part there is once more the theme exposition, which ends with a *free* coda where trumpet and saxophone are in a collective improvisation. Once more one can find swing elements until when the song fades out into the next interlude, this time played from the piano player.

### *3.4.2 CONCLUSIONS*

The entire album has overt cross- cultural references full of emotional spontaneity, a constant element in the music of Omer Avital.

Omer uses a forceful attack to push the rhythm of the piece. There is something special about this beautiful bass player above his finest technique, influences and compositional skills in my opinion. It is his concept of “freedom”. Omer’s music expresses freedom and any performing or recording session looks like a journey developed in a fluid form through suggestive and epic themes. I like to image that probably this sense of freedom is coming through a social and politic personal necessity of peace expressed as a traditional ancient song.

Having analysed Omer’s music I got the chance to discover a big amount of traditional music like ancient Andalusian, Moroccan and Middle West music. I find it interesting how Omer mixes the different grooves coming from those music into a shape of jazz building original and fresh atmospheres.

## **SECTION 4: INTERVIEWS**

### **4.1 Introduction to the method**

I have done interviews with local and internationally known double bass players. I asked three local double bass players living in Barcelona and three internationally known artists. I chose these artists in particular because they are, in my opinion, all somehow representative for the modern double bass playing approach in Jazz. In addition to this, I chose them because they have influenced me in my personal development. They influenced me because each of them owns certain characteristics in their playing that impress me.

The interviewed double bass players were:

**Local:** David Mengual, Masa Kamaguchi and Giulia Valle

**International:** Ben Alison, Larry Grenadier and Petros Klampanis.

The aim of the conducted interviews was to inquire and find out about the artist's inspirations and experiences of playing the double bass. The difficulty about creating the appropriate questions for this interview was to find valuable in depth and personal information that goes beyond any info, which can be found in existing sources, such as books or online material.

Additionally, I wanted to know more about their professional career and musical development. My questions likewise concerned the personal opinion about collaboration between professional musicians because this can influence the own style and techniques, too.

The topic of this thesis: "*The evolution of the musical language and style of the Jazz double bass in the modern composition*" was further explored through these interviews because the style in the modern approach is always linked to personal development and experiences by each double bass player.

Looking the interviews attached in annex 8.1 I have put special attention to questions number 3,5,7,8,10 and 11 since they help to further explore the topic of my thesis and relate to the modern Jazz approach. Questions number 1,2,4,6,9 and 12 were of more personal character in connection to good advises but likewise crucial. I received in depth, honest and highly interesting and relevant answers from the artists.

The results of the answers received are summarized and elaborated in the following section.

#### **4.2 Personal idols in Jazz**

Question three was about the double bass player's idols in Jazz music, who inspire them the most and why. The importance of this question is closely related to the personal evolution approach of the instrument. The own music personality is often influenced by orienting oneself towards an idol, his playing and style. By following an idol, studying

and elaborating his style and music (transcriptions, listening, practice and analysis) one is enriching the own style, skills and techniques and adapting it accordingly.

The answers to this question were diverse. *David Megual* (local double bass player from Barcelona) said that Charlie Haden was an idol because of his lyricism and his special musical concept, which I also refer to in the section about him in this thesis. *David Mengual* stated that Charlie Haden's musical concept was similar to his own. This statement proves what was said before, that musicians often tend to adapt their style to their idols.

Another local double bass player called *Giulia Valle* answered this question in a different way. She identified her idols to be Charles Mingus because of an interesting aspect: she appreciated him as a bass player and composer but much more as an “*energy propeller*” (G. Valle 2013). She also stated that there are two bigger directions or so called *schools* in the double bass play that influenced the modern contemporary approach on the instrument. One is coming from *Wilbur Ware* for his interesting rhythmic lines “*he has created a school that years later have been developed by people like Larry Grenadier and Ben Street*” (G. Valle 2013).

The other one is determined through *Scott LaFaro* “*for his constant search of melody that years later was developed by Marc Johnson and Eddie Gomez*”.

In the end, she added that she appreciated *Charlie Haden* for his honesty in music and person very much.

*Larry Grenadier*, an internationally known double bass player from the United States of America, and my own idol, answered this interview question by listing a number of most influential artists such as: Ray Brown, Charles Mingus, Paul Chambers, Oscar Pettiford, Sam Jones, Ron Carter, Jimmy Garrison, Charlie Haden, George Mraz, Eddie Gomez, Gary Peacock, Rufus Reid and Marc Johnson. “*At a certain point I realized every bass player had something to offer me, something I could take away and use as my own*” (L. Grenadier, 2013).

