

Alien Autopsy pt. 1

It's time for a perspective shift. If you were a visitor from another planet and you came to Earth to watch a concert, would you have the sense that you were watching Humans perform on instruments that were designed BY Humans FOR Humans? Do the players look like they are distorting their physiques to accommodate their gear, or do they seem to be merging effortlessly with the physicality of their instruments?



Postural awareness and sensitivity to excess tension are fundamental qualities of good technique on ANY instrument. I always strive to alter my body as little as possible (but as much as necessary) in order to insure maximum longevity and control. Awareness of tension that may lead to excessive effort or postural distortion is dependent on an idea known as the “Weber-Fechner Law”. This is a proposed relationship between the magnitude of a physical stimulus and the intensity or strength that is perceived. In simpler terms, our ability to notice changes in stimulus is inversely proportional to the overall amount of stimulus present. A classic example involves a simple thought experiment. Imagine you are in a pitch black cave unable to see your hand in front of your face. If you light a candle the difference between the darkness and the illuminated cave will be striking. If you were already in a room with 500 candles, the 501st candle would add the same amount of light to the room, but we would no longer be aware that anything had changed. It is a bit of a paradox, but it is the rules of the game in that our ability to sense changes in bodily tension will increase as we reduce the amount of static “background” tension. One of the unique challenges of the double bass is that due the extreme size and lack of instrument standardization means that this is all dependent upon there being a good match between instrument and player. Finding a bass

that fits your body size and musical needs can be a lifelong pursuit. This applies at both ends of the spectrum in that larger individuals can feel hampered by instruments that are actually too small for them. It is not just the more petite among us that are struggling with a mismatch with a large instrument.

Another way of increasing your awareness of your physicality has nothing to do with bass playing. It is important to consider that if playing the bass is the most physically demanding thing that you do during the day, you are asking for trouble. A Paul Ellison quote that has greatly affected me is “Bassists are Musical Athletes.” Find an activity that you enjoy that promotes strength, cardiovascular health, and body awareness. This can be yoga, pilates, strength training, swimming, running, or any combination of the above. Strength training and running have been my activities of choice over the last 8 years. You may even find a new passion that brings a fresh perspective to your Art. I have started to run Ultramarathons (races of over 26.2 miles and frequently up to 100 miles) in my 40s, and the discipline and focus required to prepare for these type of events has profoundly influenced my approach to practice and performance. The physical requirements of our instrument (not to mention the inevitable cartage) demand a high degree of fitness in order to sustain a long and injury-free career.



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FRACTAL FRIDAY TOPICS!

Please submit comments or suggestions for future topics to davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com

FRACTAL FORUM(S)!

Every Friday on Zoom at 7PM PDT!

NEW! Fractal Forum (East Coast/EU friendly time) Every SUNDAY on Zoom at 10AM PDT!

Visit www.fractalbassist.com to get the invite(s). Everyone is welcome at either or both times.

FRACTAL BASSIST Channel on YouTube (Coming Soon!)

This invite-only YouTube channel will be a continuation, development and place to share these ideas and principles. Although the entire Fractal Fingering course and samples are available online and at DiscoverDoubleBass.com, this channel will provide a forum for more in-depth content and to address questions on a more individual basis.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas you'd like explored, or inspiration you'd like to share please email: davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com.

With Love,

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