

# DOTZAUER –

*(Founder of the Dresden School of Cello  
Playing)*

*Written by Annapaola  
(first published in [www.cellist.nl](http://www.cellist.nl))*

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# **DOTZAUER, Justus Johann Friedrich**

**Born: 1783, 20<sup>th</sup> January (Haselrich, Germany)**

**Died: 1860, 6<sup>th</sup> March (Dresden)**

*Written by Annapaola  
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Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer was born on January 20, 1783 at Haselrich, near Hildburghausen. His father was a local pastor and an ardent music-lover. In his childhood Justus played the piano, violin and cello. The organist and composer Ruttinger, who had studied with Johann Christian Kittel-the last pupil of J.S. Bach-instructed Dotzauer in music theory and elementary composition. The young musician also took lessons on the double-bass, the French horn and clarinet. At the age of fifteen, he had already played the violoncello variations by Ignac Joseph Pleyel at the Hildburghausen court concert.

After choosing the cello as his prime focus, Dotzauer left for Meiningen in 1799 and continued his studies there under the then famous German violoncellist and concertmaster of the ducal chapel Krigck-a pupil of Jean Duport.

Two years later, Dotzauer was admitted to the Meiningen court chapel. There he stayed until 1805, when he left for a Leipzig chapel. Dotzauer remained in Leipzig until 1811, and with Matthei, Campagnioli and Voigt he formed a quartet which won great acclaim. In 1810, they gave twelve concerts in Leipzig which were among the first public quartet concerts in Europe.' Ludwig Spohr spoke highly of Dotzauer as a chamber musician, and emphasized the peculiar purity of his intonation and perfection of technique. The famous German violinist and composer also appreciated him as a concert-soloist.

While he was in Leipzig, Dotzauer played in the Gewandhaus orchestra until 1811. He often visited Berlin to listen to Romberg, and whenever the opportunity arose, improved his playing under the latter's guidance. Although these were evidently only occasional lessons, the playing of the great master, then at the height of his world fame, made a huge impression on young Dotzauer and influenced his performing style, which his contemporaries praised for its combination of "solidity and grace," expressiveness and technical skill. Besides his own compositions, Dotzauer's repertoire included concertos by Romberg, Arnold and other contemporaries.

After being appointed to the post of royal chamber musician in Dresden in 1811, Dotzauer gave a farewell concert in Leipzig.

Dotzauer played in the Dresden chapel for forty years (from 1821 until 1850 as principal violoncellist), taking part in symphonic and operatic performances. For a number of years after 1817 he played there under Carl Maria von Weber and later (1842-1849) under Richard Wagner. Dotzauer played in the premieres of Wagner's operas *Rienzi* and *The Flying Dutchman*.

When in 1841 Hector Berlioz was invited to two concerts in Dresden, he found the Dresden orchestra in its full flower. Effusively praising the Dresden chapel, Berlioz wrote: "Besides the outstanding artists whom I have already named, there is the excellent professor Dotzauer. He leads the violoncellists, but is simultaneously responsible for the performance of the first desk basses, as the double-bassist playing next to him is too old... Quite often, Dotzauer performed in solo recitals and as a chamber musician, a member of the quartet featuring Limberg, Schmidel, Peschke and himself.

From time to time the violoncellist toured in other towns of Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. Reviews usually centered on the mastery and expressiveness of the Dresden violoncellist's performance, and historians of the violoncello art note the qualities of his playing, such as "great solidity and fascinating sweetness," "combination of power of tone with nobility and gracefulness of style."

In 1850, Dotzauer left his post in the court orchestra and retired. He died in Dresden on March 6, 1860.

Dotzauer successfully combined a concert and teaching career. During his 50 years in Dresden, he taught many excellent violoncellists-Voigt, Kummer, Drechsler, Schubert and his son, Karl Ludwig Dotzauer. Voigt's activity centered around Leipzig; Kummer in Dresden; Drechsler in Dessau; Schubert and K.L. Dotzauer in Kassel.

Dotzauer was no ordinary composer-he wrote an opera (Graziosa), several masses, symphonies, overtures, and chamber compositions. But they lost their artistic significance. This is also true of most of his cello works, which comprise nine concertos, three concertinos, the Double concerto (for two cellos), sonatas, fantasias, variations, divertissements and pot-pourris -so popular at the time, especially in teaching.

