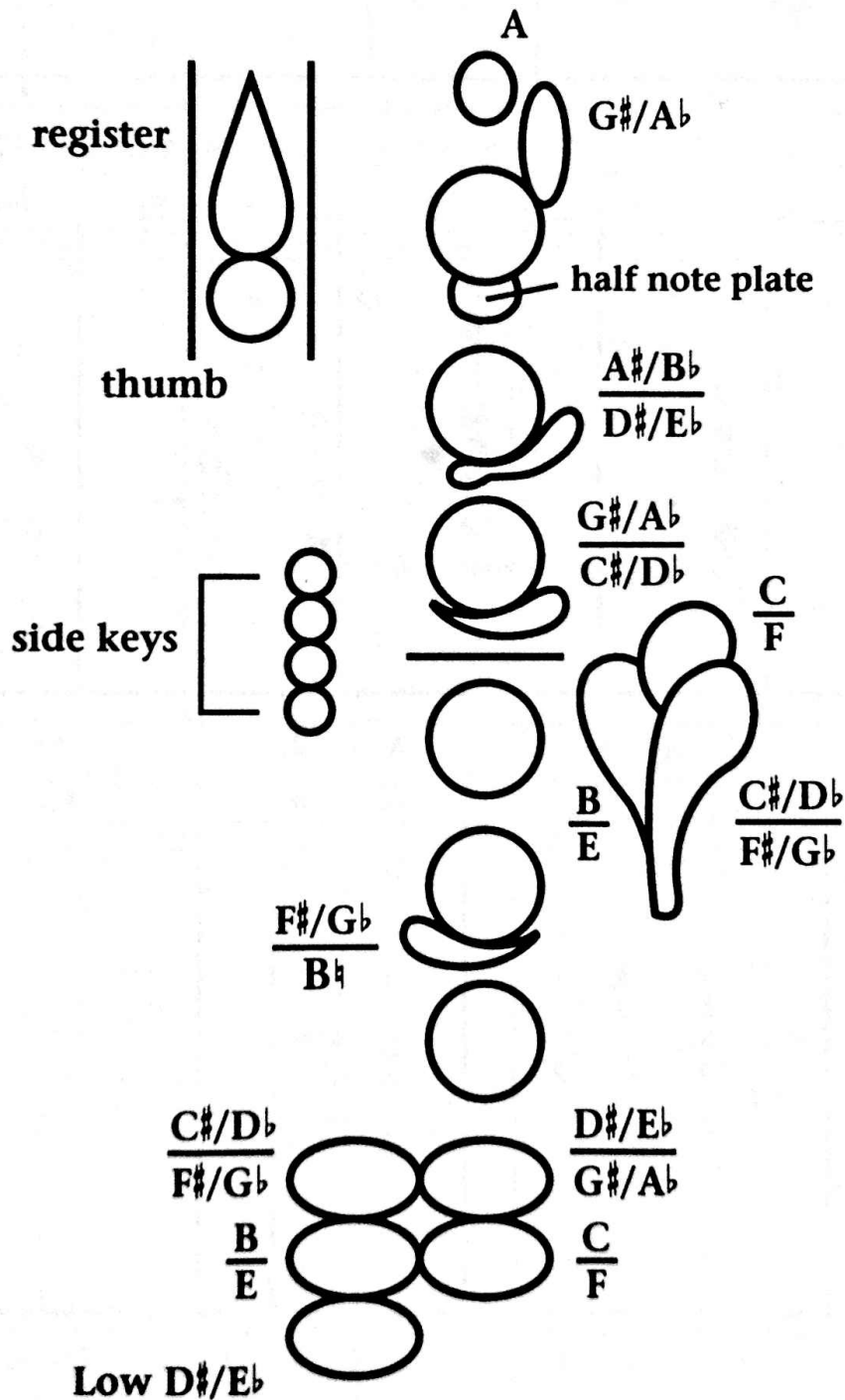


Bass Clarinet/Alto Clarinet/Contralto Clarinet Fingering Chart

(When more than one fingering is shown, the first is the most common.)

It is illegal to photocopy or reproduce this Bass Clarinet/Alto Clarinet/Contralto Clarinet Fingering Chart.

