

The Orff Echo

FALL 2023

VOLUME 56 NUMBER 1

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ORFF-SCHULWERK ASSOCIATION



Improvisation

SONOR®



ALL TOGETHER NOW



NUVO + WINDSTARS CLASS SET!

- **24 INSTRUMENTS**
- **24 STUDENT BOOKS**
- **TEACHER BOOK**
- **SPARE PARTS KIT**



**BUY NOW & GET 2 SONOR
GLOCKENSPIELS FREE!**

**- WITH BOOMWHACKER™ COLORED BARS
(A \$100 VALUE!)**



Find Out More!

SONOR®



Contact your local dealer or KHS America at **800-446-6010** for more information.
KHS America Inc., 12020 Volunteer Blvd., Mt. Juliet, TN 37122 www.nuvo-instrumental.com

West Music and You—
*Creating Lifelong
MusicMakers*
TOGETHER!



West Music is proud to be the **number 1 resource** for Orff Schulwerk, Kodály, and World Music Drumming teacher training programs in the US.



westmusic.com



Tell me, I forget;
show me, I remember;
involve me, I understand.

Orff because you love to teach.

STUDIO 49 because you love to listen.

The Orff Echo

FALL 2023
VOLUME 56 NUMBER 1

QUARTERLY JOURNAL
OF THE AMERICAN
ORFF-SCHULWERK
ASSOCIATION

on the cover

"Glowing Fall Leaf" by Matteo Facio,
a student at Channing Memorial
Elementary School, Elgin, IL.
Art teacher: Mrs. Christa Bellock

issue coordinators

Sandra Adorno, Diana Hawley, Martha O'Hehir



American Orff-Schulwerk Association

1284 SOM Center Road, #264
Mayfield Heights, OH 44124
(440) 600-7329

Website: www.aosa.org; Email: info@aosa.org

ethics statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association strongly encourages members to be positive and discreet when discussing our organization, specific courses and/or teachers, and the Orff Schulwerk approach. The very nature of the Orff Schulwerk philosophy embodies a broad spectrum of expressions, exploring different paths to arrive at artistic and educational goals. Members are encouraged to recognize and remain open to varied approaches and to celebrate both our differences and our similarities.

Contents Copyright 2023 by the
American Orff-Schulwerk Association
Printed in the USA

Articles are viewpoints of the authors and
do not imply endorsement by AOSA.

IMPROVISATION

- 10** **Improvisation: The Pleasure of Survival**
By Doug Goodkin
- 16** **Embracing Immediacy: Teacher as Improviser**
By BethAnn Hepburn
- 24** **First Steps in Improvisation**
By George Halley
- 30** **Orff, Kodály, and Improvisation**
By Megan M. Sheridan
- 36** **Improvisation and Composition:
Complementary Approaches to Creation**
By Micaela Gutierrez Schmitz
- 44** **Jamming + Orff Schulwerk:
Reflections on My Favorite Musical Moment**
By David Dockan

COLUMNS AND DEPARTMENTS

5 President's Message

Communications that Connect
Fall 2023

Josh Southard

8 In This Issue

Improvisation

By Linda Hines With Sandra Adorno, Diana Hawley,
and Martha O'Hehir

RESOURCES

50 Children's Book Review

Zug the Bug

Reviewed by Amy Brown

51 Children's Book Review

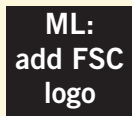
Change Sings

Reviewed by Misty Kikoler

53 Supporting Our Learning

General Music: Dimensions of Practice

Reviewed by Judith Thompson-Barthwell



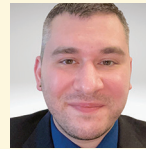
editorial board



Christine Ballenger
ceborff@gmail.com



Juliana Cantarelli Vita
juvc.echo@gmail.com



Ian Cicco
ian.cicco@usm.edu



Austin Cooper
ACGeneralMusic@gmail.com



Roxanne Dixon
rxndxn@gmail.com



Diana Hawley
dianakayhawley@gmail.com



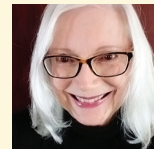
Christa Jones
christajeonjones@gmail.com



Erika Knapp
erikajknapp@gmail.com



Alan Spurgeon
aspurg@olemiss.edu



Editor in Chief
Linda Hines
echoeditor@aosa.org

mission statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association is a professional organization of educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman.

Our mission is:

- to demonstrate the value of Orff Schulwerk and promote its widespread use;
- to support the professional development of our members; and
- to inspire and advocate for the creative potential of all learners.

AOSA diversity statement

AOSA is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive membership, promoting an understanding of issues of diversity and inclusion, and providing teaching and learning resources and professional development that respects, affirms, and protects the dignity and worth of all.

our core values

As music and movement educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman, we believe that:

- Every learner deserves the opportunity to actively create, improvise, sing, play, move, speak, and listen.
- Every learner should experience music and dance from cultures represented in both our diverse American society and the larger global community.
- Every learner deserves a passionate, committed music educator who values the importance of active music making.
- Every Orff Schulwerk educator deserves high-quality opportunities to improve their pedagogy and musicianship through active, collaborative professional development.
- Every Orff Schulwerk educator should cultivate the creative potential in all learners.
- Every AOSA member deserves opportunities to engage in open and constructive dialogue regarding the future and well-being of their chapter and the national organization.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Josh Southard

Communications that Connect: Fall 2023

I guess you can say my musical pathway began in the last month or two of fifth grade. It was sign-up night for sixth-grade band. The band room at Ohio County Elementary-Middle School in southern Indiana was a recessed room, with the entrance door at the top. I walked in, coolly walked/jumped down the stairs, and took a seat. There I was, four foot nothing, asking for

the trombone. The instrument was about as tall as I was, and I will never forget the representative handing it to me, letting go, and then watching the slide tilt downward as it was almost too heavy for me to hold. I was hooked. I knew, at that very moment, I was going to become a band director.



This idea never wavered throughout middle and high school. I was accepted into the School of Music at Butler University in the Fall of 2000 and could not wait to have my own band in a few short years. Then as I listened to my elementary music methods professor tell the class we would be doing an elementary internship that semester—which required planning and teaching

5



no strings attached
A free resource
for Movement
& Music Educators

Teaching With
Orff

TeachingWithOrff.com | Lesson Plans | Community | Instrument Repair | From **STUDIO 49**

full lessons—burnout occurred. I already wondered if teaching music was what I really wanted as my career, and this announcement sealed the deal. I scheduled an appointment with my advisor to switch majors. In the meantime, I had to at least start with the internship. We had been given a list of local music teachers willing to take interns; because I wanted to see how a male elementary music educator taught, I called Dean Maniakas.

I hated leaving campus and hated every moment of the 15-minute drive to Dean’s school. At this point, I just wanted to get my major switched and be done. Dean had told me that once I signed in, just come into the music room located right next to the office. “You’ll hear us,” he said. I had no idea what he meant by that, but upon walking through the doors, I loved the sound coming from the music room. The music, different from anything I had heard before, was what I figured might be a recording of a marimba ensemble. I signed in, walked across the hall, and what I saw was not children listening to a CD (that stands for compact disc!)—the children were the ones playing the music. A group of maybe 20 or so were playing small xylophones and another five or six were up dancing. I just stood at the door and watched. In time, I would learn that this piece was the *Rondo in 3 in Music for Children, Volume I*. Doug Goodkin once wrote about how different styles and genres of music can transport people to different places and evoke certain feelings. The sound of Orff instruments and children singing and laughing took me to a magical place of wonder and excitement. Words cannot more accurately describe the rush of feelings I had in that moment, standing in the doorway, watching those children play and dance with such enthusiasm, excitement, and innocence. I was supposed to stay for an hour that Tuesday afternoon, but I wound up staying for three. I rushed back Thursday and stayed for another three hours. After that visit, I returned to campus, canceled the appointment with my advisor, and called my dad to tell him I was changing paths. I was going to teach elementary music.

Along with the excitement I felt about elementary music came the dread of *I have no idea how to do any of this*. I owe everything to Dean. He worked with me for hours upon hours during that semester, and then again while I was lucky enough to student teach with him, and then again for the first few years of teaching when I had questions upon questions. Twenty years

later, he is still there whenever I call. My pathway has hit some hills and unexpected turns over the years, but the people, friendships, mentors, and students along the way have made it worthwhile. We all have a story like this. For many of us, our story always seems to start with, “Well, I was going to be a . . .,” only to end with “but then I found Orff Schulwerk.”

Pathways

When summer ends, a new pathway begins for all of us. For those who have just completed Level I, the pathway is full of new ideas, exciting lessons, and, ideally, a newfound love for teaching that will energize them throughout this new school year. Those who have finished Level II are taking a path of refining their process with a better understanding of getting from Point A to Point B, and maybe even exploring a mode or two. Then there are our newest AOSA Teacher Education Level IIIs: Your pathway is about to change yet again, as you have worked extremely hard, put in countless hours, and completed your Levels education. The question is: Where will your pathway take you? The pathways of new teachers, or those of us who have been teaching a while, may take a turn this year as well. It might come from attending a workshop and getting a fresh idea or process for something we have done for years, or attending our first or (enter number here!) AOSA’s Professional Development Conference and seeing *Ding Dong Diggi Dong* processed and performed in a way we had never thought of doing before. How about trying a new poem this year, composing our own Mixolydian piece for our second graders, or creating something in B-flat pentatonic? Whatever we choose, we need to make this part of our pathway meaningful not only to ourselves, but also to our students.

As a member, you will find AOSA offers many pathways to explore. If you are looking to further your training, our website lists Levels and Master courses offered all around the country. If you are seeking individual studies, Professional Learning Networks are hosted regularly throughout the school year and saved on our website to reference or watch later. Close to 30 Individual Study Units covering a wide range of topics are available. More are added regularly, and you can complete them at your own pace. Sign up for the Digital Mentorship program, either as a mentee or mentor, and develop a one-on-one connection with another teacher. If you feel that teaching other teachers is your path, present at a

Chapter Share workshop, a state conference, or the AOSA Professional Development Conference. Apply to become a teacher educator and apprentice to teach at a Levels course. Whichever path you choose, remember it is ultimately the children, our students, who benefit.

While we each start or continue on our paths, AOSA has started down a new path as well. The spring referendum, which came to fruition after several years of work by so many of our members, passed and is now being implemented. Our vice president and vice president-elect of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access now move to member-elected positions beginning with the 2023 cycle. Tiffany English, our new executive director, has taken on the role full time, and I have every confidence that AOSA will continue to grow and thrive under her leadership. Finally, our National Board of Trustees continues to work hard in making this organization one that truly serves all our members and is in line with AOSA's mission statement, diversity statement, and core values.

I am deeply honored to serve as AOSA's president for the next two years. In my previous time on the NBT, I had the privilege of serving with Presidents Tiffany English, Lisa Hewitt, and Michelle Fella Przybylowski, as well as with past Executive Director Carrie Barnette. Their leadership has truly been an inspiration for me as I strive to continue the great work AOSA has done—and will continue to do. Every path has its bumps and hills, but with the help of the Executive Committee, the National Board of Trustees, and you, our members, I will work to continue guiding AOSA down a path in which everyone can take pride. ■

JOSH SOUTHARD is the music specialist at Smoky Row Elementary School in Carmel, Indiana, where he teaches kindergarten through Grade 5 music. He is a past president of the Indiana Orff Schulwerk Association and has served on the AOSA National Board of Trustees. Josh teaches AOSA Teacher Education Basic I, II, and III Levels Courses, and is currently serving as AOSA president.

7

Joy

One of the joys of being an educator is sparking joy through our work. Look for “Joy”—our Winter 2024 issue—where authors reflect on the joy found in classrooms and careers, in teaching outside, in experiencing flow state, in creating with technology, and more!



By Linda Hines With Sandra Adorno, Diana Hawley, and Martha O’Hehir

Improvisation

8

Pause wherever children are playing and you will likely see improvisation unfolding. What can music educators do to capture these moments of organically evolving creativity and reinvent them in the classroom, while at the same time preserving the magic? In this issue, we explore the pedagogical moment of improvisation through a variety of visions.

Doug Goodkin presents improvisation through a conceptual lens as it relates to Orff Schulwerk and how it emerges in the greater world. Through “The Secret Song,” an activity he created for students, he discusses the use and benefits of improvisation as a learning tool.

Looking through the lens of the practitioner, **BethAnn Hepburn** advances her claim that pedagogical decisions support students’ creations and demand of teachers an ever-present willingness to improvise. Through the concepts of *evoke*, *respond*, *model*, and *guide*, she details how the teacher-improviser embraces immediacy while constantly molding the student journey through the elemental process.

With an approach tiered from simple to more complex, **George Halley** presents several playful strategies for introducing and nurturing improvisation

skills to students in the elementary grades. The steps he details can transform improvisation from an enigma to an energetic, enjoyable experience.

The Orff Schulwerk and Kodály approaches support the creative process inherent in improvisation, notes **Megan M. Sheridan**. Her examples highlight how teachers can include improvisation through moving, singing, and playing instruments.

