

# NEW METHOD

for String Bass

## PART II

### THE THUMB POSITION

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FRANZ SIMANDL  
(1840-1912)

In cultivating a technique for concert playing, the thumb position constitutes one of the most important features, for only by these means is it possible to raise the String Bass to the rank of a concert instrument. In order to retain the thumb position, the player must lay his left arm upon the sides of the instrument, placing that part of the thumb between the first joint and the nail horizontally across the string. As the thumb may be placed lightly upon the string (producing harmonics or flageolet tones) or firmly, pressing it down to the finger-board, I consider it expedient to use a different term for each manner of setting the thumb, viz: to indicate the thumb-position producing the harmonics or flageolet tones, and for the firm setting of the thumb.

The first finger is placed upon the string slightly curved (not bent-in), in such a manner that the extreme tip of the ball shall press the string without, however, touching it with the nail.

The second finger, which presses the string down, more with the middle of the ball, is also placed upon the string, but is curved comparatively less than the first.

The third finger must be straightened out to be placed on the string; owing to its being so short and weak, it is seldom used independently, but mostly with preparation. It used to be employed only in exceptional cases (to produce harmonics), as with the strings formerly used, the requisite power and quality of tone could not be obtained. Since, however, considerably thinner strings are now used for solo-playing, the use of the third finger is no longer so limited; it is, in fact, pretty regularly used to finish scales and florid passages. In the execution of big skips, the second finger had better be employed, being the longest and the strongest, as it is easier to make sure of correctly stopping the higher notes and tones with the second finger than it is with the third.

The fourth finger is not used when thumb-position is employed.

#### Exercises in thumb position on the G string

The exercises are presented on a single staff in bass clef, common time (C), and are labeled a through e. Exercise 'a' shows a sequence of notes: G1 (open), G2 (1), Bb2 (2), G2 (1), Bb2 (2), G2 (1), G3 (2), Bb3 (3), G3 (2), G4 (3), Bb4 (4), G4 (3), G5 (4), Bb5 (5), G5 (4), G6 (5). Exercise 'b' shows a sequence: G2 (1), G#2 (2), Bb2 (3), G2 (1), Bb2 (2), G2 (1), G3 (2), Bb3 (3), G3 (2), G4 (3), Bb4 (4), G4 (3), G5 (4). Exercise 'c' is a chromatic scale starting from G1 and moving up to G6. Exercise 'd' is a chromatic scale starting from G6 and moving down to G1. Exercise 'e' consists of slurs over groups of four notes: G2-G3-G4-G5, G3-G4-G5-G6, G4-G5-G6-G7, G5-G6-G7-G8, and G6-G7-G8-G9.