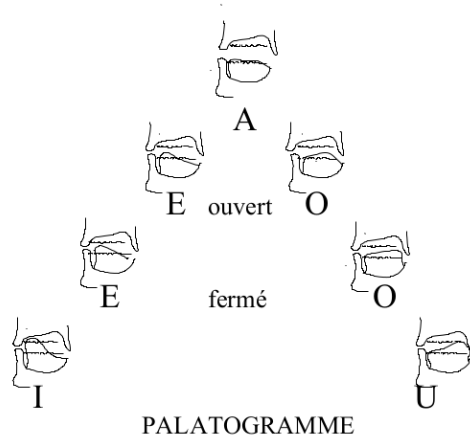
Bass Clarinet Alto Clarinet/Contralto Clarinet Key Diagram



Key Diagram, notes in this layout: $\frac{B}{E}$ (with register key)
 $\frac{E}{E}$ (without register key)

ARTICULATION

Le schéma obtenu correspond à la progression de la langue dans la cavité buccale, de la position la plus fermée en avant à la position la plus fermée à l'arrière.



La référence aux voyelles permet de modifier consciemment le volume de la cavité buccale, et donc de changer sensiblement le timbre, la couleur, la justesse d'un son et de soutenir l'embouchure. C'est par la pratique empirique que chaque musicien peut adapter sa morphologie et maîtriser cette technique dite de "vocalisation".

La langue crée dans la cavité buccale, un résonateur de tel volume correspondant à la production des formants nécessaire à l'articulation de tel son musical.

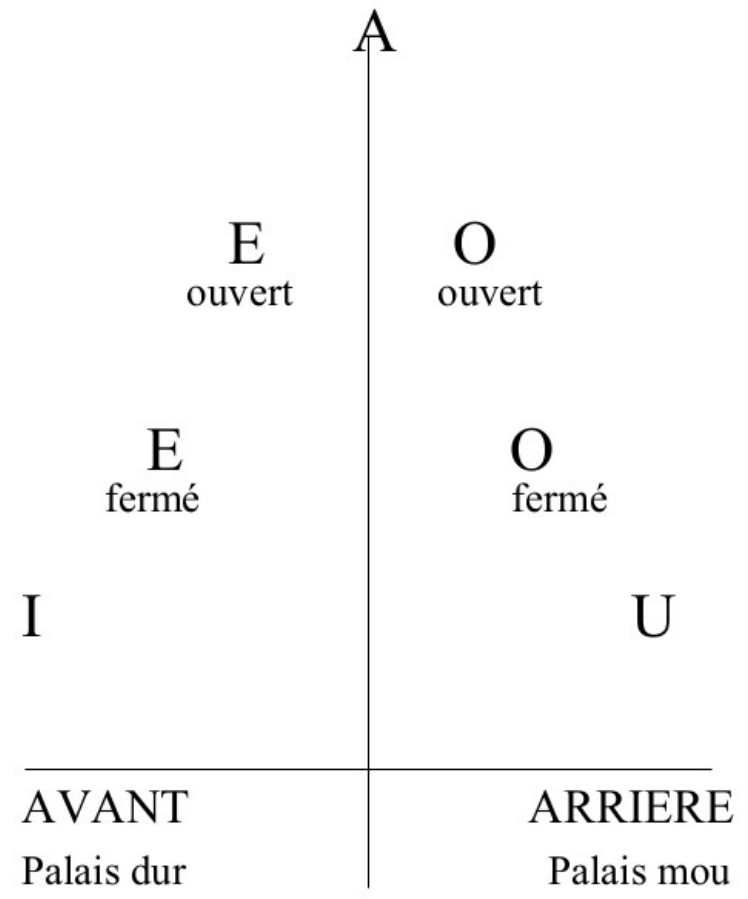
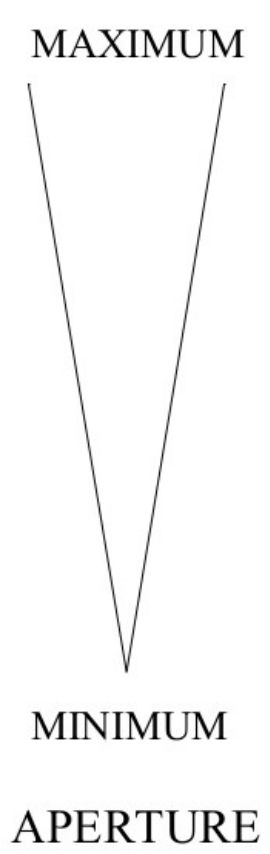
Ce volume buccal dépend de la place de la langue et de sa distance au palais que l'on nomme "**aperture**" (degré d'ouverture).

