2027 Maker's Competition
Rules and Guidelines

COMPETITION OBJECTIVE

(1.1) The Competition's objective is to inspire the creation of outstanding, artistic, concert-quality double basses. Those judging are instructed to identify those double basses having the greatest artistic merit, technical execution, tone quality, and ease of playing.

ELIGIBILITY

(2.1) All entry forms and fees must be received by the ISB on or before **Monday, May 3, 2027**. The entry fee includes one-year digital membership and an admission badge to the 2027 ISB Convention. To enter the **2027 ISB Maker's Competition**, complete the separate entry form. *Questions?* Contact the International Society of Bassists at 14070 Proton Rd. Suite 100, Dallas, TX 75244, +1 (972) 233-9107 ext. 204, fax +1 (972) 490-4219, email info@ISBworldoffice.com and/or office@ISBworldoffice.com.

GENERAL RULES

(3.1) Rules and judging procedures for the Double Bass Maker's Competition have been designed to ensure fairness to all competitors. **Double basses submitted for Competition must have been completed after June 1, 2025.** The decision of the judges is final.

(3.2) Master Bass Luthier status is granted to an instrument maker who has been awarded Gold Medals in three different ISB Competitions for bass making. Those makers designated Master Bass Luthier status are not allowed to enter further ISB Double Bass Luthier Competitions.

(3.3) Competitors may enter one double bass for consideration for certificates, awards or prizes.

(3.4) No workmanship or tone judge may have seen, heard, or played on any double bass entered in the Competition prior to the date of the Competition.

(3.5) No Competition Committee member may enter the Competition.

(3.6) The International Society of Bassists will take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of instruments entered into the competition and exhibition. However, the ISB is not responsible for any loss, damage or destruction to any instrument during the competition (including the period during which instruments are stored before and/or after the competition). Competitors are responsible for insuring their own instruments.

(3.7) Contestants are financially responsible for the transportation of their instrument both to and from the competition site.

REGISTRATION

(4.1) Competition entry forms will be posted at https://www.ISBworldoffice.com/luthier.asp, or contact the International Society of Bassists at 14070 Proton Rd., Suite 100, Dallas, TX 75244, (972) 233-9107 ext. 204, fax (972) 490-4219, email info@ISBworldoffice.com or office@ISBworldoffice.com.

(4.2) **If you are shipping in advance**, entries must arrive per instructions on the entry form between **Tuesday, June 2, 2027 and Thursday, June 4, 2027. If you are transporting entries yourself**, you must arrive at the designated judging facility by **6 PM Mountain Time** on **Sunday, June 6, 2027**.

(4.3) All entry fees and registration forms must arrive at the ISB office in Dallas, by **Monday, May 3, 2027**.

AFFIDAVIT OF AUTHENTICITY

(5.1) All makers entering the Competition must sign an affidavit on the entry form indicating that the instrument has been made entirely by their own hands. Fittings such as tuning machines (pegs), tailpieces and endpins on the instrument may be commercially produced. Makers are not permitted to sub-contract work on instruments submitted.

(5.2) Factory-produced, mass-produced or instruments made using the skills and labor of more than the single/sole/one individual double bass maker are not eligible for the competition (except for rule 5.3).

(5.3) Two makers ("co-makers") may work together to enter one instrument if the co-makers have been previously established as a known "team." Neither of the co-makers may also enter an instrument on their own. If the co-makers win any awards, only one certificate and/or medal will be presented to the team.

ANONYMITY RULES

(6.1) In an effort to ensure impartiality, the identity of the makers of the instruments is withheld from the judges during the Competition. To prevent the judges from identifying the maker by looking at the instrument's label, brand, or stamped mark, it is the responsibility of the contestant to make sure that all such labels, brands, or stamped marks are covered or otherwise concealed at the time of entry. Even so, all instruments must have a label, brand, or stamped mark. This is so that the maker may be positively identified, if necessary, at the conclusion of the Competition after the judging has taken place. Once the instruments have been entered into the contest, each is given a randomly assigned secret number known only to the Competition Facilitator. At the conclusion of the Competition, we want to be able to examine the hidden maker's label, brand, or stamp to ensure that the instrument is returned to its rightful owner. Any violation of these rules will lead to disqualification. Competitor lists will not be available until the completion of the judging.

