

Art of the Bow DVD Review

In this major new DVD presentation the formidable bowing technique of Francois Rabbath is exhaustively analysed using state-of-the-art video game technology alongside more conventional methods. In employing the talents of Ball State University's Biomechanics Lab, producer and director Hans Sturm takes advantage of technology previously used to perfect Tiger Woods' golf swing.

This method required Rabbath to don a black suit with reflective markers placed at key locations on his person and instrument. Bright lights shone on these markers allowed them to be filmed from three angles by high-speed digital cameras, with the resulting data, after mind-boggling mathematical calculations, providing an accurate three-dimensional representation of Rabbath's bowing. Overlaying a computer-generated stick figure, which may be viewed from selectable angles, takes much of the mystery out of advanced right-arm technique.

While the 'biomechanics' chapter comprises the most innovative section of this DVD, there is a wealth of information captured in more traditional video interviews and performance extracts: posture, bow weight, wrist flexibility, elbow angle and chest placement are only some of the subjects addressed. His discourse on teaching young beginners moves a refreshing distance away from the half-position, slow-bow orthodoxy responsible for strangling so many nascent musical careers. At three hours' running time, this DVD gives Rabbath a forum to expound at length not only on the mysteries of the bow, but on his personal philosophy of being an artist, teacher and performer. Debate over the 'right' way to make sound with string instrument and bow will continue for as long as there is music in the world. Whatever your camp, you will derive benefit from having access to this DVD. Future developments involving biomechanics could result in a complete virtual representation of the bow arm; a comparison using this technology of other top players would be particularly welcome.

by Iain Crawford - Double Bassist Magazine