In our next piece, **Micaela Gutierrez Schmitz** walks readers through an exploration of improvisation and composition lesson approaches that she continues to develop through experimenting, iterating, learning, and innovating.


David Dockan shares moments of musical jams that provided the means to explore social relationships and self-expression. These improvisational experiences became a springboard for his classroom teaching, where jamming connects to informal music learning through imitation, exploration, and creation.

This issue’s children’s books, reviewed by **Amy Brown** and **Misty Kikoler**, offer colorful, clever, entertaining ways to increase student vocabulary and social awareness. This issue’s Supporting Our Learning book, reviewed by **Judith Thompson-Barthwell**, offers current best practices in music education.

Through its very nature, improvisation provides a pathway for educators to shift the music classroom focus from transmission of knowledge to the development of creative thinking. It is a powerful tool for cultivating skill development, empowerment, and enjoyment for students and educators alike. ■

LINDA HINES is editor in chief of *The Orff Echo*.

Coordinators **SANDRA ADORNO**, **DIANA HAWLEY**, and **MARTHA O’HEHIR** collaborated on this issue. They are Orff practitioners and enthusiasts.



LET THEIR VERY FIRST NOTES SHINE

Explore music's lighter side with our most colorful, expressive recorders. Far from toys, Yamaha Rainbow Recorders offer the superior tuning, beautiful tone and maximum durability you'd expect from our instruments, complete with a kid-friendly, candy colored glow that's certain to stand out in any classroom.

For more information please visit:
Yamaha.io/rainbowOE2

 **YAMAHA**
Make Waves

Improvisation: The Pleasure of Survival

10



DOUG GOODKIN is an internationally recognized Orff Schulwerk teacher, providing training to teachers in over 50 countries worldwide. He worked with children in The San Francisco School for 45 years and continues working as a consultant, mentor, guest teacher, workshop leader, and performer in schools locally, nationally, and internationally. He is the author of 10 books and is featured in the documentary film *The Secret Song*.

ABSTRACT

Improvisation in music is intimidating to some, even though we improvise throughout the day. In this article, the author details how music education that treats music as a language, rather than a precise duplication of given notes, increases comfort with improvisation in musical expression. He relates how perceiving improvisation as a vital skill invites educational adaptations to foster and nurture it and suggests, perhaps, the Orff Schulwerk classroom can be a model for all of education in this direction.

By Doug Goodkin

“We don’t improvise,” said Brandon, a student in a class where I was a guest teacher.

“Did you know you were going to say that to me when you woke up this morning?”

“No.”

“Then you just improvised.”

Improvisation is the art of responding in the moment to what the situation demands, drawing from all previous knowledge and experience. It is the act of discovering both what you know and what you did not know you know. Brandon was quite used to improvising through speech—we all do it in every conversational encounter. He simply needed more practice speaking the language of music in the same way, more confidence in arranging and re-arranging tones and rhythms as comfortably as nouns and verbs.

We all improvise through the day in many ways. We learn the steps to cooking a stir-fry, the route to drive to school, the procedure to email our workshop notes. What happens, though, when the recipe calls for mustard greens and we



SOURCE: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PORTFOLIO/VLADST

have only kale? When there is a traffic jam? When our email gets sent back undelivered? It is time to improvise.

When we have cooked long enough, we know what is similar to mustard greens and equally know we can stir fry without them. We know there are other roads that can lead us to school. We remember that the post office still delivers mail. The most successful improvisation comes from knowing the territory.

In his reluctance to improvise, Brandon was revealing two things:

- 1) Insufficient experience with the language of music to understand how to speak it spontaneously.
- 2) A lack of trust in his own intuitive and imaginative powers, partially fostered by a school culture that cares only for duplicating previous right answers instead of exploring the necessary next questions.

Without the invitation to say things in his own words/tones/movements, to see each thing learned not as the end of the matter, but as the beginning of the next possibility, Brandon's creative and imaginative powers might go untapped. He might turn into the kind of literal thinker who would abandon his stir-fry plans if mustard greens were not available, sit in the traffic jam, or cancel the workshop because his email notes could not be sent. He might be vulnerable to a fundamentalist thinking that insists there is only one way to act, only one way to believe, only one option—to obey and adhere rigidly to rules and formulas someone else made. He might become someone unable to meet the demands of the moment with a fresh imagination, applying yesterday's solutions to tomorrow's problems. In a time like our own, when rapidly shifting conditions demand an imaginative and intelligent response, this can become downright dangerous.

Our Evolutionary Imperative

There is sufficient evidence that evolution, in both the plant and animal world, necessitates adaptability, the capacity to respond to changing conditions. Likewise, the flourishing of human beings and human culture from prehistoric times to our own came about by the capacity to think flexibly and adapt behaviorally in a constantly changing world. Here's how John Medina (2008) described it in his book, *Brain Rules*:

How did we grow from a wobbly, fragile minority population to a staggering tide of humanity seven billion strong and growing? There is only one way, according to Richard Potts, director of the Human Origins Program at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. You give up on stability. You don't try to beat back the changes. You begin not to care about consistency within a given habitat, because such consistency isn't an option. You adapt to variation itself. Potts calls his notion the Variability Selection Theory.... It predicts there will be interactions between two powerful features of the brain: a database in which to store a fund of knowledge, and an ability to improvise off of that database. (p. 37)

Our experiences form a database of knowledge about content, procedures, and techniques the brain remembers and calls forth as needed. With sufficient experience and attention, we note recurring patterns that allow us to predict events and act accordingly. This is half of our evolutionary strategy for survival.

Equally important, however, is the plasticity of the brain, the way it continually re-shapes itself from experience and reaction to experience. Life's unpredictable situations—and there are many—require us to consider a Plan B. What do we do when a pandemic has us sheltering in place, when extreme weather cancels our airline flights, when the things we used to count on are unreliable? Here flexible thinking rises to the rescue.

In the past, those changing conditions—climate changes, scientific understandings, cultural advances, technological breakthroughs—moved at a glacial pace and we often had plenty of time to adapt and make small modifications to meet them. Now we are faced with something completely new in human experience, a hyper-speed rapid rate of change. Technologies that transform cultures have created more changes in the past 20 years than in the 200 years preceding that. A 5-year-old computer is already considered

obsolete, and a new iPhone model is released every year. Schools are training children for jobs, companies, and workplaces that do not yet exist. We live in a world where, increasingly, all plans are provisional. Under these conditions, improvisation in all fields of human experience is not a luxury reserved for creative artists, but a new *necessity* in our daily lives. Thus, training children to be deep, broad, flexible thinkers should move to the center of all education, far beyond a frothy fill for the talented kids in the jazz band.

Today's schools should be, *must be*, a place to nurture both sides of the brain's potential, providing an environment for learning the essential knowledge, concepts, and techniques, *and* for exercising the ability to improvise and create from them. Knowledge simply is not complete until it is re-worked, re-visioned, re-created, and used. In the conversation between the concrete, known database of knowledge and the imaginative use of that knowledge applied to the constant variation of an unpredictable world lies the art of learning—and teaching.

Improvisation in the Music Class: The Secret Song

That is the big picture. But what does this mean for schooling? How might we actually move improvisation front and center in our teaching when we have not been taught like this? When it comes to Orff Schulwerk, what does it look and feel like to create a curriculum of what my teacher Avon Gillespie called “possibility seeking?”

It begins with a firm belief in the innate musicality of each and every child. To give an example of how this faith translates to the lesson in the music class, I turn to “The Secret Song,” an activity I developed as an introduction to the Orff instruments for 5-year-olds, but one that can be used with any age. The Orff instruments are set around the room, each in the pentatonic scale. The children enter the class. I gather them close and speak in a whispered voice:

Who likes secrets? Well, I have some secrets for you today but instead of telling them to you, you have to discover them. Did you know that inside these bars of wood on the xylophone is a secret song waiting for you? It is hidden like gold in the earth and you only need three things to dig it out:

- 1) A hand or two with mallets to lift out the sound.
- 2) A listening ear that can hear what you play.

3) A mind that can recognize when the song appears and can remember it.

I'll demonstrate. Raise your hand when you think my secret song has come out of hiding.... Did you notice how I ended? While you're playing, don't forget to pay attention and find the moment when the song wants to end and go back into the bars to rest. So now choose one of the xylophones placed around the room and good luck finding your song! You have about five minutes and then we'll come back and share them.

And so they do. The results are always illuminating and, sometimes, astounding. Every child comes back with something that has some quality of musical coherence. Some songs are mathematically based, some are kinesthetic, some suggest a song with words, some are boldly experimental, some tell a kind of story. Each not only proves my faith that every child is musical, but also reveals precisely *how* they are musical and shows something of their character, personality, and the way they think.

Without a single lesson in xylophone technique or musical concepts or compositional principles, the kids come through. When Orff famously said, "Let the children be their own composers," he left it up to us to determine how to make that invitation real. The imagery of "The Secret Song" has proven to be just right, for all ages.

This completely turns around the notion that children must learn technique, theory, note reading, harmony, and specific styles *before* they can improvise coherently. Traditional music programs concentrate the bulk of their attention on building the database. By the time they invite children to improvise—if indeed, they do at all (and then mostly in the jazz band)—the children have lost their spontaneous musical urges and relegated music to a specialized subject with rules and right and wrong answers. As Orff (1932/2011) said:

Music begins inside human beings and so must any instruction; not at the instrument, not with the first finger, nor with the first position, not with this or that chord. The starting point is one's own stillness. Listening to oneself. The "being ready for music." (as cited in Haselbach, 2011, p. 66)

In the liner notes to his album *Spirits*, jazz pianist Keith Jarrett (1986) said something similar:

Music is not a separate, controlled event where a musician presents something to a passive audience. It is in the blood. It is life There is a fine line between using technique and making music. We must be open to the silence in order to fill it just right. We must see the spaces, inhabit them, live them. Then, the next note, the next move, becomes apparent because it is *needed*. ... Until you are participating in this, you cannot hear. Until you hear, you cannot play. Until you listen, you cannot make music.

"The Secret Song" is a simple way to coax music out of stillness and silence, to hear it, to listen, to reveal what is in your blood. It is available for any teacher to offer, regardless of their own musical training.

In the conversation between the concrete, known database of knowledge and the imaginative use of that knowledge applied to the constant variation of an unpredictable world lies the art of learning—and teaching.

13

MUSIC IS ELEMENTARY.
Music Education Starts Here.

Equip your classroom with great prices on instruments and supplies from MIE and call to inquire about our gently used Orff instruments, custom packages, and always low prices on in-stock items.

With over 30 years in serving the elementary teacher, let us show you why music education starts here.

www.MusicIsElementary.com / 800-888-7502

Duets and Trios

Another powerful structure is something I call “Duets and Trios.” Here the instruments are set up in a circle, and one person begins an improvised version of their “secret song.” The person to the right listens and finds a way to join in so the two are conversing. Once that is established, the next person to the right finds the spaces in the musical duet to contribute, at which point the first person fades out. The trio is now a duet again, then the fourth person joins in, the second fades out. Thus, the music travels around the circle in alternate duets and trios until returning to the first, at which point the first and last listen for the moment when the music announces its end.

Before we start, I reveal that we are about to hear some beautiful music that has never been played before in the entire history of humanity—and will never be played again. That captures their attention! The key to success is summarized in one word, perhaps the most important word in all of music education and one often ignored in all our fancy lesson planning—*listen!* In this setting, you not only need to listen to the song from within, but also to your neighbor’s song that you can enhance and enrich with your own contribution. If, in the greater world, our difficult challenges might be met with the kind of imaginative response forged in deep solitude, they also require deep listening to others and the ability to respond in a dynamic and ongoing conversation.

If, in the greater world, our difficult challenges might be met with the kind of imaginative response forged in deep solitude, they also require deep listening to others and the ability to respond in a dynamic and ongoing conversation.

Note that the choice of the pentatonic scale in both activities simplifies the process for the children and allows a meaningful learning experience for them. While the children move up the spiral of musical understanding, improvisation can become more challenging as they find their way through diatonic modes with moving drones, harmonic patterns with I, IV, and V chords, jazz blues with a pentatonic scale over harmonic changes. Each musical style will require different criteria for successful improvisation:

bluegrass guitar solos different from rock, flamenco, or jazz; jazz trap set solos different from Indian *tabla* or West African master drum improvisations; jazz trumpet solos with different expectations in New Orleans style, swing, be-bop, or Latin jazz. The important thing is that the two siblings—the database of knowledge and the capacity to improvise within it—continue side-by-side.

Each step of the way, *improvisation is the final exam*. It reveals what the child does or does not understand about a particular style or harmonic structure or fixed form. That is why we do not teach HV-V arrangements to children in second grade. If they are not ready to improvise within a given piece, that time is better spent with material, such as pentatonic melodies with drones and ostinato, that makes sense to them. The proof is when they improvise melodies or ostinato or drones or compose pieces alone or in small groups. Now the 4H club of the *hand* that can do, the *head* that can understand, the *heart* that can feel, and the ear that can *hear* are in perfect balance. It is perhaps the essential element that sets Orff Schulwerk apart from learning to read the notes to *Minuet in G* without understanding how to improvise within it, without ever being asked to sing it, and without being able to feel it fully after months of halting and sputtering non-musical steps to eventual mastery.

