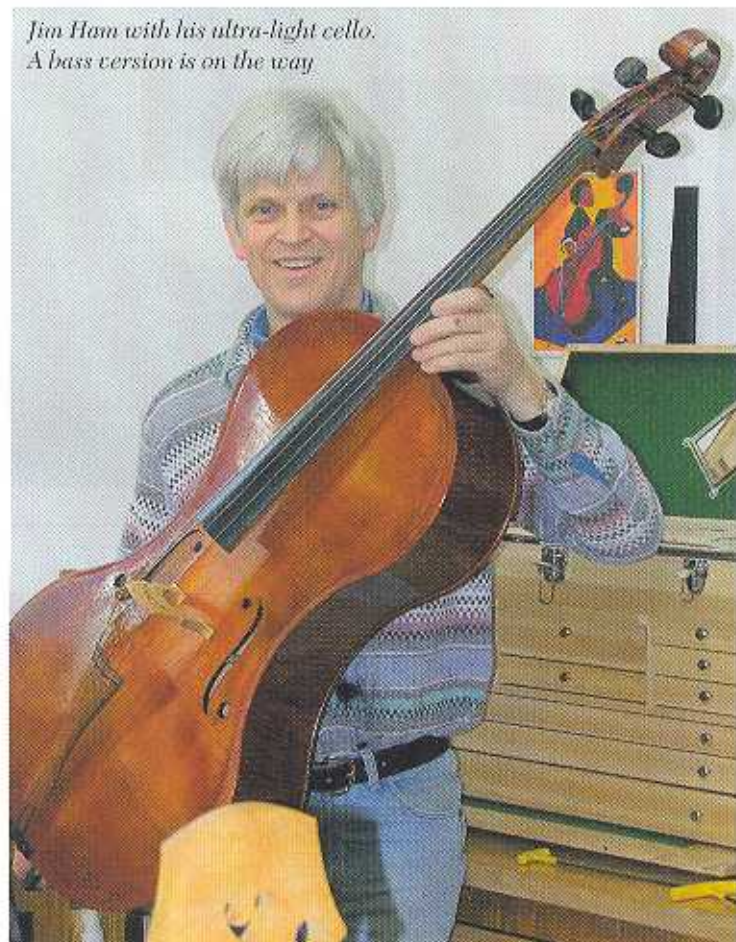


Jim Ham to make ultra-light bass

Jim Ham with his ultra-light cello.
A bass version is on the way



American bass maker Jim Ham has revealed plans to make an ultra-light double bass with the technology used to make his acclaimed ultra-light cello. The bass will be unveiled at the International Society of Bassists (ISB) Convention in Oklahoma City in June 2007.

Ham teamed up with violin maker Ted White to develop the cello, which weighs 2.1kg – around half the weight of a normal cello. He said: 'The dimensions of the bass will be similar to the two models I make now, with a mostly traditional appearance, and will have my trademark adjustable neck.' Like its cello counterpart, the bass will weigh half that of a normal bass. The main vibrating components of the instruments will comprise balsa wood, with veneers of maple or spruce, and there will be carbon fibre reinforcements in strategic places, as well as a carbon fibre fingerboard. Balsa wood has been hailed as the new wonder-material in lutherie circles because of its purported ability to combine rigidity and lightness with tone and responsiveness. 'It is possible to make a professional-quality instrument using these materials and engineering concepts for use with all traditional repertoire – orchestra, solo and jazz, which would be more responsive and easier to play than traditional instruments, while sounding at least as good and having equivalent durability and beauty,' Ham continued.

Ham cites portability as an obvious advantage, as well as improvements in sound quality. He said: 'The recent work done with balsa violins by Douglas Martin and Joseph Curtin at the VSA Oberlin Acoustics workshops has convinced me that great advances are possible in sound quality by non-traditional means.'

Jeff Bradetich's new pedagogy book

American bassist and pedagogue Jeff Bradetich has pooled his knowledge and experience as a bass teacher into a new book on double bass pedagogy. The bassist, who has been educating for 25 years and teaches at the University of North Texas (UNT), Denton, recently returned from a five-month sabbatical predominantly spent writing the manuscript.

Bradetich says that the book, provisionally named *Double Bass – the Ultimate Challenge*, addresses the importance of developing modern approaches to bass pedagogy that consider the bass's increasing status as a solo instrument. Among the topics central to the work are: left-hand fingering, use of the bow, and techniques for better sound production. The book also addresses public and psychological perceptions of the instrument alongside the technical aspects of playing it.

Bradetich's role as a teacher at the UNT and coordinator of the annual Bradetich masterclasses have provided him with an ideal environment in which to explore pedagogical ideas. The UNT has the largest university double bass programme in the world. The publisher and publishing date are to be confirmed.

Menuhin School's new hall

The Yehudi Menuhin School in the UK has a new £2.5m concert hall, named after the school's founder. The 300-seater venue has been built to specific requirements of acoustics, and also has a digital recording facility. In addition to being used by the School's students, the hall will be available for hire throughout the year.

The School was founded by Menuhin in 1963 and provides tuition in stringed instruments, piano and guitar. Among the double bass alumni are Paul Ellison, currently professor of double bass at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, US, who will visit the School in May. Among the current bass faculty is Caroline Emery. For information visit www.yehudimenuhinschool.co.uk.