Le siège de l'aperture, endroit où se rétrécit le canal buccal est le point d'articulation. Au niveau du palais, on peut déterminer deux zones d'articulation : l'une vers l'avant (palais dur), l'autre vers l'arrière (palais mou/voile du palais).

Le son [a] est celui qui possède la plus grande ouverture, le son [u] (prononcé 'ou' opposé à [ü] prononcé 'u') présente un canal buccal rétréci au niveau du voile du palais, le son [i] présente un rétrécissement au niveau du palais dur, etc...

On peut classer ainsi les voyelles selon le point d'articulation et l'aperture qu'elles exigent.

	ARTICULATION	APERTURE
[a]	médiane	maximum
[e]	avant/ <i>palais dur</i>	moyenne
[i]	avant/ <i>palais dur</i>	minimum
[o]	arrière/ <i>palais mou</i>	moyenne
[u]	arrière/ <i>palais mou</i>	minimum



Considering the bass clarinet as your instrument, some points are clear:

The voice hardly ever is technically so demanding that you have to rehearse or practise jumps and runs for hours like soprano clarinet players have to quite often. Even the second and third sopranos have to work harder there. But still you have to be technically good; and the long levers and keys require strong hands and some power. Intonationwise the instrument is less demanding than the soprano clarinet. With embouchure you can do more when playing the higher clarinets, because the mouth's volume is smaller compared to the bass clarinet's volume. And: People tend to hear small deviations better in higher pitches than in lower.

You may find it surprising but you won't need much more breath or lung volume for a bass clarinet to play the same piece as you need for a soprano. The problem is that the type of voice that bass clarinets play **is not** the same as the soprano's: Long and very long legato-lines, often loud ones with crescendo have to be mastered, and while the soprano is hardly ever alone and can work as a team (breath intermittently), bass clarinets are often single. In arrangements you get the cello-part: Beautiful, but then a violoncello doesn't have to breath... ;-)

The bass clarinet is nothing for the primadonna-type: If you really need to play an important solo part that everybody will hear and remember and you need that in every concert to feel good, then the bass clarinet will not become your favorite instrument (maybe you should consider switching to E flat?)

If the orchestra doesn't provide a bass clarinet, that is, if you have to buy your own instrument, you better not be financially limited. Having to spend less than 5.000 Euro (or US-Dollars) for a good bass clarinet would be a bargain. You may find used ones, shorter ones (see above) and instruments from synthetic material (ABS, Resonite) for much less, but even when you buy a "cheap" bass clarinet for 3.000 Euro you better not be poor. You always should be aware that you could be having the same fun with a trumpet costing 800 Euro.

Save time and money buying saxophone reeds

Many bass clarinet players (including me and my wife) play bass clarinet using sax reeds. There are people who will call this impossible, but it works well for me. For german bass clarinets you can use alto sax reeds, for boehm bass clarinets you can use tenor sax reeds. I do it not only because of the price (about 50%), but it is a question of availability: Good reeds are available for saxophones in nearly every small music shop at the corner all over the world, while bass clarinet reeds often have to be ordered in advance. You may as well try an internet mail order business, but there, too, you can't rely on having them the next day.

What to do with the bass clarinet in the break/pause?

There are always those guys who will disassemble the instrument, sweep through the parts and put them into the box, after having checked and re-oiled all keys etc. - but many of us don't. In a concert break you can as well hold the instrument in one hand and your beer or champagne in the other (looks great as long you have the upper arms of a bodybuilder ;-)

If you have about 70 Euro to spare you can buy an excellent bass clarinet stand (the same stand as for bassoons, a heavy solid steel thing with a big rubber cup). You can leave the instrument there, and nobody will kick it over. You really need such a stand if the bass clarinet is one of two instruments you play in the same concerto, and you don't want to place the expensive instrument on the floor where somebody may step on it. The floor still is a safer place than putting the instrument on a chair. So, if you must, turn the mouthpiece of the instrument up (prevents breaking the reed), and put the bass clarinet onto its opened case on the floor in an open space where people can see it rather than putting it on a chair (NEVER do that!).

You may as well find an empty corner where you can safely lean the bass clarinet into - but hurry, bassoonists and bassist and lots of other instrumentalists are looking for the same places! Beware: Do not try to lean your expensive instrument into a door frame of a door that may be opened from outside, even if it is locked at the moment!