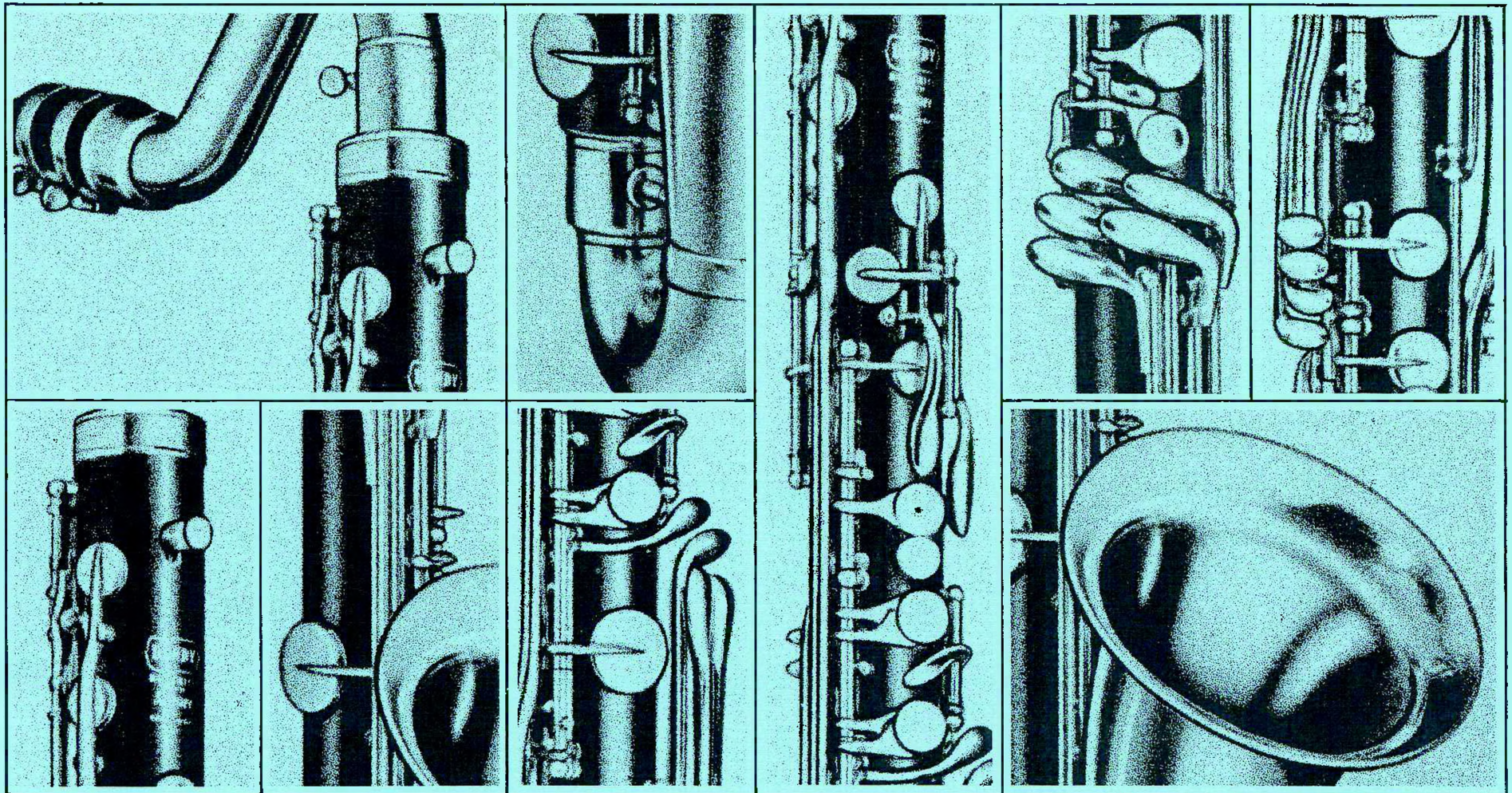


The Teacher's Guide to the Alto, Bass and Contrabass Clarinets

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Introduction

One of the most significant musical achievements of the 20th century has been the perfection and mass production of the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets. The impact these instruments are having on the music of today is significant indeed. They promise to play an even more important role in the wind music of the future. The alto, bass and contrabass clarinets have unlimited possibilities as solo instruments, in combination with other instruments in chamber music, in the clarinet choir, in the orchestra, and especially as members of the modern wind band.

Composers and arrangers are constantly making more and more interesting use of these instruments. With the advent of the "symphony of winds" concept of band instrumentation and the growing popularity of both the clarinet and woodwind choirs, our most important task is to develop players capable of obtaining the musical results that composers and arrangers are beginning to expect from these remarkable instruments.

Selecting the Player

In past years, the idea was established that if a student was not a good B \flat soprano clarinet player, he should be given an alto, bass or contrabass clarinet to play. This is a fallacy. The same qualities of musical sensitivity, diligence, initiative, love of music, and intelligence that will make it possible for a student to become a fine B \flat soprano clarinet player are also necessary for a fine player on the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet.

It is important that the student chosen to play one of these instruments be motivated to want to play it. This means that these instruments must be glamorized. Talking about their importance, playing phonograph recordings which feature these instruments, and having soloists perform on them will do much to develop a climate where students will want to play the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets. The recording "Contest Solos for the Clarinet Family" in the Selmer educational record series features

solos played on all of these instruments. It is highly recommended to develop interest in them and also to develop a concept of how they should sound.

