

James Oesi

Double Bass/Artistic Director/Arranger/Presenter

"One to watch" (The Strad)



Power, rhythmic stability and a warm, enigmatic presence; the double bass has a striking identity, from Classical to Jazz. *"One to watch" (The Strad)* - In James Oesi's gifted hands, that enticing sound transforms music you know, into pieces reimagined. A virtuosic soloist, arranger and Artistic Director, James' vision for his instrument, its repertoire and these times is powerful.

"Oesi's beautiful tone strikes you immediately. He makes the bass truly sing... playing his instrument with real virtuosity."
(Reformatorsch Dagblad - album 'Adoration')

Born in London and raised in post-apartheid Johannesburg, James moved to Russia aged 16 to study at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory, before completing his studies at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. Now based in Amsterdam, he moves between Baroque, Classical and Contemporary music, and occasionally Jazz. It was his Bach playing, shared on Instagram, which led the late Abdullah Ibrahim to propose a collaboration. When James pointed out that he had no Jazz training, Ibrahim told him that the way he played Bach, he didn't need any.

One of the few double bassists to have built a career as a soloist, James has performed at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Gewandhaus in Leipzig and Concertgebouw Brugge. His festival appearances include Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Festival of Flanders Ghent, North Sea Jazz and Höri Musiktage, where he was Artist in Residence in 2026. He has commissioned works from Calliope Tsoupaki and Derrick Hodge, as well as many young composers.

James' own trio, the James Oesi Trio, tours joyous, eclectic programmes for double bass, bass guitar and theorbo, ranging from the 17th century to South African Jazz of the 80s and 90s. Their self-titled debut EP was released on vinyl in 2025. James' debut album 'Adoration' (2024), with pianist Djuwa Mroivili, places late-Romantic favourites by Dvořák, Brahms and Gershwin alongside composers of colour of the same era, including Florence Price, whose organ piece gives the album its title. His next album, his own transcription of all six of Bach's cello suites, was recorded with Grammy-winning producer Guido Tichelman and is set to be released in 2027.

An engaging presenter, James has hosted his own NPO Klassiek programme and appeared on Podium Klassiek and Klara. He is the Founder and Artistic Director of BassFest, the only festival of its kind in the world, and since 2024 has been Artistic Director of Bachfestival Dordrecht. A dedicated pedagogue, he is Professor of Classical Double Bass at HKU Utrecht Conservatory.

James Oesi is managed worldwide by Percius (and with Robert Soomer for NL & BE).

This biography is valid for use until September 2027. We update our biographies regularly. For the most up-to-date version please email info@percius.co.uk