

A Dream

For years Arab artists have dreamt of an instrument that represents their identity and authentic Arab culture to saturate their passion for the music that emanates from their civilization. It has been a lost count of ages since any new instruments have been produced within the Arab world and in particular the family of instruments that are played with the bow. Hence came the idea to world renowned musician Naseer Shamma where he would work extensively to achieve this, with him Luthier Amro Fawzy would be followed with a decade of anatomical and technical studies on all stringed instruments that were played with a bow.

In the year 2000, the first encounter with a newly produced Arab string instrument arose and it was the Oud Bass, made by Youssef Yacoub of Iraq on the basis of consultations and discussions with Naseer Shamma, a few years later a similar version of the instrument was presented in Cairo by the late Egyptian Luthier Ajeeb Nassif. The model at hand was a four stringed instrument and would be played with a badminton. From then on the journey would continue with Luthier Amro Fawzi, with this Oud Bass as a starting point, the long road then on was met with a series of experiments to reach the current state it is in today.

Shamma and Fawzy began to work on the entire Oud family dependant on fruitful discussions, and what soon gave birth to the Quarter Bass and of course is played with the bow as well. Today we are faced with the new generation of stringed eastern instruments which are unique in both appearance and character, both innovations and new additions to global instrument industry



LOUD Reborn

An innovation by Naseer Shamma

An Introduction

It may also surprise Oud enthusiasts around the world that the instrument dates back to 2350 B.C., To simply put it; the Oud is a fatherly instrument that has given birth to machines that harness the sounds heard all over the modern global musical industry today.

The European Lute, the Guitar, the Mandolin, the Bazooki and the Saz are others. All descendants of what was once a four-double stringed wooden complexion known as the Oud. Carrying with it its loud modesties yet reverberating and unmissable silent ego the ages have seen it independently build its own empires. One element was and is the enhancement of its sounds having evolved with additions of its string count, Zeryab adding the 5th string in the 8th century, Mohamed Salem Baik adding the 6th in the early 1800s, Rouhi al Khammash was famed for playing with the 7th in the 70s though he insisted to mention that other artists such as Mohammad al Qassajbi had their own trials, and at latest Naseer Shamma adding the 8th string in 1986 based on the notorious Farabi scripts. The Oud gave birth to Schools, such as the Iraqi and Egyptian forms during the spread of Islamic scriptures, engraving deep echoes in Arab musical culture, Turkey and Iran are other outstretches where musicians are held accountable for what they are able to present with it, stretching the Oud's influence not only across borders, yet civilisations.

First documented by historians in the Akkadian era 2350 B.C., Since, all who encounter the machine whether academics, composers or those who correspond to the musical sciences are well aware of the historical responsibility that comes with the handling of the Oud. It has been a life long dream for Oud master Dr. Naseer Shamma, to revive what was lost as this instrument indulged into its own musical era. After years of dedication, today we can confidently say, that dream has become a reality.



