

The Bass Clarinet:
A Collection of Pedagogical Materials and Approaches

By Andrea Vos-Rochefort

A fairly recent and persistent surge in the popularity of the bass clarinet both as an orchestral and solo instrument necessitates a more recent inventory of popular instructional methods, pedagogical concepts, repertoire, and tenets of basic maintenance. A primary motivation for this study lies in the author's unique situation of being in close proximity to two major orchestral bass clarinet players (Ron Aufmann of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Benjamin Freimuth, formerly of the San Francisco Symphony) with varied approaches and tremendous experience in playing and teaching the bass clarinet. As a doctoral candidate and future educator at the collegiate level, it seems appropriate to dedicate time and resources to preparing the instruction of young bass clarinetists.

At first glance, there is significantly less material readily available in the typical university library than there is for instruction on the soprano clarinets. However, upon closer examination, *The Clarinet* furnishes numerous articles and other items are available through interlibrary loan if a student knows what to look for. The first comprehensive resource I was directed to look for was a fairly recent publication, Jean-Marc Volta's *La Clarinette Basse*, dating from 1996. The lateness of this rudimentary pedagogical step reflects a persistent misconception that the bass clarinet is incapable of achieving the technical fluency of the soprano clarinets. Those who know better tend to use Bb clarinet method books and scales to achieve their aims without the guide of a method book specifically written for the bass clarinet.

The first published method book for the bass clarinet, A. P. Sainte-Marie's *Methode pour la Clarinette Basse*, appeared in 1898. Thomas Aber describes it as:

primarily a guide to practical fingerings for the bass clarinet... The preface compares the bass to the soprano clarinet as the organ would be compared to the piano [and includes] a three-paragraph history of the early form of the bass clarinet, crediting A. Buffet *jeune*

with the first truly usable bass clarinet. Buffet's improvements to an instrument made by Dumas, chief jeweler of the Emperor, in 1807 allowed Isaac Franco Dacosta to brilliantly perform the now famous bass clarinet solo in Meyerbeer's opera *Les Huguenots* in Paris in 1836. Thereafter, according to the history, Adolphe Sax and A. Buffet *jeune* together made further improvements to this instrument.¹

Sainte-Marie's *Méthode* goes on to address out-dated technical issues like the operation of two register keys, one for the lower register and one for the higher register and the difficulties produced by the transition between these two keys playing D, E-flat, and E in the clarion register. This practice was replaced in the 1930s by a single key resulting in automated operation of the two vents. He also refers to these tones as "muted tones" of the bass clarinet and includes four-tone ascending and descending chromatic passages starting on these notes saying that these exercises to "develop purity of tone and fluidity in this range are the most important exercises in his *Methode*."²

Other notable contributions came much later and include Himie Voxman's 1952 Rubank publication, *Introducing the Alto or Bass Clarinet*, and William E. Rhoads' six edited volumes of studies for alto and bass clarinet published by Southern Music: *Technical Studies*, *Etudes for Technical Facility*, and *Advanced Studies from Julius Weissenborn*. Publications from this era are less desirable as they adhere to the belief that bass clarinets are cumbersome and incapable of technical prowess. The next generation quickly buried this myth as Josef Horak forged a path as a soloist with his duo partner, pianist Emma Kovarnova, commissioning new works and programming bass clarinet recitals. Pedagogical materials soon replied to this new virtuosity—

¹ Thomas Aber, "The First Published Method for the Bass Clarinet – A. P. Sainte-Marie's *Méthode pour la Clarinet Basse* of 1898— and a Brief Survey of Subsequent Didactic Works for the Bass Clarinet," *The Clarinet* 42, 3 (June 2015), 76-9

² *Ibid.*, 78.