RULES COMMITTEE

(7.1) The responsibility for interpretation of Competition rules, the settling of disputes and dealing with questions arising during the Competition lies with the ISB rules committee.

RULES INFRACTIONS

(8.1) Infractions of rules will be determined by the rules committee after consultation with the appropriate judges. Instruments which do not comply with Competition rules will be disqualified. All entry fees for disqualified items will be forfeited. Any maker who is caught attempting to commit fraud in the Competition by submitting the work of others in his/her name will be disqualified from the Competition and may be banned from all future ISB Competitions.

RESTRICTIONS ON MATERIALS

(9.1) Under the Endangered Species Act, under States Customs does not permit the importation of elephant ivory, tortoise shell or whalebone. Items made from these banned materials that cross United States borders may be confiscated by United States Customs.

(9.2) Double basses must be made of predominately wood material. Fiberglass, carbon fiber, Kevlar, epoxy and other such materials may be used, but sparingly.

INSTRUMENT SETUP

(10.1) Prior to the announced time of the beginning of official judging, proper setup of instruments must be verified by the maker or his representative, or by the official ISB representative, according to instructions provided by the maker. Once judging begins, access to instruments will not be permitted until the completion of the competition.

(10.2) The ISB will designate a qualified luthier to handle small simple repairs and adjustments should the need arise. This will include replacing broken strings and closing open seams between the ribs and plates. A luthier designated by the ISB will close any such open seams with very dilute hide glue to enable the instrument to participate in the tone competition. The judges will be informed of the repair and shown its location on the instrument. Once the instrument is returned to the competitor, he/she may easily reopen the seam and repair it to his/her satisfaction.

(10.3) Luthiers who would prefer that no one repairs their instrument in the event of a more extensive problem should initial the first of two statements all contestants are required to read on the entry form. By initialing this statement, your instrument which will be removed from the Competition if it becomes damaged beyond a simple repair, and the Competition fee will be refunded. If a problem occurs during the judging phase of the Competition, the ISB cannot contact the competitor because this would necessitate a breach of security concerning anonymity.

(10.4) String choice is the decision of the maker. It is suggested, but not required, to disguise or cover the thread near the tailpiece of the strings being used. Disguising or covering the color and design of the thread of the strings, helps to keep the judges impartial and not influenced by any preconceived ideas of how any specific brand of strings “should” sound.

INSTRUMENT WORKMANSHIP JUDGING

(11.1) Workmanship judging will be accomplished by three (3) judges and will be divided into two (2) rounds, evaluation and medal. In the evaluation round, each instrument will be evaluated by each judge independently and without discussion with the other judges.

(11.2) The three (3) judges will be recommended by the Competition Chair and consist of professional luthiers employed full time in the making, repairing, and/or restoration of violin family instruments.

(11.3) Instrument workmanship evaluation will be divided into six categories:

1. **Setup:** Includes bridge, post, pegs, tailpiece, fingerboard, nut, saddle, and endpin.
2. **Varnish:** Includes color, transparency, evenness of application, ground and texture.
3. **Modeling:** Includes arching, surface texture, f-holes, including positioning and shape relative to arching.
4. **Scroll:** Includes model, flowing lines, pegbox, finish work, and overall character.
5. **Construction:** Includes outline, glue joints, bending and fitting of ribs and purfling, execution of neck, edges, corners, f-holes, scroll, and finish work.
6. **Overall Impression:** Includes originality, choice of materials, elegance and overall consistency of style, and artistry.