Innovation

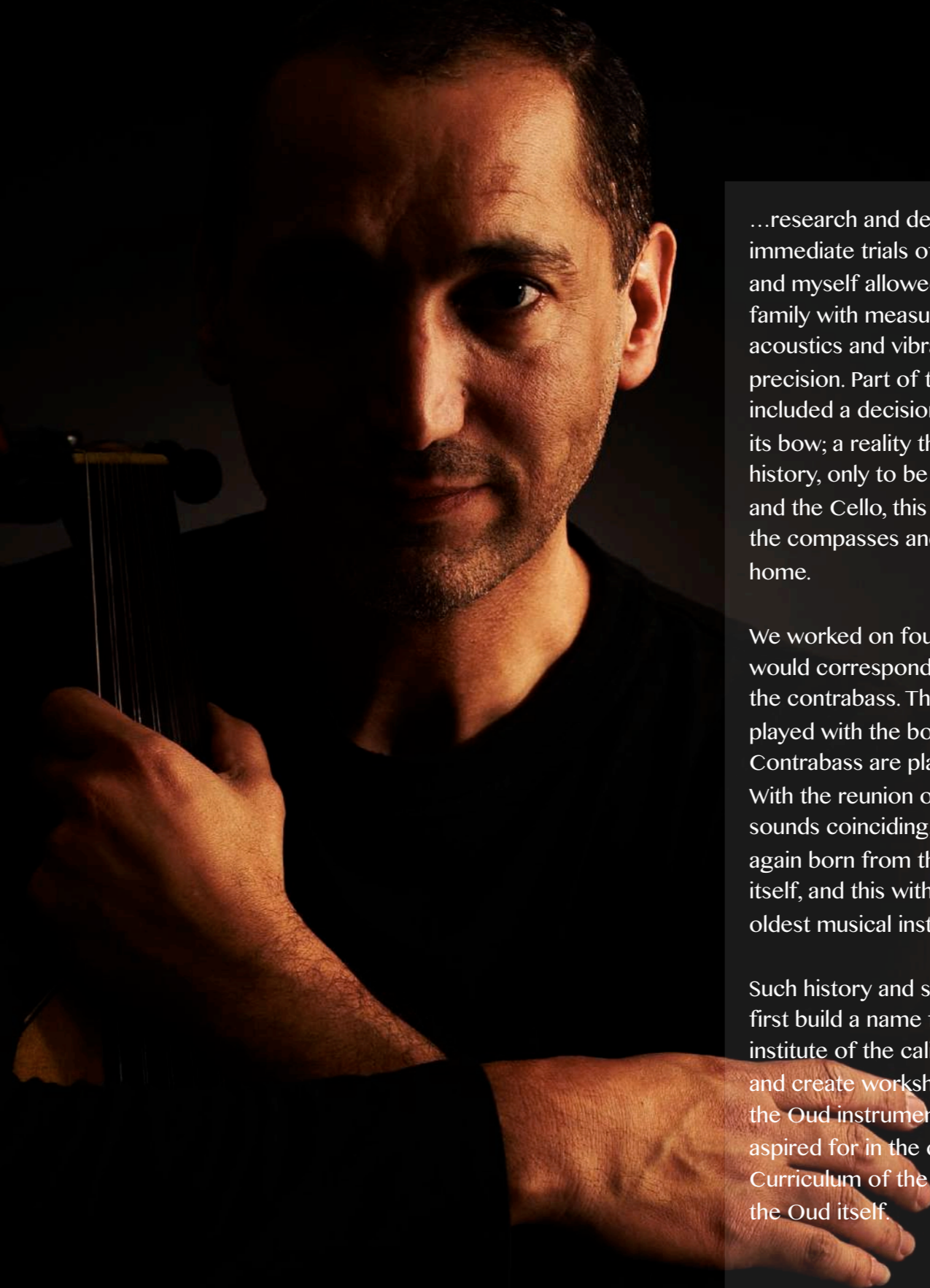
Dream of a Woodplayer

My Part in the development of the Oud Instrument began for me when I was just a student, and this personal obsession has partnered me throughout my relationship with renowned Luthiers of Iraq.

Daily I would go to the workshop of the legendary Master Mohamed Fadel sitting with him for hours on end. Tuning his newly produced Oud Instruments was not the tip of the iceberg, as I was keen of suggesting amendments and ideas to him, he would respond silently by taking a moment to think, hence grab the instrument and begin to level to some of the amendments I suggested, As time went by I gained his trust in facilitating the changes I wanted done to this instrument.

Yet this dream of mine was laid the drawer to rest as I went on with my own career as a musician, until I was faced with the remarkable opportunity of establishing the Arab Oud House in 1999 in Cairo, I was quick to declaring the creation of a workshop with in the Oud House, in which manufacturing of the instrument is taught whilst it would also serve as a research foundation for what was to come. Indeed we began manufacturing Oud instruments in various styles and sizes.

As the initiative spread its wings further, we were offered a grand space in the Arab Oud House of Abu Dhabi, the luxury of another workshop here was amazingly relevant to the entire...



...research and development process, the immediate trials of testing amongst students and myself allowed us to produce an Oud family with measurements that correspond to acoustics and vibrations with exceptional precision. Part of the development process included a decision to bring back the Oud with its bow; a reality that disappeared in the ages of history, only to be then again born as the Violin and the Cello, this task for us was regenerating the compasses and directing it back to its true home.

We worked on four sizes for the bow and these would correspond to the violin, viola, cello and the contrabass. The violin and the viola are played with the bow, when the Cello and the Contrabass are played with an additional nail. With the reunion of this entire family, and the sounds coinciding; Arab music is now once again born from the womb of Arabic culture itself, and this with gratitude to one of the oldest musical instruments in history; the Oud.

Such history and such tasks demanded that I first build a name for myself first, establish an institute of the caliber of the Arab Oud House and create workshops for the manufacturing of the Oud instrument in order to achieve what I aspired for in the development of the Curriculum of the Oud, playing the Oud, and the Oud itself.