Spurred by the efforts of virtuosi such as Josef Horak, Harry Sparnaay, Henri Bok, J. M. Volta, and others, composers have created a substantial solo and chamber music repertoire for the bass clarinet and have made high technical demands on its performers. The musical vocabulary of these works, such as their extremely wide range and frequent use of micro-tones, slap-tongue, and multi phonics, requires a specialized technique. The Dutch bass clarinetist Henri Bok addressed these issues in his *Nouvelles Techniques pour la Clarinette Basse* (1989, rev. 2011, www.henrikbok.com). Jean-Marc Volta, formerly principal bass clarinetist with the Opera National de Paris, published his *La Clarinette Basse*, in 1996 (Paris: International Music Diffusion). This work could be considered a direct descendant of Sainte-Marie's *Methode*, but on a much grander scale. It deals with traditional playing techniques throughout the entire range of the modern instrument to low C and includes detailed exercises on sound production, use of the tongue, digital dexterity and transition between registers. Along with diagrams concerning fingerings, oral formation, and tongue placement, as well as technical exercises, it includes orchestra passages paired with each topic.³

Contemporary resources include Sauro Berti's *Vingti studi* and Henry Sparnaay's *Daily Chromatic Studies for the Bass Clarinet*. Despite this resurgence of attention, many of today's orchestral bass clarinetists swear by the adequacy of Albert scales, Rose etudes, and orchestral excerpts. Benjamin Freimuth, former bass clarinetist with the San Francisco Symphony, says about beginning bass clarinet students, "What I do is I play scales. Just scales, just two octaves, all scales, chromatic scales, whatever. And what I'm trying to do is get a homogenous sound, a good sound, without getting any kind of tension, I want to be relaxed..."⁴ He is also adamant about practicing a chromatic scale from G4–D#5 ascending and descending to achieve evenness of tone, saying that his first lessons with Linnea Nereim, bass clarinetist with the Cleveland Symphony, consisted solely of this exercise in order to iron out the break and create a focused tone with appropriate body. "If that can be really smooth, with no break, the rest of the instrument takes care of itself. You can do *Langenus* studies, anything that gets you over the

³ Thomas Aber, "The First Published Method for the Bass Clarinet," *The Clarinet* 42, 3 (June 2015), 78.

⁴ Benjamin Freimuth, lesson/interview, Cincinnati, April 7, 2017.

break, but you have to focus on listening.”⁵ Excerpts that reinforce this concept include the Pas de Deux from *The Nutcracker*, the chorale with E-flat clarinet in *Rite of Spring*, and the solo from Khachaturian’s *Piano Concerto*.

As most potential bass clarinet players begin on the soprano clarinet, Cheyenne Bland Cruz provides excellent advice for the high school or university student who suddenly finds themselves playing bass clarinet in a wind ensemble. She stresses the importance of familiarizing oneself with the instrument, determining which key moves which lever and be able to trace the causes of problems even if repairs are best left to an experienced repairperson due to the touchy nature of the adjustments. She also insists on investing in a personal mouthpiece as it minimizes intonation issues and provides greater comfort. As for reeds, she says “it is common to go down a half size or more in strength from soprano reeds but this is subject to mouthpiece facing.”⁶ It is also important to familiarize oneself with the intonation of every note on the instrument, marking tendencies that are 10 cents or more. Newer bass clarinets will have intonation adjustment screws that are user-friendly and control the pad heights. Finally, she emphasizes the practice of long tones beginning at quarter note =72 and getting slower to habituate the student to using more air and support and taking more mouthpiece.⁷ Ron Aufmann, bass clarinetist with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, suggests using a business card inserted between the reed and the lay of the mouthpiece to find the position of the bottom lip that best enables vibration of the

⁵ Benjamin Freimuth, lesson/interview, Cincinnati, April 7, 2017.

⁶ Cheyenne Bland Cruz, assisted by Kimberly Cole Levant and Henri Bok, “The Pedagogy Corner: A Pedagogical Guide to Playing Bass Clarinet in a Wind Ensemble,” *The Clarinet* 41, 4 (September 2014), 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

reed.⁸ Another important difference lies in the voicing which Bland Cruz defines as a combination of “embouchure strength, air speed, and tongue position” suggesting that “oh” or “ah” syllables add depth to the bottom register and “ew” or “ay” work for the higher register.⁹ Chester Rowell says, “It is interesting about the tongue position on the bass. It’s a little lower in my mind, obviously because you’re encouraging the air to be back in the mouth. When you say the word “aw” it’s right where the bass ought to be – about two inches behind where it is for the soprano clarinet.”¹⁰ Experimentation is important in this domain and students should practice playing G5–C6 with and without the register key.¹¹