*Petros Klampanis* mentioned Paul Chambers and Ray Brown as his idols for their “*deep tone and solid groove as well as his melodic bass-lines and solos*” (P. Klampanis, 2013).

One more time a bass player calls *Scott LaFaro* to be an influential figure in the evolution of the contemporary bass play.

*Ben Allison* said that Charles Mingus, Dave Holland, *Scott LaFaro*, *Charlie Haden*, George Duvivier, Oscar Pettiford, Milt Hinton, Wilbur Ware had a great impact on him. He was especially attracted to those bass players who acted as band- leaders and composers. In connection to this, he mentions: *"I think they have a unique perspective on how to build a band and how musicians interact while playing. The bass has tremendous power to set the harmony and rhythmic direction of a piece of music and, in a way, acts as a bridge between the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic functions of the other instruments in the band"* (B. Allison, 2013).

#### **4.3 Musical experiences and influence on career**

Another essential question was number five. It refers to a significant musical experience of the double bass players that influence and mark their own career. Sometimes, the bass player's role is adapting to a specific style of music. The playing approach is different if an artists plays with a more traditional musician or a more vanguard one. To give an example, the personality of *Scott LaFaro* has significantly developed through collaboration with Bill Evans. Their band (Billy Evans trio) was looking for a different approach and freedom in interpreting the standard traditional repertoire.

While *Masa Kamaguchi* reports about his significant learning experience with and through Joe Hunt in Boston, *David Mengual* call the four years of being part of the *"Orquestra del Teatre Lluire"* under the direction of Lluís Vidal as the most important once related to his learning process. Also other local musicians as Dani Perez, Joan Díaz, David Xirgu and Carme Canela marked his development intensively. Moreover, Barry Harris and Nat Su showed him how to *"live music in a different way"* (D. Mengual, 2013)

*Ben Allison* reports in the interview that founding his own Jazz Composers Collective in 1992 influences him strongly. The Collective was created to *"foster new music and build audiences for new jazz"* (B. Allison, 2013).

Larry Grenadier mentioned that there were really a large number of musicians throughout his career that he has met and who helped him tremendously. However, through Joe Henderson he has learned more than with anyone else about, for instance, note choice, groove, phrasing and sound. Another important effect on his development appeared through Stan Getz. *“From these more experienced musicians I learned what others needed from the bass. What the instrument can offer the music”* (L. Grenadier, 2013).

#### **4.4 Thechnical approach and creative composition process**

Question number *seven* was asked to identify different technical approaches during the creative process of composition. One of the aspects that I wanted to develop with this work was learn the first steps towards my own composition process. In my opinion, composing gives the chance to understand the own stylistic tendencies in music and gives the possibility to discover the own voice and own style.

The question was put in the following way: *How do you organise the creative process in your composition and your playing? What inspires you when write a new song?*

David Mengual describes the composition process as a translation of a certain moment in live into music. He says it was an intuitive and spontaneous process.

*“First the head, then the heart”* says Giulia Valle (G.Valle, 2013). Ben Allison describes the writing process to be of a longer period (several months). He uses a *“scrap book of musical fragments”* to collect his ideas (B. Alison, 2013). He pays attention to a *“good mix”* and an *“interesting form”* while he includes contrasts, humour, surprises and avoids cliché. The creative process continues in the rehearsals and most of the times the originally written tunes take another shape through playing with the band.

Petros Klampanis emphasizes the daily practice as an important component of the creative process. He furthermore indicates *“What occurs to me is that the creative process is like digging the ground in order to find a gemstone. I cannot expect a gemstone to walk my way! I need to work my way towards it”* (P.Klampanis, 2013).

#### 4.5 Milestones in the evolution of modern Jazz

Question eight was asked to inquire about the artist's specific opinion. *"In your opinion, which double bass player influenced the evolution of the modern Jazz double bass approach the most and why?"*

*Masa Kamaguchi* named Scott LaFaro. *David Mengual* refers to Jaco Pastorius who had created a revolution related to the potential and the possibilities of the function of the bass in Jazz music.

*Ben Allison* says that all bass players somehow build and influence each other's work. *Petros Klampanis* also finds it hard to pick one single bass player but he considers once more Ray Brown as a huge chapter in bass playing.

