

The clarinet family

Although the Böehm system clarinet in Bb is the most widely known member of the clarinet family, it also has a number of cousins that share the limelight with contemporary musicians today.

Here we take a look at the clarinet family, from the highest to the lowest voice.

two



Sopranino clarinet in Ab

Now a curiosity in itself, this instrument is very rare and one of the most highly prized pieces among collectors. Its use, however, was largely limited to military bands.

Sopranino clarinet in Ab

Sopranino clarinet in Eb

Best remembered for its contribution to Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, this instrument demands a strong technique as its high notes require special fingering. Its star quality? The perfect resonance of its high tones.

Sopranino clarinet in Eb

Sopranino clarinet in D

Also not for the faint hearted, the sopranino clarinet in D nevertheless found favour with Molter in his concertos and with Richard Strauss in his symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegel*. It has the advantage of being easier to play than its Eb counterpart.

Sopranino clarinet in D

Clarinet in C

Increasingly cast aside by experienced players in favour of the Bb, this instrument, which seduced both Franz Liszt in *Faust* (choral symphony) and Richard Strauss in *The Knight of the Rose*, is sometimes used as a beginner's instrument.

Clarinet in C

Clarinet in Bb

The most commonly used. Combining brilliance and eloquence with a full and radiant sound, it blends perfectly with both woodwind and string instruments. Virtuoso and faithful companion of soloists from the worlds of classical, jazz and contemporary music alike.

Clarinet in Bb

Clarinet in A

A favourite amongst Bb devotees who revel in its warm intimacy combined with an exquisite softness and beautifully deep tone. It is little wonder that this clarinet made its mark in the chamber music of both Mozart and Brahms.

Clarinet in A

Basset clarinet in A

Similar in design to the clarinet in A but with the added possibility of a low C, this instrument excels in Mozart's *Quintet for clarinet and strings*, K 581. However, it remains very rare.

Basset clarinet in A



**Basset horn
in F**

Who wouldn't think of Mozart and his *Requiem* when considering this instrument that was also a favourite of Strauss and Massenet? Previously bent in the middle, today's basset horn is straight in form and has a metal neck.

Basset horn in F



**Alto clarinet
in Eb**

The alto clarinet in Eb differs from other clarinets in its curved metal neck and bell, much like the basset horn. It is a much sought after instrument and is particularly appreciated in chamber music.

Alto clarinet in Eb



**Bass clarinet
in Bb**

This clarinet has a curved neck and a larger bell, while its authoritative bass notes combine marvellously with the wood and string sections of jazz and contemporary music alike. There are two bass models: one going down to low Eb and the other to low C.

Bass clarinet in Bb



**Contralto
clarinet in Eb**

This clarinet draws on all the charms of its superbly smooth, deep register, which gives it exceptional range. Unfortunately, however, it is all too rarely used in a symphony orchestra.

Contralto clarinet in Eb



**Contrabass
clarinet in Bb**

The shape of this instrument is what sets it apart from the rest: folded back on itself, it is 2.31 metres long. Made from metal and wood, it extends to a low Bb bass octave. Composers are turning to it more and more.

Contrabass clarinet in Bb