

BERLIOZ

THE BEAR

Hi kids! I'm ready to tell you all about my book, "Berlioz, the Bear." I hope you are interested in how books are made. I know many of you like to write and draw, too. My little character, Hedgie, is here to tell tidbits also.



This is what happened. I was listening to a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert. My husband Joe plays with BSO. While I was watching, Joe and all the double basses began to play loudly. I thought, "that is a large instrument, really huge. Something could fit right inside." Then I noticed the carved "F" holes in the front of Joe's bass. It would have to be a small something. A mouse? A caterpillar? Music does that. It leads one's thoughts to interesting places.

All this took place at an outdoor concert at Tanglewood, the Boston Symphony's summer home. Afterward the musicians were talking about their instruments. I asked Joe if his double bass changed with the weather. He looked concerned. "Jan", he said, "my bass is 100 years old. Sometimes the wood dries out and cracks. Then it makes a buzz." "A loud buzz?" I asked, "that people can hear?"

At that moment I knew what kind of creature might live in a double bass, and my story had begun.

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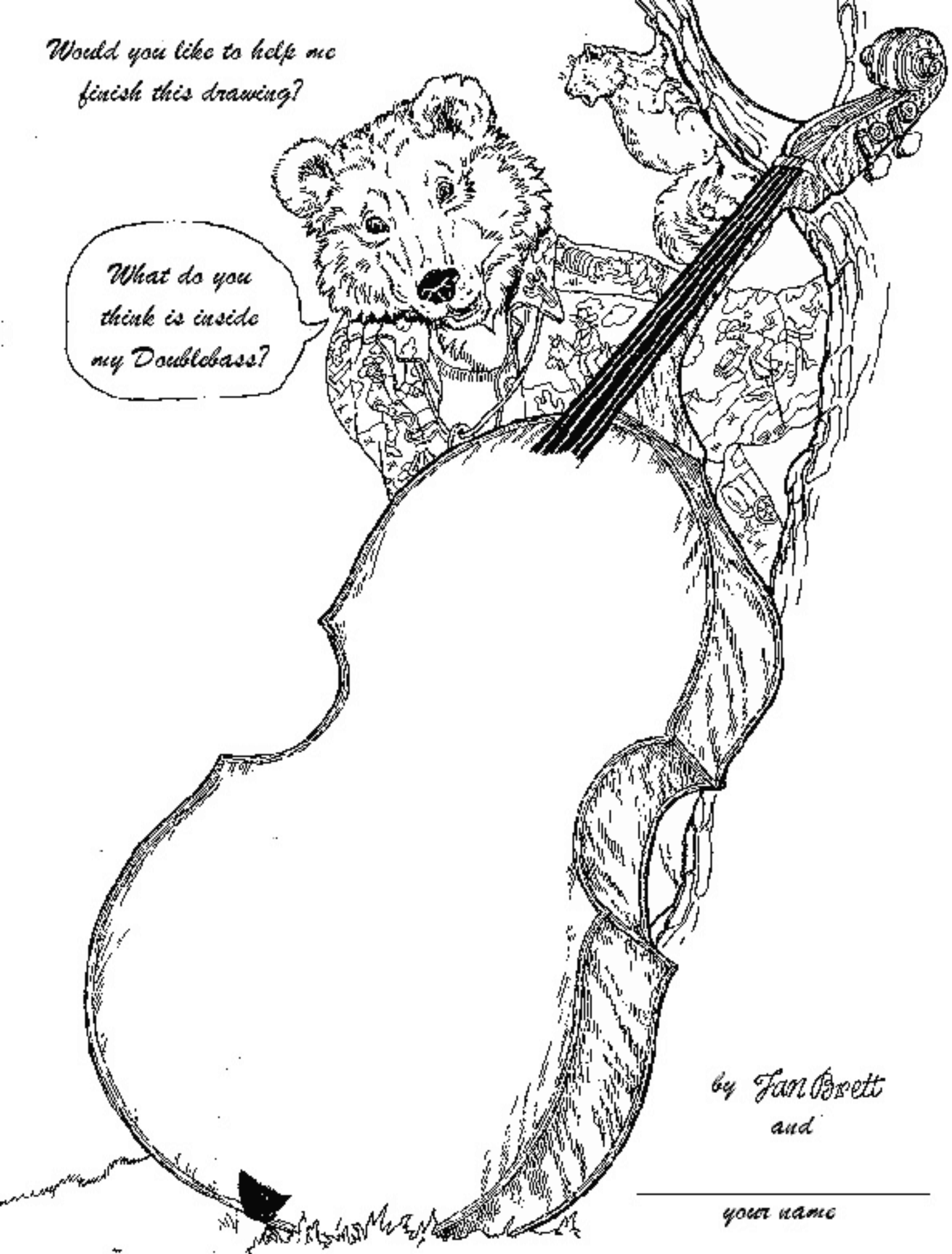
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*Would you like to help me
finish this drawing?*

