

Just "Oud"

by Sebastian Stenzel

Herewith I proudly present my new, universal oud model. It was designed to solve a basic problem many players have: that the bowl is rather big, making the instrument difficult to play comfortably. To simply downscale the bowl is not a good solution, because the instrument will inevitably lose sonority in the bass. Many aspects of the construction can contribute to a good bass, however sufficient air volume inside the oud's body is indispensable. For this reason, I tried to give the bowl as much volume as possible, while keeping the soundboard width small, putting the volume where it is not in the way, as it were. But getting a sonorous bass from an oud with a bowl depth of only 16 cm is not the only advantage of this radical new shape. Others are:

- the right arm rests comfortably on the lower part of the bowl which meets the soundboard at an angle of almost 45 degrees, instead of on a more or less sharp edge which hinders both mobility and blood circulation of the player's arm.
- The small soundboard width of only 32 cm actually increases the acoustical efficiency of the soundboard, improving loudness and projection.
- The many different radii of the non-axisymmetrical shape of the bowl translate into a great variation of stiffness, which greatly improves the balance, reduces the risk of wolf-notes, increases the richness of harmonics and further improves the projection.

The drawbacks? Don't worry – they are all mine: it is extremely difficult to build!

I could not say if my new model is an Arabic, Turkish, Persian or an European oud, even though there are influences from all these regions, and anyway I would much rather transcend all these regional (and even more the national) identifications. So my new model fits none or all of these categories. Accordingly, you could call it "Universal Oud", or – much better in my opinion – just "Oud".

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