It is practical to start beginners on these instruments, for the plateau keys make them easier to finger than the B \flat soprano open hole clarinet. However, since the keys are larger on the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet, it is a good idea to select a student with large strong hands. It is also helpful if the student enjoys the lower sounds of the musical scale. Students who do start on the alto, bass, or contrabass clarinet avoid many problems experienced by students that transfer from the B \flat soprano clarinet. It is an excellent idea to rotate clarinet players in the high school and college band so that each of them can have one or two years of playing on the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet in the band. This experience will usually improve the student's ability to play the B \flat soprano clarinet as well.

It is important to the success of the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet that players be urged to take private lessons. Private instruction, section rehearsals, and rehearsals in small groups where individual correction and attention can be given to the student are very helpful. Without doubt, one of the greatest motivations for a player is to have him involved in studying a solo. Scheduling a public performance for the soloist will provide additional incentive for growth and improvement.

Spending a lot of time working on one piece, or even one passage, will do much to develop technique. Too many times young players play a lot of music but do not really practice any of it. The result is that they progress very slowly. Correct, diligent practice can result in amazing technical growth and improvement. A solo often provides the motivation for this kind of practice.

Common Errors in Playing the Lower Clarinets

My observations of a great many players of the alto, bass and contrabass clarinet have revealed several errors that seem almost universal. Among these are:

1. Embouchure too tight

2. Too little mouthpiece in the mouth
3. Mouthpiece facing too long and close
4. Reed too stiff
5. Ligature dampening reed vibration
6. Lack of breath support
7. Air column too fast
8. Poor attacks
9. Tongue too heavy
10. Instrument held improperly
11. Instrument out of adjustment

The beautiful, rich, resonant tone and fluent technique which are inherent characteristics of the lower clarinets are lost when one or more of these problems is present. Let us discuss each of these points so they can be eliminated.

Embouchure

The embouchure for the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet is much more relaxed than that of the B \flat soprano clarinet. It can be described as a "pucker" embouchure. There is more pressure on top of the mouthpiece than on the reed. This is in contrast to the B \flat soprano clarinet embouchure where the pressure is approximately the same on the top of the mouthpiece and on the reed. The larger the mouthpiece, the greater the pressure on the top of the mouthpiece and the less pressure on the reed.

Mouthpiece Position

The mouthpiece on the alto, bass and contrabass clarinet should enter the mouth almost at a right angle. This is similar to the angle used in playing the saxophone. When the mouthpiece enters the mouth at the angle used for playing the soprano clarinet, the tone is choked and small. The recommended position results in a tone of maximum resonance.

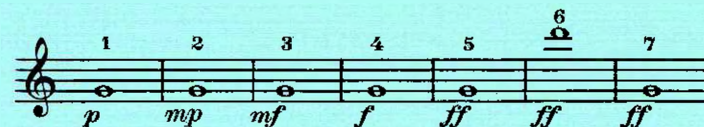
Forming the Embouchure

To form the embouchure on the alto, bass and contrabass clarinet, open the mouth wide and place the upper teeth on the top of the mouthpiece, opposite the point where

the facing opening begins (see next paragraph). The lower jaw is pulled down and forward and held with a "hollow" in the chin. The lower lip is held slightly tensed and firm and is brought up lightly against the reed. The lips are then closed and drawn in to the sides of the mouthpiece to keep the air from leaking. It should be noted that only a small part of the lower lip is over the lower teeth. The reed is supported lightly by the lip muscles rather than strongly by the lip on the teeth, as is done in the B \flat soprano clarinet embouchure.

Correct Amount of Mouthpiece in the Mouth

In general, students do not use enough mouthpiece in the mouth in playing the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets. To find the correct amount of mouthpiece to use, the student should play an open G with the lips near the tip of the mouthpiece. The tone will be small, pinched and thin. The student should repeat this note several times, each time taking slightly more mouthpiece into the mouth. The tone will grow larger and more resonant until a point is reached when a high D is produced instead of the G. This note, the first overtone produced on the clarinet with the open G fingering, indicates that the embouchure has passed the place where the opening on the mouthpiece facing begins. The student should then withdraw the mouthpiece from the mouth a small amount at a time until the tone drops to the open G once more. This will locate the proper amount of mouthpiece in the mouth. The test will look like this:



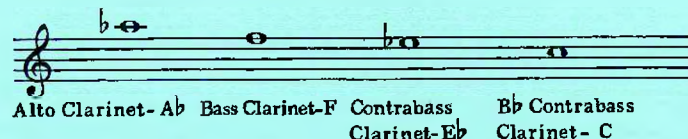
At 1 the student would be playing on the tip of the mouthpiece. On numbers 2 to 5 he would put slightly more mouthpiece in the mouth and the tone would grow larger and fuller. At 6, when the student takes too much mouthpiece, the high D sounds. At 7 when a little of the mouth-

piece has been taken from the mouth the open G sounds once again full and resonant.

It is a good idea for the student to make this test each practice period the first few weeks of playing the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet, to make certain he has the correct amount of the mouthpiece in the mouth. To summarize, the student should use as much mouthpiece in the mouth as possible without losing control.

Mouthpiece Pitch Tones

A good method to assist the student in getting the feel of the correct embouchure is to have him play on the mouthpiece alone. The pitch of the tone he produces is an indication of the embouchure pressure he is using. If the embouchure is formed correctly, he should be able to produce the following pitches:



If the student produces a higher pitch than this or if he produces no sound at all, it is an indication that he is using too much pressure against the reed. The student should push the mouthpiece more firmly against the upper teeth, drop the jaw slightly, take a little more mouthpiece in the mouth and adjust the embouchure until he is able to produce the recommended pitch.

