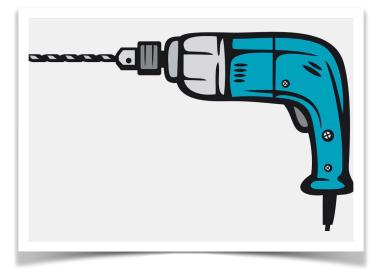**"Put me in, Coach!"**

When we talk about practice strategies it all boils down to self-management. Practice is generally a solitary pursuit, but we can have a virtual "coach" in the room with us any time we want. How valuable would it be to have someone over your shoulder, keeping you focused and directed during your sessions? For years, I have used an interval timer to help manage my time in practice sessions. Apps such as Gymboss and Seconds Pro are designed for the fitness world, but they can be low-cost and powerful tools to enhance your practice efficacy. I prefer the features and functionality of Seconds Pro, so that is the one I will highlight here. It can be applied in many different ways, but I would like to focus on "drills".

It is important to first define what I mean by "drills". They are distinctly different from what is commonly called "warming up". "Warming up" is getting your body and mind limber, oxygenated, and ready to practice deeply. It should include dynamic (as opposed to static) stretching, breathing exercises, and gentle movement; NOT playing. Drills are highly focused exercises designed to address specific aspects of fundamental technique. Choosing specific drills is a highly personal process and requires intense self-awareness and/or input from a mentor or teacher. They can be basic techniques or challenges derived from repertoire. I like to use a list of 12 topics that alternate (for the most part) between left hand and right hand techniques. They are each assigned 5 minutes, and there is a 5 minute break between each group of 4 exercises (modeled on the "pomodoro method". Google it). I first learned the concept behind this way using Seconds Pro from Joshua Voiles' "Artist Acceleration". It is based on the concept of Deep Practice.

Here is a sample template:

Open strings		Bow Changes		Marcato	
Left Hand Contact		Low position vibrato		1 finger scales	
Spiccato	(Rest)	String crossing curves	(Rest)	Vomit shifts	
Pivots		High position vibrato		4ths	

Using Seconds Pro, create a "Custom Timer", and enter the names of the intervals along with their respective lengths. You can do it manually or use the link here:

http://www.intervaltimer.com/timers/9769187

Make sure to set the Alerts to "Text-to-Speech with Count". As each new interval approaches, you will get a countdown of 3-2-1 followed by a voice prompt for the new exercise. It creates a virtual coach in the room with you that directs you to focus on a new, narrow concept at predetermined intervals. The result is what Joshua calls a "gamification" of the practice session where you have a virtual assistant (a la Cortana or J.A.R.V.I.S.) directing you and keeping you dialed in on your next objective. Keep tempo logs (where relevant) of the various intervals so that you can have another measurement to track your progress. I like to keep 2 versions of this timer: one with 5 minute intervals and one with 2 minute intervals (with no rest segments) for when I need a quick tune up. The goal is to engage with a laser-like focus on the objective of each interval for the time allotted. You don't have to solve all of the challenges in each session. We're in this for the long haul, and there is always tomorrow. Remember: gamers don't die; they respawn.

THOMASTIK
INFELD
VIENNA
HANDMADE STRINGS SINCE 1919

FRACTAL FRIDAY TOPICS!

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

FRACTAL FORUM

Fridays beginning Oct. 9 at 7PM PDT. Visit www.fractalbassist.com to get the invite.

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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