*What do you
think is inside
my Doublebass?*



*by Jan Brett
and*

_____ *your name*

I named Berlioz the bear after a French composer, Hector Berlioz. If you want to hear some music that he wrote, my favorite is "The Hungarian March". This is how to pronounce his name : **BEAR-LEE-OZE** (the last part rhymes with toes)

Just remember, there is a "bear" in Berlioz .

Creating the character of Berlioz was easy. I just took my husband, Joe, and lengthened his nose. When it was long enough I added a black bear nose tip. Then I moved his ears up and rounded them. Last of all, I covered him with thick fur.



I exaggerated Joe's personality for my book. He's enthusiastic and he tries hard to make things go well. I made Berlioz even more so. When everything goes wrong, Berlioz struggles to control himself. He tugs his ears.



People may use body language to express themselves. Watching people skip with lightheartedness, gnash their teeth because they're frustrated, or pop their eyes with surprise gives me ideas for my animal characters.

I wanted each member of Berlioz's band to look different. I asked five members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra to help me.

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Tom Martin is tall and lanky. His red hair sets him apart from the other bears. I tried to capture his droll humor.



Martha Babcock is actually a cellist with the BSO, not a French-horn player. I found it wasn't easy to put dimples on a bear.



Tom Gauger is a percussionist. He's handsome and a good sport.



Harvey Seigel is married to Martha. He seems unflappable. That's why he's reading a book after the cart gets stuck.



Norman Bolter's eyebrows are so expressive, I wanted him for a bear.



I took off Joe's glasses and mustache when he became Berlioz.



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Hedgehogs are beloved in Bavaria. They are called Stackeltiere.



A painting over a window in Bavaria



I had a story idea and animal characters. Next, I would need a setting for them.

I remembered a place where I had seen an outdoor band concert. It was in Bavaria, a part of Germany, and I promised myself that someday I would put it in a book. The buildings were painted with decorations and scenes from stories. Every window had a flower box. In the town square, there was a fountain left over from the olden days where the animals came to drink. Instead of tearing it down, the townspeople planted a garden around it.



I went back to Bavaria to sketch and to bring back ideas for Berlioz the Bear. We passed many beautiful farms. I found most of the animals that appear in my book. If you look closely at the mule you can find his name. It means "slowly" in Italian. But one of the animals is from our neighborhood. She's an elegant schnauzer named Gretchen. Her relatives come from Germany, so I put her in my book, too. I hope you like saying "schnauzer" as much as I do.



The plowhorse



Joe and I sampled yummy German sausages, bread and cheese. One special sausage is called Weisswurst. It looks like a small pale hotdog. According to custom you should eat Weisswurst before noon. In the borders of Berlioz, you can see what happens when a rabbit is tempted by a sausage.

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You know you're in Bavaria when you see lederhosen (leather pants) on men and Dirndl (full skirted dresses) on women.



Our last challenge was finding a bandwagon for the musicians. Happily, on the last day of our trip we saw one in a folk art museum. The museum caretaker didn't approve of the way we took our photographs - it wasn't very dignified. But I needed to record the cart from all angles for the book. When I got home, I took my photos to an architect. He made a scale model out of cardboard for me to draw.



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