

# **Amati Contrabassoon Fingering Chart**

**Enrique Polanco Jr.**

Contrabassoonist

Houston, Texas

[enriquepolancojr@gmail.com](mailto:enriquepolancojr@gmail.com)

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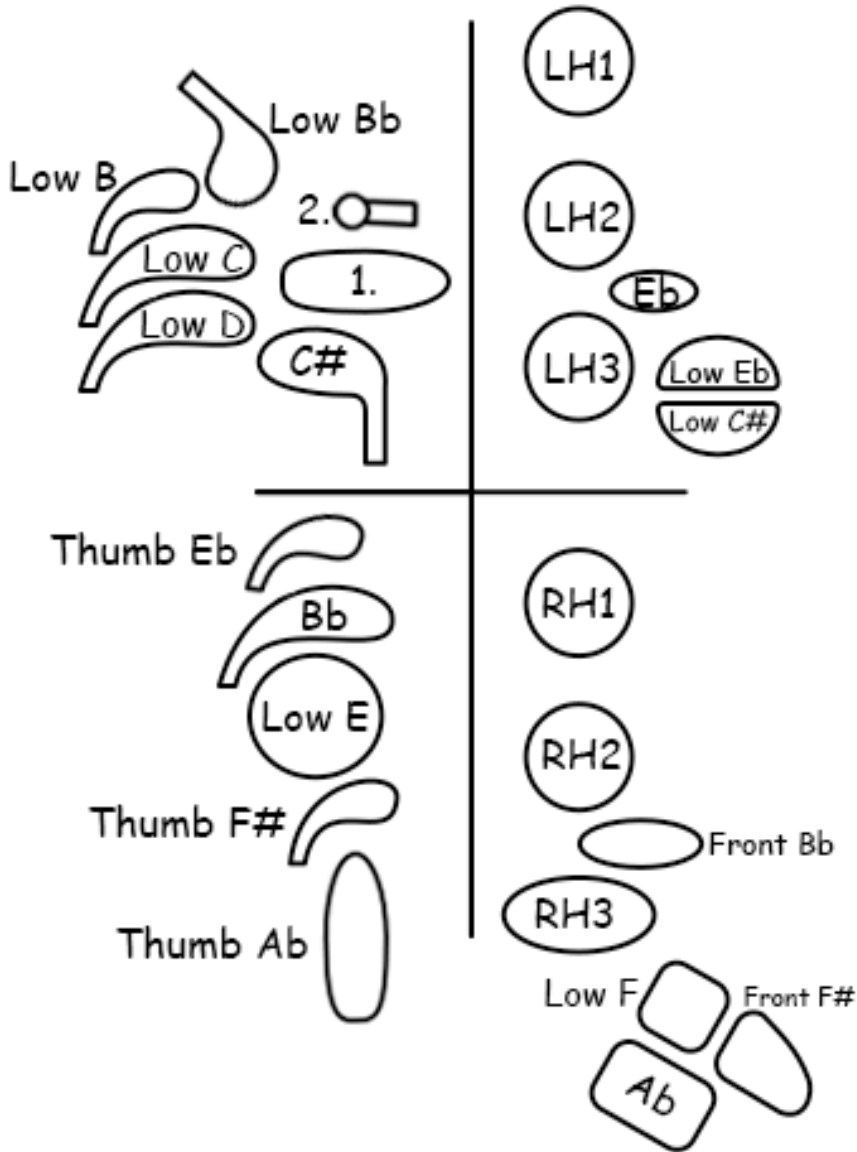
## INTRODUCTION

My first experience with this contrabassoon was my freshman year for a piece by the name of *La Fiesta Mexicana*, where I first became aware of the terribly inconsistent fingering charts created for the contrabassoon. Hours were spent finding not only fingerings that worked but were stable enough to stay in tune. Much later I auditioned on the contrabassoon for the TMEA All-State band, where I found increased difficulty in the demanding upper register of the instrument (which I will forever say: no instrument with “contra” in its name has any business with ledger lines). This continued struggle has inspired me to create a fingering chart on this instrument, containing my best attempts at stable fingerings for all registers of the instrument and resources for reeds on the instrument (see “Getting Started”). These fingerings have proven to be consistent on this instrument and I hope they can aid you in your time with this instrument.