He also mentions again Scott LaFaro to be responsible for the *"emancipated, melodic bass playing within the trio which inspired and influenced many bassists to come after him"* (P. Klampanis, 2013).

#### 4.6 Music taste and listening activity

Question ten wanted to explore the double bass player's music taste and listening activity, which are very crucial in the whole approach and development. The artists were asked which genres they prefer next to Jazz.

Surprisingly, the first answer received was by *Masa Kamaguchi* who simply and clearly stated: *"I don't listen to music"* (M. Kamaguchi, 2013).

*David Mengual* looks at a holistic approach and sees the music as a whole. All music is valuable in his opinion.

*Petros Klampanis* appreciates music as an *"honest emotional expression of its creator"* no matter what style of music (P. Klampanis, 2013). Also *Ben Allison* listens to a very wide range of styles.

*Giulia Valle* likes post-romantic music such as Rachmaninov or Scriabin as well as contemporary composers like Bartok, Ligeti or Hindemith. *"When I need peace I listen to Bach, specially the Keyboard works, such as the Goldberg variations and the two and three part inventions. When I feel like grooving I play Shirley Horn"* (G. Valle, 2013).



#### 4.7 Rhythm section and connection between members

One of the *last questions* was asked to know about crucial elements in a *rhythm section* and the important connection between its members that the interviewed bass players are looking for. I asked this question because I suppose that the cooperation and communication aspect between the members of the rhythm section is essential. It helps to give the double bass the freedom to determinate a specific role and direction in playing and thus influence.

For *Masa Kamaguchi* that the real job for the double bass player is to build the connection between the members of the band. Taking into account different approaches related to different musicians. *David Mengual* stresses two central aspects: “el vínculo personal y la capacidad de escuchar y respetar” (D. Mengual, 2013).

*Giulia Valle* outlines another feature linked to the personality. Egoism which applies to the music and to the life. She describes it as “*the worst enemy*” and says that it can “*screw up an entire session*” (G. Valle, 2013). Subsequently, she states that listening is more important than anything else.

Despite this, *Ben Alison* regards the band as a whole. “*We all play together and serve the music and the moment. I tend to prefer playing with musicians who approach music the same way*” (B. Allison, 2013).

“*The importance of a good solid rhythm section cannot be stressed enough*” says *Larry Grenadier*.

His idea is that if a rythm section is good, the creativity is high. But in addition to this, a very high level of listening and concentration is required. He emphasised: “*If the bassist's role is to make everyone sound the best they can a constant state of intensive listening is necessary at all times; giving the music what it needs to keep it in balance*” (L. Grenadier, 2013). All in all, through this the music will be developed in a more sensitive, subtle and creative way.

*Petros Klampanis* answers that groove and also (just like *Larry Grenadier* stated) sensitivity are the key words. About groove he further says: “*It's the conviction with which the rhythm is interpreted and performed*” (P. Klampanis, 2013).

## SECTION 5: ANALYSIS OF OWN COMPOSITION

### 5.1 Introduction

As remarked already in the preface of my work, one of my most crucial goals during the school experience was to get confident with the compositional aspect of my personal development. In my opinion, writing music helps to discover the personal taste and the voice as a musician.

Students mostly spend time to concentrate their practicing on the emulation process. This is probably one of the most important aspects in learning and developing music ability and vocabulary, necessary to approach the Jazz music, but not the only one. Even though I was afraid to explore this new area of music, I faced the challenge.

Now I regard this final thesis as a way to present also my own compositions as a result of my personal development. Collaborating with the *Walk Tall* band, with which I am playing since some months and with which I will play my final concert, I got the chance to involve myself more in the compositional aspect and to finalize the recording of our first album of original music where I present two of my compositions.

The assignment of Jazz Composition followed in the first part of the current year of study, helped me to explore the composition techniques of world wide famous musicians and to collect precious information in organizing the personal creative work. It cost me time to get into this process, but as our composition teacher often reminded us: the only way to get confident with it, is to continuously practice in finding solutions and appeals to organize and connect the musical ideas. However, together with the technical aspect and the specific influences from all kinds of music I got in contact with, I tried always to translate emotional situations I personally lived.

That is why all the compositions are strictly related to persons, places and experiences I had in my life. These emotional aspects inspired me and guided me in the creative process of writing music. All my compositions were made for the quartet format that includes a guitar, piano, double bass and drums. Any song is also connected with my

band's sound, whereas the abilities of the musicians I play with influenced me in the organization of the tunes' structure and effect.

