

# Reviews

## TWG Saxophone

The Woodwind Group has recently successfully premiered their latest model of student saxophones available in alto, tenor and baritone.

These instruments sport some very clever and thoughtful touches such as a sculptured high F key for ease of playing, complete with adjustable palm keys. The Keilwerth offers a similar invention, however TWG's is a screwdriver-operated action. When I asked if the screwdriver comes with the instrument the answer was 'probably best if it doesn't' – and the mind was suddenly filled with creative 'I haven't practised because...' excuses that did not include a dog.

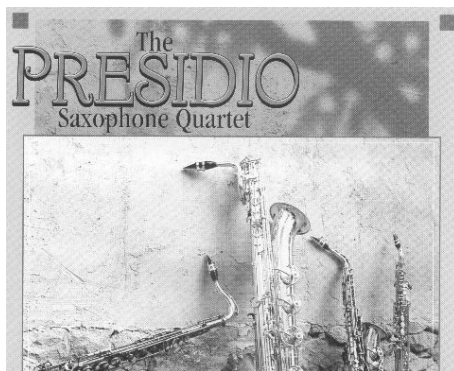
Targeted to the young student population, these instruments also display a high F# key and my favourite – the octave mechanism roller – very ingenious and very necessary. Enthusiastic students will also enjoy the "Light Pack" – as the name suggests, but also quite durable with back pack strap option, no doubt handy for the bus ride home after band rehearsal.

So how does it play?

Admittedly the price certainly does not represent the quality of the instrument. Altos are presently competitively priced at a bargain \$1400, the tenor at \$1780 and the baritone at \$5200. For both the alto and tenor the intonation is incredibly consistent, particularly the upper end of the range. Response is also very easy in the low register. The altissimo register has a liquid sound and flexibility but lacking in resistance. The general tone was strikingly rich and consistent throughout the entire range. With a solid feel in weight and construction, it may be speculated that these horns will last the distance of time, wear and tear. Other thoughtful touches include the adjustable solid thumb rest for the custom designed hand position. I would have enjoyed experiencing the baritone, which was unavailable at the time. I am curious to see if the quality remains true in the lower instrument.

In conclusion, I was immediately impressed with the TWG saxophones and would certainly have no hesitation in recommending these to prospective students or those wishing to upgrade from the less than successful beginner instrument. Students can certainly be guaranteed of an excellent head start in purchasing a TWG saxophone.

– Diana Tolmie



## The Presidio Saxophone Quartet PSQ03

[www.presidioquartet.com](http://www.presidioquartet.com)

The Presidio Saxophone Quartet hail from Tucson, Arizona where they are an active part of the classical and jazz scenes. This, their first CD features a range of music that is often not heard recorded, such as the opening work, the *Quatuor pour saxophones* by F & M Jeanjean.

The Jeanjean quartet must be one of the few works written by two brothers, and while the four movements are light in character, that is not to imply that they are trifles. My favourite movement is *Papillons*, to which the Presidio bring their characteristic energy and style.

The bulk of the CD is taken up by a range of American pieces, including arrangements, of composers such as Joplin, and a suite of pieces based on folk songs by Jack W. Marshall. It is not often that pieces such as these are recorded with the necessary seriousness

to bring them to life. The Presidio Quartet, however, play with a sense of purpose that enables them to carry these pieces off. They wear their hearts on their sleeves in these pieces, alternating vigorous dance style with folksong simplicity and always with attention to detail. The Goldrush Suite is humorous and lively, a real highlight of the recording.

The final piece is Russell Peck's *Drastic Measures*, a work that is something of a staple of American saxophone quartets in the last twenty years or so. The two contrasting movements are linked thematically, with the influence of both jazz and minimalism obvious in its composition. The performance here has an exciting shape, with the group striving to explore the expressive possibilities, rather than relying on the composition to speak for itself.