Many amateur musicians of the first half and of the middle of the last century made extensive use of the collections of operatic arias arranged by Dotzauer for cello with the bass part (in the 1830s he published six of these collections) which are among the earliest violoncello transcriptions.

Dotzauer's teaching compositions were very valuable, and some are still. The cellist tried to embody his long years of performing and teaching experience in numerous etudes, exercises and methods. He compiled The Violoncello Method Op. 165 (1832), The Violoncello Method for Elementary Teaching Op. 126 (1836), The Method of Playing Harmonics Op. 147 (1837), and The Practical Method of Violoncello Playing Op. 155 (s.a.).

The Violoncello Method Op. 165 consists of two parts: the first is dedicated to the method of violoncello playing, and the second to practical teaching material. This material is primarily schematic and is of little interest from the musical point of view, although the cello part is accompanied by a second cello, which makes it slightly more musical and helps develop the habit of ensemble playing.

As he tries to cover various kinds of technique, the author is not always very consistent in the pattern of the exercises; as he is unable to provide sufficient material for practicing one specific skill, he relies on the teacher and on an additional list of recommended pedagogical literature.

Judging by the drawing of the cellist at the instrument contained in Dotzauer's Method, it was essentially different from that of Romberg's. Though both positions are based on playing without the spike and holding the instrument between the calves, Dotzauer's position is freer and more natural, and the cello is held not very deep. Unlike Romberg's firm "grip," Dotzauer's manner of holding the bow is less tense. Whereas the French schools advised holding the bow at a certain distance from the frog, Dotzauer was one of the first (if not the very first) author of violoncello methods who insisted that the bow be held near the frog-as do today's contemporary cellists. Especially attentive to the freedom of the right hand, Dotzauer was basically correct in evaluating the role of the other parts of the arm, and tried to encourage natural movements throughout the whole length of drawing the bow. The position of the left hand is also close to the contemporary- specifically violoncello.

Besides his etudes and capriccios, in the list of additional recommended literature Dotzauer gives the Method of the Paris Conservatoire (1804) and the Method of Duport (1806). In Dotzauer's Method one can sense a certain influence of Romberg, though his Method appeared only in 1840. At the same time, in some respects Dotzauer takes an independent course.

As far as shifts of positions are concerned, he comes very close to the principles of Davydov, who was the first to systematize in his Method (1888) the development of this important technical device in the sense of expressiveness. Dotzauer thought portamento not suitable for tutti, but suitable for solo concert music, in which case it "could produce quite a pleasant effect."

He worked out the thumb device both theoretically and methodically. In the fingering of scales (he gives alternate fingering with and without open strings) he is a step ahead compared to Romberg, although not yet at the level of Davydov.

Dotzauer presents three alternate fingerings for the C Major scale, the second of which is rhythmical and the third-with the thumb -absolutely outdated.

In the Method there is material to help develop the technique of double stops (including fourths and fifths) and as a rare example for the cello, the octaves played with "Fingersatz": 9 -3; 1-4. Dotzauer gives the rich scale of embellishments (ornamentation) its due place. Vibrato is also included. Much attention is given to bowing, with three main strokes differentiated. The first one is the long stroke (semibreve notes in slow tempo) for which he recommends "economy" of the bow and performance of each long note crescendo and diminuendo. The second stroke is "wave-like," performed by the hand on two or more alternating legato strings. The third one is a short and emphasized stroke. He advises to play the strokes upbow, when it is easier and more natural to play them downbow, and vice versa.

Dotzauer considers about 120 stroke combinations and introduces a visual schematic table of strokes. Here, dotted strokes and various kinds of arpeggios are of great interest. Of the specific strokes, Dotzauer emphasizes staccato on one bow motion. In his Practical Method he writes about a spiccato stroke, which he is more tolerant of than was Romberg.

In the esthetic sense, Dotzauer's principles as presented in his Method indicate his opinion as relatively progressive and close to the basics of the French schools and of Romberg's Method, published eight years later.

Dotzauer considered tonal power and purity extremely important. He evidently was very concerned that the sound be warm, with vibrato (he calls it tremolo), though in the Method he links its application only with the "sustained sounds." According to the spirit of the time he, like Romberg, made limited use of vibrato, although he wrote that with long notes it produced a very sweet impression.

