



Reviews



[Catalin Rotaru Plays Music for Double Bass and Piano by Frank Proto](#)

Sonata 1963

A Carmen Fantasy

Sonata No. 2

Catalin Rotaru: Double Bass, Marina Pacowski: Piano

Frank Proto is a composer who started out playing the double bass. He plays jazz as well as classical and composes fluently in both idioms, often simultaneously. This release of his works for bass and piano is played by two fine musicians who have also demonstrated their proficiency in both areas of performance, as one may judge not only from the sound of this fine CD but by watching them on the accompanying DVD. The DVD is a combination of the performances of the music - presumably the same readings as on the CD - with interviews of both players plus written biographies and video program notes about the pieces and their composer. Red Mark has done this before, combining recordings with videos. It brings one closer to everyone involved, and here it helps you appreciate just what goes into a project like this one.

Seeing the players in action is inspiring. This is not easy music to play, since it requires very precise communication to be convincing. I was already impressed at how expressively it was handled when listening to the CD, but watching it done on the DVD is really special. These musicians play beautifully and are good to watch. (Each piece seems to require a different outfit.)

The early sonata is the easiest to follow. It has been recorded several times before but never this smoothly. The *Carmen Fantasy* was written later, in 1991 for François Rabbath. It has been recorded with piano and with orchestra. There was a recording by Rabbath with Proto on piano. Sonata No. 2 is from 2013. In speaking about these works, Proto gives us a considerable amount of his life history, told with enjoyable details and illustrated with interesting photos and background music from the pieces mentioned, not the ones on this program. One can learn a lot this way.

Proto's music is a fascinating blend of modern classicism, jazz gestures, and quotations from other people's music. He is clearly a highly organized and pleasantly inspired composer and performer. The performers are among the best I have heard in this literature, and the recorded quality is excellently clear - even more on the DVD than on the CD, unless that's a variation in the quality of my setup that I am not aware of. At any rate I recommend this highly.

David Moore

American Record Guide

[Back to Feature Presentation](#)

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Chamber Catalog

Orchestra Catalog

Rentals

Red Mark

CD/DVD Catalog

Audio Excerpts

About

Liben Music

Frank Proto

François Rabbath

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HELP and Frequently asked Questions

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Composer:

Title:

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[Catalin Rotaru Plays Music of Frank Proto](#)

Catalin Rotaru, double bass

Marina Pacowski, piano.

DVD/CD Red Mark

The International Society of Bassists will pay tribute to Frank Proto, arguably the most important composer for the double bass since Bottesini, at its 2015 convention at Colorado State university. His catalog of masterpieces that have entered the standard repertoire include three concertos, two sonatas, chamber works and his extraordinarily popular *Carmen Fantasy*, which is probably being played somewhere in the world even as you read these words. A number of artists have programmed works by Proto for our week in Fort Collins, including some surprises, and there is no better way to prepare for the experience than by viewing Frank Proto's latest landmark project, **Catalin Rotaru Plays Music for Double Bass and Piano by Frank Proto.**

This DVD/CD combination includes luminous performances by the extraordinary double bass virtuoso Catalin Rotaru of *Sonata 1963*, *Carmen Fantasy* and the world premiere recording of *Sonata No. 2*, which Proto wrote for and dedicated to him. Rotaru is joined by pianist Marina Pacowski, a sensitive and accomplished artist in her own right who is well known to ISB convention audiences. The professional production quality and sheer excitement generated by Rotaru and Pacowski makes viewing this DVD feel more like being in a concert hall than in one's living room. For aspiring performers, this is a masterclass in how it's done, and for fans of the music of Frank Proto, it just doesn't get any better than this.

But the fun doesn't stop with the recital. Disc two features extensive interviews and program notes, and best of all, a virtual walk down memory lane with Proto himself narrating as he remembers his friends and major influences (especially David Walter and Fred Zimmermann), being the first double bass student to give a recital at the Manhattan School of Music, and what it was like to be a young freelance musician in a golden age of jazz and classical music in New York City. There are some Easter eggs in this disc, so watch closely. Frank Proto has opened a window with this music and documentary project that you won't want to close.

Madeleine Crouch

Bass World

[Back to Feature Presentation](#)