When forming the embouchure, Ron Aufmann thinks of a “certain amount of strength in the upper lip against the top of the mouthpiece, but we don’t want to squeeze the sides of the reed shut. I still think of a dog-house kind of thing, flat bottom, rounded roof...think of corners as in and back...so you stay away from the sides. Cheeks should not puff out, as “the size of the cavity inside your mouth reflects your sound, [if it] is too much it makes the sound too tubby.”¹²

Edward Palanker describes embouchure formation saying:

Project the embouchure in a forward direction as if you are blowing out a candle or whistling, but not to that extreme. Folding the top lip into the top teeth will enable you to

⁸ Ron Aufmann, Taken from a lesson/interview on April 22, 2017.

⁹ Cheyenne Bland Cruz, assisted by Kimberly Cole Levant and Henri Bok, “The Pedagogy Corner: A Pedagogical Guide to Playing Bass Clarinet in a Wind Ensemble,” *The Clarinet* 41, 4 (September 2014), 26.

¹⁰ Michael Webster, “Teaching Clarinet: Who’s on Bass?” *The Clarinet* 41, 4, September 2014), 60.

¹¹ Cheyenne Bland Cruz, assisted by Kimberly Cole Levant and Henri Bok, “The Pedagogy Corner: A Pedagogical Guide to Playing Bass Clarinet in a Wind Ensemble,” *The Clarinet* 41, 4 (September 2014), 25.

¹² Ron Aufmann, lesson/interview, Cincinnati, April 22, 2017.

get a slightly bigger, more open tone, simulating a double lip without the teeth cutting into the lip. This will also enable you to open your throat more. Although the lower lip should remain reasonably stationary, you need to be a bit flexible in “rolling” the teeth slightly when skipping from the higher register to the lower register while voicing the back of the throat low.¹³

According to Ron Aufmann, the LH thumb is another sand trap, the position of the thumb should allow it to point over the right shoulder so the thumb can simply rock to cover the register key.

He suggests that beginners approach the bass clarinet like a new instrument and start with simple exercises like page 123 or 128 of Klosé’s method book and focus on playing everything in tune before focusing on finding the “perfect sound”.¹⁴

Michael Webster’s article, “Teaching Clarinet: Who’s on Bass?” features an interview with Chester Rowell who describes his first lesson, saying “William Osseck [who played in the Rochester Philharmonic] showed me how to loosen up my face a little bit, not using the upper cheek muscles as much as you do on the clarinet. But the best lesson I got was actually from Les Thiamin...he said, ‘Put a small pocket of air down toward your lower jaw to help you relax’ and it helped me a lot.”¹⁵ To combat squeaks, he recalls “some advice that Mr. Hasty gave me which was to start notes with a “hah-tah” syllable, which made you open up the back muscles of your throat. You start a sound from relaxation, then add a little tension, rather than the other way...

¹³ Edward Palanker, “Bass Clarinet 101,” *The Clarinet* 31, 4 (September 2004), 80.

¹⁴ Ron Aufmann, lesson/interview, Cincinnati, April 22, 2017.

¹⁵ Michael Webster, “Teaching Clarinet: Who’s on Bass?” *The Clarinet* 41, 4, September 2014), 59.

The air precedes the tongue.”¹⁶ Other useful syllables proposed by Ron Aufmann and his student, Mikey Arbulu, include “hou” or “heu”.¹⁷

Angle of the neck, articulation, and support of the instrument can all be controversial subjects on the bass clarinet as some professionals will advocate for various approaches. Chester Rowell for one admits to anchor tonguing because “I put the tip of my tongue on the top of my lower lip, which encourages more reed insertion. The reed is big and what causes squeaks is the reed itself not being hit by the tongue completely.” He also encourages the use of neckstraps saying that “90% of the bass clarinet players I run into are grabbing the instrument with their right hand and actually holding onto it. So their thumbs are in too far past the thumb rest and their hands are not arched correctly.”¹⁸ The position of the left hand thumb and the nature of its movements are essential to successful hand position. Furthermore, the larger keys and the general stiffness of university instruments can encourage bad habits and one effective remedy recommended by Ron Aufmann is Bonade’s technique of “lift and squeeze” which focuses on a two-sided motion where the fingers lift away from the keys and squeeze down with the same force and fluidity.¹⁹ It is most important that the player feel security while playing the bass clarinet and that the fingers are not jerking the instrument away and the head is not jerking and interfering with the embouchure seal.