## 5.2 Ti cerco e ti trovo

"*Ti cerco e ti trovo*" was my first composition. It is a medium even eights song that follows the structure A – B. The song is built on a motivic idea that develops gradually for the whole A- section. The first eight bars are played in unison from guitar and bass. From bar 9 there is the entrance of piano and drums comping while the bass leaves the melody marking the changes of the tune and the guitar continues to expose the theme.

**A** Giampaolo Laurentaci

Em7 Ebmaj7 Abmaj7 Gm7

5 C° Bbm7 Am7 Dm7

9 Em7 F° F#m7(b5) C/G

During the composition process, I focused merely on the melodic trait and added a chord progression later that constantly modulates by following the lines of the phrases. Furthermore, I thought it was necessary to add a surprise content to break the rhythmic structure of the song and create a link between the A and B- section. I used a different rhythmic cell built on the same intervallic motif of the first bar's melody and one major 3<sup>rd</sup> above and in 11/8 metric:

17 D/C C/Bb Bb/Ab

x3

The B- section is characterized through a rock feeling part in 4/4 built on chord modulation over the line that follow a constant rhythmic pattern with a tensional harmonic projection. As a resolution I decided to adopt the same 11/8 metric device, this time half tone more up which prepares the coda of the melody and sets up the solo part:

24 Am<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>11</sup> Db/D rock feel C/D B/D

28 Bb/D F#(sus2)/Db A(sus2)/C Bb/B B(sus2)/A

33 Eb/Db Db/B B/A D/C C/Bb Bb/A

35 D/C C/Bb Bb/Ab Ab/F# F#(sus2)/Ab E(sus2)/Bb D(sus2)/C C(sus2)/D

The musical score for the B-section consists of four staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff (measures 24-27) features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 24, followed by a 'rock feel' section. The second staff (measures 28-32) continues the harmonic progression. The third staff (measures 33-34) includes a repeat sign and a double bar line. The fourth staff (measures 35-36) concludes the section with a final chord.

The solo follows the chords' progression of the A- part of the song in a constant loop ending then on the 11/8 fragment used as *cue* to launch the last theme exposition from the B- section. The two bars on 11/8 are used at the end for developing a drum solo:

71 Eb/Db Db/B B/A Eb/Db Db/B B/A

73 D/C C/Bb Bb/A D/C C/Bb Bb/A

75 D/C C/Bb Bb/Ab Ab/F# F#(sus2)/Ab E(sus2)/Bb D(sus2)/C C(sus2)/D Em<sup>7</sup>

The musical score for the solo section consists of three staves of music. The first staff (measures 71-72) is marked 'drums solo on cue' and features a 11/8 time signature. The second staff (measures 73-74) continues the harmonic progression. The third staff (measures 75-80) concludes the section with a final chord.

The composition reflects an even eights modern aesthetic of a through compose technique. I added the device of a rock feeling for the B- part to integrate one

characteristic component, which I adapted from another musical style that played a big role in the evolution and the development of my own music experience.

### 5.3 Ninna per Mareike

Articulated in a sort of “*Suite*” format, this song is a Lullaby that comes out during the last theme in a coda format. Since the first moment I had a clear structure in mind concerning the music I wanted to create but I needed to organize all the material I had collected. The tune starts with a *free tempo* introduction full of fermatas that are used to build a lyricism connection between the different motivic lines:

Intro free tempo

Chords and measures indicated in the score:

- Measure 1: Fmaj7(#5)/Db
- Measure 2: Abmaj7(#5)/G
- Measure 5: Gb9
- Measure 6: Amaj7(#5)/Db
- Measure 9: A9(sus4)/D
- Measure 10: Gbm7/B
- Measure 13: C9(sus4)
- Measure 14: Ebmaj7(add13)
- Measure 17: Em7(add9)
- Measure 18: D(sus4)
- Measure 19: a tempo (3/4)
- Measure 20: 5

Piano, guitar and bass play this line while the drummer builds a rhythmic texture with a free improvisation approach remarking the dramatic atmosphere during the intro. Also in this composition I privileged the melodic aspect above anything else during the creation moment. The bar's metrics are adapted to the melody's construction. Even if the melody is built in a 3/4 metric, at some point, I decided to move it to 5/4 or 4/4. I

took this decision because I considered that the melodic aspect of the tune could adapt better to the changes of rhythm displayed in the following example:

Measures 30-33 of a musical score. Measure 30 is in 5/4 time, measure 31 in 3/4, measure 32 in 4/4, and measure 33 in 4/4. Chords are: Am7(add9), Fmaj7(#11), Dm(maj7), Ebmaj7, Em7(add9), Ebmaj7, Em7(add9), Ebmaj7. Rhythmic figures include a triplet of eighth notes and a quintuplet of eighth notes.

