

A Tour of the Bass

The bass has a few different names that it is referred to; the strings bass, the double bass, the upright bass, the contrabass to name a few. The bass or double bass is named for its original purpose of doubling the bass in large ensembles. It's wooden and shaped like the others, but tall. A musician that plays Double Bass typically stands poised over the instrument or is seated on a large stool playing over the neck. The tuning for the Double Bass is similar to an acoustic guitar's bottom 4 strings with E, A, D and G.

Parts of the viola include:

Scroll - The scroll is a decorative carved wood piece at the end of the string bass. The scroll is a decorative carved wood piece at the end of the string bass, usually carved out of the same piece of wood forming the pegbox.

Pegbox - Tuning handles - The pegbox holds sturdy tuning machines for the strings to wrap around so they can be tuned. The other end of the strings is anchored at the tailpiece. Each peg is slightly tapered in shape, allowing the player to adjust the hold of the peg by applying more or less pressure and turning. Often, the pegbox and the scroll of the string bass are carved out of a single piece of wood.

Machine Heads - The machine heads are made of metal and are used to adjust the pitch of each string easily. The string bass is the only member of the traditional stringed instrument family to have metal machine tuners, which are necessary due to the remarkable force exerted by the string bass's larger gauge strings.

Ribs - The ribs (or sides) are carefully crafted to hold the string bass's top and back apart, creating the space for the sound to develop.

Nut - The nut (or string nut) holds and directs the strings down the fingerboard to the tailpiece. The nut is found at the top end of the fingerboard, holding the strings in perfect alignment and exact height from the fingerboard to maximize the string bass's tone and playability. Four small grooves or notches are carved into the top of the nut, into which the strings are placed before winding around the pegs.

Fingerboard - The fingerboard provides a hard surface for the string to be pressed down onto so notes can be played. String bass fingerboards are mostly made of ebony, a very hard black wood. Other hardwoods are sometimes used on lower quality instruments and are blackened to look like ebony.

F-hole - F-holes help shape and direct the sound of the string bass. F-holes are openings carved into the top of the string bass that act to increase the power of the tone emitted by the instrument. They allow some sound from the resonant interior of the string bass to escape to the listener, but that is not their primary purpose. In fact, most of the tone provided by the string bass comes from the vibration of the top and the back transferred directly to the air.

Sound Post - Held by string tension, the sound post bridges the insides of the top and back of the string bass, allowing them to vibrate in unison for a stronger sound. The sound post of a string bass is a small cylindrically shaped piece of wood (usually made of spruce) that is positioned inside the string bass with the tip touching

just below the right foot of the bridge. It runs between the top and back of the string bass, transferring vibration from one surface to the other to maximize the tone of the string bass.

Bridge - The bridge is a small piece of maple that holds the strings away from the top of the string bass and transfers vibration to the body. The bridge is a small, decoratively carved piece of maple that is positioned on the top between f-hole notches. Their functions are to and hold the strings away from the string bass's top surface.

Strings - It has 4 strings, sometimes you may see 5 strings, with a standard tuning in fourths. E, A, D & G.

Fine Tuners - Fine tuners allow for more precise tuning of each string. Fine tuners are rare for string basses, because the innovation of machine heads for tuning has made them virtually unnecessary. However, they can be found for all or some of the strings on the tailpiece of the string bass, most commonly on the E string. However, some instruments have fine tuners installed for all four strings.

Tailpiece - The tailpiece holds the strings to the body of the string bass on its lower end. The tailpiece is the anchor holding the strings to the body of the string bass on its lower end. Unlike most of the other parts of the string bass, the tailpiece is held to the string bass strictly by string tension.

Saddle - The saddle helps spread the force of string tension away from the string bass's center toward the chin rest. A string bass saddle is a small rectangular block of wood, often crafted of ebony, which helps relieve pressure exerted on the string bass's body by the force of the string tension.

Endpin - The end button holds the string bass's tail gut and tailpiece firmly in place. The end button is found at the end or bottom of the string bass body and is usually made from a hardwood like ebony or rosewood. The tail gut of the modern string bass attaches at the end of the tailpiece and loops around the end button so it has a secure anchor point to hold the tailpiece in place.