¹⁶ Michael Webster, “Teaching Clarinet: Who’s on Bass?” *The Clarinet* 41, 4, September 2014), 60.

¹⁷ Mikey Arbulu, lesson observation/interview, Cincinnati, April 17, 2017.

¹⁸ Michael Webster, “Teaching Clarinet: Who’s on Bass?” *The Clarinet* 41, 4, September 2014), 61.

¹⁹ Ron Aufmann, lesson/interview, Cincinnati, April 22, 2017.

Articulation, like on the clarinet, is also a study of “less is more” in terms of movements.

David Bourque describes articulation saying,

I learned everything I know about articulation on the bass clarinet by playing with and listening to great bassoon players. Bassoonists start notes very clearly, and on the bass clarinet, the notes must also start squarely, and not “woof” in. It is a nasty habit that some clarinet players have, and it is even easier to get tricky into on the bass clarinet as the reed is big and it takes air and time to get it moving. A bass clarinet player who plays late is as good as dead.²⁰

In keeping with this concept, Ron Aufmann suggests starting players on Giampieri’s *Sixteen Daily Studies* published by Ricordi and written for bassoonists with an emphasis on articulation and reading in bass clef. He also recommends Demnitz’s etudes as they are “really charming” and “not very hard” for beginners and Martin Arnold’s *Bass Clarinet Scale Book* for its use of treble and bass clef. One thing is certain, when experimenting with articulation, it is not recommended to use pressure to start notes on the bass. The width of the reed does contribute to its sensitivity in that pressure from the corners can squeeze the reed and dampen the necessary vibrations. Lawrie Bloom says

[he doesn’t] technically think of articulating on the bass clarinet as being any different than on the clarinet, I am accomplishing it in the same way, with the tip of the tongue as close to the tip of the reed as possible. Obviously the angle of the instrument, of the mouthpiece as presented to the embouchure is different from the clarinet. It is therefore hard to play right at the tip of the reed... So I’m articulating a little bit lower but still with the tip of the tongue with a very short motion of the tongue, so I’m not involving the back of the tongue which would interfere with airflow.²¹

²⁰ David Bourque, “The Bass Clarinetists’ Workbook,” *The Clarinet* 41, 2 (March 2014), 65.

²¹ J. Lawrie Bloom, “Rico: Lawrie Bloom on Articulation” (D’Addario Woodwinds, February 11, 2009), accessed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMyqu8WILFA>.

Some players suggest angling the bass clarinet in at a more severe angle so the mouthpiece angle is similar to that of the soprano clarinet and resolve many of these issues which departs from an older school of thought. Chester Rowell explains, saying:

Bass clarinetists in the '60s and '70s encouraged a more direct approach— not so angled. These days both the new Buffet and Selmer bass clarinets are extremely angled. The question is: when you have the neck so angled, in my mind, it affects the dependability of the fifth harmonic above C. Those first three or four notes in the fifth harmonic are affected by an extremely arched neck. So what I prefer is a moderately arched neck that does encourage you to put the mouthpiece in the mouth arched up, but not so much.²²

Ben Freimuth prefers a more direct angle of entry but maintains that

More basic than that, with the bass clarinet, it is very important that you are in charge of the bass clarinet. Posture-wise, this sounds crazy, but it is important that you are over it. It's about physically being in charge. Another thing that is very important about the bass clarinet, and that practicing will do, is to have the mindset of no fear... You have to be able to take in a breath and play. You're open, you're moving the air very solidly, you're relaxed here, and always, every time you play anything, it is with a level of 'Here I am!'