Mouthpieces

Common problems in playing the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets are mouthpieces with facings that are too long and tip openings that are too close. To play well, the student must be able to locate the embouchure at the point where the reed leaves the mouthpiece (the beginning of the facing). If the facing is too long, it is uncomfortable and sometimes even impossible for the student to take this much mouthpiece into the mouth. Thus, he is forced to locate his embouchure on the resistance curve of the facing. In such a case, a reed of desirable

strength will seem too soft and will often close up. The student generally tries to solve this problem by using a heavier reed. This destroys tone quality, limits flexibility and causes squeaks. Mouthpiece facings of this type also result in a resistance curve so gradual that light reeds will not respond properly.

After many years of experimentation with mouthpieces and mouthpiece facings, it is my belief that the ideal combination of factors including facing length and tip opening are to be found in the Selmer C* alto clarinet mouthpiece and the Selmer C** bass and E \flat contrabass clarinet mouthpieces. These mouthpieces have a facing length that enables the player to hold the embouchure comfortably at the controlling point of the facing. They also have a tip opening and resistance curve which permits even the high register to be played readily with a relatively soft reed.

The Reed

It is important to use a reed that will vibrate readily. Reeds of strength 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 are recommended for use on all of the large members of the clarinet family. A reed of this strength will give emphasis to the fundamental and lower overtones, which will result in a rich mellow tone. In contrast, a hard reed accentuates the upper partials, which results in a shrill, harsh tone quality. The hard reed also has a tendency to squeak. Players who transfer from the B \flat soprano clarinet to the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet are often tempted to use a hard reed in an attempt to achieve the same embouchure feel. Much better results are obtained when the player uses a softer reed and the recommended embouchure.

A cane reed should have dark, evenly-spaced grain lines extending to the tip. This will insure excellent resiliency and long reed life. Before playing, the reed should be soaked in water, placed on a piece of glass, rubbed briskly with the finger and left on the glass to dry. When this is done for three or four days, it will close the pores of the cane and thus prevent the reed from becoming waterlogged. Dutch rush or reed rush should be used to balance the sides of the reed. It should also be used to adjust the reed to the exact desired playing strength.

The reed should be designed so the sides are light and the center is thick. The light sides make the low register speak readily, while the high center makes it possible to play the high register in tune and with good tone quality. Reeds will play better and last longer if they are soaked in lukewarm tap water before playing. They should always be removed from the mouthpiece after playing, the vamp rubbed with the finger to close the pores and stored in a reed conditioner or tied with rubber bands to a flat surface so they will not warp when drying. For additional information regarding this important subject, the reader is referred to the author's book *Playing and Teaching the Clarinet Family*, published by the Southern Music Company. This book contains additional information of interest and assistance to the teacher or player of the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet.

In experimenting with reeds, I have found that alto saxophone reeds, instead of alto clarinet reeds, often give more body and richness to the alto clarinet tone. I have also found that baritone saxophone reeds give excellent results when used on the Bundy and Selmer E \flat contrabass clarinets.

The Ligature

A principle of great importance to successful playing on the B \flat soprano clarinet is that the reed must be held firmly on the mouthpiece table and held so that the sides of the reed can vibrate freely. Many excellent ligatures based on this principle are available for the B \flat soprano clarinet and are widely used by fine players. The observance of this principle is of even greater importance on the large clarinets. When the ligature presses against the sides of the reed, it chokes and dampens the vibration of the reed. This reduces resonance, flexibility and tonal beauty and forces the player to use a heavier reed to overcome this effect. An easy experiment will readily demonstrate this principle. Without using a ligature, hold a new light reed with the thumbs pressed on the center of the top of the reed and blow an open G. If it is a good, vibrant reed and is being held properly, it will blow freely with a resonant tone. Next, hold the reed with the thumbs pressing on the sides of the reed as if held by the ligature. The

tone will immediately become choked and be smaller and less resonant. Ideally, the reed for these instruments should also be of a special design which touches the reed only on the top, leaving the sides free to vibrate. Since ligatures of this type are not readily available for the harmony clarinets, pliers should be used to bend the standard ligature so that the area under the ligature screws is flat.

Holding the Instrument

The alto, bass and contrabass clarinets should be held directly in front of the player. Girls wearing tight skirts may turn both knees a little to the left and still hold the instrument directly in front of the body. The instruments should be held high enough to force the mouthpiece tightly against the upper teeth and force the head to be held high and tilted back slightly. This helps keep the throat open.

Use of the Floor Peg

The use of a floor peg is without doubt the single most helpful aid to the alto, bass and contrabass clarinet player. All of these instruments should be equipped with strong, reliable pegs that adjust easily, will not slip and support the instruments securely.

When the instrument is played on a peg, the entire weight of the head can be rested on the top of the mouthpiece. The player can then take the pressure off of the lower lip and yet hold the instrument in the mouth securely.

Another problem solved by the use of the peg is the tightening of the embouchure when the student plays in the throat register. When the instrument is played on a strap, the student usually depends on the embouchure to assist in holding the instrument when the fingers are removed for notes in the throat register. This causes the throat register to be played sharp and also causes squeaks when the player crosses the break into the clarion register.

Another distinct advantage of the floor peg is that it forces the player to hold the instrument in the correct position in front and parallel to his body. Players should



Playing position for the bass clarinet

be taught to adjust the peg so that the mouthpiece is high enough to force the player to sit tall and to tilt the head back slightly. If the peg is fully extended and the instrument is still too low, books, blocks of wood or a case should be used to adjust the instrument to proper playing height. Alto clarinet pegs are not common yet. They are, however, available in two lengths. The shorter peg (16") is for instruments which are taken apart at the center joint and will fit into the compact alto clarinet case. The longer peg (20") is designed for instruments that are not taken apart at the center joint and are carried in the longer "one piece" cases.