Although these two examples focus on instrumental improvisation, it is important to remember that children in Orff Schulwerk programs improvise in a wide variety of media far beyond the xylophones. They create patterns and phrases with the phonemic sounds of the alphabet in various name games, speech pieces, and beat-boxing; they explore the sonic potential of their bodies through body percussion, improvise movement and gesture with and without music, and create spontaneous dramatic scenes and a host of other media and improvisational structures. In short, with the guidance of a seasoned teacher, the full range of their native musical and kinesthetic genius is given free rein to roam about, explore, and try things out, always aiming for more coherent form and more nuanced expression. In so doing, they discover many of the very patterns and structures that form the database of the practicing musician. Turning topsy-turvy the notion that first the database, then the improvisation, such activities as mentioned here become part of the pathway to creating the foundation of musical knowledge.

Conclusion

Let us now return to Brandon. After our “I don’t improvise” conversation, I gave the class three notes to play (E-G-A) and taught them the Duke Ellington tune *The C-Jam Blues* (transposed to the key of A). With me playing piano, they played the tune twice and then all improvised at the same time. The three notes ensured that no tones would sound bad with my piano accompaniment and they could concentrate on rhythmic ideas and phrasing. Playing at the same time freed them to explore in safety, without fear of being heard. We then played the melody again, and I had the first row of instruments play one at a time. Now they were in the realm of risk—what if they sounded bad? What if the teacher criticized them? What if their classmates ridiculed them? The class, caught up in the excitement of the piece, did not have time to think about all that. When the first person played

and everybody realized how good she sounded, they grew more confident.

The last person in the row to improvise was Brandon. This was a big moment, and he met it with a timid, but increasingly more confident, attempt. We all played the melody once more and ended with a dramatic jazz flair. I invited the students to applaud for everyone, particularly the soloists, walking down the line one by one. When I got to Brandon, I asked the group how he sounded and they shouted, “Great!” I shook his hand and said, “Well, I guess you do improvise after all.”

Can you see the smile on his face? ■

This article was first published in Creative Interactions: Creative Learning, Creative Teaching, and Group Creativity in Music Education (2023), edited by Dr. Andrea Sangiorgio, University of Music and Theatre, Munich, Germany.

REFERENCES

- Medina, J. (2008). *Brain rules*. Pear Press.
- Haselbach, B. (Ed.). (2011). Thoughts about music with children and non-professionals. *Texts on Theory and Practice of Orff Schulwerk V. 1 Basic Texts 1932–2010* (pp. 66–77). Hal Leonard.
- Jarrett, K. (1986). [Liner notes]. In *Spirits* [Album]. Toronto Sound Studio.

Embracing Immediacy: Teacher as Improviser

16



BETHANN HEPBURN holds a master's degree in music education from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a PhD candidate in music education at Kent State University. BethAnn teaches general music and choir for Streetsboro City Schools and is the music mentor for the Ohio Department of Education Fine Arts Cohort for new teachers. She serves as the Ohio Music Education Association's professional development chair for general music and is on the NafME General Music Council. BethAnn is a frequent presenter and AOSA teacher educator and former NBT representative. She is co-author of *Purposeful Pathways: Possibilities for the Elementary Music Classroom*, Books 1–4.

ABSTRACT

Throughout the Orff Schulwerk pedagogical process, the teacher is responsible for improvising with fluidity in ever-changing improvisational roles. In this article, the author delves into the facets of the chameleon-like nature of Orff Schulwerk practitioners who embrace improvisation as a core characteristic of their teaching, philosophically and pedagogically, and offers encouragement for newly developing teacher-improvisers.

By BethAnn Hepburn

Orff Schulwerk teachers' improvisational roles shift constantly throughout their lessons. The purpose of improvising at any moment is to pivot pedagogically or to perform the role of a music participant with the class. This in-the-moment teaching was described as an educational theory of immediacy by Andreas Liess (Liess, 1966). True to honoring the Schulwerk as an immediate musical experience, Orff teachers might improvise to *evoke*, *respond*, *model*, and *guide* with an intentional action to bring students personal experiences with music and movement. These pedagogical decisions ultimately support students' creations, regardless of the media being explored, and demand of the teacher an ever-present willingness to improvise.

Educational Theory of Immediacy

Andreas Liess (1966), one of Carl Orff's earliest biographers, stressed the importance of improvisation in elemental music making to stimulate and develop the innate musical qualities of a child and expanded by stating, "Orff's *Schulwerk* may truly be described as a great educational theory of immediacy" (p. 58). When considering the philosophical underpinnings of improvisation at the core of elemental music making, a great responsibility is placed on the teacher to allow for these improvisatory musical episodes to occur. When we reflect upon the use of



SOURCE: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PORTFOLIO/ISAXAR

the term *immediacy*—and its implication of bringing direct and instant involvement with something and giving rise to a sense of urgency or excitement—we see that the teacher is the person responsible for this artful engagement.

This engagement is two-fold on the part of teachers as improvisers: first, in the willingness to create spontaneously with their students, and second, to model musical improvisations. In this first role, teachers provide the impetus for student-led inventions and guide the music and movement products the students create. They also improvise as they arrange musical ideas garnered from the class, facilitate experimental explorations by the group, and help shape the final form musically through guided improvisations with the class. Secondly, as musical models for students, teachers provide extemporized musical responses inspired by students' original ideas. Depending on the musical task at hand, at any given moment the elemental music experience provokes a unique and immediate improvised model.

The improvised expressive speech or storytelling in our classrooms can evoke expressive speech from our students, put bodies in motion, or serve as the creative impetus for articulation on instruments.

Embracing Immediacy

The first challenge of the teacher-improviser is to embrace the notion of immediacy in the Schulwerk pedagogy. Orff stated, “Those who look for a method or a ready-made system are rather uncomfortable with the Schulwerk; people with an artistic temperament and a flair for improvisation are fascinated by it. They are stimulated by the possibilities inherent in a work which is never quite finished, in flux, constantly developing” (Orff & Walter, 1963, p. 69). Orff’s Schulwerk, as an educational theory of immediacy, demands the teacher be constantly flexible with the music and movement coming from the students. The teacher must be willing to improvise both as a musical participant and as a pedagogue while guiding

student creations and reacting to a lesson's music and movement happenings.

Embracing immediacy opens Orff Schulwerk teachers to spontaneous creation with their students through a cyclic improvised exploration in musical development—both for themselves and their students—as they create elemental music together. This requires teachers to stay in flux during the process and to open themselves to the constant development of musical ideas from students. The inherent improvisational immediacy in the Orff Schulwerk classroom provides opportunities for teachers to *evoke*, *model*, *respond*, and *guide* as active partners in the ever-evolving music.

Improvising to Evoke Movement and Music

Orff Schulwerk teachers improvise to evoke music and movement responses consistently from their students throughout the teaching process. For instance, when students need a catalyst for movement, teachers can improvise, providing the impetus to put the body in motion or evoke a particular movement quality, such as floating versus wringing.

This skill for improvisation requires a knowledgeable and comfortable musical facility on various instruments to evoke various movement qualities. Teachers make multiple decisions, including which instrument to use at that moment, the rhythms, and the tonality; the improvised music choices will inspire different student responses. For example, a Phrygian melody on an alto metallophone does not feel the same across our inner landscape as a major tonality on a piano or a syncopated hand drum rhythm. Each will evoke a different physical response in our students, resulting in different types of movements.

This improvisatory episode continues as teachers observe and respond musically to their students' actions, facilitating further guidance for the students. Teachers are the model responsible for providing a musical example that students can respond to in their movement creations. For example, when exploring sudden and sustained movements, but the sudden movement in the students' bodies looks more like a cooked noodle bouncing around a bowl than a dry hard

noodle in the box, changing the music improvisation to a rhythm with more staccato might evoke more sudden movements.

Teachers evoke imagination. The improvised expressive speech or storytelling in our classrooms can evoke expressive speech from our students, put bodies in motion, or serve as the creative impetus for articulation on instruments. How we say it is how they will play it! Using improvisatory acting skills to provide a lively interpretation of the text, teachers evoke dynamics, color exploration, and rhythmic speech from their students. Rhythmic speech, whether in the form of longer prose or simple phrases, or rhythmic bricks strung together, should be recited with an improvisatory nature that brings them to life, capturing an essence or character that can translate to dynamics, movement, rhythm, and so forth when students begin to improvise with the inspiring text. This response from students carries over to musical inspiration because the teacher-improviser is also an improvisational model for students.

Teacher as Improviser: The Musical Model

Remembering that the teacher is a constant musical role model in the classroom is imperative in Orff Schulwerk pedagogy. For example, rather than a cacophonous plodding of claps and stomps with a rhythmic pattern as a rhythmic improvisation, teachers should improvise and model an expressive flow through the body and explore the possibility of timbre and dynamics when improvising body percussion rhythms. When teachers improvise an elemental melody on a recorder or pure vowel in a vocal line, they need to be the model of musicianship they wish their students to emulate or strive towards. Even better is the teacher's willingness to set ego aside, rather than be the only model, and invite a student in the room to provide the model to emulate. Musically expressive and stylistic improvisation requires dedication and practice on various instruments and openness to students being the musical model for improvisation as the teacher facilitates.

Modeling – Teacher Musicianship During Process Teaching

In an Orff Schulwerk lesson, the teacher provides models for imitation as part of the teaching process. Students draw upon these experiences to create their own improvisations in the transference of the

Musically expressive and stylistic improvisation requires dedication and practice on various instruments and openness to students being the musical model as the teacher facilitates.

material into a new context, song, or ensemble piece (Keetman, 1974). Suppose the focus is on students learning to improvise using elemental forms or rhythmic variations. To prepare, the teacher should practice implementing this on various instruments to serve as the model in many timbres in the classroom. This requires dedication and time—practice in and out of the classroom—to improve improvisational skills on a variety of instruments. In the classroom, teachers can experiment with a new instrument while modeling a willingness to take risks. These exploratory efforts on the teacher’s behalf create a safe classroom environment that can also empower students to take risks in their efforts to improvise.

The teacher improvises musical patterns for ensemble development as a model for students to imitate. This fosters experiences from which to draw after analysis of the patterns, providing students a conceptual understanding that guides them in creating their manipulations of the known patterns into new possibilities of form, timbre, and ensemble.

Teacher as an Improvisatory Pedagogue: Responding

Our improvisatory responses to the happenings throughout an Orff Schulwerk-based lesson are musical and pedagogical. When we are facilitating student creations or responding to students’ musical improvisations, we might need to make suggestions in the moment to help guide them or to provide the validation they are seeking in their musical choices. This requires the teacher to be acutely aware of what is happening while students create their music or movement, in order to improvise by reacting and responding. For instance, when improvising with a student, the student can play the question to which the teacher provides the answer. Alternatively, modeling how to add a sequence or variation on a more musically demanding theme elevates an improvisation beyond simply “trading eights” to fill in time.

Improvising with students as an active ensemble member throughout the lessons helps develop new musicianship skills. Teachers should model and include these skills in their improvisations. For example, teachers model improvisations using a swing rhythm if students have not had the experience of swinging rhythms yet. Or, they assist with articulation on the recorder by modeling tonguing techniques. Improvising with utmost musicality elevates students’ musicianship and performance.

Improvisation in Pedagogy: Embrace Guiding, not Deciding

A willingness to pivot in the moment with students is one of the most intimidating yet freeing forms of improvisation an Orff Schulwerk practitioner faces. Trusting that the elemental structure and process will eventually evolve into a musical composition, and letting go of replicating a pre-composed arrangement, demands that teachers constantly improvise throughout a lesson.

Orff Schulwerk practitioners should have a philosophical willingness to create student-generated music or use written music as a model, not a replication. This co-creation with students is the center of the Schulwerk as an educational theory of immediacy. Frazee (2006) emphasized the need for teachers to provide more opportunities for immediate creation with their students, movement experiences, and high artistic creativity; this replication was an inherent problem when the *Elemental Music Practice* exercises and the later *Music for Children* scores and improvisation exercises were put into print. Providing students with the improvisatory nature intended in the Schulwerk is often lost (Frazee, 2006).

A simple activity can foster acceptance of guiding, not deciding. For example, when using a rhyme for the basis of a melody, the teacher can guide students to extract themes from the main rhyme to create rhythmic bricks, then have them create a linear rhythmic phrase using combinations of those bricks to provide the structure for them to improvise melodic ostinati. As students decide how to arrange the ostinati, the teacher pivots on the spot to support their exploration. This facilitation of the improvisation process will eventually lead to a “frozen improvisation” or plan that results in a class composition the students arrive at by means of their teacher’s improvised choices. When teachers become guides, supporting their students toward a musical goal rather than deciding the final product from a written score ahead of time, the dance begins. This requires teachers to trust their musical training and instincts to help mold student ideas by taking time to experiment, trying their ideas, and embracing “what if?” possibilities. A teacher might ask, “What happens when that melodic ostinato is moved from the bass to the alto? What if we put that rhythm on an unpitched instrument instead?” When teachers embrace immediate explorations, they embrace improvisation as a central character of the teaching pedagogy.

