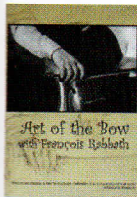


# DVDS

## ART OF THE BOW ART OF THE LEFT HAND

François Rabbath  
AVANT BASS  
WWW.ARTOFTHEBOW.COM



*Art of the Bow* is a single DVD delivered with the same passion and commitment that double

bassist François Rabbath brings to his performances. In a series of interviews, he demonstrates an evangelical zeal for his 'New Technique', and he explains his philosophy of teaching and learning and his dedication to promoting the very personal and human relationship that he believes should exist between teacher and student, and between performer and listener.

Rabbath starts with a discussion about finding the best possible relationship between the player's body and the bass, in order to enable equal tone production on all strings. To achieve this, he has

adopted his own particular endpin set-up, which he fully explains. He goes on to give his views on rosin, bow weight, hair tension and bow balance, before tackling the mechanics of bowing. His explanations of the bow arm are pared down to some universal truths about the physics and mechanics of string vibration and sound production, and how, therefore, the body must work to produce the purest and truest sound. Once this is established, it is just a small step to varying these fundamental principles to produce a variety of sounds and textures – all of which are demonstrated in performances of Rabbath's own compositions or of works by Frank Proto.

Rabbath believes that there are seven basic families of bow strokes (son premier, portato, staccato, sautillé and barriolage, retake, repeated down and up bows, and artificial harmonics) and in demonstrating these the DVD employs its most advanced camera angles and slow-motion studies. This makes for fascinating viewing, and it prompts in-depth

thought and analysis of every bow stroke, from the simplest to the most complex. Watching these demonstrations, I was reminded of Percival Hodgson's book *Motion Study and Violin Bowing*, for which the author produced cyclographs showing the motion of the arm by placing lights on the bow and performer and filming them carrying out various bow strokes. It is good to see cutting-edge technology being used once again to reveal the freedom of movement so easily observed in master performers and so elusive to many of the rest of us.



*Art of the Left Hand* consists of two DVD discs. The first is simply a series of lecture demonstrations

that explain Rabbath's philosophy on the left hand through numerous demonstrations of music by Bach and Rabbath himself. He touches on many aspects of playing that students need to address: practice, fingerings, pivots, the crab, interpretation, preparing the ears of the listener, and storytelling. This is all valuable stuff, whether or not you want to adopt his technique in its entirety.

In the second disc, though, just as he has blown apart traditional ideas of double bass technique, Rabbath explodes conventional ways of filming artists performing, with a series of multi-angle animations showing the body at work. Through these animations, Rabbath demonstrates pivots, hand positions, scales, shifting, the crab and vibrato. Not only can the techniques be seen live from three separate camera angles, but there are also electronic animations displaying the various techniques, made using markers carefully positioned on Rabbath's body. These animated demonstrations are themselves viewable from no fewer than nine camera angles.

This is a truly fascinating way of demonstrating the workings of the body. Perhaps my favourite view comes in a Bach Sarabande where the bass has been completely removed from the animation, leaving only the arms, hands, fingers and torso.

*Art of the Bow* and *Art of the Left Hand* are both packed with information delivered by an inspirational performer and teacher. Whether you are a keen amateur or a serious professional, no bass player's education is complete without having experienced Rabbath's demonstrations.

CATHY ELLIOTT