When a repairman is asked to install a peg, caution him to mount it a little to the left of center on the back of the instrument, so that it will clear the thumb rest. Installing alto clarinet pegs should become a big business for the repairman, since they are so important to excellent playing on the instrument and so few instruments have them installed.

The Neck Strap

If it is not possible for the player to have a peg mounted on the instrument, he will need to use a neck strap. It is extremely important that this neck strap be kept taut so that it will help hold the instrument tightly against the upper teeth and thus prevent it from resting on the lower lip. Pushing up and out with the right hand thumb will further assist in achieving the desired embouchure and instrument position. A leather strap is best; a flimsy neck strap that slips or stretches will gradually permit the instrument to rest on the lower lip, causing the tone to be pinched off.

Finger and Hand Positions

To achieve the great technical facility possible on the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets, correct finger and hand positions are imperative. The player's arms should hang comfortably and naturally at the sides. The wrist should be straight and the hands kept in line with the forearms.

Each finger should remain arched, never straightening

or breaking down at the joints. Holding a tennis ball or baseball in the hands will give the feeling of the desired curvature for the fingers. The finger motion should be made from the knuckles, not the joints.

The thumbs are especially important to correct finger and hand position. The left thumb should not be held straight up, parallel with the register key, as is often done by young players. Instead, it should strike an angle of about 120 degrees with the length of the register key. The left hand should be drawn up and into the clarinet so that the fingers touch the keys at an angle. The first finger should be over the A and A \flat keys.

The right thumb should touch the thumb rest between the nail and the first joint of the thumb. When the fingers of the right hand are properly curved and drawn up, the first finger is over or near the bottom trill key (E \flat key).

Correct Breathing

To obtain excellent results in playing the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets, it is imperative that players use diaphragm or deep breathing technique. The air columns of these instruments are large and require a large amount of air with strong support to achieve proper results.

To teach the student the concept of deep or diaphragmatic breathing, have him sit on the forward edge of the chair and bend over placing the chin in the palms of the hands and the elbows on the knees. Then have the student breathe in suddenly as if gasping. The student will automatically breathe correctly (expanding at the waist) and thus obtain a concept of correct breathing. Next, the student should sit tall with the back arched in and the head held high. While sitting in this position, he should again breathe in quickly, expanding in the same area as when doubled up. If the student has difficulty breathing correctly while sitting up, he should once again practice breathing in the doubled up position.

Breath Support

Most inexperienced wind players do not use nearly enough breath support. This is especially true in the case of alto, bass and contrabass clarinet players, and



is one of the great differences between ordinary and outstanding players on these instruments.

To give the student a concept of how hard he should blow and the correct feeling of breath support, have him take a large breath at the waist and then blow the air out through clenched teeth making a strong hissing sound. He will have to use the correct breathing muscles to produce this effect. The player must next be taught to use this same amount of force or support when playing. He must, however, learn to omit air in a sustained, controlled fashion. Blowing a candle flame into a steady bent position is an excellent means of practicing the development of breath support and breath control.

Controlling Air Speed

If the player blows the air column too fast he will not only produce a harsh tone, but will overpower the reed, causing squeaks. This is especially noticeable on the bass and contrabass clarinets.

To achieve the desired slow air column, the player should drop the tongue to the floor of the mouth and play as if saying the word "who." This will cause the largest possible opening of the throat and oral cavity and will cause the air to move slowly. The player should practice long tones in the low register using this slow column of air until he gets the feeling of the air vibrating the reed at just the right speed.

The air needs to move faster in the high register. This can be accomplished by lifting the tongue as if saying "toe," "tah," "taa," and "tee." If the student has difficulty in producing notes in the high registers, this may well be caused by the air moving too slowly. The more common problem, however, is getting the air to move slowly enough to produce a beautiful, resonant tone in the low register.

Starting the Tone

One of the most serious problems of the inexperienced alto, bass and contrabass clarinet player is that of poor attacks. Many players start the tone on these instruments by hitting the tongue against the reed and then blowing. This causes a hard, noisy attack. To achieve a beautiful

attack the student must be trained to begin the tone with three basic steps. First, he must place the tip of the tongue at the tip of the reed. To insure that the tongue is actually at the very tip of the reed, it is a good idea to tell the student to begin by placing the tip of the tongue between the reed and the mouthpiece. Secondly, the student should be taught to blow hard, building up a strong air pressure behind the tongue. Finally, the tongue should be pulled back quickly and lightly so that the air will cause the reed to vibrate suddenly but with a noiseless attack.

To master this important technique the student should practice the following exercise slowly and carefully each day:

Count one - fix the tongue in position; count two - blow; count three - pull the tongue back quickly and lightly to release the air. Practice similar exercises over and over each day until it becomes a habit to start each tone in this manner.

Developing a Light Tongue

When players touch too much of the tongue against too much of the reed, they not only spoil their attack, but have a heavy, sluggish tonguing technique.

The student should practice slow, legato tonguing exercises each day to develop the desired light tongue. In the following exercise the first note is started with the three steps discussed in the last section. The remaining notes of the phrase should be tongued as lightly as possible, with just the tip of the tongue touching the tip of the reed. The syllable "loo" should be used in tonguing legato in the low register, "lah" in the middle register and "lee" in the high register. The air should not stop between the notes. The tongue touching the reed lightly between the notes stops the vibration of the reed for an instant and thus indicates the beginning of the next note. The following and similar exercises should be practiced each day constantly working for a lighter tongue.