Training bass clarinetists inevitably leads to preparing orchestral auditions and J. Lawrie Bloom shares his opinion that, "The goal lately (at auditions) seems to be to insult the fewest people, and, actually playing as loud as we do in an orchestra, while totally necessary to do the job, insults some people at the auditions."²³ David clarifies that in the orchestral wind section,

poetic and clear playing in the orchestra is the imperative. Rougher, aggressive playing (when musically appropriate) is also requisite of a good orchestral bass clarinet player. Playing the bass clarinet largely as a "harmony instrument" is inadequate in a large symphony orchestra. The bass clarinet is a solo voice and color, and it should be heard as such, even in many tutti passages... Bass clarinet doubles cellos, basses, tuba, low brass, and frequently fourth horn. It will also solo lines with the bassoons and the English Horn. As an orchestral bass clarinetist, there is very little that I play without focus and audible

²² Michael Webster, "Teaching Clarinet: Who's on Bass?" *The Clarinet* 41, 4 (September 2014), 59.

²³ David Bourque, "The Bass Clarinetist's Workbook," *The Clarinet* 41, 2 (March 2014), 64.

intensity. In large tutti and where it is musically appropriate, I like to give the orchestra a bass clarinet color. This approach allows the basses, cellos, contrabassoon, and low brass to hear the bass clarinet. Playing in this way provides an audible link to the otherwise geographically separated sections of the orchestra. In my experience, this approach results in better ensemble and intonation.²⁴

Ron Aufmann agrees that the “weird” instruments, of which there are typically only one represented in the orchestra need to project their voices and color the orchestra.

The orchestral audition looms large for university students and J. Lawrie Bloom advises that players “sell the repertoire as the committee may be unfamiliar with it”, to use full parts, and affirms that there will always be clarinet excerpts on a bass clarinet audition and that you must be comfortable going back and forth between the two.²⁵ David Bourque elaborates on the process saying, “Just because you can play an excellent audition and win a job does not mean that you can keep that job. If you have a job, it does not mean that you can play well enough at an audition to win another job.”²⁶ He also recommends detailed score study and listening and that the committee should be able to recognize that you are “hearing the orchestra” as you play. “As Lawrie said, it is important that you know what a really good bass clarinet is supposed to sound like. For example, the sound I try to get in the clarion range on bass is similar to the sound of the clarinet in the chalumeau.”²⁷ He also stresses the importance of checking the score for clef

²⁴ David Bourque, “The Bass Clarinetist’s Workbook,” *The Clarinet* 41, 2 (March 2014), 64.

²⁵ J. Lawrie Bloom and David Bourque, “More thoughts on the Bass Clarinet Audition and the Art of Playing Bass clarinet in a Symphony Orchestra,” *The Clarinet* 42, 1 (December 2014), 48.

²⁶ J. Lawrie Bloom and David Bourque, “More thoughts on the Bass Clarinet Audition and the Art of Playing Bass clarinet in a Symphony Orchestra,” *The Clarinet* 42, 1 (December 2014), 49.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

confusion by looking at the octave the bassoon/celli are playing in and the architecture of the line.

David Bourque and J. Lawrie Bloom list the “big eight” excerpts as Grufe’s On the Trail from Grand Canyon Suite, William Schumann’s Third Symphony, Shostakovich’s Violin Concerto, Strauss’ Don Quixote and Till Eulenspiegel, Ravel’s La Valse and the Second Suite from Daphnis et Chloe, and Mahler’s Sixth Symphony. According to them, the next eight include the cadenza from Meyerbeer’s Les Huguenots, Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony, Stravinsky’s Sacre du Printemps and Petrushka, Ravel’s Concerto for Left Hand, Khachaturian’s Piano Concerto, Hindemith’s Symphonic Metamorphosis, and Berg’s Violin Concerto.²⁸

Clef reading and transposition are also important concepts to keep in mind while teaching bass clarinetists as a significant portion of the repertoire was written for bass clarinet in A and parts for bass clarinet are notated in three different ways. Edward Palanker describes this, saying:

