

# Mp3 Ron Merhavi - One On One



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Double bass' many faces: original solo works 1986-2008 22 MP3 Songs in this album (68:47) ! Related styles: CLASSICAL: Contemporary, CLASSICAL: Programmatic music People who are interested in Yo-Yo Ma Gary Karr should consider this download. Details: One on One Double bass' many faces Ron Merhavi, double bass solo It is with great joy and a sense of deep honor that I hereby present a collection of newly written pieces for double bass solo (1986-2008). For the most part, these works cannot be deemed 'canonic' or representative of any one genre they are, rather, the fruits of my artistic caprice. Most were discovered whilst searching for music and lyrical materials and can be seen as lovely stones meant to create a larger musical mosaic. These so-called "raw materials", in my view, are often overlooked, despite their obvious musical value and emotive quality. Above all, they are an exiting way to highlight the beauty and depth of the double bass. The impetus for this project was quite simple: it was a means for me to stay connected to the double bass. My daily work keeps me immersed in the waters of classical music and I am honored to be part of its tidal flow. Yet, at the same time, I am left with precious little time for direct performance. This endeavour has been my lifeline to that world. I am grateful to Zvika Hirshler, who, with a great sense of sensibility and patience, helped to design a natural sound recording of my instrument. I am pleased to have been able to enlist the talents of so many accomplished composers. Four of the works in this compilation are new pieces created locally by Israeli artists. Several works were at some point recorded--such as Waldszenen 1986--but have not received what I consider to be proper publicity ever since and are long overdue for fresh exposure. For some, the material on this disk may not be 'easy' to listen to; it does require a certain musical flexibility, sense of adventure and appreciation of the double bass. To my taste, the works are quite communicative, they present a range of composition styles and attitudes toward the instrument, that will, I hope both enthrall and enlighten. Ron Merhavi David

Anderson (born 1962) is a composer/performer, who appears with various ensembles across the U.S.A. Until recently principal bass with the Louisiana Philharmonic in New Orleans, David's home and job fell victim to hurricane Katrina and currently he is a substitute player with the Minnesota Orchestra. As a soloist he has performed with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Bobby McFerrin. Anderson's main teachers were Frank Proto and Stuart Sankey. Anderson taught double bass at the University of Louisville, Kentucky School of Music and served as a member of the board of directors of the International Society of Bassists (ISB). His Concerto for double bass, Strings Harp, commissioned by Philadelphia Orchestra principal bassist Hal Robinson, premiered at the ISB convention in 1997. Competitors in the solo double bass performance category played Anderson's Capriccio no. 2 for double bass solo, a piece based on fragments from the same concerto. Andr Hajdu was born in Hungary and studied at the Liszt Music Academy in Budapest with Ern Szegedi (piano) and Zoltan Kodly (ethnomusicology), among others. In 1956 he moved to Paris, continuing his studies at the Conservatoire with Darius Milhaud (composition) and Olivier Messiaen (philosophy of music). Since 1966, Hajdu has been living in Jerusalem, taught at the Tel-Aviv Music Academy as well as Bar-Ilan University, serving in the latter as head of the Music Department and founder of the Composition Department. Hajdu has published articles, transcriptions and arrangements dealing with Klezmer and Hassidic Music. This repertoire has inspired many of his works, on broader aspects of Jewish thought as well as Jewish history, such as Dreams of Spain (1991), a cantata, describing the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Hajdu's unique Jewish thought merges ancient roots with a modern, personal concept. A great deal of his output is artistic piano pedagogy works. In 1997, Hajdu was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize for his achievements in composition, research and teaching. Andr Hajdu was a teacher of mine at the Israel Arts and Science Academy in Jerusalem. I was glad that he has accepted my commission for a piece for double bass and ensemble Shadows and Echoes, AKA Insomnia Noctis (2004), composed for my last Dissertation recital in Michigan. Composer's Note: Mimes and Pantomimes was written for the first solo disc of Ron Merhavi. The original idea was to compose a set of short pieces dispersed in different places in the CD, a kind of commentary binding the other pieces like a ritornello. But when I finished them, I felt that some of them should better work linked, so I grouped them into two sets of three. The original title Marginal Notes, which fitted the first conception, was changed to Mimes and Pantomimes, a title which suggests that each piece corresponds to a specific character. For sure, I did

not have this in mind when I wrote them, but appeared to me later, when I heard Ron's playing. What gave them this character? I guess it was the instrument itself, fighting hard against its old image of low animal. No! it can sing, it can fly, it can be mysterious or agile. It was this fight which made these miniatures theatre-like, but it is the theatre of one actor mimicking all the roles (as I saw Marcel Marceau doing it in Paris), so it's a mime!