Figure 1. Level I Student Leading Question and Answer Improvisation at AOSA Teacher Education Course in Hawaii.



PHOTOGRAPHER: BETHANN HEPBURN. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Figure 2. Teacher Educator Michael Chandler Leading Recorder Improvisation With Level III Students at University of Memphis.



PHOTOGRAPHER: JANDREA CRUM. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Developing as a Teacher-Improviser

It is commonplace for teachers to be uncomfortable initially with improvising. Orff Schulwerk teacher educator and music researcher Michael Chandler (2018) stated that educators need more experience to be better teachers of improvisation for their students.

As in the *Music for Children* imitation examples, imitation of pattern play in the Orff Schulwerk approach supports developing musicianship and is a great place to start. According to several music education researchers, learning to improvise demonstrates acquired music-thinking skills and serves as a marker of a young independent musician (Azzara, 1993; Beegle, 2010). These types of thinking

skills and constructs for patterns, experiences with motivic form development, and the use of melodic and rhythmic patterns are at the core of Orff Schulwerk process teaching. Schulwerk-informed teachers gain insights while facilitating creations by their students, and a constantly improvised teaching sequence takes place. Orff Schulwerk courses emphasize learning to improvise as an experiential task that must be practiced and blended with meaning for students to make correct musical syntax choices for improvisations (American Orff-Schulwerk Association, 2015). In short, these courses support teacher growth in achieving and embracing “immediacy” (see Figures 1 and 2; see Figures 3 and 4, p. 21).

Figure 3. Masterclass Students Improvising Dance at University of Memphis.



PHOTOGRAPHER: BETHANN HEPBURN. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Figure 4. Watching Dancers and Improvising During University of Memphis Masterclass.



PHOTOGRAPHER: JANDREA CRUM. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Conclusion

Orff Schulwerk teachers who improvise and use an improvisatory pedagogical approach to facilitate student improvisation convey opportunities for students to explore, imitate, and create. These teachers value student ownership and creativity in their classrooms through their actions and willingness to pivot. Supporting student creativity through immediate

musical experiences brings us back to the philosophical underpinning of Orff's intention of the Schulwerk to bring about a first-hand experience with music and movement through improvisation. Students should be provided an elemental, spirit-filled experience with music through elemental process teaching guided by their teacher-improviser, who embraces immediacy and consistently molds the journey. ■

REFERENCES

- American Orff-Schulwerk Association. (2015). *Curriculum for AOSA-endorsed Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education*. <https://member.aosa.org/member/teacher-education-courses/aosa-teacher-education-curriculum#>
- Azzara, C. D. (1993). Audiation-based improvisation techniques and elementary instrumental students' music achievement. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 41(4), 328–342. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3345508>
- Beegle, A.C. (2010). A classroom-based study of small-group improvisation with fifth-grade children. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 58(3), 219–239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429410379916>
- Chandler, M. D. (2018). Improvisation in elementary general music: A review of the literature. *UPDATE: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 37(1), 42–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123318763002>
- Frazeo, J. (2006). *Orff Schulwerk today: Nurturing musical expression and understanding*. Schott Music Corporation.
- Keetman, G. (1974). *Elementaria: First acquaintance with Orff-Schulwerk*. Schott and Co. Ltd.
- Liess, A. (1966). *Carl Orff: His life and his music*. Calder & Boyars.
- Orff, C., & Walter, A. (1963). The Schulwerk: Its origin and aims. *Music Educators Journal*, 49(5), 69–74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3389951>

Join the Conversation ...

“Connect.” The essence of Orff Schulwerk is connection. We enable our students to make meaningful, life-long connections with their peers, we connect our various approaches for musical learning, and we connect our own cultures with others to develop diverse music-making experiences.

What does connection look like for you? How can we use Orff Schulwerk tenets to connect with our students, and what meaningful connections might we make with one another as Orff Schulwerk practitioners and enthusiasts? How can connection be used to bridge cultures to diversify the Orff Schulwerk approach?

We wonder:

- How can we connect to the cultures of our students?
- How can we connect the various pedagogical approaches to music education?
- What connections exist within our school communities?
- Students connect with each other through popular music. How might we harness that in the classroom?
- What role does collaboration play when connecting with our peers?
- How do we connect with diverse student populations?

In *The Orff Echo* Fall 2024 issue, we seek a lively conversation that revolves around connection in the Schulwerk. Look for the official call for submissions in AOSA News and in your Membership Essentials email, November 2023.



American Orff-Schulwerk Association



First Steps in Improvisation

24



GEORGE HALLEY teaches kindergarten through Grade 6 music at Cherokee Trail Elementary in Colorado. He received his bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Northern Colorado and his master's degree in the arts from Adams State University in Alamosa, Colorado. George completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and has taught workshops at the local and state level. He works with students from the Denver Metro area by teaching two different studio classes focused on music, movement, and play.

ABSTRACT

Improvisation can seem too abstract to teach effectively in public schools, but it is a skill that allows students to express their musicality fully. In this article, the author details how approaching the skill of improvisation in a familiar and playful manner furthers students' and teachers' enjoyment of this skill in the classroom and in their performances.

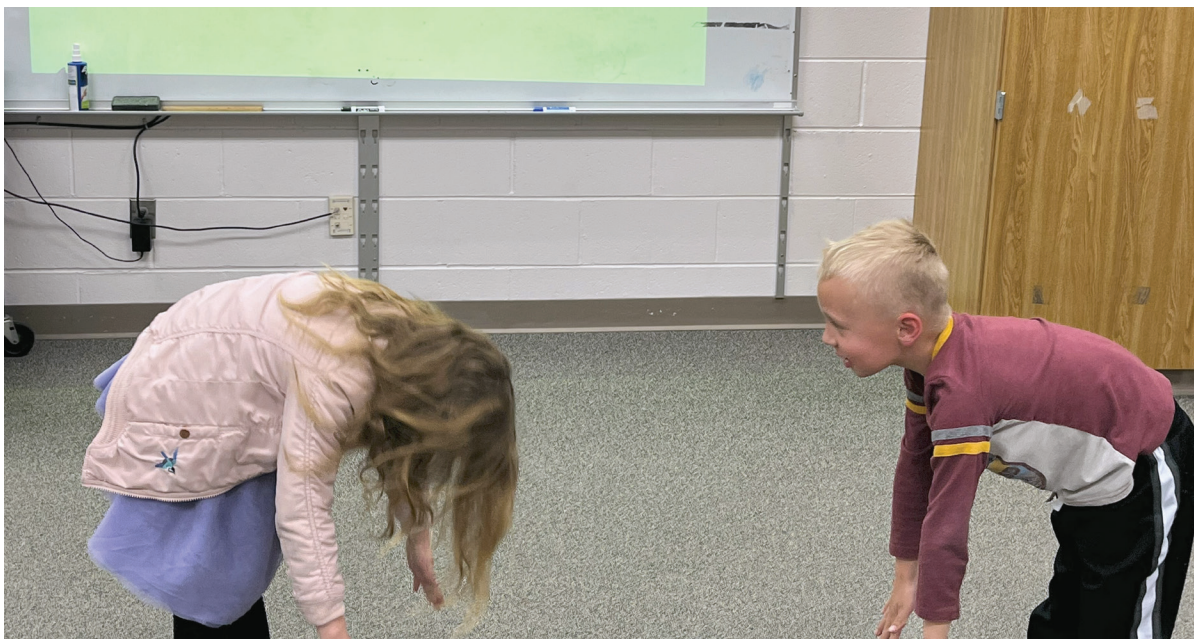
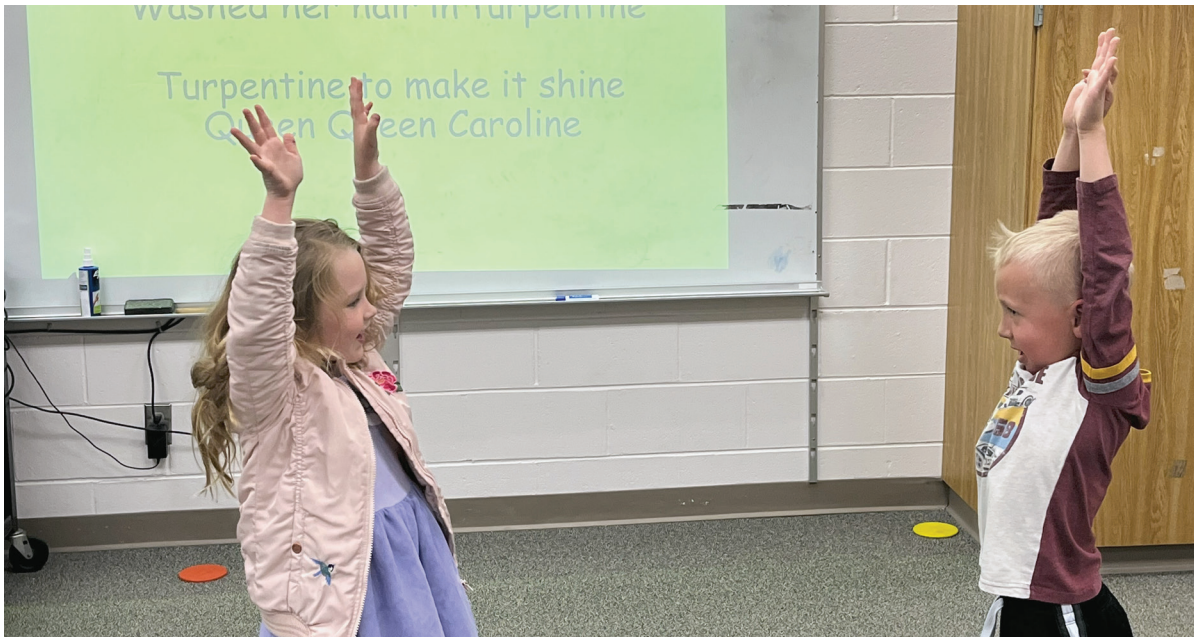
By George Halley

Improvisation can prompt a sense of pride and joy or anxiety and fear for students and teachers alike. Especially while performing, improvisation brings excitement as well as apprehension because anything can happen. Educators sometimes shy away from teaching or using improvisation in the classroom, which diminishes students' overall musical experiences. Despite its inclusion in music curriculum and repeated calls for its use in a variety of music classrooms, some teachers still associate improvisation solely with jazz ensembles at the secondary and post-secondary levels (Farrell, 2016). Educators at the elementary level typically prioritize teaching fundamental music and fostering an understanding and love of music. This can create the perception that techniques like improvisation are too advanced for elementary students and appropriate only for older students.

Understandably, teachers like to control the success rate in their classrooms. Improvisation is an open-ended, abstract art form that, in its early stages, might not sound like “success” to an audience or to a person passing by the classroom door. With the current emphasis on data and test scores that demonstrate students are learning and able to explain their learning, how teachers evaluate and quantify learning improvisation is challenging—notably when the outcome differs greatly from one student to the next.

We can overcome this challenge by providing students with opportunities to practice improvisation at a young age and giving them clear guidelines to continue

Figures 1 and 2. First-Grade Students Exploring High and Low Voices.



PHOTOGRAPHER: GEORGE HALLEY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

to explore it as they progress. This will help them develop confidence and, in turn, realize more positive outcomes. After achieving this, students will not only be willing, but also enthusiastic about attempting improvisation. We have all heard it said, “You have to crawl before you walk, and walk before you run.” In the same way, improvisation instruction can be scaffolded into simple and more complex skills.

Step 1. Crawling

Introducing improvisation in the music classroom to young students is a means for developing their skills early. When a kindergarten class is exploring how to show the beat to a song, this is an opportunity for improvisation. The teacher can demonstrate different ways to keep a steady beat, then invite students to practice together and independently, after which they

Figure 3. *Birds Singing* – Soprano.

George Halley

Birds sing-ing high birds sing-ing low birds sing-ing all a-round

4
let's sing with them, here we go!

26

can individually “show the beat.” At first they might use an already practiced technique, but soon they will improvise new and original ways to show the beat when their turns come. Small playful moments like these, when students begin to experience the joy of sharing their ideas with others, encourage future improvisation.

An early improvisation experience can be designed using a familiar poem or nursery rhyme such as “Queen Queen Caroline” (Smith, 1986). Having young students explore high and low vocal sounds while reading the poem is a simplified version of improvisation. With arms raised in the air for high sounds and hands touching the floor for low sounds, students conduct the class, showing how they would like the poem to sound, with the understanding that the conductor (teacher or student) can change the level at any point (see Figures 1 and 2, p. 25). After students practice leading others, teachers can use this opportunity to assess students individually to make sure their voices match the level of their arms. This fun activity allows for assessment of high and low voice. It also has roots in the skill of improvisation, for instance, creating something on the spot without the opportunity to write it down or practice ahead of time.

Another early singing improvisation activity targets learning to identify *sol-la-mi* melodies through simple songs like *Birds Singing* (see Figure 3). *Birds Singing* is an upbeat activity in which students create short four-beat melodies using *sol-la-mi* between repetitions of the song. To begin, the teacher models an improvised B section, singing a four-beat pattern using *sol-la-mi* for students to repeat. This helps students not only hear the form of the music and length of improvisation, but also it provides many different examples for them to draw from when it is their turn. It is easiest to start on *sol* at first because it is a familiar note from prior learning.

