

BASSOON

The bassoon is a double reed instrument. Because of its size, it plays very low notes, giving it a lower sound than the other woodwind instruments. The bassoon's double reed produces a characteristic nasal quality, two octaves lower than the range of the oboe, that lends distinctive color to the woodwind instruments. The contrabassoon or double bassoon, has a range one octave lower than the bassoon. Developed in the 17th century, it's the ancestor of the English curtal and French sordone used in the Renaissance.



Bassoon Links

<http://bassoonresource.org/>

How the sound is made

Sound on a woodwind instrument comes from a vibrating column of air inside the instrument. The player makes this column of air vibrate in one of three ways: as air is blown across the top of an instrument (like the flute), across a single reed (like the clarinet), or across two reeds (like the oboe). A single reed is clamped to a mouthpiece at the top of the instrument and vibrates against the mouthpiece when air is blown between the reed and the mouthpiece. Two reeds tied together are commonly known as a double reed. This double reed fits into a tube at the top of the instrument and vibrates when air is forced between the two reeds.

How the pitch is changed

Woodwind pitch depends on the volume of air that is vibrating. A larger volume vibrates more slowly, for lower pitch; a smaller volume vibrates more quickly, for a higher pitch. For most woodwinds, the player changes pitch by opening and closing holes along the instrument's length. Closing more holes makes the instrument longer, making the notes lower.