A. H. Composer Oded Assaf (born in Israel, 1947) studied in both Israel and England. Since the 1980's his compositions were performed in Israel by artists such as Astrit Baltzan-Zorman, Amit Dolberg, Michal Tal, Ruben Seroussi and Idit Shemer and by groups such as The 21st Century Ensemble, The Hemiola Women's Choir, The Efroni Choir, and Musika Nova. Oded Assaf is a lecturer at Tel-Aviv University and in the Levinsky College of Education, and has published articles about new musics (Israeli and others).

Composer's Note: Ron Merhavi, who commissioned the composition I am Writing My Nocturne, challenged me to compose for an instrument which (much to our regret) is not extremely prominent as a solo instrument. He was the one to introduce me to the term "the lyric double bass". The composition would not have turned out as it did without Ron's collaboration, his musical ideas and technical hints. I therefore dedicate this composition to him. Shortly before I turned to composing the piece, I read Dan Tsalka's new book, *The Alphabet Book*, and was impressed by the chapter Nocturne, which was in my mind one of the book's most beautiful parts. In the past Tsalka has written deeply and beautifully about music. The especially grim and dark tones of the double bass in my thoughts (as well as my memories of the hazy sounds of ancient bow instruments, some of them forefathers of the double bass) were tied to me to Tsalka's beautiful chapter. My composition is not "program music" nor a musical accompaniment for a text; it has linkage to the text in its own means and terms: "It all depends in the Nocturne" writes Tsalka "If I am able to feel the black of the night as a giant sail, as a shadowy and cloudy element which unites the world and connects its parts, which infiltrates and envelopes trees, bridges, towers, mountains and hills, a live musical element lit by the light of the moon and stars () I fear nothing () I wander contented I compose my nocturne" (The text proceeds to other thoughts and provinces). These lines as well as the title of my composition were taken from Dan Tsalka's book: *The Alphabet Book*, published 2003, (Courtesy of the Tsalka family and Xargol Publishers, Tel-Aviv). My composition has three short movements.

O.A. Performer's note (from the printed sheet music): I asked Oded Assaf to compose a double bass solo composition for me for the Youth at the Centre concert series at the Jerusalem Music Centre. When I request a new composition for an

instrument I always ask that there be something expressive about the music beyond the technical effects that are often showcased in such works. It is important to me that the double bass be treated like any "regular" instrument, providing the musician with an opportunity to convey emotion along with perspicacity. This composition process of this piece saw quite a few versions and transformations. My role, among others, was to stand guard and make sure that the writing for the instrument was idiomatic and coherent. This is how, for example, the decision was taken to make all of the second movement in harmonics, as the difference between "regular" sounds and the harmonics ones was over pronounced. Oded hears the sound of the double-bass as emerging from its forefather, the bass viol. His inspiration for the piece is a sense of darkness that blankets both space and time. It is like a deep voice that emerges from the dark echoes of the past. In one of our meetings, I commented that the second movement of the work evokes up an image for me of a person wandering in the darkness whistling. The third movement, in a pizzicato with glissando, includes silences, which seem to play an important role in Oded's concept. The glissando in this movement does not itself serve as an effect, and must be preformed vocally, just as a singer and every human being passes naturally through small intervals, especially through little spaces of seconds and thirds. Sing seconds and thirds from a particular note first and only then imitate the natural glissando created in the throat on the double bass' fingerboard. Every new composition poses a certain challenge to the performer. Here the difficulty is not necessarily in playing the notes themselves. (I am glad to say that in these terms this composition is very fitting for students), but rather in expressing its special concept and delivering it to the listener. Commissioning this piece was made possible through the support of the Jerusalem Music Centre, where it was premired on 10 March 2006. Reinhard Wolschina was born in Leipzig, 1952. He studied piano and composition at the Music Academy in Weimar, where he has founded the studio for new music and currently serves as Professor for composition. Wolschina has been celebrated as a composer through two Hanns Eisler prizes for composition from German Radio. In 1996 he composed a double concerto for double bass, Marimba, eighteen wind instruments and two Harps. Wolschina is a sought after guest worldwide as a composer and a performer, among others with the trio he founded, PianOV0, comprised of Oboe, Cello and Piano, as well as in a Guitar-Piano duo with his wife, Chris Bilobram. During my studies in the U.S., a web search led me to Wolschina's Vision-Aktion, a piece for Oboe, Cello and double bass that I was privileged to perform for the first time outside of Germany. Composer's note: My deep concern for the health and lasting existence of our