There are three ways of notating of the bass clarinet, the French, the German, and a combination of both, which is confusing, and wrong. The French, using only the treble clef, is the easiest because you read the same way as you do a clarinet part, and it sounds an octave lower. The German, using the bass clef, sounds in the octave it is written, a written low G on the bottom line of the staff sounds like a low G, not an octave lower. Now for the confusion. When composers want to write up high in the bass clef, instead of writing lots of ledger lines, they write it in the treble clef. But because it is written as it sounds, you have to play it an octave higher so it will sound like the note you are looking at. The problem is that many composers did not understand this and when writing in the bass clef and going to the treble clef they want you to play it in the French style, as written instead of an octave higher. It can be confusing, and there’s no way to know other than common sense and experience. Most composers, like Dukas, Franck, and Strauss (in some of his works) wrote in the German style and understood it, but some did not. Rachmaninoff never got it correct and even Stravinsky got it wrong on occasion. In Petrushka, the early version, he wrote the same passage in both the French and German

²⁸ J. Lawrie Bloom and David Bourque, “More thoughts on the Bass Clarinet Audition and the Art of Playing Bass clarinet in a Symphony Orchestra,” *The Clarinet* 42, 1 (December 2014), 54.

notation. there is also a need to learn to transpose from “A” bass clarinet. Some composers who wrote for bass clarinet in “A” are Wagner, Mahler, and Ravel.²⁹

Keith Bowen describes the bass clarinet as being “introduced by Wagner in Lohengrin in 1848” with its last known works including “Strauss’ Sonatina fur Blaser, 1942, and Messiaen’s Turangalila Symphonie, 1948, and Gunther Schuller’s Duo Sonata, 1949, for clarinet and bass clarinet.”³⁰ He describes two major influences on composers writing for bass clarinet in A: practicality of key and sound-character/tonal implications and notes that “use of the bass clarinet in A persisted longer in France (Messiaen, Ravel), Russia (Rachmaninov), and England (Bax, Ireland) than in Germany where it originated.”³¹

A telephone interview with the only living composer who wrote for bass clarinet in A, Gunther Schuller, revealed that Schuller frequently heard it played with the Metropolitan Opera in which he was playing horn at the time. “He did think there was some difference in sound but in his work, the key relationship between movements was the critical idea. If a bass in A was not available it was perfectly acceptable to transpose it onto a B-flat instrument. He agreed it was possible that composers such as Wagner and Mahler could have considered the key in which the instrument was playing might be important for reasons other than technical ease.”³² Despite this argument, it is common practice for orchestral bass clarinetists to write out transpositions as bass clarinets in A are of limited availability, but as Ron Aufmann points out, the likelihood of being asked to play Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* at the last minute is high and the ability to transpose

²⁹ Edward Palanker, “Bass Clarinet 101,” *The Clarinet* 31, 4 (September 2004), 80.

³⁰ Keith Bowen, “The Rise and Fall of the Bass Clarinet in A,” *The Clarinet* 38, 4, (September 2011), 44.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

³² *Ibid.*, 50.

at sight will make this process easier.³³ Included below are pieces with significant parts for bass clarinet in A taken from Keith Bowen's instructional article.³⁴