Once students show signs of comprehension, they are ready to improvise the B section. This encourages them to take risks in a short, non-intimidating way.

Early experiences in improvisation on the barred instruments can include developing soundscapes for stories and movement. For example, a book such as *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt* (Rosen & Oxenbury, 2009) offers ample opportunity to encourage students to create sounds for the different scenes, whether it is “swishy grass,” “squishy mud,” or a “swirly snowstorm.” When students share their improvised ideas, invite them to discuss the merits of different possibilities and to create a composition that could eventually become a performance piece.

Through playful, encouraging improvisatory experiences such as these, students develop a sense of comfort and excitement with creating something in the moment. What starts as a game leads to further improvisation as their musical skills continue to develop.

Step 2: Walking

By the time students reach an intermediate level in improvisation, they are ready to identify the skill and experience it in different media. At this level, teachers need to guide students to improvise melodies that sound like a completed thought and not just random noise. One strategy is to begin by using the form of question and answer as it is found in a simple conversation between two people. This affords a concrete understanding of improvisation through a familiar, everyday activity.

To begin, ask students a simple question like “What is your favorite food?” or “What is your favorite color?” Let them know they need to answer in a complete sentence of similar length to the question and restate part of the question in the answer. Some students will

AABA', and decorating the third of a scale. Students can decide which form they like and even create their own forms, individually and in small groups. They can also take inspiration from works of art or poems and literature. Students can improvise over a I-IV-V chord progression, explore accidentals with jazz and blues techniques and so on. In the words of Margaret Murray (2015),

many of the Orff songs can be accompanied in different ways; they can be lengthened by inventing new verses; interludes can be improvised spontaneously in the form of question and answers between teacher and child or between child and child. (pp. 8–9)

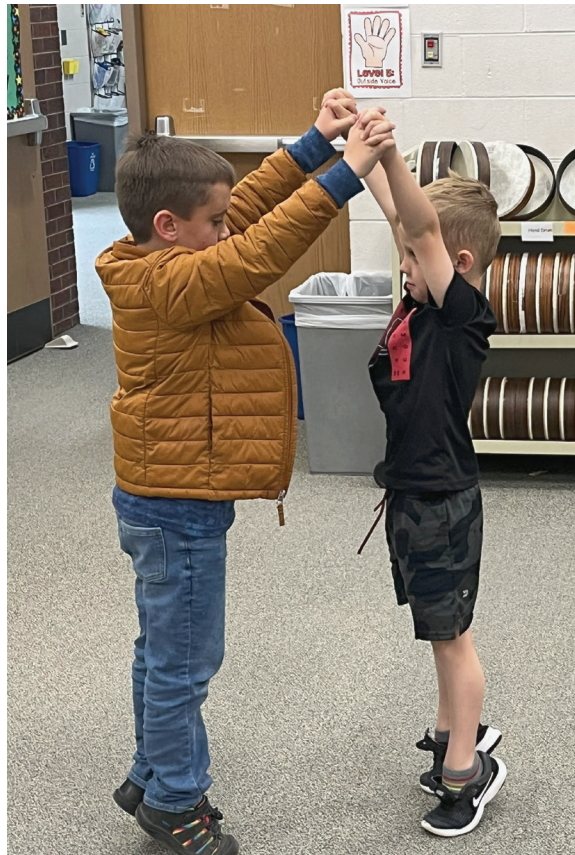
Conclusion

Improvisation is exciting to experience; it does not have to be intimidating to explore or teach. By using familiar guidelines presented in a playful manner, educators facilitate student understanding of what might be considered an abstract concept and enable them to perceive improvisation as an exciting new way to express themselves (see Figures 11 and 12). Teaching improvisation to children provides a means for them to share their thoughts, feelings, and emotions through music and empowers them to become more confident musicians. As a result, they are able to take ownership of their music and share their thoughts with the rest of the world. ■

REFERENCES

- Farrell, F. (2016). In search of a new tradition: Improvisation in choral settings. *Canadian Music Educator*, (58)1, 33–38.
- Murray, M. (2015). Reminders from Margaret Murray. *The Orff Echo*, 47(4), 8–9.
- Rosen, M., & Oxenbury, H. (2009). *We're going on a bear hunt*. Walker Books.
- Smith, J. W. (1986). *The Jessie Willcox Smith Mother Goose: A careful and full selection of the rhymes*. Derrydale Books.

Figures 11–12. Students Showing High and Low Sounds Through Movement Shapes.



PHOTOGRAPHER: GEORGE HALLEY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Orff, Kodály, and Improvisation

30



MEGAN M. SHERIDAN is an associate professor of music education at the University of Florida where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in elementary general music, qualitative research methods, and sociology in music education. She is Kodály certified and has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I and II. Megan's research interests include pedagogical practices in general music, music for children with special needs, and music for diverse student populations.

ABSTRACT

Improvisation is an important part of the music learning process. The Orff Schulwerk and Kodály approaches offer frameworks within which teachers can incorporate improvisatory musical experiences in children's regular musical learning. In this article, the author discusses improvisation as a creative process supported by these approaches and shares examples of how teachers might include improvisation through movement, instruments, and song.

By Megan M. Sheridan

The Orff Schulwerk and Kodály approaches hold that improvisation is a necessary part of the musical learning process because it allows children to express themselves, build confidence and problem-solving skills, and demonstrate their highest level of musical learning and mastery (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015; Warner, 1991). Children in Orff Schulwerk- and Kodály-based classrooms engage in improvised music and movement experiences. These experiences are a way for children to experiment with various ideas and concepts on the pathway to integrating knowledge and building musical skills and literacy. Although music literacy has been associated with the reading and writing of traditional Western notation, the profession has come to recognize that it is much more complex and includes proficiency in areas such as aural skills (e.g., playing by ear), improvising, and composing (with and without standard notation), to name a few. Therefore, the inclusion of improvisatory experiences in children's music education is paramount. Both approaches offer frameworks within which teachers can include these experiences for even the youngest of musicians.

Improvisation and Creativity

The Orff Schulwerk and Kodály approaches center the child and focus on designing developmentally appropriate experiences that lead children to grow as musicians.



SOURCE: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PORTFOLIO/A-DIGIT

Tools and techniques such as singing, chanting, moving, and playing classroom instruments are used in both approaches. These tools and techniques serve as a means to build musical knowledge and skills through a sound-to-symbol process that encourages higher-order cognitive processes like analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Bloom's taxonomy identifies *creating* as the peak of learning because students must use their knowledge and skills to produce something new (Armstrong, 2010). In the elementary general music classroom, creating new musical products can take many forms and can be improvised or composed. Improvisation is unique in that students must use their musical knowledge and skills to craft something new on the spot without writing it down and often without spending a great deal of time planning out the new material. This process is the epitome of creativity.

Defining creativity can be challenging and elusive. It can be easier to understand and more accessible

if we think of there being two types: *Big C Creativity* (sociocultural) and *little c creativity* (individual). Sawyer (2012) defined Big C Creativity as “the generation of a product that is judged to be novel and also to be appropriate, useful, or valuable by a suitably knowledgeable social group” (p. 8). Little c creativity is defined as “a new mental combination that is expressed in the world” (Sawyer, 2012, p. 7). Little c creativity is the type we encounter most in the music classroom, particularly when students are engaged in improvisation.

Improvisation, and thus little c creativity, exist on a continuum. It can start as simply as children inserting their names into a chant when it is their turn (i.e., fitting their names into a prescribed number of beats) and progress to more complex tasks like improvising complete phrases or entire sections with the voice or on melodic instruments. These examples require children to create something in

the moment and express that creation in some way. Improvisation experiences need not be on a large scale to be meaningful. All that is required is they be focused, purposeful, and carefully planned by the teacher; otherwise children might feel overwhelmed or lost in the experience and unsure of what to do.

Movement can be an accessible medium through which children explore improvisation and engage in creative experiences. Both the Orff Schulwerk and Kodály approaches embrace the value and necessity of including movement and dance experiences in music education because engaging with music kinesthetically allows learners to internalize concepts and strengthen their musical ear and memory (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015). Singing games and folk dances are often present in both Orff Schulwerk- and Kodály-based classrooms and lay the groundwork for progressing toward more free and improvisatory movement. Through singing games and dance, children build a repertoire of movements and become aware of elements such as phrasing, form, expression, and dynamics. For example, the singing game *All 'Round the Brickyard* requires that individual children improvise and name a movement while singing (The American Folk Song Collection, n.d.). The song begins with the whole class singing “All ‘round the brickyard, remember me.” Then, one individual child sings “I’m going to _____ it, _____ it, _____ it, and-a remember me.” In the blanks, the child inserts a movement such as jump, swim, or spin. The movement can be locomotor or nonlocomotor.

Children’s musicianship grows and is enhanced through singing, speaking, moving, and playing instruments, with the goal of engaging in creative musical experiences through composition and improvisation.

Keetman (1970/1974) recommended beginning improvisatory movement experiences early in a child’s music education because often young children engage readily in free, spontaneous movement uninhibited by the world around them. Orff Schulwerk educators can harness this impulse by guiding children in and through improvised movement experiences connected to music the teacher performs or from a recording. They might also provide a visual stimulus, such as a painting, image, or cards with lines or shapes, for children to incorporate with music to guide their improvised

movements. These types of improvised movement experiences help children internalize and embody the music they hear. The senses of beat, phrasing, style, mood, pitch, and rhythm, strengthened through these experiences, will ultimately affect children’s active music making.

Short improvisatory movement experiences like the one in *All ‘Round the Brickyard* help build and strengthen children’s movement vocabulary. Once this is established, even if it is only a handful of movements, children can begin to improvise to longer phrases of familiar, unfamiliar, or teacher-improvised music. In a lesson where the objective is to respond to the dynamics of a piece of music, children might be asked to use a locomotor movement that represents what they hear. For example, in Edvard Grieg’s *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, which begins soft and slow and builds steadily throughout, children are encouraged to listen carefully and adjust their movements accordingly.

Instrumental Improvisation in an Orff Schulwerk-Based Classroom

Improvisation and creativity have been at the center of the Orff Schulwerk approach since Orff first began to focus on music teaching and learning (Warner, 1991). For children to improvise and create, Orff suggested they must first have purposefully planned experiences with the central concept through play, imitation, and exploration. These experiences are rooted in a combination of music, movement and dance, speech, and drama. Children’s musicianship grows and is enhanced through singing, speaking, moving, and playing instruments, with the goal of engaging in creative musical experiences through composition and improvisation.

Orff Schulwerk practitioners recognize the need to sequence learning experiences carefully so children realize joy, success, and meaning in their musical explorations. In *Elementaria*, Keetman (1970/1974) carefully laid out sequences for teaching rhythmic and melodic concepts and for teaching movement and improvisation, including a technique for guiding children in melodic improvisation on a xylophone. For instance, the teacher sets the instruments so only the pitches of the Do-pentatonic C scale are available. In a call-and-response style, the teacher plays an eight-beat phrase consisting of only quarter notes and half notes. It is suggested the children use the teacher’s rhythm, but they may choose the pitches they wish to play. Once they are successful and confident improvising within a

limited tone and/or rhythm set, “freer versions” where children use their own rhythmic patterns, incorporate additional pitches, and/or play longer phrases can follow (Keetman, 1970/1974, p. 89).

Vocal Improvisation in a Kodály-Based Classroom

The Kodály approach is a philosophy and concept of music teaching that originated in Hungary after composer, ethnomusicologist, and music educator Zoltán Kodály observed a deterioration in the musical skills and knowledge of the Hungarian people. He sensed they had lost their connection to their own culture and music (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015). Kodály’s approach was founded on several principles, many clearly designed to remedy this by providing children with a music education founded on principles related to music literacy, singing, aural skills, and developmentally appropriate teaching practices (Choksy, 1981; Sheridan, 2019; Sinor, 1997).

Traditionally, Kodály music educators follow a cycle of *prepare-present-practice* when introducing students to new musical concepts (Choksey, 1981). During the prepare phase, children experience the new concept through singing and moving, work to describe it as it relates to known concepts, and create visual representations of it. This all occurs before the concept is named and its symbol is presented. Once it is clear to the teacher that the students have internalized the concept through kinesthetic, aural, and visual experiences, the teacher presents the name and symbol, at which time the new concept is moved into a practice phase. In this phase, Kodály practitioners are most likely to include improvisation experiences, though they need not be limited to the practice phase. As in the Orff Schulwerk approach, improvisation can occur without the awareness of names or symbols, if those participating have had sufficient experience with the focus concepts. Students can improvise melodic patterns with neutral syllables

NEW RELEASES AND BEST SELLERS!

FULL COLOR VISUALS, LESSON PLANS, STUDENT SONGSHEETS!

ACTIVITES, SONGS, GAMES, LESSON PLANS!

Visit us online, email, or call for more information!

www.beatinpathpublications.com • beatinpath@mac.com • 540-478-4833

TEACHERS WRITING FOR TEACHERS

or on instruments, and they can perform rhythmic patterns without the use of rhythm syllables as ways to experience the new concept in the *prepare* phase.