Differentiating between the sound requirements of a soloist and an orchestral or chamber musician, Dotzauer wrote: "When overcoming the most difficult passages seems to be a brilliant achievement, infinitely superior is the merit of producing a beautiful tone and the ability to play melodiously; the sound of the noblest instrument approaching the human voice remains an incontestable example and model for every musician."

Quoting Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768), Dotzauer spoke of the importance of musical taste being based on simplicity.

"A musician, who, as they used to say, does not leave a single note undistorted, who frames simple and quiet singing with embellishments and plays either with harmonics, or pizzicato, or ponticello, either up the fingerboard, or down, torturing the ear with different strokes ... such a musician is a bad performer, who has no notion of beautiful simplicity. He vulgarly insults good taste."

Dotzauer pays special attention to the accompaniment of recitatives. Demanding that a violoncellist have complete command of the instrument and knowledge of harmony, he speaks about the correspondence of the sound force to the "main effect," about the submission of the accompaniment to the solo singer.

He warns the cellist accompanist to refrain from superfluous embellishments and passages—the sin of many musicians of the time — which distracted listeners' attention from the vocal part. Dotzauer distinguished the "simple recitative," in which the cellist only supported the declamation of the singer, from the "obligato recitative" in which the orchestral instrument played an independent role.

The Practical Method comprised four books of etudes and exercises in order of progressively growing difficulty: "Elementary teaching and eighteen progressive exercises" (for beginners with the accompaniment of a second cello); "Twenty etudes and scale-like exercises in the first positions" (containing material for practicing finger technique, shifts and bowing); "Twenty duets with the thumb" (the last three are of virtuoso character) and "Twenty-four daily etudes to achieve virtuosity" (double stops, cadenza-like passages and various complicated strokes are employed).

The Method of Playing Harmonics includes the methods of this device, double stops, scales and exercises in harmonics, plus an additional section on pizzicato played by the left hand.

As justly stated by Eckhardt, Dotzauer's methods do not contain interesting enough material in the musical respect, but because of their methodic and pedagogical qualities were quite popular for many successive decades. Many re-editions by Schroder, Salter, Becker and Klingenberg (Op. 165) as well as translations attest to their pedagogical value and popularity even in the present century.

Dotzauer's Daily Exercises were his most successful piece of fortune, and were very popular especially in Germany, as material for teaching and practice purposes. Almost all prominent German violoncellists and pedagogues wrote exercises of this type, trying to make a sort of compendium of exercises covering different techniques and helping to preserve and develop them. But as time went by, the rational and differentiated use of this kind of manual evolved into formal daily playing of all exercises without an intelligent selection of the most suitable of them for each individual musician at a definite stage of his education. By the end of the last century, in German teaching of the violoncello, such use of "daily exercises" often led to formalism, to substitution of the nurturing of an artist by the training of a professional dabbler.

The merits of Dotzauer's many etudes lie in their exceptionally varied technique, in their pedagogic rationality and in the different degrees of difficulty -from elementary exercises to the most difficult virtuoso etudes. Dotzauer's 113 etudes, selected and edited by Johann Klingenberg," a pupil of Friedrich GrUtzmacher, are still widely used during the entire period the violoncello is taught.

Dotzauer's Preludes and Fugues for Violoncello Solo Op. 178 deserve special mention, as they might be a valuable aid when working at polyphony and preparing a young cellist for the study of Bach's solo suites.

Of special note is Dotzauer's early edition of Bach's Six suites for violoncello solo, first published in Leipzig in 1825 (by the Probst editorial board) -without the name of the editor. Only a year later-also in Leipzig- (by Breitkopf and Hertel) the suites. were republished in Dotzauer's edition which differed from the previous one in strokes and dynamic marks.

Though Dotzauer's edition is outdated and is only of historical significance now, its value is in no way denigrated, as it was the first edition conceived from the point of view of a performer, proving Dotzauer's early interest in Bach's music and showing that he did try to include the suites in the concert and teaching repertoire. But neither Probst nor Dotzauer call them suites. Probst calls them Six Sonatas or etudes, while Dotzauer uses Six Solos or etudes. He seems somewhat hesitant about the definition of their musical and instructive character. Although the incontestable artistic value of the suites was acknowledged much later, Dotzauer's role in the rebirth of these works should not be underestimated, especially if we remember that Bach's violin solo sonatas and partitas in Ferdinand David's edition appeared only in 1843.



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