SURNAME	TITLE OF WORK	OPUS # (ETC)	DATE OF COMPOSITION
1 Bartók	Dance Suite No. 1	Opus 3	1903 rev. c. 1920
2 Bartók	Dance Suite No. 2	Opus 4	1907 rev. 1920, 1943
3 Bartók	Miraculous Mandarin	Op. 19	1924
4 Bar	Spring Fire		1922
5 Bar	Symphony No. 1		1906
6 Bar	Symphony No. 2		1931
7 Bar	Symphony No. 4		1932
8 Bar	Symphony No. 5		1934
9 Bar	Symphony No. 6		1907 orch. 1928
10 Berg	Sieben Früher Lieder		1870
11 Billewiden	Ninans	Op. 20	1925
12 Copland	Dance symphony for large orchestra		1899
13 Debuss	Paris a Nocturne (The Song of a Great City)		1883
14 Dvorák	Scheherazade	Op. 66	1896
15 Dvorák	The Water Sprite	Op. 107	1896
16 Dvorák	The Noon Witch	Op. 108	1896
17 Dvorák	The Wild (or Wood) Dove	Op. 110	1896
18 Elgar	Pomp & Circumstance March No. 2	Op. 39 no. 2	1901
19 Elgar	Pomp & Circumstance March No. 1	Op. 39 no. 1	1901
20 Ireland	Symphonic Rhapsody Mai-Dun		1933
21 Liszt	Dante Symphony	Rauhe 426	1855-6
22 Mahler	Symphony No. 4		1892, 1900 + revs. to 1910
23 Mahler	Symphony No. 5		1902 + revs.
24 Mahler	Symphony No. 6		1904, 1906 + revs.
25 Mahler	Symphony No. 7		1905 + revs.
26 Mahler	Symphony No. 8		1907
27 Mahler	Das Lied von der Erde		1909
28 Messiaen	Turangala Symphony		1948 rev. 1990
29 Puccini	Manon Lescaut		1893
30 Puccini	La Bohème		1896
31 Puccini	Tosca		1900
32 Rachmaninoff	Symphony No. 2	Opus 27	1907
33 Rachmaninoff	Symphony No. 3	Opus 44	1936 rev. 1938
34 Rachmaninoff	Symphonic Dances		1940
35 Ravel	La Valse		1920
36 Ravel	Concerto for the Left Hand		1930
37 Ravel	L'Enfant et les Sortilèges		1925
38 Ravel Mussorgsky	Pictures at an Exhibition		1922
39 Respighi	Fountains of Rome	Op. 106	1916
40 Rimsky-Korsakov	The Maid of Pskov		1872
41 Rimsky-Korsakov	Mlada		1872
42 Rimsky-Korsakov	The Legend of Tsar Saltan		1901

SURNAME	TITLE OF WORK	OPUS # (ETC)	DATE OF COMPOSITION
43 Rimsky-Korsakov	The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya		1901
44 Rimsky-Korsakov	The Golden Cockerel		1907
45 Schoenberg	Pelles und Melisande	Op. 5	1911
46 Schoenberg	Kammersymphonie	Op. 9	1912
47 Schoenberg	Gurre-Lieder		1901 orch 1913
48 Schuller	Duo Sonata		1949
49 Strauss	Sonatine No. 1 für Bläser (Aus dem Werkstatt des Invaliden)		1943
50 Strauss	Rosenkavalier		1910
51 Sullivan	The Golden Legend		1886
52 Tchaikovsky	Nutcracker Ballet	Opus 71	1892
53 Verdi	Orfeo		1867
54 Vianca da Motta	A Patria	Opus 13	1895
55 Wagner	Lohengrin		1848
56 Wagner	Die Walküre		1852-1856
57 Wagner	Tristan und Isolde		1857-1859
58 Wagner	Das Rheingold		1853-1862
59 Wagner	Siegfried		1856-1869
60 Wagner	Götterdämmerung		1869-1874
61 Wagner	Parsifal		1877-1881

Table 2: List of works known using the bass clarinet in A.

The scores were all examined with two questions in mind:

1. Is the usage standard (as taught by orchestration manuals) separate and bass clarinet in the same tonality, chosen to avoid extreme key signatures, with lowest notes written F?
2. Is there evidence that the bass clarinet in A was employed for its lowest notes?
3. Was the tonality of the bass clarinet ever chosen contrary to standard usage?

Most of the usage is indeed standard. Only one work (by Berg) has been found requiring a bass in A with a lower note than written (F, Bb). In the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was absolutely normal to select the bass in A when indicated by the tonality, and this practice was continued by many composers in the 20th century. It was often used for its lowest notes. Curiously, the use of the bass in A persisted longer in France (Ravel, Messiaen).

Generally, performers should only use the instruments indicated by the composer. Since each of these instruments has its own particular character, it may be assumed that the composer has preferred one or the other instrument for the sake of a delicate timbre and not out of mere whim.

Tearing now to the works that they wrote, Table 2 shows a list of more 100 works found that use the bass clarinet in A.

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By no means an extensive list, this resource seeks to compile the thoughts and processes of major figures and current players in the realm of orchestral bass clarinet. The author refrains

³³ Ron Aufmann, interview/lesson by author, Cincinnati, April 22, 2017.

