

## Ophicleide

A conical brass instrument of the keyed-bugle family, the ophicleide is the direct predecessor of the euphonium and tuba (and quite possibly the saxophone). The name of the instrument literally translates to “keyed serpent.” It is constructed with nine, ten, eleven or even twelve keys (rather than valves) and is available in a variety of sizes. As with all brass instruments, the actual range of the instrument varies, depending upon the abilities of the player.

Alto ophicleides are generally built in either F or E flat; bass ophicleides are normally built in either C or B flat; and double bass ophicleides are usually built in either F or E flat. Since the number of keys may vary from instrument to instrument, no definitive, standardized fingering system exists. The players are responsible for determining the appropriate fingering for a given pitch based upon the configuration of their instruments. The timbre of the ophicleide is similar to that of the euphonium or tuba (depending upon the size of the instrument).

Ophicleides are non-transposing instruments written in bass clef. However, it is acceptable to write an alto ophicleide part in treble clef, should the number of ledger lines required become cumbersome. While no longer considered part of the standard orchestral palette, the instrument continues to retain a loyal following.

The image displays six musical diagrams, each showing the range of a specific ophicleide. Each diagram consists of a bass clef staff with a treble clef staff above it. A red bracket indicates the 'Practical Range' and a blue bracket indicates the 'Full Range'. The notes are written in a way that shows the instrument's range across multiple ledger lines.

- Alto ophicleide in F:** Practical Range from G<sub>2</sub> to G<sub>3</sub>; Full Range from G<sub>1</sub> to G<sub>3</sub>.
- Alto ophicleide in E flat:** Practical Range from F<sub>2</sub> to F<sub>3</sub>; Full Range from F<sub>1</sub> to F<sub>3</sub>.
- Bass ophicleide in C:** Practical Range from C<sub>2</sub> to C<sub>3</sub>; Full Range from C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>3</sub>.
- Bass ophicleide in B flat:** Practical Range from B<sub>1</sub> to B<sub>2</sub>; Full Range from B<sub>0</sub> to B<sub>2</sub>.
- Double bass ophicleide in F:** Practical Range from F<sub>2</sub> to F<sub>3</sub>; Full Range from F<sub>0</sub> to F<sub>3</sub>.
- Double bass ophicleide in E flat:** Practical Range from E<sub>2</sub> to E<sub>3</sub>; Full Range from E<sub>0</sub> to E<sub>3</sub>.