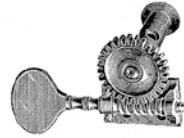


Jonas Lohse



# The Double Bass Book



English translation by Martin and Maria Wind

## Foreword by Martin Wind



*Martin Wind is a bassist/composer with a broad stylistic musical background. Born in Flensburg, Germany, he earned a diploma as an orchestra musician at the music conservatory in Cologne. After winning the third prize at the 1995 Thelonious Monk Bass Competition and the Cognac Hennessy/Blue Note Jazz Search in 1996, he moved to New York City, where he has since worked with a large variety of world renown artists in the fields of jazz, Brazilian music, pop, and film music.*

I believe it was sometime in 2019 that I received an intriguing inquiry from Jonas Lohse, a multi-talented jazz bassist, set-up specialist, bass shop owner, publisher, author from Frankfurt, Germany. He was looking for somebody to translate his marvelous textbook *Das Kontrabass-Buch* for a first English edition. I soon realized that the person he was looking for was me! I've been bilingual since moving to New York City in 1996 and have always been interested in our instrument's history, the making of them, as well as the biographies of important orchestra players, soloists, and jazz bassists.

Working on this book turned out to be a gift in so many ways: it helped me keep my sanity by giving me something meaningful to work on during those long COVID lockdown times, and allowed my wife Maria and I to share in a professional engagement (she proofread and corrected my work); in the process I also got to improve my vocabulary and grammar, but most importantly, I LEARNED SO MUCH!

Here are a few fun facts that you will be able to discover over the next 200+ pages: did you know that Domenico Dragonetti traveled to Bonn, Germany from London at the age of 83 years to participate in a performance of Beethoven's 5th Symphony as the principal of 13 bassists, or that Giovanni Bottesini conducted the world premiere of Verdi's "Aida" in Cairo, Egypt in 1871? How about the fact that German makers dominated the global market for simple, inexpensive string instruments for over two centuries, before manufacturers from Japan, Korea and China took the lead in the 1970s? Or that at the beginning of the 19th century a  $\frac{3}{4}$  orchestra bass was being offered in the Sears, Roebuck & Co catalogue for \$ 22.85?

I hope that you will enjoy this excursion into the world of the double bass as much as I have! I have gained a much deeper understanding of the craftsmanship that goes into making and setting up instruments. I'm more aware of major technological inventions and the scientific conditions that allow us to experience sound. But most of all, I learned to appreciate even more the wonderful community of bassists that have helped lead the way and elevate our instrument to unknown heights. Now fasten your seatbelts and enjoy the ride!

Martin Wind

Teaneck, New Jersey, June 2021

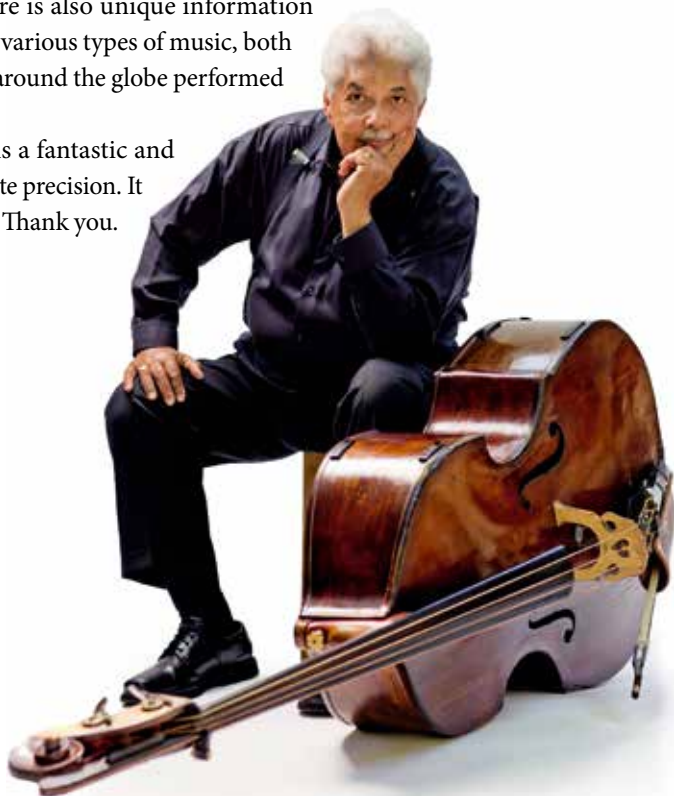
## Foreword by Rufus Reid

Mr. Jonas Lohse has gathered an incredibly detailed information about the beginnings and development of our beloved instrument, the double bass. He has made this 240 page book extremely interesting and accessible to learn of the origins and the history of the double bass by utilizing detailed graphics, illustrations, and beautiful photographs throughout the book. The information gathered here is very engaging from the novice to the most astute professional luthier.