³⁴ Keith Bowen, "The Rise and Fall of the Bass Clarinet in A," *The Clarinet* 38, 4 (September 2011), 51-2.

from discussing materials, mouthpieces, and the process of selecting and setting up a new bass clarinet as this process is individual and deserves more thorough treatment elsewhere. The aim of this compilation is to establish a pedagogical foundation for approaching the instruction of bass clarinet students at a university level. The bass clarinet has come a long way and this is largely thanks to its pioneering spirit and the virtuosic players who believe so firmly in its potential. Josef Horak and Henri Bok, author of *Nouvelles Techniques de la Clarinet Basse*³⁵ are the giants upon whose shoulders this “new wave” of popularity for the bass clarinet was built. At this point in the bass clarinetist’s history, student literature looks back to transcriptions of Bach and forward to collaborations with contemporary composers and is all the richer for this depth and diversity.

³⁵ Henri Bok, “The Future of the Bass Clarinet vs. The Bass Clarinet of the Future,” *The Clarinet* 41, 4 (September 2014), 66–7.

BASS CLARINET SOLOS FOR STUDENTS

With piano, low C: Spotlights on the Bass clarinet by Jan Hadermann (De Haske); Sonata, op. 40a by Michael Kibbe (Shawnee Press); Fantasiestucke, op. 108 by Bernard Krol (Bote & Bock); Sonata Lirica by David Loeb (Shoepair Music Productions); Scherzo Barbaro by Boris Pillin (Western Music International); Bass Clarinet Concerto by Karel Reiner (Schott Music, Panton) composed for Josef Horak)

With piano, Low C not required: Praeludium by Haakon Bergh (Western Music International); Ballade by Eugene Bozza (Southern Music Company); Prelude and Fugetta by Rayner Brown (Western Music International); Andante and Allegro by Yvonne Desportes (Southern Music Company); Romanze by Friedrich Diethel (Metropolis Music Publishers); Romance by J. G. Orlamunder (Carl Fischer); Introduction and March by John Rarig (Western Music International); Lied by Francois Rasse (Metropolis Music Publishers); Legende et Divertissement by Jules Semler-Collery (Peer Music Classical)

Unaccompanied, low C required: Monolog by Dietrich Erdmann (Breitkopf & Hartel); Aulos by Ivana Loudova (Alea Publishing); Three Little Ditties for Bass Clarinet by Tom Riedstra (Donemus Publishing)

Unaccompanied, Low C not required: Suite, op. 37 by Adolf Busch (Amadeus Verlag)³⁶

WEB RESOURCE GUIDE:

Centro Internazionale di Ricerca sul Clarinetto Basso, or CIRCB at www.circb.info

Jason Alder's personal website, PDF of quarter tone fingering chart for Buffet instruments
Sauro Berti, bass clarinetist of Teatro dell'Opera di Roma (www.SauroBerti.it), first page and etude of Venti Studi for bass clarinet and basset horn

Michael Lowenstein, earspasm.com, recordings of classic Voxman bass clarinet solo book, Rubank *Concert and Contest Collection*, 40 videos in the "So You Want to be a Bass Clarinet Player" series

Edward S. Palanker, bass clarinet, Baltimore Symphony, articles available at eddiesclarinet.com

The [Bass] Clarinet of the 21st Century (<http://userpages.umbc.edu/~emrich/chapter6.html> from E. Michael Richards' book *The Clarinet of the Twenty-First Century* with multi phonic chart and extensive discussion of acoustics/extended techniques with spectrograms

Alber/Lerstad Altissimo Fingerings (http://home.gethome.no/terje_bjorn.lerstad/altissimo.html), bass and contrabass fingerings (C-sharp3–G6)

Woodwind Fingering Guide (www.wfg.woodwind.org/clarinet/basscl_alt_2.html)

alto, bass, contrabass clarinets, clean layout

Alea Publishing at bassclarinet.org, sheet music available for purchase from Duo Alea contrabass.com by Grant D. Green³⁷

³⁶ William Hayter, "Bass Clarinet Solos for Students," *The Clarinet* (Volume 41, 4, September 2014), 82–6.

³⁷ Kellie Lignitz-Hahn and Rachel Yoder, "Clarinet Cache: A Guide to Bass Clarinet on the Web," *The Clarinet* (Volume 41, 4, September 2014): 28–9.

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