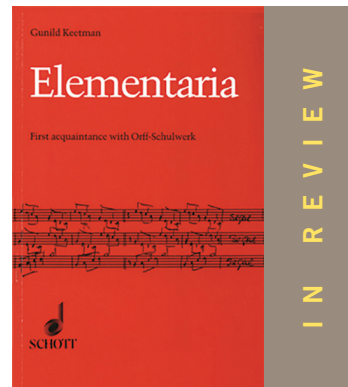


Reviewed by **Martha M. O’Hehir**

Elementaria

Written by Gunild Keetman

Mainz, Germany: Schott Musik International, 1984



Where do we begin an answer to the question “What is the significance of *Elementaria* to the Orff Schulwerk repertoire?” My personal journey revealed a series of metaphors. *Elementaria* is:

- a key to unlocking and understanding the secrets and magic of what the Orff Schulwerk philosophy and practice is, how to facilitate it, and how to sequence it, for any class, community, age group;
- a *Fodor’s Guide* to the landscape of the Schulwerk primary source materials;
- a missing link to the primary skill-sets of the original movement training and recorder playing, which are not addressed in the more well-known five volumes of *Music for Children*;
- a legacy tutorial, direct from our “root-teacher” Gunild Keetman, to the reader (via the translation of Margaret Murray);
- a handbook for the American Orff-Schulwerk Association teacher educator and those who hope to be one;
- a densely written, generous download of wisdom to dissect and apply to your setting, which will make you an expert teacher and a practitioner of Orff Schulwerk; and
- a wonderful memorial to one of the greatest music teachers in history, Gunild Keetman.

Additionally if you want to be sure your starting place in the Schulwerk is “pure” before you mutate into your own wildflower version and unique gifts, this is *the Source* you need. Werner Thomas pointed this out in his brilliant introduction to the text. Be sure to read all the introductory pages.

It is significant that the first online course offered by AOSA’s new Professional Learning Network was a study of this text. That was a choice wisely made because the content of this little book is central to who we are and what we love to do. The study guides and questions created for that course only begin to scratch the surface of what *Elementaria* has to offer. They can reveal more than is possible in a short review such as this, although using those documents as a guided self-study is still a possibility. After this, your teaching will be different, and better, and you will know how to reproduce what works well. Reading and *doing* what Keetman suggests simply changes everything.

If you are not sure how to begin your movement teaching, you will find a complete, though skeletal, elementary movement curriculum on page 172 where you can observe Keetman’s genius at blending all the skills of body percussion, movement, and speech.

If you want a key to the primary texts of Orff Schulwerk, gather your five volumes of *Music For Children* (MfC), *Erstes Spiel am Xylophon*

(Erstes), *Rhythmische Übung* (R.U.), and *Elementaria* (Elem). Reading Keetman's words in Elem will open up many doors to our practice that seem a mystery at first. Wherever a musical example in Elem appears, find a similar example in volume I of MfC, in R.U., or in Erstes, and you will see how this book is a *Fodor's Guide* to our primary sources.

For examples, use Elem pages 20-22 as a guide to R.U. Note how Elem explains, beginning on pages 37-41, how to use the building blocks as accompaniments to given melodies; see volume I MfC pages 60-61, for similar examples. Do you wonder how to develop nursery rhymes and proverbs? See pages 43-53 and compare that to volume I page 3, #2 and following. For fuller development of speech pieces and more direct correlations to volume I, see Elem pages 96-104, and then visit volume I MfC pages 50-51. What *Elementaria* does through the word, *Erstes Spiel* does by musical example: compare Elem pages 64-79 and Erstes Exercises #1-21 (not all in order from #19-#21). By means of this study, you will understand how to develop the model songs, pieces, and motifs in the Volumes and supplementary materials. You will receive a guided tour of all the highlights and landmarks hidden in plain view.

In *Elementaria* and *Erstes Spiel*, we find Keetman speaking directly to the problem of the presumed knowledge base of students entering Volume I, at the time when the Schulwerk was developed. We need to use *Erstes Spiel am Xylophon* and the suggested activities in *Elementaria* to build the earliest foundations of our music programs, because typically our students (of any age) do not come to us with the foundations of early childhood music making that was prevalent in Keetman's day.

In this text, we find the largest documentation of movement experiments. In *Elementaria*, Keetman distinguishes four "tracks" of a movement curriculum: Reaction Training (ensemble work), pages 107-110; Gymnastic Exercises, pages 111-112 (stretching, relaxation,

and posture for beautiful music making); Movement Training, pages 112-171 (similar to Dalcroze and Laban trainings); and Dance Performance, pages 155-171 (similar to developing dance and movement pieces through improvisation as at the Güntherschule). If you are not sure how to begin your movement teaching, you will find a complete, though skeletal, elementary movement curriculum on page 172 where you can observe Keetman's genius at blending all the skills of body percussion, movement, and speech. She recommends this sequence for 4 to 6 year olds, but the sequenced activities would build confidence for beginners of any age. You could use these suggestions immediately in your classroom, letting Keetman sequence the skills, which allows you to focus on your delivery and the students' acquisition. On page 95 there is a brief and dense description of recorder curriculum ideas. The only glitch for American teachers is the translator, Margaret Murray's, use of her English system of crotchets and quavers, but this is a challenge easily surmounted.

As a serious Orff Schulwerk practitioner, you will begin reading *Elementaria* during your Level I course. You will finish it and try out Keetman's suggestions in your classroom over the next school year, and you will read it annually throughout your career. May the Source be with you. ■

MARTHA M. O'HEHIR holds a master's degree in music education from Shenandoah Conservatory and a master's degree in educational leadership from Johns Hopkins. She served on the editorial boards of *The Orff Echo* for nine years, *Reverberations* for six years, and co-authored the first Professional Learning Network for AOSA, with a study of Keetman's *Elementaria*. She has presented sessions at AOSA's Professional Development Conferences and is exploring the application of the Schulwerk to community music making. Over her 30-year career, she taught pre-kindergarten through high school general and choral music, elementary gifted and general education, and wrote new curricula for each of those fields. Martha is a member of *The Orff Echo* editorial board.