



**LUCIEN
CAILLIET**

Musical and Educational Director
G. Leblanc Corporation

The **LEBLANC**
Contrabass and
Contra-Alto
clarinets

G. LEBLANC CORPORATION

THE LEBLANC CONTRABASS AND CONTRA-ALTO CLARINETS

PREFACE

The Leblanc Bb Contrabass clarinet and the Eb Contra-alto Clarinet constitute the greatest innovation in musical instrument manufacture since the invention of the saxophone by Sax.

Messrs. Georges and Leon Leblanc and their associate acoustician — engineer Charles Houvenaghel deserve the congratulations and gratitude of the entire musical profession and music lovers all over the world. The science and meticulous care in the fabrication of these instruments result in their being perfection in intonation, emission, tone quality and mechanism.

Heretofore, the clarinet choir in the band had to rely on the tuba for its contrabass instrument. This was wrong and in flagrant violation of orchestration principles.

For example, the following chord for strings:

Viol. 1
Viol. 2
Violas
Cellos
string bass

being transcribed for clarinet choir could not have its contrabass note without the contrabass clarinet.

clar. 1, 2
clar. 3
alto clar.
bass "
contrabass clar.

Neither could the lower octave of the bass melody of the following passage for clarinet choir in which no instrument other than the Contrabass clarinet should be assigned to it.

clar. 1
clar. 2
alto cl.
bass cl.
contrabass cl.

The word "CONTRA" — as applied to musical instruments — means: "sounding at the lower octave of the written notes". Accordingly, the Bb contrabass clarinet sounds one octave below the bass clarinet and the Eb contra-alto clarinet sounds one octave below the alto clarinet, hence: the reason for their respective names.

The compass of the Leblanc Eb Contra-alto is

written:
etc.

sounds:
etc.

The compass of the 340 Leblanc Bb Contrabass Clarinet

is written:

sounds:

The compass of the 345 Leblanc Bb Contrabass Clarinet

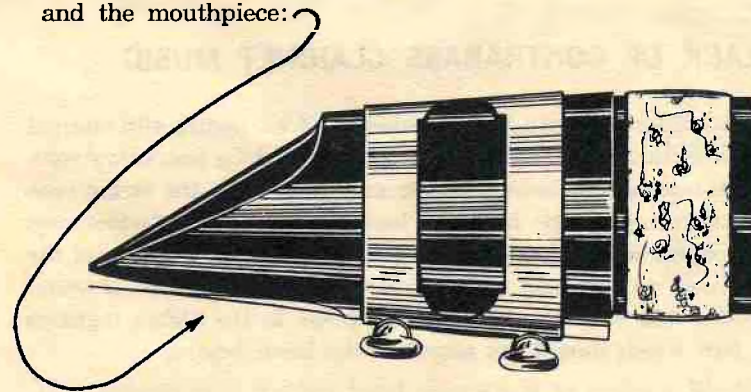
is written:

sounds:

In principle, all clarinets — like all saxophones — are played similarly, i.e., with the same fingering and embouchure. However, the following suggestions should be observed in the playing of the Bb contrabass clarinet: 1. — Because of the larger size and tubing, the slower, fewer and wider vibrations of the lower clarinets (such as the alto, bass and contras), softer reeds should be used as the instrument becomes bigger;

a heavy, stiff reed will not produce the right timbre of tone on these instruments and besides, would be extremely strenuous to play.

2. — One of the elementary principles in clarinet playing is to have the lower lip press EXACTLY at the point of separation between the reed and the mouthpiece:



This is even more imperative with the larger clarinets, and particularly with the contras, as too little mouthpiece in the mouth will cause a fuzzy, weak, strangled tone and probably squeaks.

3. — Blowing must be done from the top of the mouth as if saying: HHHOOOH ...

The pitch of the extreme low notes of all contrabass instruments becomes difficult to distinguish by the human ear. However, these low notes become perfectly audible when associated with their first harmonics (an octave above) which effect is sonorous, deep and rich.

The same situation prevails in every instrument family of the orchestra or the band in which the contrabass instrument is invariably associated with its bass instrument, both sounding in octaves. Examples: cellos and string contra-basses, bassoon and contra-bassoon, baritone saxophone and bass saxophone, Bb bass and BBb tuba, and naturally bass clarinet and Bb contrabass clarinet. All these instruments frequently play in octaves, in which case the bass instrument becomes the first harmonic of its contrabass instrument, their blending being most harmonious and beautiful.

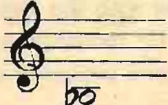
By the same token, the above dissertation explains why the Bb contrabass clarinet (which is the most powerful woodwind instrument in the contrabass register), when associated with string contra-basses, prompts the harmonic series (natural vibrations) of these instruments thus

amplifying their tone volume to astonishing proportions. Therefore, adding the contrabass clarinet to the orchestra or the band constitutes more than the addition of one instrument.

