



LUTHIER
Mario Lamarre

LOCATION
**Montreal, Quebec,
Canada**

MY WORKSHOP is on the ground floor of a converted mattress factory in downtown Montreal that was redeveloped to provide affordable space for artists and artisans. In total I have 37 square feet of space, but that also includes my office, a machine room and a varnishing room. I spend a lot of my time making and repairing double basses, so it's great to have such a big space.

In the picture you can see where I do most of my work. It's laid out in the way my former teacher, Sylvio de

Lellis, laid out his workshop – the workbenches face the client, with the hand-tools just behind. De Lellis came to Quebec from Italy and was the first person to set up a violin making school in Canada.

I mainly use the near bench for repairs and the far one for making, and both get a good amount of natural light from the windows. The double doors at the back lead into a small internal courtyard, and I enjoy being close to nature and the changing seasons.

The small open instrument on the bench in the foreground is a beautiful little violin that's in for repair. It's a really old instrument and it still has the original label: 'Francisco Lupot Orleano fecit 1775.' It's really interesting because the design is so similar to that of a baby double bass. Behind the violin is an ebony tailpiece that I'm making for the bass in the back right-hand corner.

PHOTOS MARIO LAMARRE

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On the far workbench you can see the neck of a four-string double bass with a carved-head scroll – the head from Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* drawing. When I make scrolls like this I always make a draft in clay before carving it in wood – this way my clients can see what it will look like.

The neck with the carved scroll is for the same bass as the ebony tailpiece. I made it in 2009, and at the moment it

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has a removable five-string neck. The new four-string neck will allow the musician to interchange the two necks as required,

an innovation I suggest to many of my double bassist clients. The bass in the foreground is a French instrument that was made at the end of the 19th century. I've just finished putting on a low C extension with four capos, carved in ebony.

On the right-hand wall are my tools and storage areas. I made the orange and black drawers in the back corner when I was 14 and they're still going strong – I've always been interested in wood and how things fit together.

On the right, on top of the green drawers, you can also see my grinders. The one with the flash of yellow is new and it has a diamond wheel that rotates at 2,000rpm. I use it for sharpening hardened tools and carbon. It's wonderful and I couldn't do without it!

INTERVIEW BY VICKY HANCOCK

NEXT MONTH IRINA FEICHTL IN MUNICH, GERMANY