(11.4) Any and/or all instruments that receive a recommendation from at least one (1) workmanship judge will receive at least a Certificate of Merit (Workmanship). During the medal round, the Certificate of Merit instruments from the evaluation round will be reviewed by all judges working together. Any and/or all instruments which receive a unanimous vote as showing superior quality of workmanship will be recommended for Gold Medals. **Instruments that receive a Certificate of Merit (Workmanship) as well as a Silver Medal (Tone), may, with the unanimous vote of both the Workmanship and Tone Judges, be awarded a Gold Medal. It will be the final decision of all the judges present if these instruments will be advanced to a Gold Medal or will remain as a Certificate of Merit / Silver Medal winner.** Please read the rules explaining Gold Medals, Silver Medals, and Certificates of Merit.

INSTRUMENT TONE JUDGING

(12.1) Tone judging will be divided into three (3) rounds, preliminary, evaluation and medal. In the preliminary round, each instrument will be evaluated by three (3) playing judges who will select those instruments which, in his/her opinion, should be given further consideration in the evaluation round. In the evaluation round, each instrument chosen from the preliminary round will be further evaluated by the judges to determine which, in his/her opinion, is of concert quality and should be considered by all judges in the medal round. Any and/or all instruments that receive a recommendation by at least one (1) tone judge will receive at least a Certificate of Merit (Tone). During the medal round, the Certificate of Merit instruments from the evaluation round will be reviewed by all judges working together. Any and/or all instruments which receive a unanimous vote as being instrument of concert quality tone will be recommended for Gold Medals. **Any instruments that receive a Certificate of Merit (Tone) as well as a Silver Medal (Workmanship), may, with the unanimous vote of both the Workmanship and Tone Judges, be awarded a Gold Medal. It will be the final decision of all the judges present if these instruments will be advanced to a Gold Medal or will remain as a Certificate of Merit/Silver Medal winner.** Please read the rules explaining Gold Medals, Silver Medals, and Certificates of Merit.

(12.2) The three (3) tone judges will be selected by the Maker's Competition Chair from a list of capable bassists recommended by the Division Chairs of the concurrent Orchestral, Jazz, and Solo Competitions. Each Division Chair will suggest three to five bassists to represent their respective divisions in the judging of tone for the Makers Competition. The final three tone judges should represent one (1) professional double bassist who is a member of a full-time orchestra (ICSOM or ROPA orchestra preferred) and who can well represent the Orchestral Division, one (1) professional double bassist who is recognized as an active jazz bassist and who can well represent the Jazz Division, and one (1) professional double bassist who is recognized as an active soloist and can well represent the Solo Division.

(12.3) Instrument tone evaluation will be divided into six categories or more, at the discretion of the tone judges. The six suggested categories are:

1. **Tone:** color, sustain, pizz and arco qualities, able to play in tune, a pleasing sound, etc.
2. **Dynamic Range:** responsiveness, soft to loud, etc.
3. **Balance:** evenness of tone through all ranges, etc.
4. **Projection:** tone quality from a distance, etc.
5. **Ergonomics:** physical playability, accessibility of left hand, bow clearance, etc.
6. **Overall Impression:** personal feel, first impressions, enjoyment of instrument, etc.

DOUBLE BASS CONVENTION FAVORITE AWARD

(13.1) After the workmanship and tone judging is completed during the first days of the ISB Convention, the instruments will be open to public viewing. Those wishing to cast a single vote for Convention Favorite may do so using the ballots provided at the gallery exit.

(13.2) Only one vote may be cast per person during the Convention and only members of the International Society of Bassists registered as participants in the Convention and who are sixteen (16) years of age or older may cast votes. Children who are fifteen (15) years of age or younger may not enter the Competition room unless accompanied by a responsible adult. Under no circumstance will those who are fifteen (15) years of age or younger be allowed to handle the Competition instruments.

(13.3) A single Convention Favorite Award will be given to the double bass that earns the most votes from Convention participants. The double basses that earn the second and third highest amount of votes will receive Convention Favorite Honorable Mention awards.

(13.4) A full-time Competition Room Monitor, designated by the Competition Chair, will oversee all instruments, remind Convention participants of instrument handling precautions, and will pass out and collect voting ballots. Only a limited number of Convention participants will be allowed in the Competition room at any given time as per the room monitor's discretion. Convention participants may bring their own bows to assist them in their selection of their favorite instrument.