LACK OF CONTRABASS CLARINET MUSIC

Some music editions contain Bb contrabass and Eb contra-alto clarinet parts, but unfortunately, most are still without it. As a temporary solution, the Bb contrabass clarinet player may play from the string bass part by transposing a tone higher. Playing from a bass clarinet part would be possible as long as this bass clarinet part was the bass of the harmony which may fittingly sound an octave lower. However, it would not be good if and when the bass clarinet plays in the higher registers a special part which should not sound at the lower octave.

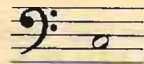

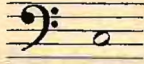

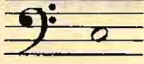
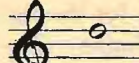
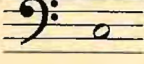

The Eb contra may play from a baritone Sax part but that instrument

descends to only Bb  while the Leblanc Eb

contra descends to low C  almost an

octave below; this lower portion would thus be missed in the most necessary register.

Another possibility is for the Eb contra to play from a tuba part by substituting the bass clef with a treble clef, take out 3 flats, or in case of only 2 flats, take out these two flats and add one sharp; if only one flat, take out that flat and add 2 sharps, etc. This is an un-scholastic way to transpose and we do not recommend it; besides, the tuba part is intended to be played by a tuba — which is a brass instrument, and not a clarinet. The clarinet section being often referred to as the “string section of the band”, accordingly, the string bass part would be a most logical substitute; its transposition for the Eb contra would therefore be a major 6th and an octave, as the string bass sounds an octave lower than written. The transposition for the Bb Contra is one tone plus 2 octaves higher than the tuba, and one tone plus one octave higher than the string bass.

Example:	Tuba:		Eb Contra:	
	String Bass:		Eb Contra:	
	Tuba:		Bb Contra:	
	String Bass:		Bb Contra:	

The best solution for the band director is to make a Bb Contrabass clarinet or Eb Contra-alto clarinet part by working from the full score and compose such a part from the low woodwinds, low saxes, string bass, tuba, and best fitting the instrumentation.

This extra work will only be temporary as such parts will soon be available in all new publications.

Bb CONTRABASS CLARINET WITH CHORUS

The addition of the Bb Contrabass clarinet to a mixed chorus, or men's choir is most effective due to the fact that it plays in the contrabass register, which register is inaccessible by human voices.

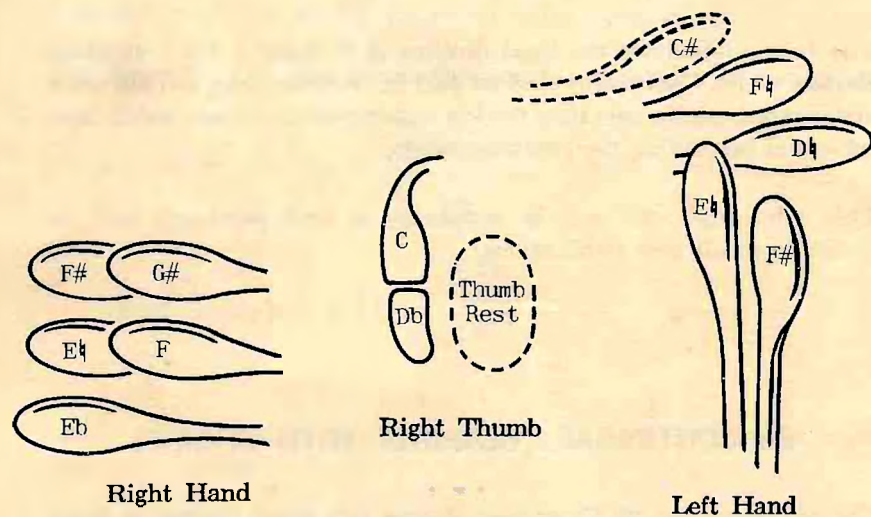
The participation of this instrument playing an octave lower than the basses provides the fundamental sounds to the choir's harmonic series, causing the bass voices to become the first harmonics, and thus prompting the natural vibrations emanating from the entire group. Accordingly, it amplifies its low register to an extent never realized before.

Because of the clarinet being the closest instrument to human voices, the contrabass clarinet blends beautifully with the chorus' low register, even without the listeners being aware of its presence.

FINGERING for the Leblanc Bb Contrabass clarinet is the same as for all the other clarinets from low E to high C. Below the low E, Eb is fingered with the extra key for the right little finger and the D with the extra key for the left little finger.

The Leblanc Eb Contra-alto clarinet descends to LOW C. Its Eb and D are played as indicated above. The Db is fingered with the lower spatula for the right thumb and the C with upper spatula also with the right thumb. (See below.)

The Leblanc Bb #345 Contrabass clarinet descends to low C (as low as the contra-bassoon). Its fingering is the same as described above for the contra-alto clarinet. (See below.)



The Leblanc Educational department being a service to the musical world; this booklet is likewise intended to be informative. In accord with this spirit, we cheerfully invite your questions whenever they arise, and I will take pleasure in answering them to the best of my ability.

Lucien Cailliet