Improvisation can take place in a variety of ways in a Kodály-based classroom. For example, in a previous lesson, a group of second-grade students might have been introduced to the symbol, solfège, and notation for the melodic pattern *mi-re-do*. Now they are ready to read, write, improvise, and compose with this new concept. To practice improvising with *mi-re-do*, the teacher introduces a call and response activity by writing four quarter notes on the board and singing a simple four-beat pattern such as *mi-re-do-re* while pointing to the quarter notes. The teacher instructs the class to respond with their own four-beat pattern, using the pitches *mi*, *re*, and *do* in any combination, while maintaining the rhythmic pattern written on the board.

Initially, the teacher has the entire class respond at the same time, which allows the comfort of group response. After a few rounds, the teacher divides the class into three groups and proceeds to perform the call and response with each small group. Once each group has had several turns, the teacher, mindful that this is their first experience improvising with *mi-re-do*, invites volunteers and does not require each child to attempt it individually. Eventually, each child will have a turn.

Once the children are comfortable improvising within these boundaries, the possibilities for the next steps are endless. For example, the children can work on creating longer improvised phrases with more complex rhythms. The teacher may specify that their improvised phrases, regardless of length, must end on *do*. They might also work on transferring their vocal improvisations onto pitched instruments such as xylophones. Additionally, the call and response vocal improvisation process just described can also be used for more complex tone sets (e.g., *la-sol-mi-re-do*), movement, and melodic improvisation with instruments.

Conclusion

Improvisation is an important part of music learning and development supported by both the Orff Schulwerk and Kodály approaches. Improvisational activities can be simple or complex, melodic, or rhythmic, use singing, instruments, or movement, and they require only a willingness to try. As with any learned skill, the more we do it, the better we get at improvising and teaching students to improvise. As we plan our upcoming lessons, let us find places where we can include improvisatory experiences for our students, no matter how simple those experiences might be. ■

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, P. (2010). *Bloom's taxonomy*. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>
- Choksy, L. (1981). *The Kodály context: Creating an environment for musical learning*. Prentice-Hall.
- Houlahan, M., & Tacka, P. (2015). *Kodály today: A cognitive approach to elementary music education*. Oxford University Press.
- Keetman, G. (1974). *Elementaria: First acquaintance with Orff-Schulwerk*. (M. Murray, Trans.). Schott & Co. Ltd. (Original work published 1970)
- Sawyer, R. K. (2012). *The science of human innovation: Explaining creativity*. Oxford University Press.
- Sheridan, M. M. (2019). The Kodály concept in the United States: Early American adaptations to recent evolutions. *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, 41(1), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536600618787481>
- Sinor, J. (1997). The ideas of Kodály in America. *Music Educators Journal*, 83(5), 37–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399007>
- The American Folk Song Collection (n.d.). *All 'round the brickyard*. <https://kodaly.hnu.edu/song.cfm?id=452>
- Warner, B. (1991). *Orff-Schulwerk: Applications for the classroom*. Prentice Hall.

Preserving the Legacy ...

Over the past year, AOSA has lost five amazing music educators who were beloved members of our organization and whose contributions to Orff Schulwerk we wish to honor in our publications. In addition to a tribute to these luminaries in the Fall 2024 issue of *The Orff Echo*, the *Reverberations: Teachers Teaching Teachers* editors have planned a series of articles that will post over the coming year. These articles will feature a piece of the legacy left by each of these teachers whose model of how to bring creativity to all children through the Schulwerk has inspired so many of us.



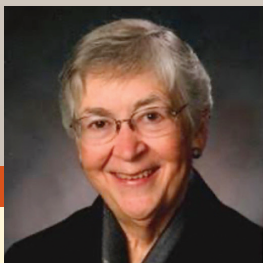
**Marilyn Copeland
DAVIDSON**
(1934–2023)

Sue Snyder will share the foundational characteristics of Marilyn's planning and teaching along with a model of how this applies to a lesson based on *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein.



**Carol
ERION**
(1943–2023)

Donna Fleetwood has helped gather some of Carol's many lovely canons. The article will share several of these compositions along with her "recipe" for writing a great canon.



**Barbara
GRENOBLE**
(1933–2022)

Karen Petty will share Barbara's approach to introducing unpitched percussion along with a model that helps children discover how to use these instruments.



**Alice
PRATT**
(1953–2023)

From 2006 through 2010, Alice coordinated "OPUS: Orff Programs in Urban Schools," a regular column in *Reverberations*. The upcoming article will share links to these columns, which have recently been digitized and added to the AOSA Resource Library.



**Arvida
STEEN**
(1937–2023)

Sharon Mazion shares how to use Arvida's book, *Exploring Orff: A Teacher's Guide*, as a practical approach to help Orff Schulwerk-inspired teachers think about structuring a curriculum and planning lessons.

Improvisation and Composition: Complementary Approaches to Creation

36



MICAELA GUTIERREZ

SCHMITZ is a harpsichordist, early musician, and educator who blends Music Learning Theory, Kodály, and Orff Schulwerk approaches in her role as a kindergarten through Grade 8 music teacher at St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs, and at Saints Peter and Paul School, California, Kentucky. She completed teacher education in the United Kingdom and holds a Kentucky teaching license. Micaela has benefited from the Jenny Koeneman Memorial Scholarship and AOSA's Digital Mentorship Program.

ABSTRACT

Improvisation and composition are two arms of the creation process. In this article, the author uses classroom examples to illustrate ways in which manipulatives and notation might support these processes and challenges readers to consider composition as one way to enrich improvisation.

By Micaela Gutierrez Schmitz

Improvisation and composition are important companion paths to creation. Sometimes teachers need to guide exploration to help students discover the multiple possibilities available to them; at other times, students need to commit themselves to a compositional choice so they can refine their work or discover new avenues for improvisation. This exploration raises questions about how we as teachers guide students and coach them toward musical understanding. If our intent is to respond to the needs of students, then we must be cautious to not work merely toward a notated product. At the same time, we must balance students' conflicting desires; some students might simply want to get the job done efficiently, whereas others might need to notate their ideas throughout the creative process to see how they continue to shape their initial output with each iteration.

First, although improvisation and composition are related in terms of creation, they are not the same thing. Tension exists between a final version and a “work in progress” or “work for right now.” The essence of improvisation is in its ephemeral nature—it is produced, consumed, and leaves no trace. In an Orff Schulwerk-inspired setting, improvisation can be a community experience where ideas bounce off one another in a chain reaction of planning and performing (Pressing, 1988). As humans, we want to capture and recreate experiences, which leads us to composition. Yet in the desire to fix forever in memory our version of a piece, we might be shortchanging the improvisation experience. Therein lies the tension between improvisation and composition.

Figures 1a–1b. Using Yarn to Show Melodic Shapes.



Secondly, people often assume improvisation is a step towards composition, but that is not necessarily the case. Part of this assumption is the question of process versus product (Solomon, 2000). As educators, we want a barrier-free way to encourage creation, but if students are to “work on a piece,” they need to remember it well enough to improve it. Brophy (2000) noted that students have to go through process-oriented improvisation before they are ready for product-oriented composition. In some circumstances, though, it might be meaningful to compose first then improvise to explore other possibilities that might arise from the composition in which the process began. How do we distinguish these processes for our students? A composition is fixed, and improvisation is not. Whether it is written down or recorded is immaterial.

As teachers, we often plan a step-by-step process, but it is important to alter our approaches in response to what children find helpful. I enjoy leading songwriting projects, where improvisation and composition go hand in hand. Following are some of my process ideas illustrating the ways improvisation and composition can complement each other, beginning with the more typical improvisation-first methods.

Starting With a Topic

Often, I open a lesson by providing a topic to my students and together we word-storm ideas for lyrics. I invite them to generate one good, four-beat line by improvising possible lines of text and then choosing one. This first good line must be rhythmic, with logical syllabification, and without too much rhyme. We tap the rhythms, discuss the concept of accent, and add or subtract words or syllables. Students use this as a model for their other three lines. They might notate rhythms in pencil or select rhythm cards, which they then copy.

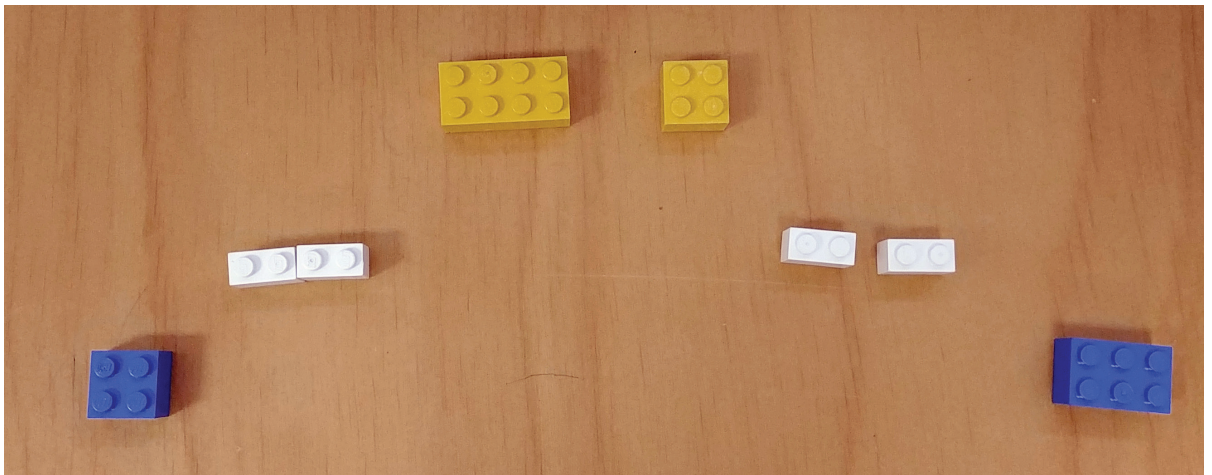
Playing With Melody Manipulatives

Next we make melodic choices based on a scale. There are five improvisation strategies my students use along their way to composition: yarn, Lego, bingo chips, a rhythm/pitch/harmony grid, and solfa building bricks.

1. Yarn

The first strategy uses four pieces of yarn, one per phrase, showing melodic shapes (see Figures 1a and 1b). A student may create a shape, and we sing it. Or, students may adjust the yarn to change it and try it out. This sort of improvisation allows trial and

Figure 2. Using Lego Pieces to Show Duration and Pitch.



error and helps the class generate ideas. For ease of singing, I advise my students either to start phrase two where phrase one ended or, to keep the form simple, to repeat the first phrase for the third phrase. The yarn exploration strategy accommodates whole-class, small-group, or individual composition.

2. Legos

The length of the Lego (two dots, four dots) aligns with the duration of a note. Students may map the melodic contour by playing with placement (see Figure 2). This helps them generate ideas in a playful way and allows small groups to work with their own sets.

3. Bingo Chips

This strategy pairs a laminated staff and bingo chips (I call them “magic dots”) for note heads. Students count the syllables in one line and create a shape with the correct number of chips (see Figure 3). Then they set out to sing their ideas, testing their work. This is more like staff notation, so transferring their bingo chip ideas to paper could be a next step. Sometimes each member of the group comes up with an original idea, and then the students pick a winning version as the first phrase. We record it in some way and then attempt to use other patterns next or clear the cards for new ideas.

Figure 3. Staff With Movable “Magic Dots” for Pitch.



Figure 4. Triad-based Composition Grid With Optional Staff Notation.

4. Rhythm/Pitch/Harmony Grid

The rhythm/pitch/harmony (or notation) grid consists of a series of one-beat boxes. After writing the lyrics at the bottom of the page and noting how the syllables are divided within the words, students notate rhythms above the words using Xs or traditional rhythmic notation. In the last step, they add solfa or pitch letter names below the rhythmic notation (see Figure 4).

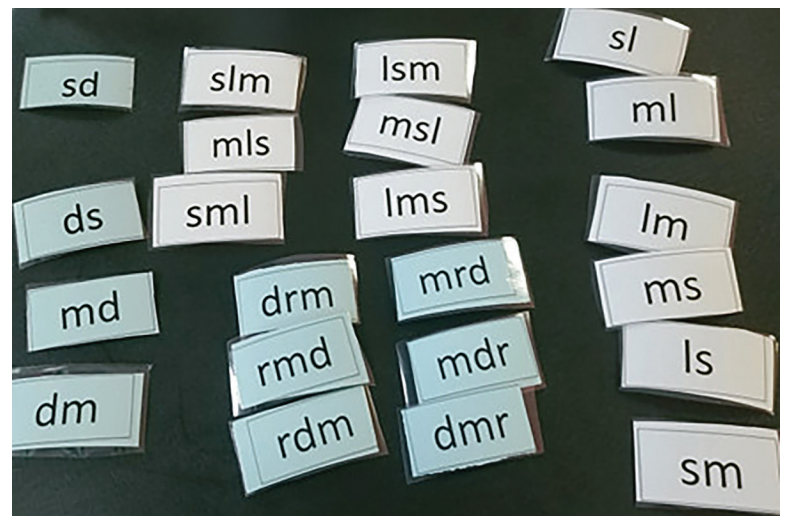
For some, the act of writing the notes is composition, which they will then edit and refine. For others, it is improvisation, as this is just an initial step in the creative process. Note that it might be either improvisation or composition because students often find a blank page daunting. Asking them just to “write something down that is part of the chord” encourages them to make an initial choice. For some students, the act of writing stimulates their creative pathways; what they write, though, is simply exploration. When they play what they have recorded on a xylophone, we find out how much they have audiated—usually far less than I would wish. This method promotes ease in note checking at the xylophone, but it does not show melodic contour clearly. When students play a tune that jumps up for a note that should be next or has an unsingable range, we then change pitches or add arrows to show whether the next note will go up or down, or add tick marks to designate high or low octaves. Often they choose all chord members, and I encourage them to include some neighbor tones. They explore these changes through

improvisation at the xylophone until they arrive at a better solution, which they then write down. For these students, the first writing is improvisation. For those who have a better handle on chord tones versus non-chord tones, the writing might be composition.