forests, as well as the desire to warn my contemporaries not to surrender, but to take action so as to preserve the forest for our sake and for the sake of our children, have led me to compose the piece *Waldszenen* 1986 (Forest scenes 1986). Although at first sight the piece may seem extremely difficult for most double bass players, I would like to tell the broad minded interpreter that all the technical tricks in this piece hinge on an acquaintance of over fifteen years with solo playing on the double bass. This piece is at the same time a loving gesture to the solo double bass and to the wide sonorous possibilities it captures. The double bass player who feels that all this work is relevant to him (or to her) should not spare him or herself any energy, playing the *Waldszenen* with as much technical skill and sense of fantasy that can be mustered. Throughout the piece there appears a thread or motive fragments of a renowned theme by Johannes Brahms (first Symphony, opening of the last movement); towards the end of the piece appears the main theme of *Abschied* (farewell) from Robert Schumann's piano cycle *Waldszenen* (Forest scenes), op. 82. *Waldszenen* for double bass solo was written in 17-18 November 1986 in Tabarz (Thuringian forest). R.W. Between 1979-1983 Luciano Berio had composed 34 duets for two violins. These duets are mainly pedagogic and were created for young students to perform, although some of them present a challenge for more experienced players. Each duet carries the name of a figure from Berio's world, be past composers, current colleagues from the music world and even relatives and neighbours. Duet no. 3 is named after Yossi Pecker, Berio's father-in-law; duet no. 18, composed in Tel-Aviv in 1980 is named after Piero Farulli, violist and a member of the Quartetto Italiano. At the end of the same decade, Berio wove materials from both of these duets into his piece *Psy* for double bass solo, with *Forte Barocco* as its performance indication. The musical juxtaposition reminds of the *Sequenzas* and other solo pieces by Berio. John Elmquist double bassist, pianist and composer from the Chicago area. Elmquist holds a D.M.A. in music composition from the University of Memphis. His work *Pockets*, for double bass solo was composed in 1993. This work requires acrobatic agility with such feats as the playing of similar pitched notes on near strings, playing with the left hand (unlike the common right hand) pizzicato, a constant switch between regular bow playing (*arco*) and a "white noise" effect as a result of playing with minimal bow weight, next to the bridge (*sul ponticello*). Elmquist's sophisticated writing highlights his intimate acquaintance with the instrument as both player and composer. It is a stunning piece of eclecticism, merging motifs from the western art music world with elements of jazz and pop. Robert Rohe was born in New York City. He studied double bass with Fred Zimmermann, member of the

New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Rohe served as principal bass with the New Orleans Symphony and Opera Orchestras for more than 30 years. He played in various orchestras under such conductors as Stokowsky, Toscanini and Reiner. Composer, violinist and improviser Carmel Raz was born in 1982 and Grew up in both Israel and U.S.A. Raz graduated from the Hanns Eisler Music Academy, Berlin and the University of Chicago. She served as principal violinist of Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra and the Young Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and was a member of the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra. Her works have been performed in concerts and festivals throughout North America, Europe and Israel by groups such as Arditti Quartet, Orkest de Ereprijs and Musica Nova Israel. Carmel has received grants and commissions from organizations such as the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, ASCAP, Meet the Composer and the Mellon Foundation. She was composer-in-residence with the Chicago-based Millennium Chamber Players. Carmel is an active, eclectic musician, performing music ranging from Jazz to World Music and Electronica. For more information on Carmel Raz see [carmelraz.com](http://carmelraz.com)

Composer's Note: Merhavim (Landscapes) was written in June 2008 for bassist Ron Merhavi, who asked me for a piece that would feature the lyrical side of the double bass. Before writing the piece I met with Ron twice, once at the National Park in Ramat Gan, where we enjoyed the landscape together, and an additional time at his Givatayim home, where he gave me a guided tour of the landscape of the bass sound. This piece is the direct result of both these meetings. C.R.