There is information about how the bridges are constructed and used. There are beautiful portraits of the various significant styles of beautiful instruments from around the world. There are fingerboard charts, glossaries, and illustrations with the various sizes and measurements used to construct the instrument. There is also a section that discusses and illustrates the origins of the bass guitar. There is also unique information never discussed in other books about the various types of music, both European classical, Jazz, and music from around the globe performed on the double bass.

Mr. Lohse's *The Double Bass Book* is a fantastic and most impressive labor of love with articulate precision. It will be a beautiful addition to any library. Thank you.

Rufus Reid  
Jazz Bassist/Composer



*Rufus Reid and his Josef Reiger bass (made ca. 1805 at Mittenwald/Germany)*

# Table of contents

<b>Forewords</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The history of the Double Bass at a glance</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The history of the Double Bass</b>	<b>17</b>
Tunings	23
Shapes	26
Sizes	29
Tonewoods	34
Bows	42
Electric Upright Bass (EUB)	50
On the road with the double bass	54
The double bass and its parts (in four languages)	58
Range of the double bass, the notes on the piano keyboard	60
<b>Lutherie</b>	<b>61</b>
Craft and industrial stringed instrument making	62
Factory made violins from Germany	62
Germany as a developing country	64
Quality as competitive advantage	67
The 20th century	69
Labeling fraud	83
American-made plywood basses	86
<b>Strings</b>	<b>93</b>
Rosin	100
<b>Important bassists</b>	<b>101</b>
Johann Matthias Sperger – *1750 †1812	102
Domenico Dragonetti – *1763 †1846	103
Václav House (Wenzel Hause) – *1764 †1847	104
Giovanni Bottesini – *1821 †1889	104
Franz Simandl – *1840 †1912	105
Serge Alexandrovich Koussevitzky – *1874 †1951	106
<b>The Double Bass in Jazz</b>	<b>107</b>
Bowing, plucking or slapping?	109
1930–1940: The Swing era	110
1940–1950: The Bebop revolution	111
Jazz Jam Sessions—breeding grounds of bebop	113
Red Mitchell about the bass scene of the 1950ies	119
1950–1960: Modern Jazz	120
1960–1970: Free Jazz and Avantgarde	121
1970: The electrification of Jazz	123

Technological Backlash	124
Bassists and the Cello in Jazz	125
Bassists in the Jazz polls	127
<b>Jazz Bass Timeline</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Electrical amplification of the Double Bass</b>	<b>135</b>
Microphones	136
Piezos	137
Magnetic pickups	138
The development of pickups	141
Phase cancellation for pickups	147
Do-it-yourself pickups	147
Amplifier and speakers	148
Impedance	152
Tone controls and filters	152
Feedback	153
Digital signal processing	154
<b>Setup und sound optimization</b>	<b>155</b>
The fingerboard	156
The bridge	160
The nut	170
The soundpost	171
Where does the soundpost go?	176
Cutting a new soundpost	176
The Tailpiece	178
The Saddle	180
The Endpin	181
Climate	183
Sharp tools	184
Glues	185
<b>Sound improvement from the laboratory</b>	<b>187</b>
Chladnian sound figures	187
Mode Matching	187
Vibration dedampening	188
Wolf tones	189
<b>The acquisition of a double bass</b>	<b>191</b>
How does the bass sound?	196
Prices yesterday and today	199

<b>Instrument Portraits</b>	<b>203</b>
Gasparo da Salò	204
Giovanni Paolo Maggini	208
Hans Christoph Zäncker	210
Peeter Borlon	212
Johann Joseph Stadlmann	213
Matteo Gofriller	214
Domenico Montagnana	216
Domenico Busan	218
Giovanni Battista Ceruti	220
Giuseppe Baldantoni	222
John Frederick Lott	225
Hawkes & Son	228
J. T. Lamy	231
The “Karr-Koussevitzky” bass	232
Bass making in Mittenwald	234
Bass making in the Saxon/West Bohemian region	235
Bass making at Bubenreuth	237
Acknowledgments	238
About the author	239