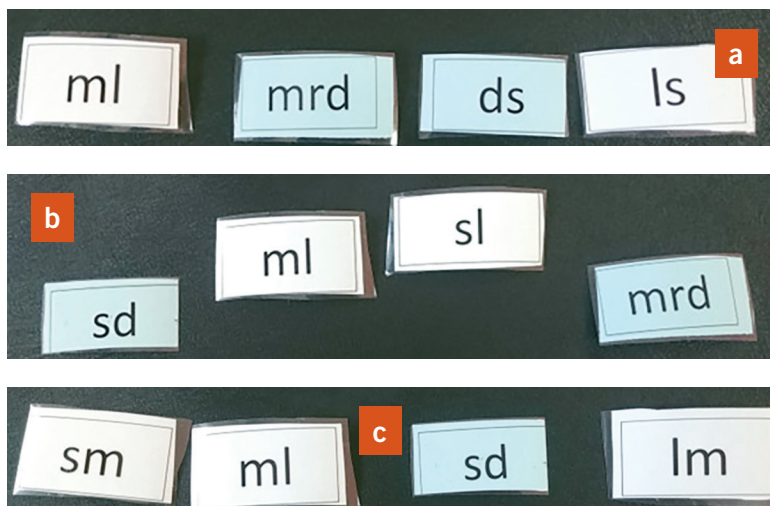
5. Solfa Building Bricks

Last year I experimented with a fifth strategy by offering two- or three-note solfa building bricks, essentially Keetman’s building bricks but with pitches. I call this approach “composition or improvisation by brick,” because they can be tested and re-ordered

Figure 5. Solfa Melodic Brick Set.



Figures 6a–6c. Solfa Building Bricks.



40

quickly. Using patterns inspired by Gordon’s Music Learning Theory (MLT) (Lange, 2013), I prepared the aural path by echo singing two- or three-note tonal patterns with students in major and minor scales with the functions of tonic, dominant, and subdominant. This strategy helped them arrive at a melody for the verse of a song we later submitted to a songwriting competition. With the chorus already composed, they were tasked with creating a two-phrase melody to a given text. The seventh-grade class worked out a given rhythm, and then they were invited to add pitch individually to the provided rhythm. I created all two-note and three-note combinations of *do re mi* and of *so mi la* and made two- and three-note combinations of *do mi so* (see Figure 5, p. 39, and Figures 6a, b, and c). Like other strategies, this allowed students to play with different options.

Using the Strategies

1. Generating Ideas

For this activity, I encouraged students to use any of the strategies we had explored to improvise and compose. They could draw a melodic shape for each of the lines, or they could order pitch pattern cards to generate ideas and then assign solfa patterns/motives to each line, adding some neighbor notes when

desired. I would then help them transfer the solfa to pitch letter names for playing at barred instruments or keyboard. This felt a little clunky, as it seemed they had not played solfa enough to recall their melodies on the instruments without writing down pitch names. Looking back, it is apparent I had not covered the discrimination phase (Lange, 2013) of MLT sufficiently for them to be fluent with solfa syllables.

2. Some Challenges With Solfa Building Bricks

This activity was moderately successful in supporting students as they generated ideas, but the solfa building bricks were not all perfectly interchangeable in terms of order. For example, some students did not realize they could repeat a pitch when more syllables existed than pitches in a pattern. Also, the solfa building bricks did not specify direction, so students had to be careful to avoid two successive leaps upward or pitches out of a comfortable vocal range. Ordering and re-ordering manipulatives can help them play with the materials in an improvisatory fashion. If there are too many choices, however, they can be overwhelmed. To mitigate this, next time I will include cards suggesting dominant and subdominant with patterns that include *ti*. In a major key, tonic-dominant patterns might include: *dmd ds,d rts srt dms*. Subdominant patterns might include: *dsm fld trs mds lfd msd*.

3. Improvisation Leading to Composition

Figures 7 a, 7b, and 7c (p. 41) illustrate an improvisation-to-composition progression. In Figures 7a and 7b, the student had drawn melodic shapes and written solfa syllables underneath. The final iteration, 7c, started on the right side of the page with melodic shapes and solfa. When transferring her ideas to the staff, one student changed her mind after testing them on the xylophone. Inviting students to transfer their ideas to traditional notation provides one more opportunity to determine if what they intend to hear is what they are recording on the page.

4. Composition Leading to Improvisation

This final activity details how we borrowed words from a story as a starting point to move third-grade students from composition to improvisation. Using the words, “onions, carrots, mushrooms, yams,” we worked out the rhythms as a class. Then, in pairs, students set the words to a simple melody on paper before going to the instruments. They chose solfa pitches first and were invited to sing them. We directed them to use *do re mi*

As teachers continue to grow professionally, we acquire more ways to prepare our students to explore creatively—such as through vocal improvisation, question-and-answer exploration, tonal pattern manipulation, and so forth.

Figure 8. Sample Composition Using So, La, Do Re Mi So La.

Make your own!!! Use do re mi so la. (You can use low la [la,] and low so [so,] near do. Underneath write the letter name for the pitch. Remember G=do.)

Carrots, onions, mushrooms, yams

so so	mi re	do la,	do
G G	E D	C A	C

performed their compositions for each other, I invited them to improvise using the same setup; as it turned out, they were more fluid in their improvisation. If we can move past composition as the ultimate final product, we can enrich improvisation and give it its proper due.

The Importance of Exploration

After exploring tools provided for creation, it is important to consider the benefits of improvisation practice. For instance, I invite my recorder students

to improvise quite a bit before writing anything down, withholding pencils until they have explored. The groups that explore more typically write more logical, easily performable pieces. Some create pieces that are simpler than their expected level (Swanwick & Tilman, 1986) for fear of making a mistake. Students who do not use the exploratory time use the writing stage to improvise, and then end up making many changes afterward. Either way, teachers are there to guide them through the creative process.

Conclusion

After almost five years of Orff Schulwerk-inspired classroom teaching, I have learned that my first choice will not always be the most effective approach to facilitating creative work with my students. As teachers continue to grow professionally, we acquire more ways to prepare our students to explore creatively—such as through vocal improvisation, question-and-answer exploration, tonal pattern manipulation, and so forth. Like our students, we learn by doing. It is important for us to give ourselves grace and to remember that in this profession, sometimes the process is the goal. ■

REFERENCES

- Brophy, T. (2000). Unveiling the mysteries of the developing child improviser. *The Orff Echo*, 32(4), 32–37.
- Dixon, R. (2021). Songwriting in the Orff Schulwerk classroom. *The Orff Echo*, 54(1), 48–55.
- Hamilton, H. (2000). Composing and improvising: From theory to practice. *The Orff Echo*, 32(4), 20–23.
- Lange, D. (2013) Integrating Music Learning Theory with the Orff approach. *The Orff Echo*, 45(2), 22–27.
- Pressing, J. (1988). Improvisation: Methods and models. In J. A. Sloboda (Ed.), *Generative processes in music: The psychology of performance, improvisation and composition* (pp. 129–168). Academic Press.
- Solomon, M. (2000). Paths to improvisation: Using Keetman's Elementaria. *The Orff Echo*, 32(4), 16–19.
- Swanwick, K., & Tilman, J. (1986). The sequence of musical development: A study of children's composition. *British Journal of Music Education*, 3(3), 305–33. <https://doi:10.1017/S0265051700000814>

The Orff Echo Editorial Board Is Seeking New Members

The Orff Echo editorial board invites you to consider joining our team! Engage with us in vibrant conversations as we envision features, topics, and content that expand and enrich the permanent body of knowledge at the philosophical heart of AOSA. As an active or retired Orff Schulwerk practitioner, you know how to encourage the best in others by guiding and mentoring them in meaningful, transformative ways. Serving on *The Orff Echo* editorial board offers opportunities for you to share your expertise by helping colleagues from around the world craft their experiences, challenges, insights, and research into articles that convey the depth and dynamics of the Orff Schulwerk approach.

Interested? For details and more information, talk to any of the current editorial board members, stop by the Writing for AOSA table at the Professional Development Conference in November, or send an email to: echoeditor@aosa.org



Jamming + Orff Schulwerk: Reflections on My Favorite Musical Moment

44



DAVID DOCKAN is a PhD student in music education and teaching assistant at the University of Kentucky. He also teaches a summer course with Martina Vasil on using popular music and Orff Schulwerk. David is an active clinician and writer, exploring informal music learning, hip-hop, Orff Schulwerk, modern band, and popular media in the elementary classroom. He received his bachelor's degree in music from West Virginia University and his master's degree from Kent State University. David has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III.

ABSTRACT

Jamming and Orff Schulwerk can be used together to create unique student experiences. In this article, the author discusses one of his favorite musical moments, a jam session with his family, and then connects the ideas of jamming to teaching with an Orff Schulwerk approach through elemental music making, community, and improvisation.

By David Dockan

My grandparents raised my dad and his brothers in Grand Marais, Minnesota. In his youth, my dad played guitar and sang with his family and in rock bands, making music at home and performing in local establishments. As a child, I had always heard about this music-making community and finally witnessed it when I was 16. In the summer of 2010, my dad, my brother, and I traveled to Grand Marais to meet other family members and attend the annual Fisherman's Picnic festival. One afternoon, while unpacking various musical instruments, including guitars, electric basses, and percussion instruments, my uncle looked at me and asked what songs I knew. At the time, I knew *Gotta Find You* from the Disney Channel's *Camp Rock*. I told them what chords to play and began to sing the song as if I were Joe Jonas at the final jam at Camp Rock.

After I sang the entire song, my uncle told me to keep playing the chords. Then someone spontaneously started singing about asparagus, which eventually became a refrain of "Gimme some of that, gimme some of that, yeah yeah." Verses about Britney Spears eating asparagus and verses about asparagus's effect on the human body also flowed. My grandmother picked up an accordion and another uncle grabbed his harmonica as we continued to play through the same four chords as my original, Disney-inspired song request. Next, my cousin added some pop-style vocal riffs (i.e., multiple notes sung over a vowel) while other family members harmonized on neutral syllables. I was experiencing my first jam session.



SOURCE: WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PORTFOLIO/TRAFFIC_ANALYZER

Reflecting on this experience, I compared it to a lesson facilitated by a music teacher using the Orff Schulwerk approach. Jamming encompasses elements of music (chords, rhythms, form, etc.), and students analyze, perform, and create through imitation, exploration, and improvisation. There are several ways jamming and the Orff Schulwerk approach can work together to cultivate unique experiences for our students.

Jamming

Randles et al. (2022) defined jamming as an “informal activity where musicians play improvised songs and chord progressions for fun” (p. 258). For example, my family’s jam session was not a formal rehearsal with a designated leader determining the goals and direction of the group. All members had a say in the process and could add musical elements as they pleased. While my uncle was pulling out the instruments and

creating the environment for us to play together, the rest of us suggested songs, improvised melodies, and made music. Having fun was also a crucial component. People can enjoy creating sounds together during shared moments; the isolated temporal experience does not always need to lead toward a polished performance. Making music through jamming should be fun, just as our Orff Schulwerk classrooms should be for our students.

This act of jamming can appear haphazard and unstructured. It is, however, often part of the popular musicians’ informal music learning process. Green (2008) proposed that this process consists of five characteristics through which music is learned: (1) aurally, through listening to and imitating recordings; (2) through friend groups; (3) through self-study or peer teaching; (4) through students performing, composing, improvising, and listening; and (5) through student-selected music. This definition

Table 1. Comparing Informal Music Learning and Orff Schulwerk

Informal Music Learning	Orff Schulwerk
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Music is learned aurally through listening to and imitating recordings. 2. Learning takes place in friendship groups. 3. Skills and knowledge are acquired through self-study and peer teaching. 4. Learners are performers, composers, improvisers, and listeners. 5. Learners choose the music themselves. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elemental approach to music education. 2. Learning through active music making (singing, saying, moving, playing instruments). 3. Students are empowered to be music makers and creators. 4. Learners are stakeholders in the classroom. 5. Melodic/rhythmic ostinato and musical forms are connected to movement and speech.

SOURCE: CREATED BY DAVID DOCKAN, 2023.

of an informal music learning approach and the Orff Schulwerk approach can work nicely together because of their many similarities: learning through imitation, self- and peer-study, and integrated learning (Vasil & Dockan, 2023). Like informal music learning, a jam session’s haphazard and unstructured nature opens a space to create without judgment and where mistakes are a natural part of the process.

