

AK'S CLARINET RESOURCE LIST FOR COMPOSERS 2022

1. CLARINET BASICS

- a. Clarinet Ranges: It's really helpful to understand the 3 main ranges of the clarinet (applies to all clarinets). Each range has its own unique character and sound.
 1. Chalumeau ("written" low E to Bflat- middle line of treble staff, or for bass clarinet, written low C, 4 ledger lines below treble staff).

Tonal Quality: Mellow, Dark, Warm
 2. Clarion (written B -middle line of treble staff, to C, 2 ledger lines above treble clef)

Tonal Quality: Clear, Ringing, Projected
 3. Altissimo (C# to C, 5 ledger lines above treble staff, possibly higher).

Tonal Quality: Louder, Harsher, Thinner- especially in the extreme upper end of this range.
- b. Bass Clarinet: All professional orchestral players and new music specialists nowadays own low C Bass clarinets (contrary to the advice given by some orchestration books and online resources!).
- c. When should/ can I write for clarinet in A?

Any time you want to use the lowest pitch, concert C# (lowest pitch of Bb clarinet is concert D)

Any time the concert pitch score transposes to a key with many sharps for the Bb clarinet. Not always necessary, though. If you're unsure, check with a clarinetist to see if it's easier on A or Bb clarinet.

Any time you feel like it 😊

There is NO bass clarinet in A.
- d. How much time should I allow to switch between instruments?

I need less time to go from Bass to Bflat and slightly more the other way around (due to the fact I have to put my Bflat down on its stand in order to play bass. The bass CAN rest on my shoulder for really fast changes, though not preferred!).

Try miming playing/switching the instruments and see how long it takes- or best, ask a clarinetist to try for you.

A non-rushed switch time is definitely preferred!!
- e. The Altissimo notes for Bb and A clarinets, while very similar in actual range to the flute's, are not similar in beauty of tone (or ease of playing). Really high notes that can sound delicate and pretty on the flute generally sound harsher and more strained on clarinet. We try our best to imitate the flute up there, but are thankful when composers understand the inherent differences between the two instruments. Also remember that, with transposition, we ARE in fact playing a tone or a minor third higher than the flute- which adds to the issue.

2. NOTATION BASICS

Never write 8va or 8vb for clarinetists! WE ARE USED TO READING LEDGER LINES. It's important to remember that each note in each octave has a different fingering (eg. Each of the four E's on the clarinet is fingered completely differently).
BASS CLARINET: Always write for bass clarinet in treble clef (notes will sound a 9th lower than written). Again, we are used to reading ledger lines!!

3. A SMALL SELECTION OF CLARINET SOLOS TO LISTEN TO:

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- a. Igor Stravinsky: *Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo* (1918)
THE Solo clarinet piece that started it all- an absolute classic of our repertoire. It really showcases the very essence of the instrument and draws on Jazz and Folk music as well as neo-classical influences.
- b. Olivier Messaien: *Abime des Oiseaux from Quartet for the End of Time* (1941)
Messaien delves into the most intense colours and emotions that the clarinet has to offer, evoking the stillness of dawn, birdsong, freedom, and joy, all cloaked with the darkness of captivity.
- c. Murray Adaskin: *Vocalise No. 1 for BFlat Clarinet* (1989)
A haunting opening melody that beautifully exploits the clarinet's low range, followed by a whirlwind middle section, and ending as it starts.
- d. Joan Tower: *Wings* (1983)
This tour-de-force solo depicts birds and has become a modern "classic" of our repertoire.
- e. Brian Harman: *Leaning for solo B-flat Clarinet* (2012)
A quirky little piece that explores the world of clarinet microtones in a very playful way. Check out my video of this work on the CMC's Unaccompanied Online Concert Series (#39- July 2021).
- f. Emily Doolittle: *Field Music for Solo Clarinet* (1998)
Excellent clarinet writing and a very compelling piece.

4. QUALITY ONLINE RESOURCES FOR COMPOSERS WRITING FOR CLARINETS:

- a. www.heatherroche.net
A very thorough and informative website specifically for composers by a Canadian clarinetist/ bass clarinetist currently living in London, U.K. Many extended techniques explained and demonstrated. Not all the techniques will work for all players, but it's really helpful to see what's possible!
- b. www.gregoryoakes.com
An Awesome database for Multiphonic and Microtonal Fingerings (Bflat clarinet only) that actually work (for me). 185 multiphonics listed and sound files included for each one so you can hear the actual sounds. Very well organized!
- c. Scribd.com - or possibly other websites: The clarinet of the 21st Century
By E. Michael Richards. Excellent and detailed information. Was available online for free until recently but now seems to be only for purchase.

5. Books on extended clarinet techniques

- a. New Directions for Clarinet- by Phillip Rehfeldt
The "Granddaddy" of contemporary technique books- a great resource for all sizes of clarinet
- b. New Techniques for the Bass Clarinet- by Henri Bok
Includes multiphonic and microtonal fingerings (among much else!).
- c. The clarinet of the 21st Century- by E. Michael Richards