(13.5) Extreme care should be taken by all Convention participants entering the Competition/Exhibition room so as not to injure or damage any Competition or Exhibition instruments. Any damage whatsoever should be reported to the Room Monitor immediately. Those responsible for the damage will also be responsible for all repair costs to the instrument(s) damaged.

(13.6) All Convention participants will be required to sign a written statement concerning the fact that they are responsible for any and all damages they inflict, whether it be by accident or other, to any and all instruments in the Competition/Exhibition room.

(13.7) Luthiers who would prefer that no one outside the workmanship and tone judges and ISB designates handle or play their double bass should mark "No" in the box on the front page of the registration form and initial. Luthiers who wish that their instrument not be handled or played, thereby not competing in the Convention Favorite Category, will have their instrument placed off limits to Convention participants.

(13.8) Participants who ignore the rules and instructions of the Competition room will be dismissed from the Competition room immediately and may be dismissed from the ISB Convention upon conference with the ISB Board of Directors and Competition Chair.

SILVER MEDALS

(14.1) A Silver Medal is awarded if judges recommend a Gold Medal in one category and award no medal or certificate in the other category. The categories referred to for double basses are Workmanship and Tone.

GOLD MEDALS

(15.1) For an instrument to receive a Gold Medal, it must be recommended by all designated judges for such a medal in both of its categories. In other words, an instrument must receive a Silver Medal in the Workmanship category and a Silver Medal in the Tone category to receive a Gold Medal. Instruments considered superior in both categories should receive at least a Certificate of Merit in both categories. **Any instruments that receive a Certificate of Merit (Tone or Workmanship) as well as a Silver Medal (Tone or Workmanship), may, with the unanimous vote of both the Workmanship and Tone Judges, be awarded a Gold Medal. It will be the final decision of all the judges present if these instruments will be advanced to a Gold Medal or will remain as a Certificate of Merit / Silver Medal winner.**

SOUND OFF COMPETITION

(16.1) The Sound Off Competition will be evaluated using a live audience in an auditorium or recital hall. Instruments will be played by at least two different musicians behind a screen for anonymity. This competition is optional for those makers who do not wish to participate.

(16.2) After the Workmanship and Tone Judging competition is completed and the Convention Favorite event is completed, the Sound Off Competition will take place the next day of the Convention.

(16.3) Only those instruments that were entered into the Makers Competition may participate in the Sound Off Competition. The maker of the instrument or their representative will be solely responsible for delivering their instrument to the Sound Off Competition site. Late entrants will not be accepted.

(16.4) All audience listeners/participants will be given the same score sheet. An announcer will inform the audience of the rules and guidelines before the competition begins specifying that the competition is only for tone, that the instruments will be introduced at the end, and everyone is strongly encouraged to take notes during the judging.

(16.5) There will be at least two different musicians used to perform a short passage (less than one minute) on each instrument per round. The musicians will be instructed to play each instrument to the best of their ability, using their own personal bow, music predetermined for this event. The musicians will not be allowed to comment or to vote for any instrument. For the first round, the first musician will perform a “classical” selection, and for the second round the second musician will perform a “jazz” selection. If a third round is made a second “classical” selection will be performed.

(16.6) Dependent upon time and the number of entrants, there will be a minimum of two rounds of playing, three rounds if possible. The order of instruments will be (in essence) from A to Z in the first round, Z to A in the second round, and randomized in the third round, if time allows.

(16.7) Scoring for the Sound Off Competition is as follows and these rules will be announced to the audience: Each audience listener will have four points to use, and they must use all four points. They can give four different instruments one point apiece, or two different instruments two points apiece, or three different instruments one, one, and two points. They cannot give any instrument three points or four

points. They must use all four points. If a score sheet deviates from this scoring system, it will be discarded and not counted.

(16.8) At the completion of the event all score sheets are to be collected and counted. After the final round, while the score sheets are counted, the instruments and the instrument makers may be introduced to the audience listeners.

(16.9) Awards will be given to the top three, highest point scoring instruments.

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