Crossing the Break

One of the most difficult feats on the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets is to cross the break smoothly. To accomplish this, the hands and fingers must be in correct position. A great deal of slow, careful practice is required to train the first finger and thumb of the left hand to roll to and from the A and register keys properly. These movements should be practiced in front of a mirror to make certain that the fingers and thumb are kept in the correct positions. It is extremely important that students

practice crossing the break until it can be executed perfectly without thought.

The following exercises should be practiced daily until they can be played smoothly and evenly. Make certain that the hands and fingers are kept in perfect position. Make certain that the mouthpiece is tight against the upper teeth and that the embouchure does not tighten or move when changing registers.



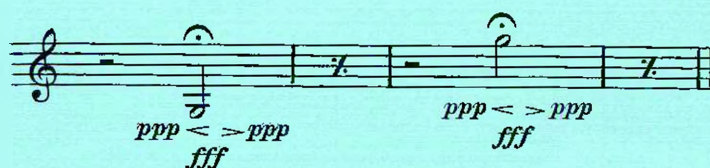
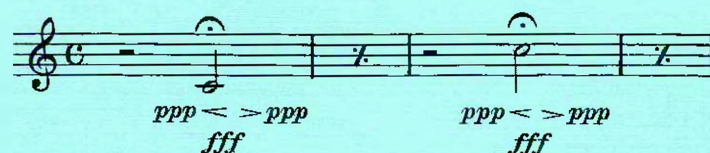
Excellent extensive exercises designed for mastering the crossing of the break are available in the "Special Studies" section of the *Hal Leonard Advanced Band Method* for alto and bass clarinet. These same exercises can also be used for the contrabass clarinets in E \flat or B \flat . The first part of the book is also good training material for the junior and senior high school band.

Tone Quality

Although technique is important to the alto, bass and contrabass clarinetist, beautiful tone quality is of even greater importance. The first step in obtaining beautiful tone quality is to develop a concept of what a fine tone actually sounds like on the instrument. This is not always easy for the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet player, as one rarely hears soloists on these instruments. If students cannot hear artists in person perform on these instruments, they must rely on recordings. The recording "Contest Solos for the Clarinet Family" in the Selmer educational record series will serve as a guide for the development of a free, singing, dark, resonant sound which is in direct contrast with the small, tight, pinched, hard sound that is often produced.

Long Tone Practice

Practicing long tones is an important means of improving tone quality, intonation, and control. To gain the most from this practice, the tones should be started as soft as possible, an even, steady crescendo should be made until the loudest sound without loss of quality is produced. Then a gradual decrescendo back to *ppp* should be made. It is best to count and listen carefully to keep the tone quality beautiful, the crescendo and decrescendo even and the intonation correct. A minimum of three or four notes should be practiced each day in this manner. Each note should be repeated until the student is satisfied that he has performed the exercise the best he possibly can at that time.



Vibrato

The beauty and warmth of the alto, bass and contrabass clarinet tone can be further enhanced by the judicious use of an artistic vibrato. The vibrato should be thought of as something that is added to an already excellent tone to give it interest and expression. Vibrato should be used when the alto, bass or contrabass clarinet are being played as solo instruments or when they are playing solo passages in the ensemble. Ordinarily it should not be used when these instruments are playing passages that are intended to blend into the ensemble.

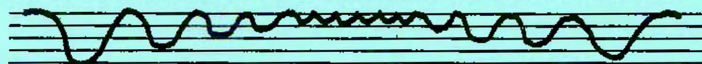
The most widely accepted method for producing the vibrato on the alto, bass and contrabass clarinet is with the jaw. This is the same type of vibrato that is generally used on the saxophone. The same motion and muscles used in lowering and raising the pitches are used in biting. The jaw muscles must be trained to control the vibrato at all speeds and widths necessary for artistic musical expression.

To learn to produce the vibrato, the student should begin by playing one note. He should drop the jaw to lower the pitch and then raise the jaw to return the pitch to normal. It is helpful for the student to lower the jaw as if saying "aah" and then return the jaw to its normal position as if saying "eee." The student should be taught to bend the tone down slowly, smoothly and deliberately and then bend the tone back to the normal pitch.

Once the student has the feeling of producing the vibrato in this manner, he should practice the C major scale in whole notes at approximately 70 beats per minute with one vibrato pulsation per beat. This should be practiced for one week or until the student can produce this slow vibrato with perfect control. Next, he should practice the C major scale in whole notes with two pulsations per beat. He should next practice similarly with three, four, five and finally six pulsations per beat.



After this has been mastered, the student should practice vibrato on long tones starting very slow and wide and getting gradually faster and more narrow. When the student has reached his maximum speed keeping the vibrato smooth and even, he should gradually slow the vibrato down. The vibrato should get slightly wider as it gets slower. This will train the student to be able to produce the vibrato at all speeds and at all widths. This exercise would look like this.



After the student has mastered this exercise, he will be ready to use the vibrato in the music he is performing. The vibrato used must suit the music being performed. Generally, he should use it only on notes held one beat or longer. In slow, tranquil music the vibrato will be slower and wider, while in fast, exciting music it will be faster and more narrow. At times, for the best musical expression, it should be omitted entirely.

The study of vibrato should be started as soon as the player has mastered the fundamental clarinet technique. This will usually be after the clarinetist has played for two or three years.