Maestro Naseer Shamma

OUDDTraditional

With the traditional Oud stretching back to 2350 B.C. there have been noticeable shifts in cultural music that were influenced by the instrument. Of the more recent examples was the beginning of the 9th century where the musical tradition of the Mediterranean Sea was began to base itself in great part on the traditional Oud. At the heart of Oud music were and are the Makams. Makams are also playable on other instruments, but for Arab music, Makams are executed on the Oud. Understanding the history of the Oud sheds light on just how mandatory it is in Middle eastern musical culture.

Relevant to our project the Oud's historical track gives it the opportunity to father a full family set of instruments, with a variety of sounds that meet the needs of symphonic sets. Similar to what in ages later came as the Violin and how it was set to breed other instruments, of course this was done through the physics of sound to also correspond to different sizes. Examples that originated from the Violin are the Viola, the Violoncel also known as the Cello and the Contrabass or Bass Instrument.

With these instruments in reality all ancestors of the Oud it was a decision to take the path we are on now. Strengthening the Oud instrument as a whole and empowering its presence to evolve into a family or group of sounds.



OUDLIN

Additions to the traditional instrument first started with the Oudlin, which would be the equivalent of the Violin, however with a much more familiar basis to the Oud itself. It of course is played with a bow and was a crucial first step in which we would work to develop the rest of the Oud family.



OUDLA

The Oudla which is the second addition and has a striking resemblance to the Viola of course an instrument that is larger in size of the Violin but presents a deeper tone. We can confidently say the Oudla will offer unique robust sounds that grab your attention at its first chime.



68.40cm

22.70cm



LOUDLO

Oudlo is the third addition and can be attributed to the Violincell or the Cello, again the curved complexion of the Oudlo strengthens the Oud ancestral element in this machine giving it a unique standing point amongst other instruments, truly an addition that excites all of us involved in this project.





OUDBASS

The Oud Bass allows us to bring in deep reverberations and merge that output with the Oud Orchestra, infusing itself with in the rhythms as not a stranger but an actual part of the entire clan. Given the extensive trials with the Oud Bass and of course given the resemblance to the Contrabass respectively we have even swapped and used the contrabass itself to compare the output and found a certain beauty where the Oud Bass distinguishes itself and promotes the Oud language.





Luthier's testimony

Amro Fawzi Arab Oud House Abu Dhabi

Travelling around the world to visit leading workshops in Europe and the eastern world and Studying extensively all the existing stringed instruments meant now that the first step was to observe the sound materials themselves and the different methods used to play the instruments, then building the machines through an interior & exterior design of various sizes and types of woods corresponding to how the acoustic spaces would be divided within each instrument. The first pilot project was the "The Bass Oud" successfully the instrument was born in 2007, the first of its kind it was not revealed to the public until 2010.

How was this possible? I met with Dr. Shamma in 1991 and working by his side since I have gained knowledge on both a personal and technical level. He has been an elder brother to me, the faithful teacher who spends his days, work and knowledge on his students. Always encouraging new ideas, I am witness to Shamma's distinctive footprints. Through our conversations around oriental strings he reminds us of his dream to create a family of strings with unique sounds that correspond to the Oud, which compelled the decision to bring back the bow, an element that would represent a qualitative shift for the instrument, the process of building this family has enabled richer distributions, a creative opportunity that serves as a new and peculiar Arab voice. We have moved on now to begin developing the rest of the Oud family, instruments that carry different personalities and unique sounds, a project that I am sure will be a major milestone in the global advancement in musical history.



بيت العود العربي
BAIT AL OUD
Amro Fawzy



Moving Forward

Over the years there have been numerous attempts to develop on evolution of the Oud instrument but these were not continued and faced some technicalities, the most recent attempt in the 1980's and although unable to eventually present an entire family we consider their trials and others in history a collective effort of continuance, if they did not exist, we might not be here presenting this story.

Binding together the entire Oud family enables the practice of all world classical music pieces in addition to compositions that will be dedicated to the Oud set itself. Although the instruments hold a strong resemblance to the notorious reproductions of the Violin, all in their own way remain unique and attribute not only their physical appearance to the Oud but most importantly the distinctive musical character of the instrument. It is not for a small group of people working tirelessly alone to vouch any success of this project, we are now revealing our work to the public and want you the audience to decide for yourselves.