

'Musical Trixstar'

Review by Brian Cotterill

Brian Cotterill is Director of Music at Lanesborough School (the choir school of Guildford Cathedral), Musical Director of the Surrey Songsters and a freelance organist, choral director and composer.

I'd never been asked to review a board game before. New music, books, CDs and concerts, yes, but a board game was a first. I love board games but nevertheless decided to consult the experts – six Year 5 boys from my form at school.

Musical Trixstar is a game for 2–6 players or teams, the aim of which is to move around the board starting at the time signature and finishing at the double barline. Along the way, musical questions and challenges are encountered, arranged in categories from Adagio (easy) through Moderato (medium) to Vivace (hard).

The game is very straightforward to play and certainly great fun. We all found the Adagio questions rather too easy but some of the Vivace questions were pleasingly taxing for my 10-year old games testers! We found that a game usually lasted about 45 minutes (perfect for wet lunchtimes) and the boys learnt a lot along the way.

I was impressed with the sturdiness of the game's construction, from the well-moulded musical instrument playing pieces to the quaver counters and the board itself with its spinning central wheel – well designed.

After a few games, I found that the boys at school had adapted a few of the rules and their ideas certainly make sense. They decided that they shouldn't be allowed to use Mentor or Pass cards when playing Accelerando (speed) rounds as this made the game too easy. They also decided that All Play rounds were too problematic and instead made these into two-player 'duels'.

Once we had established these House Rules, we played the game regularly for a couple of weeks. We didn't tire of it (as many of the questions were refreshingly different) and even ended up with a league table in the classroom.

This is a great game: it's fun, educational and, at times, quite taxing. I believe that it could be a real hit in any school with Primary age children or to have at home. I particularly enjoyed one question which required me to make the sound of a horse...

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