Special Fingerings

The alto, bass and contrabass clarinets in general finger like the normal Boehm system clarinet. The alto and bass clarinets do, however, have a half-hole mechanism which is not included on the normal Boehm system B \flat soprano clarinet. The half-hole mechanism makes the high register from the C \sharp above the staff to the high G speak easily and clearly. In fact since this mechanism provides a register hole of the mathematically correct dimension, this register on the bass and alto clarinet speaks more easily than it does on the B \flat soprano clarinet. The fingerings for the use of the half-hole on the alto and bass clarinet are as follows:

R	R	R	R	R	R	R
T	T	T	T	T	T	T
1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2
3	3	3	3	3	2	2
4	4	4		C \sharp		4
5	G \sharp	B \flat	G \sharp	G \sharp	G \sharp	5 G \sharp

Note: Consult the nomenclature chart on the inside back cover if you are in doubt about the keys to use in these fingerings.

It is possible for an advanced player to use the high register on the contrabass clarinet by employing the fingerings for the throat register and playing with an open throat. With adequate practice to get the feel of these notes and to get accustomed to these fingerings, the contrabass clarinetist will be able to play the high register with some facility. These same fingerings may also be used to good advantage on the alto and bass clarinets.

T	T	T	open	G \sharp	A	R R	R R	R R
1	1	1				A T	A T	T T
2						1	B \flat 1	C 1
E \flat						2	2	B \flat 4
						3	4	5
						C \sharp	5	6
						4	6	
						5		
						6		

Since the contrabass clarinet is only designed to play up to clarion A, the B \flat , B and C are usually quite difficult. They will usually speak more easily if they are fingered with the regular fingering but without the register key. The longer fingerings make high F, F \sharp and G respond quite easily on the contrabass clarinet.

Additional Keys

Most of the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets have an additional key to play low E \flat . This key is played by the right little finger. Some models of contrabass clarinets also have a low D key for the left little finger. Some bass-set horns (F alto clarinets), bass and contrabass clarinets have keys to produce low D \flat and low C. These keys, located on the back of the instrument, are played with the right thumb. Although these notes are rarely called for in the standard parts for these instruments, the added range is useful when special parts are being written. It is also possible to play the throat tones B \flat , A, A \flat and G using these keys together with the register key. While the intonation and tone quality of these notes are in-

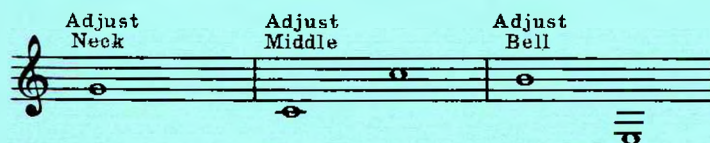
ferior, the fingerings can simplify fast technical passages across the break.

Mazzeo Model Alto, Bass and Contrabass Clarinets

The Mazzeo mechanism that has become popular on the B \flat soprano clarinet is also available on special order for Selmer alto, bass and contrabass clarinets. These instruments are of particular interest and value to players who have been trained on the Mazzeo model B \flat soprano clarinet and wish to change to the alto, bass or contrabass clarinets. The many advantages offered by this new improvement will make it useful to all players of the alto, bass and contrabass clarinet. Additional information concerning the Mazzeo model clarinets can be obtained by writing Selmer, Box 310, Elkhart, Indiana 46514.

Tuning the Alto, Bass and Contrabass Clarinets

The alto, bass and contrabass clarinet should be tuned first on open G. The instrument should be pulled at the neck or tuning slide to bring this note in tune. Do not tune by pulling the mouthpiece. The next notes tuned should be low and middle C. If the instrument can be extended between the upper and lower sections, it should be adjusted here until these tones are brought in tune or a balance established between them. The third line B and low E should be played next and tuned by adjusting the bell.



Since it is more difficult to hear the low tuning notes of the contrabass clarinet, it is a good idea to tune this instrument in unison or in octaves and fifths with another instrument, such as a bass clarinet. To tune the open G on the E \flat contrabass clarinet, the bass clarinet should play his low C. The bass clarinet should play low G to

tune the open G on the B \flat contrabass clarinet. The contrabass player should move his tuning slide, or neck until the beats are eliminated.

Most alto, bass and contrabass clarinets are built slightly sharp so that they can play in tune when the ensemble uses a pitch a little above the standard A-440. It is normal to tune the alto and bass clarinets with the tuning slide or neck extended approximately an eighth to a quarter of an inch and the contrabass clarinet approximately a quarter to one-half an inch when the ensemble is playing at standard pitch. If the tuning slide has to be extended more than this amount, the instrument will be thrown out of tune with itself. If the instrument has to be pulled too much, there is usually something that the player is doing incorrectly. Often the problem is too much embouchure pressure or a reed that is too heavy.

Playing slow scales in unison, fifths and octaves while listening to and eliminating the beats is an excellent means for improving intonation. Players need to learn their particular instrument and favor notes whose tuning tendency is either flat or sharp. If the player thinks the pitches as he plays, his embouchure will usually adjust appropriately. The ability to play in tune is one of the most important aspects of being a good musician. Much time and effort on the part of the player needs to be given to the study and improvement of this aspect of clarinet technique.

Selecting the Contrabass Clarinet

The question of whether the E \flat or B \flat contrabass clarinet should be purchased is often raised. Each instrument has its advantages. The B \flat contrabass clarinet has a large and heavy sound which adds weight to the bass line. It is especially effective in large ensembles. Its greater range can also be important if the instrument is being used to replace the contrabassoon, string bass or tuba.

Some of the advantages of the E \flat contrabass clarinet are its smoother tone quality, greater dexterity, ease of playing and automatic transposition of bass clef parts. For these reasons, the E \flat contrabass clarinet is undoubtedly a more practical instrument for most pur-

poses. When one plays both the E \flat and B \flat contrabass clarinets, the great difference in the agility and ease of playing become readily apparent.