The musicians of the Presidio are Greg Armstrong, Daniel Bell, Mike Keepe and Lisa Hunter. They have a unified sound characterised by a warm vibrato and large dynamic range. They display great discipline of intonation and ensemble, attacking all of the works on the CD with rhythmic precision. This group is a great example of a school of saxophone playing that is not often heard in Australia. They owe their tonal models to the mid-west university music schools that were influenced by the French school of Marcel Mule. The vibrato is always part of the sound, fast but not wide, always adding to the tone colour, not detracting from it. The timbre can be coloured by a slight buzz, a bit like a jazz tone, but jazz inflection is always used for stylistic purpose.

This CD will be difficult for Australian buyers to find, but if you do come across it in your travels, then please take the time to have a listen. I, for one, am looking forward to hearing more from the Presidio Quartet in the future.

– James Nightingale



### The Boosey Woodwind Method – Clarinet

Publisher Boosey and Hawkes

Editor: Chris Morgan

The Boosey Woodwind and Brass Method, under the banner of the Boosey and Hawkes publishing company, was designed as a complete course for individual and group teaching. The series is available for flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, trombone, horn in F, B flat brass band instruments and E flat brass band instruments. The one under review in this column is the clarinet method.

There are four books available in the series for clarinet. There are two methods, designed for teaching the fundamentals of playing the instrument and then two repertoire books that correspond with the progression of the methods. The first book is divided into nine sections, the first of which is a clearly presented “basics” section that describes how to assemble and disassemble the instrument, plus some uncomplicated suggestions on embouchure formation and posture. The subsequent eight sections in Book One guide the player through the early stages. The method progresses gradually in the first stage, introducing notes at intervals that give the player enough time to absorb each step. The saviour of this pace is the accompaniment CD, which provides interest and rhythmic structure to the simple lines. The sound of the instruments on the CD will never

be praised for their authenticity, yet the arrangements are clever and offer a variety of styles as backing.

Interestingly, notes of the upper register are introduced about 2/3rds of the way through the book and then left unused for a number of pages before being reintroduced. The book introduces the player to the notes spanning from low E to G on the top of the staff. By the end of the second method book, the player is extended to C just above the staff and has been introduced to a large number of rhythms and styles through the CD. (Some of the backing styles include popular, jazz, traditional and world music). Both books are very well marked and make use of small caricatures to signal the accompaniment track number, a rhythmic- or breathing-focused exercise, a challenging question or an exercise that can be played with other ensemble members using the same series.

Both books contain quite a bit of text around the technical exercises. The comments pose enough interesting questions and offer enough helpful suggestions to justify the clutter it sometimes causes on the page. As an overview, the methods offer large amounts of stimulating and well-planned material that would provide an excellent grounding for a budding musician with the guidance of a teacher.

The two repertoire books, A and B, accompany the first Boosey Method. One is used alongside stages one to four and the other with stages five to eight. Both come with piano accompaniment and even the shortest of the songs are individually titled to give independence. Between the books there are 76 songs arranged progressively and in the range of styles that is offered in the methods. As a complete set the Boosey method would keep even the most motivated students improving and interested for many months, also providing them with material to begin the development of their performance and ensemble skills. The set offers strong competition to other instrumental band methods and is well worth a trial.

– Neil McGregor



### The Boosey Woodwind Method – Saxophone

As a clarinet and saxophone teacher choosing a method book, many questions spring to mind about the choices available.

- Will this capitalize on my student's capabilities and strengthen weaknesses?
- Does it suit his/her age group?
- Does it look appealing?
- Does it progress at a speed that appeals to the student of today?
- If yes to the above – then will it sustain his/her interest?
- Is it entertaining? Will it support self-esteem and empowerment?
- Does it have the ‘tunes that you know’?
- Does it offer choice in multi-media i.e. CD, duet possibilities, piano accompaniment, problem solving, explanation of complex musical and or performance practice concepts?
- Is it value for money in that the quality represents price and durability of the book? (There is nothing worse than having to tell a parent of the generic student another book will be necessary in two months time, or the book they have chosen is far beyond their capabilities and vice versa – the student may not be cost focused, however the parents certainly are).