The solo's section is built on a loop sequence of 9 bars that include different metric changes. Only on the *cue*, piano and guitar play the motivic line that function as rhythmic adaptation of the intro melody:

SOLO SECTION on cue play melody. Measures 52-59. Measures 52-53 are in 4/4, 54 in 3/4, 55 in 4/4, 56 in 3/8, 57 in 3/4, 58 in 4/4, and 59 in 3/4. Chords are: Am, E, Am, E, Am, Eb°, D°, Am, E, Am, E, Am, Eb°, D°, E7. Rhythmic figures include a triplet of eighth notes and a quintuplet of eighth notes. The section ends with a D.S. (Da Capo) instruction.

After the last theme exposition, the song ends on a coda that finally remarks the lullaby's motif. Following a brief piano introduction built on the change, the melody is hummed from the band's members while the piano improvises a sort of variation like a small solo. Also in this case the metric of the bars is adapted to the melodic line. As in the style of the lullaby, I try to conserve the characteristic atmosphere saving a sensitive and heart-full meaning:

**CODA**

61 Fmaj7(#11) C<sup>6</sup> E<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup>/D

65 Am(maj7)/C Fmaj7 B<sup>o</sup> Am<sup>7</sup>

69 E<sup>7</sup> A(sus4) Fmaj7 D-<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup> Am(maj7)

In my opinion, the structure of the song is probably closer to a classical music style than Jazz. I first got to the music through the classical approach playing the violin since that was related to my family background. Those influences curiously came out during the composition process of *Ninna per Mareike* and the improvisation moments are probably the only characteristics linked to the aspects of the Jazz music. Surely, one of the biggest influences in this approach was received from the music of one of my favourite bass players, Avishai Cohen. Focussing on his works in trio, one can find some similarities in the beautiful album titled *Gently Disturbed*.

## 5.4 La Casa Rural

*La Casa Rural* is a song built on a different compositional approach than the previous ones. The tune follows the A – A – B structure. In this occasion I started from a modulating bass line built on a *latin* rhythm. Later, I tried to shape a busy counterpoint melody played from guitar and piano. At some point, the melody got separated moving towards a parallel counterpoint that follows an ascending and descending shape:



Having the chance to make use of two melodic instruments, I thought it was a good idea to emphasize some lines with this technique (counterpoint) that we developed in the Jazz Composition classes.

The first A ends with a unison line that marks a folkloric atmosphere:



I used this line at the end of the first A- section to link the restatement of the first melody. After that, I built a bridge to the B- section modulating the same rhythmic idea in a minor mood which introduces the supplementary part of the song:





The B- section has mainly different characteristics. The *groove* moved in a drum& bass time feeling and the instruments exchange their roles. The melody is played at unison from bass and piano while the guitar constructs a rhythmic counterpoint in the high range of the instrument, modulating a rhythmic ostinato:

21

G Cm F#(sus4) Fm<sup>6</sup>

25

D<sup>9</sup>/F# Cm/G F#maj7(#5) G C<sup>9</sup>(sus4) A<sup>b</sup>maj7

After the exposition of the B- part, I hold the melodic unison used to connect the two A- sections:

35

G V

This time, coming back to the Latin atmosphere, I built a chord progression for the solo consonant to the first melody of the tune. The tune ends with the B- section that moves on to a little coda played ad libitum.

51

G 3rd time start breaking groove

Several aspects influenced and motivated me during the creative compositional approach. There is a part from popular folk Spanish music remarked from the use of *frygian* atmospheres. The busy line of the A- melody follows a melodic line that reminds me about Lanny Tristano's composition and last but not least the drum& bass elements built in a contrast feeling on the two sections intend to create the “surprise” effect.

## 5.5 Cap de Creus

This song is intended to be a minimalistic *pop ballad* developed in three sections A – A1 - B. I wanted to create an intimate suggestive atmosphere built on a bass harmonic pedal. I tried to make a simple melodic line that intertwines with the chords' progression:

**Adagio** Giampaolo Laurentaci

**A** *Pop feel* 3 C/D F#/D Gm<sup>6</sup>/D Dmaj<sup>7</sup>

5 C(add9#11) Bm(maj7) C/B<sup>b</sup> Gmaj<sup>7</sup>(sus2) Am<sup>7</sup> 3

Both of the A parts of the tune are played in a typical pop bass groove:

A1 is characterized from some little melodic variations adapted to a different chords' progression but basically keeps the same intervallic rhythmic line.