There has been some confusion regarding the name given to the contrabass clarinet in E \flat . Since the instrument is undoubtedly a bass instrument, referring to it as a contra alto clarinet is misleading. *The American College Dictionary* defines the term contrabass as meaning below the bass. Willi Appel in the *Harvard Dictionary* says the term "contra" denotes instruments in the lowest range. Both of these definitions would uphold calling the instrument an E \flat contrabass clarinet.

Solos for Alto, Bass and Contrabass Clarinets

I have spent many years working with composers, arrangers and publishers to build a repertoire of excellent solo materials for these instruments. All of these solos have been graded so that they can be studied and performed by students at all levels of development. Each of these solos has been edited to assist the student in mastering any problem that will be encountered in the solo. Solos in the following list marked with an asterisk may be heard on the Selmer educational series recording, "Contest Solos for the Clarinet Family." Solos marked with two asterisks not only may be heard on the recording, but also have band accompaniments available. These accompaniments may be rented from E. B. Marks Corp., 136 West 52nd St., New York, New York 10019.

Solos for Alto Clarinet and Piano

1. DOLPHIN DANCE by D. McCathren — Grade I — Published by Hal Leonard Music, Inc.
2. VALSETTE by John Cacavas — Grade I — Published by Carl Fischer.
3. PUPPET PARADE by Hugo Norden — Grade I — Published by Hal Leonard Music, Inc.
4. SARABANDE** by Alfred Reed — Grade II — Published by E. B. Marks.
5. INTERMEZZO by Alfred Reed — Grade III — Published by Carl Fischer.

6. SERENATA** by Alfred Reed — Grade IV — Published by E. B. Marks.
7. CONCERTINO by Weber-McCathren — Grade V — Published by Kendor.

Solos for Bass Clarinet and Piano

1. PREMIERE WALTZ by D. McCathren — Grade I — Published by Hal Leonard Music, Inc.
2. THE HAPPY WOODSMAN by Hugo Norden — Grade I — Published by Hal Leonard Music, Inc.
3. DANSE BAROQUE (Gavotte) by Hugo Norden — Grade III — Published by Carl Fischer.
4. GUARACHA** by Alfred Reed — Grade III — Published by E. B. Marks.
5. HAITIAN DANCE** by Alfred Reed — Grade IV — Published by E. B. Marks.
6. CONCERTINO by Weber-McCathren — Grade V — Published by Kendor.

Solos for E \flat and B \flat Contrabass Clarinet and Piano

1. AFRO** by Alfred Reed — Grade III — Published by E. B. Marks.
2. SCHERZO FANTASIQUE** by Alfred Reed — Grade IV — Published by E. B. Marks.

The Clarinet Choir

One of the best means for training players on the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets is to have them play in a clarinet choir. In this ensemble, demands made on each player give them good reason to practice, study privately and become outstanding. If the student plays only in a band and does not play solos or in a clarinet choir, his parts are seldom heard alone and seldom are really important and challenging. This does not encourage hard work. In the clarinet choir the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets are not only very important, but in many instances are featured in solo passages. The following graded list of music for the clarinet choir is excellent for use as contest music or concert selections. Including one or two of these works on a band program will do much to add contrast and interest to the concert. It should be noted that rehearsing the clarinet choir is one of the most

effective means of improving the clarinet section of the band and hence the band itself.

Music for Clarinet Choir

1. CHANSON TRIESTE by Tschaikovsky-Casteel — Grade I — Published by Barnhouse.
2. LADY OF SPAIN by Evans-Jarcho — Grade III — Published by Sam Fox.
3. STUDY IN LAVENDER by Erick Osterling — Grade III — Published by Southern Music.
4. CLARINETTE VALSANTE by Alfred Reed — Grade III — Published by Kendor.
5. LULLABY FOR AN E \flat CLARINET by Noah Klauss — Grade III — Published by Kendor.
6. PRAYER FROM "EVANGELINE" by Noah Klauss — Grade III — Published by Kendor.
7. OVERTURE TO COSI FAN TUTTE by Mozart-Casteel — Grade III — Published by Kendor.
8. BALLAD FOR CLARINETS by Marcell Frank — Grade III — Published by Hal Leonard Music, Inc.
9. ELECTRONIC BRAIN by Noah Klauss — Grade IV — Published by Kendor.
10. MINUETTO in B \flat by Bolzoni-Pardee — Grade IV — Published by Kendor.
11. CLARINETICS by Noah Klauss — Grade V — Published by Kendor.

Use of the Contrabass Clarinet in the Band

The role of the contrabass clarinet in the band is first of all as the bass voice of the clarinet choir, the woodwind choir and finally for the entire band when playing tutti. The contrabass clarinet is an ideal bass instrument because its low tones are so strong and easily produced. It is, in fact, the only wind instrument in which the tone gains in strength and is more easily produced and controlled the lower one plays. Its strong fundamental tone gives strength and depth in the bass register of the band. The richness and strength of the overtones produced by the contrabass clarinet reinforces the instruments sounding above. The result is a wonderful blending and unify-

ing sound. Because of its great facility, the contrabass clarinet can easily play passages that may be very difficult on other instruments. The excellent staccato produced by the contrabass clarinet serves to give badly needed clarity to fast moving bass lines.

To get the most value from the contrabass clarinet it should have its own special part. Many contemporary composers and arrangers are regularly incorporating a part for the contrabass clarinet.