Composer Yehezkel Braun was raised in Israel, where he arrived at the age of two. He is a graduate of the Israeli Academy of Music in Tel-Aviv and holds a Master's degree in Classical Studies from Tel-Aviv University. Braun's main academic interest is a comparative study of traditional Jewish Melodies and of Plainsong. Professor Emeritus at the Tel-Aviv University, in 2001 Yehezkel Braun was been awarded the prestigious Israel Prize for Music; In 2003 he was honored with the title of Worthy of the city of Tel-Aviv-Yafo. For more information on Yehezkel Braun see [tau.ac.il/braun/](http://tau.ac.il/braun/) Braun has already collaborated with me, to my great joy, in the Sonata for bass and piano, written in the summer of 2003. This work, commissioned at my request, premiered in one of my Dissertation recitals in the U.S. In both this work and the one written for this album, Braun masterfully utilizes the entire range of the double bass. I thank actor Jonatan Chercei for his inspiring reading of the biblical verses in their initial Hebrew. Composer's Note: If I wished to compose music inspired by the biblical stories of Cain and Abel, Enoch and Methuselah, of Lamech and his two wives Adah and Zillah Which instrument would I choose? I would most probably choose the

double bass. But actually the opposite has happened: when the bass player Ron Merhavi asked me to compose something for his instrument, I was instantly reminded of the biblical stories about our primeval forefathers, stories I remember from my early childhood. The double bass is a pot-bellied instrument, the biggest and fattest of all the string instruments. But he is different from all his stringed brethren: he cannot pour forth such heart-rending tunes as can the violin. He could not and would not emulate the warm, lovely sound of the cello. He is somewhat akin to the viola in his somber sound. But he is the first and foremost of all string instruments in his deepest sounds and in the huge range between these and between his highest sounds. The double bass lends depth and volume to the orchestral sound. Playing alone his sound is grey, grey with all its hues and shades. This greyness inspires a sense of remoteness in space and in time. Remoteness and a sense of mystery. This is why I entrusted the double bass with telling the ancient stories of Genesis, with "painting" in sounds those Primeval Images. I am fully aware of the fact, that music as such is incapable of telling stories or painting pictures. So, how does a story turn into sounds? This is a secret hidden far beyond my understanding. I can only guess that this alchemy happens somehow somewhere inside the labyrinth of grey substance beneath my own skull.

Y.B. Ron Merhavi was born in Givatayim, near Tel-Aviv, 1975. In 1993 he graduated from the Israeli Arts and Science Academy in Jerusalem, where he studied double bass with Michael Klinghoffer, with whom Ron kept his studies at the Israeli Music Academy, Tel-Aviv University, combined with musicology and education. Recipient of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarship. In 2001 Ron completed his M.A. with a thesis dealing with Sofia Gubaidulina's 1975 Bass Sonata. At the Music in the Valley summer institute for strings in Kibbutz Mizra, he got acquainted with Diana Gannett, his Professor at the University of Michigan School of Music, 2002-2004. While at Michigan, Ron served as Diana's Graduate Student Instructor. He participated in numerous concerts in the Ann Arbor vicinity. Ron's 2004 three Dissertation Recitals, sharing the thread The Lyric Bass, incorporated pianists, vocalists, string quartet and orchestra (yes there was also room for an audience!), performing an original repertoire alongside transcriptions. The third recital in the series featured new works by two major Israeli composers, Yehezkel Braun (Sonata for bass and piano) and Andr Hajdu (Shadows and Echoes/ Insomnia Noctis for double bass and small ensemble). Dr. Merhavi, as he is now known, currently serves as a program director at the Jerusalem Music Centre and as a musical editor at The Voice of Music classical radio station of the Israel Broadcast Authority. Ron's musical innovations have been enthusiastically received and his unique ability

to synthesize the vast range of the instrument in an original manner has been likened to the Israeli national dish, Falafel: hot, fresh, a bit crunchy and with more than a hint of middle eastern spice!

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