

## Instrument reviews: early wind

### **PBUZZ**

Warwick Music Group



The pBuzz is the latest instrument from plastic brass pioneer Warwick Music Group, the company behind the pBone and pTrumpet. It is simpler than these, and aimed at younger children: correspondingly it is significantly cheaper and not as versatile (neither of which, of course, is necessarily a bad thing).

The instrument is based on a trombone, but stripped down to a bell, single length of slide, and a trombone-sized plastic mouthpiece. The slide is marked on the inside (just visible when playing), with six coloured positions – C, B, B $\flat$ , A, G and F. It's also marked where children should place their left and right hands. And that's pretty much it: simplicity itself, with a solid, easily cleaned construction.

It's a useful addition to the primary and pre-school market, filling an interesting gap between toy instruments, basic tuned and untuned percussion, and the more grown-up world of traditional instruments. As a number of online blogs attest, children as young as two or three can have a go at playing it – and playing with what would be the correct technique, with the right notes, follows not much later.

WMG itself says that the pBuzz is aimed at 3- to 6-year-olds (after which the pBone Mini takes over in the range), and calls it 'more eye-catching than a recorder, lighter than a drum and easier to play than a xylophone'. With the primary curriculum in mind, WMG has produced a selection of teaching resources for Years 2-3, including suggested schemes of work over four and ten sessions, colour-coded tunes with backing tracks – including *Mary had a Little Lamb*, *O When the Saints*, *Hot Cross Buns*, *Jingle Bells* and the slightly incongruous *Vindaloo* – and videos introducing how the instrument could be used in primary school settings.

Whether teachers will be tempted to bring this into their primary practice will depend very much upon their circumstances and resources. Undoubtedly it can be an energising and successful tool for group music-making – one can certainly imagine it being more impactful than the poor recorder, which WMG puts itself up against – but it will not be long before it's necessary to leave it behind, and teachers will need to have a plan for this. Impact is one thing, but the recorder would certainly get you further on its own.

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