## GETTING STARTED/REEDS

The first thing you’ll need to get started are some reeds. There are two reeds that I recommend on this instrument: Miller Select Reserve Contra Bassoon Professional Reed from Miller Double Reed, and contrabassoon reeds from Adam Trussell from the Houston Symphony (see “Resources” for links and contact info). These two reeds have the best intonation through all registers of the instrument. Another thing you’ll notice is that the instrument has two things differing from a bassoon: a peg and a water key. Firstly, the water key, make sure to empty this before and after each playing session and as needed. Secondly, the peg, you’ll want to make sure that you’ve screwed the peg screw tight; this contrabassoon’s peg seems to want to “give up” midway through your playing and the last thing you want is for it to drop during a playing session and hurting you. Or even worse, damaging your reed or the contrabassoon (slightly joking, also see “Resources” for a Houston based repair technician). One final thing that you’ll notice after attempting to play (or after looking at my beautiful key chart), is that there is no whisper key on the contrabassoon. All notes that usually use the whisper key on bassoon are the exact same in the middle register except without the whisper key.

**KEYWORK**



\*1. First flick key, used for notes such as C, A, and Bb  
 \*2. Second flick key, used for higher notes such as D

# FINGERING CHART



\*See alternate fingerings

\*See alternate fingerings


\*See alternate fingerings

		 *See alternate fingerings		 *See alternate fingerings	

				 *If sustaining, release 2 immediately after starting your air	 *If sustaining, release 2 immediately after starting your air


This section shows the primary fingering charts for the notes #b, be, e, and a in the bass clef. Each note is represented by a musical staff with a note symbol above it. Below each staff is a diagram of the contrabassoon keys, with black dots indicating the fingers to be placed on specific keys. The diagrams are arranged in two rows: the top row shows the left hand (labeled 'L' on the keys) and the bottom row shows the right hand (labeled 'R' on the keys).

**ALTERNATE FINGERINGS**

This section provides alternate fingering charts for the notes #b, be, e, and a in the bass clef. It consists of five columns, each corresponding to a note. Each column contains a musical staff with the note symbol and a diagram of the contrabassoon keys with black dots indicating the alternate fingerings. The diagrams are arranged in two rows: the top row shows the left hand (labeled 'L' on the keys) and the bottom row shows the right hand (labeled 'R' on the keys).

## TIPS

### Half Holes

As you play on the instrument you may find that the “half-holing” alternative on the instrument causes croaks or “growls” during the beginning of notes such as Ab, F#, sometimes G. An exercise to minimize this can be shown below. While doing this get a feel of the notes when they’re not growling, as the notes shouldn’t growl while slurring. Practice this exercise while thinking about how your air feels going through the reed. Eventually after doing this and keeping your air down the center of the reed you should begin to minimize the number of growls during starts of those notes.



## Tuning

Additionally, with the addition of a water key comes a tuning slide. If your open F is flat, gently push the tuning slide into the instrument. However, if you find that your open F is sharp, pull out the tuning slide until in tune. To avoid dealing with a “stuck” tuning slide I recommend using slide grease (linked below) on your tuning slide at least once a week.

## Reeds(additional)

If you end up using another type of reed that I have not suggested on this guide, I highly recommend ensuring that they are a Rieger K1 shape reed. This reed shape is optimal for this instrument for both intonation and tone quality.

## Octave Switches

Sometimes, when playing certain octaves (like C#), the overtones can make it sound like the higher pitch is in the lower octave with a bit of a high “growl.” To fix this, try hearing the higher octave in your head before switching and imagine singing it silently as you play—without actually using your voice. Now specifically on C#, where the fingerings are exactly the same, it’s best to approach this with a brass perspective. Brass players use partials to create a variety of notes with the same valve patterns. We can mimic this attempt by increasing the speed of our air and SLIGHTLY closing the aperture on the reed when going up the octave, and the opposite when going down the octave



## Resources

Link for tuning slide grease:

<https://www.musicarts.com/bach-tuning-slide-grease-main0112798>

Links for reeds:

Miller Select Reserve Contra Bassoon Professional Reed -

<https://millermarketingco.com/product/miller-select-reserve-contra-bassoon-professional-reed/>

Adam Trussell Reeds - <https://adamtrusselldoublereeds.com/product/contrabassoon-reeds-2-count/>

For further lessons and tips specific to contrabassoon contact Adam Trussell:

[adam.trussell@gmail.com](mailto:adam.trussell@gmail.com)

For contrabassoon repairs contact Glenn Dobias:

713.826.4560

[GlennD26@comcast.net](mailto:GlennD26@comcast.net)