The B- part is introduced from a period that will turn to be the theme of the B-section:

13 D<sup>9</sup>/C Gm<sup>9</sup>/B<sup>b</sup> F<sup>9</sup>/G Am<sup>7</sup>

Rock feel

17 Bm<sup>7</sup> F/A Gm<sup>7</sup> E/G<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#</sup>maj<sup>7</sup>(<sup>#</sup>5)/A<sup>#</sup>

until the end

21 G/B A/C<sup>#</sup> D/F<sup>#</sup> B<sup>b</sup>/F Eb(<sup>#</sup>11)

The melodic period presents some little variations to be adapted to the chords' progression. The song presents a different feeling characterized by another typical *rock groove* illustrated by the bass that grows in a dynamic crescendo:

## SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS

With this work I wanted to show how the double bass language was developed in the modern Jazz through different influences, artists and aspects. It must be added that when talking about the modern Jazz we are talking about a very short period of time in the Jazz history. The traditional role of the double bass playing remains, but through innovative persons such as Charlie Haden and Scott LaFaro a big change in this role has happened.

Instead of concentrating the work on only one double bass player, I decided to propose a more holistic overview on different double bass players, from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds who played, in my opinion, a crucial role in the contemporary jazz scene.

Furthermore, I concentrated on two main thoughts, which I explored. Playing the double bass and composing music. For this I chose several double players who, on the one hand were especially interesting to me because of their playing and some who came to my attention through interesting compositional skills.

I consulted and worked with the music of several famous double bass players who one could call my idols. Through music analysis and interviews, research and listening and also through my own composing, I explored the whole topic in depth and looked at it from different angles. In addition to this, I closely related this thesis to my own development, style and experience.

In some cases I realized how much “*developing techniques*” helped to stand out from the traditional role. In the case of Scott LaFaro for example, I saw how much his technical skills were helping him to build a more active leading approach in the interaction with the band.

However, the technical aspect was not the only one bringing a change of direction in modern Jazz. In the example of Charlie Haden I saw how also a minimalistic approach that he had (using few notes) was creating a change through melodic development.

In contrast to this, the analysis of Larry Grenadier revealed how much the double bass playing still keeps the traditional role through supporting components relating to

sounds, rhythm and function, underlying an interplay that always serves the music and the other musicians.

My final reflection demonstrates that in addition to the functional role of the bass, the role became more artistic and creative while earning more freedom in interaction.

Getting back to the compositional aspect I detected the different influences of other music such as pop, rock, classic or traditional music “entering” the Jazz. This was mainly shown in my analysis about Ben Allison and Omer Avital. As a conclusion one can say that this fact gives new aesthetic inputs in writing and interpreting the modern language. Also through the answers given in my interview I received supportive information about this foreign music influences.

Doing this work gave me the chance to get to know musicians I did not deal with before and to discover their music (by collecting a big amount of material). Therefore I concentrated towards a new kind of Jazz music that finally had a big impact on my own development and opened my mind. I also saw that performing (playing) and composing is always strongly interconnected. I do not want to forget that the personal contact I established with the musicians is of great advantage for my future. I arranged for instance some personal bass lessons with Larry Grenadier in Switzerland this year. Since my plan is also to move for a while to New York City, the personal contact I made with the American bass players is of great importance and creates a good chance for me to also study with them.

As I already introduced, I have collected a huge amount of information and material that will also in future help me to organize my personal practice and further musical development after the school career. I will certainly continue my personal research to discover and shape my own musical voice and compositional skills with the double bass.

I got more curious about the idea of how to explore new ways of playing and interacting with Jazz. I also like the idea to include other music styles into my own Jazz composition. This is also reflected in my compositions done (see annex and section 5).

This composing experience gave me the chance to face new challenges and I got several inputs from the wonderful musicians I have analysed through this process. I can say that

I have grown through this and I have learned how to better express my personality through music.

Next to the performing skill, the composition ability made me curious to discover and create something that honestly reflects my own person. The biggest lesson I have learned doing this work was to see how musicians distinguish themselves from others and develop a recognizable voice. This is and will be one of my mayor priorities during my own personal music evolution.

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