When a band work does not include a part for the contrabass clarinet, there are many possibilities for giving a part to the instrument. First and best would be for the director or player to extract a part from the score. If there is not enough time for this, parts that have been published for other instruments can be used. When this is the case, the greater practicality of the contrabass clarinet in E \flat can be readily seen. The E \flat contrabass clarinet can be given the baritone saxophone part or any of the parts written for bass clef instruments. By merely changing the bass clef sign to a treble clef and adding three sharps or taking away a like number of flats, the E \flat contrabass clarinet can read directly from the bass clef part. An example of how this works is as follows:

Tuba



E \flat Contrabass Clarinet



Note that since the E \flat contrabass clarinet automatically plays three flats, the two flats called for in the parts are cancelled. The third flat played by the E \flat contrabass clarinet is cancelled by adding one sharp to the key signature. When a natural sign appears in the bass clef part to raise the part one half step (as in the case of the B natural in the first measure) this is read as a sharp. When a flat is used to lower a tone that is being played with a sharp by

the E \flat contrabass clarinet because of the key signature, the flat is read as a natural sign. An example of this is the first note of the second measure. Thus, an accidental that changes the bass clef part up or down a given interval must be read so that the E \flat contrabass clarinet part is changed a like interval.

The E \flat contrabass clarinet makes an ideal substitution for the string bass. Its light staccato can be very similar to the pizzicato effect of the string bass. The E \flat contrabass clarinet can also be played with a smooth sounding tone which in many ways sounds like the string bass. Since the string bass part is written one octave higher than it actually sounds, it is important for the E \flat contrabass clarinetist to be taught to read the part down one octave. An example of this is as follows:

String Bass



E \flat Contrabass Clarinet



When the band score does not have a part for the B \flat contrabass clarinet, a bass saxophone part can be given to the player if one is published. If this part is not available, a bass clarinet part can be given to the player. The part will, however, need to be edited to insure that the B \flat contrabass does not play such unsuitable passages as countermelodies, delicate passages and passages in which the lower octave would not be desirable.

Use of the Contrabass Clarinet in the Orchestra

The contrabass clarinet is very effective when added to the orchestra instrumentation. It serves as an excellent bass voice and should be included in the standard orchestration for use as the bass voice for the woodwind

choir. It also makes an effective substitute for the contrabassoon. Perhaps its most practical and valuable use at the present time, however, is to have it play in unison with the string basses.

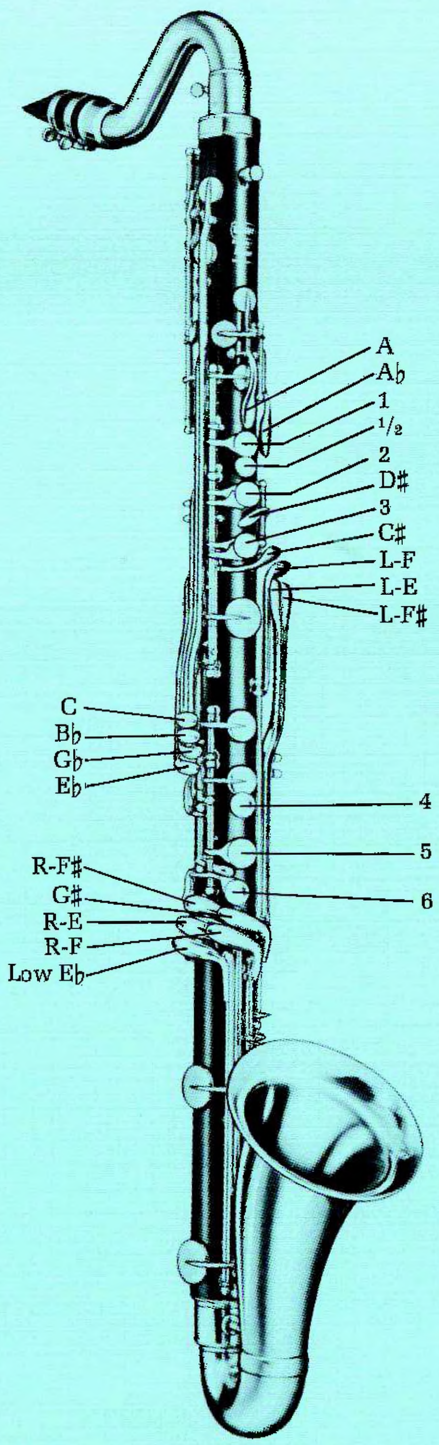
Since the string basses are of the viol family, they are tubby and lacking in penetrating power when compared to the members of the violin family. Adding a contrabass clarinet to the string basses causes the section to blend and balance more effectively with the rest of the strings. The crisp staccato of the contrabass clarinet gives emphasis and clarity to running bass lines assigned to the string basses.

Because of its strong fundamental and upper partials, the contrabass clarinet's reinforcement of the string basses can readily be heard. One string bass and a contrabass clarinet will give an effect one would expect to hear ordinarily from three or even four string basses. The contrabass clarinet also reinforces all other instruments of the orchestra, which results in a beautiful blending and richness of sound.

The contrabass clarinet has also been used effectively by choral directors who wish to reinforce the bass section of the chorus. This can be helpful to the balance of the choir, since few high school students have fully developed bass voices.

Without doubt, the alto, bass and contrabass clarinets are among our most effective and important wind instruments. The use of these instruments will undoubtedly continue to increase as composers, arrangers and conductors realize their great potential. It remains for the players of these instruments to meet the ever increasing demands that will be made on them. It is my hope that this book will help players meet this great challenge.





A

Ab

1

1/2

2

D#

3

C#

L-F

L-E

L-F#

C

Bb

Gb

Eb

4

5

6

R-F#

G#

R-E

R-F

Low Eb

Selmer

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