Informal music learning is an unfamiliar concept for many music educators, specifically those who studied in a conservatory-style teacher preparation program (Allsup, 2016). Teacher preparation programs are generally rooted in a teacher-centered approach to music education where the freedom of a jam session would not be encouraged. Although jamming might be unfamiliar to some, Orff Schulwerk teachers are curious about ways to incorporate informal music learning into their classrooms through the Orff Schulwerk approach (Dockan, 2020). Jamming is one way that informal music learning and Orff Schulwerk can coexist, because the two use elemental music making, build community, and encourage improvisation (see Table 1).

Using Elemental Music Making

Orff Schulwerk uses “elemental music; that is, music composed of simple, repetitive, sequential structures that take shape in simple forms” to have students imitate, explore, and then create (Vasil, 2019, p. 250). These elements are usually explored through rhythmic building bricks or children’s songs and games. For example, after students experience and learn a song through imitation, they explore by playing and deconstructing the song into elemental building bricks of form, rhythm, melody, and so on. Using these

building bricks or elements of music, the students are then invited to create with everything they explored and imitated throughout the lesson.

Jamming also uses elemental music making, where participants imitate, explore, and create. It usually begins with participant-selected repertoire, which tends to be *popular* songs—those based on metrics such as the “Billboard Hot 100” or “Today’s Top Hits” playlists on Spotify. Typically, these songs consist of narrow melodic ranges, between three and five chords, and rhythmic patterns in a simple, duple time signature. The elemental nature of popular music facilitates accessibility for beginning musicians. Students can informally learn to perform this music by listening to and imitating simple melodies, rhythms, and chordal patterns repeated throughout the song. After performing some parts, they can explore various ways of using them by learning the different instruments or ostinati. Finally, they can create by arranging the parts into a form, such as playing the chorus of a song and adding an improvised or composed section. Incorporating these elements enables teachers to guide students to create independently through participatory jamming.

The parallels between jamming and the Orff Schulwerk approach become evident through elemental music making. They are learning a song (imitating), isolating all the instruments/parts (exploring), and rearranging or improvising (creating). Performing a piece of music inspires the initial jam. The exploration phase allows participants to play with the elements of the music, such as rhythms and strumming patterns. Then once they find flow in the music, the creation phase begins with manipulating the musical elements (e.g., different rhythms, forms, dynamics, and lyrics).

Building Community

When jamming with others, musicians develop a sense of community and communication (Higgins, 2012). For example, my family’s music connection produced a bond between us and a new music community transpired. Nonverbal communication among us helped guide the jam to change dynamics, open the floor for solos, or return to different previously created sections. These moments transcended this story and are reflected in other jam sessions, which Randles et al. (2022) described as a “community of doers” that had “united” [them through a] “common purpose” (p. 265). The common purpose, in some cases, is joy. Jamming connects its participants through a common goal the doers are deciding in real-time.

This jamming-created community mirrors the principles of the Orff Schulwerk approach by placing the student at the center and acknowledging the social dimensions of the classroom (Hartmann, 2019). An Orff Schulwerk classroom allows students to be co-constructors and leaders by working with their peers to perform and create music together. For a classroom to develop this sense of community, a culture of students feeling safe, loved, and important must first be present (Tietz, 2019). When students know they are safe, they are more willing to try new things; when they are loved, they know they will not be reprimanded for making mistakes; and when they know they are important, they know their expressed ideas will be heard. Jamming can help create this learning environment.

Encouraging Improvisation

Improvisation is at the core of a jam session. During a recent Association for Popular Music Education (APME) conference at the Detroit Institute of Music Education, some members started jamming in the basement. They began with songs then, through non-verbal cues, a guitar player joined in and played an improvised solo. Other improvisations followed when participants tried to figure out phrases from the original songs, such as the horn section in *Superstitious* by Stevie Wonder. In this example, players created spontaneously and learned the melody or riff aurally through trial and error. There was no notation. Though listeners heard some wrong notes, the improvised attempts led to an accurate performance, very much in line with Green’s (2008) informal music learning.

The Orff Schulwerk approach highlights the importance of improvisation. Orff (1995) described his

approach as an improvisatory process that encouraged “developing, growing, and flowing” (p. 8). This frees the teacher to model improvisation throughout as students create spontaneously within the teacher-curated musical palate in a lesson inspired by the approach. For instance, kindergarteners might begin their improvisations with *sol-mi* being the only notes available on xylophone. This keeps their performance consonant by mitigating any possible dissonance and helping to ensure they feel successful. Some Orff Schulwerk teachers also ask students to work out the melody independently within a limited set of tones. This provides the opportunity for students to create and fine-tune their aural skills spontaneously by figuring out a melody.

Community and musical elements are present within improvisation. Improvisation happens most successfully in a community of doers where everyone feels safe, loved, and important. If that supportive community is absent, improvisation will be limited by self-doubt and fear of judgment. A safe community is supportive and serves as a foundation where those participating feel comfortable using the musical elements they have experienced. As in speech, vocabulary communicates ideas. The musical elements improvisation encompasses are students’ musical vocabulary. Once they have experienced the element of dynamics in music, they might experiment, for instance, by contrasting loud and soft sounds.

In both jamming and Orff Schulwerk, improvisation allows spontaneous creation and exploration of a melody to help develop aural skills. When creating spontaneously, participants assess their work constantly by referencing their previous musical experiences. This assessment occurs through listening and peer reactions. When students imitate or attempt to perform a melody, the assessment occurs by comparing the sounds with those of the recording and the rest of the ensemble. In an Orff Schulwerk classroom and in jamming, students can improvise with the elements of music in a safe and supportive community.

Conclusion

Orff Schulwerk and jamming intersect when participants lead the way in creative and improvisatory experiences within a community of music makers. An Orff Schulwerk classroom should feel like a jam session creating a community of music makers. When this happens, the teacher can step back into the role of facilitator instead of director. The teacher as facilitator

creates an informal music learning environment where students work with peers in a community, learn music by ear, co-construct musical content, and engage in self- and peer-study (Green, 2008). This facilitator model is at the heart of the Schulwerk.

The experience with my family in Minnesota represents the type of classroom and music-making environment I want to create for my students: a

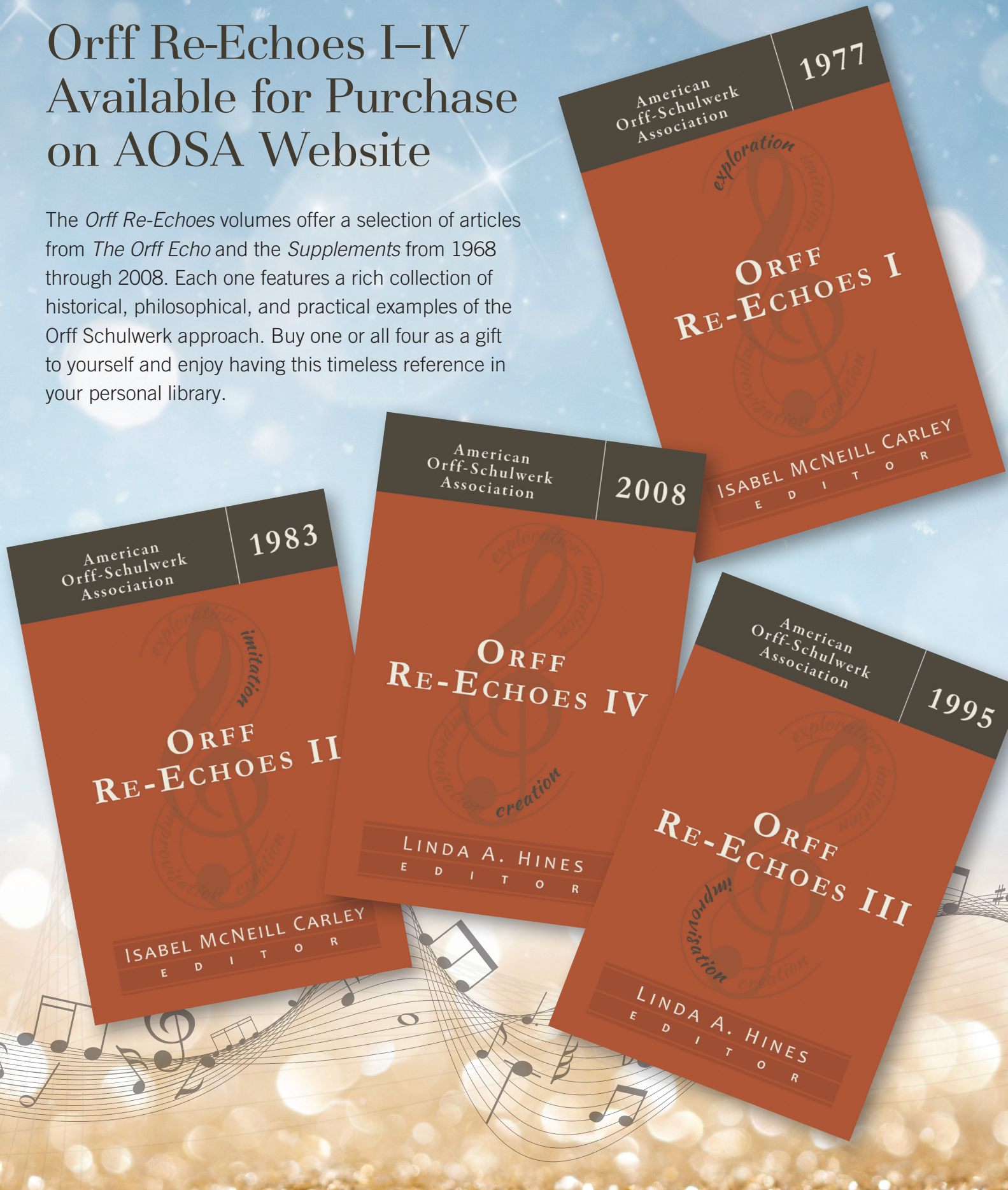
supportive community in which they are willing and able to take risks and look forward to exploring known musical elements and creating through improvisation. From the lens of many Orff Schulwerk teachers, having fun and making music together in a low-stakes environment is essential for successful student learning experiences. With the Orff Schulwerk approach and a jamming mindset, we can achieve these goals. ■

REFERENCES

- Allsup, R. E. (2016). *Remixing the classroom: Toward an open philosophy of music education*. Indiana University Press.
- Dockan, D. (2020). Orff Schulwerk, informal music learning, and creativity: A mixed-methods study. *The Orff Echo*, 52(4), 46–51.
- Green, L. (2008). *Music, informal learning, and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*. Routledge.
- Hartmann, W. (2019). The principles of Orff Schulwerk. *The Orff Echo* 52(1), 8–12.
- Higgins, L. (2012). *Community music: In theory and in practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Orff, C. (1995). Orff Schulwerk: Past and future. *The Orff Echo*, 27(4), 8–11.
- Randles, C., Jimenez, R., Agostini, D., Balic, A., & Dodson, G. (2022). The experience of musical jamming: Testing the fit of a model of hermeneutic phenomenology of spirituality in music education. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 45(1), 257–272. [www.doi.org/10.1177/1321103X211038844](https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X211038844)
- Tietz, M. (2019). The most important thing we teach. *The Orff Echo*, 52(1), 22–29.
- Vasil, M. (2019). Nonformal teaching and informal learning: Popular music education and Orff Schulwerk. In Z. Moir, B. Powell, & G. D. Smith (Eds.), *The Bloomsbury handbook of popular music education: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 249–262). Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
- Vasil, M., & Dockan, D. (2023). Orff Schulwerk and popular music education [Article submitted for publication]. *Music Educators Journal*.

Orff Re-Echoes I-IV Available for Purchase on AOSA Website

The *Orff Re-Echoes* volumes offer a selection of articles from *The Orff Echo* and the *Supplements* from 1968 through 2008. Each one features a rich collection of historical, philosophical, and practical examples of the Orff Schulwerk approach. Buy one or all four as a gift to yourself and enjoy having this timeless reference in your personal library.



For pricing and ordering details, go to: <https://member.aosa.org/online/publications/shop>

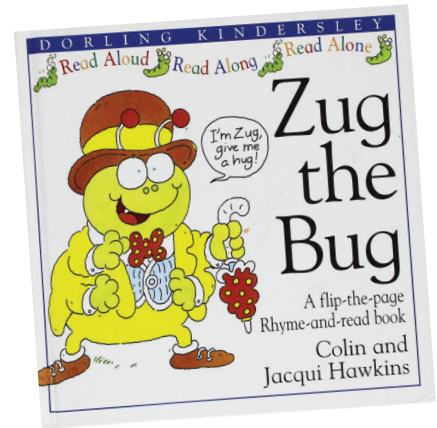
Reviewed by Amy Brown

Zug the Bug

Written by Colin and Jacqui Hawkins

Illustrated by Colin Hawkins

Dorling Kindersley (DK) Publishers LTD, 1995



Pointing to each letter as they perform the words reinforces letter recognition. This kind of activity, well suited to the Orff Schulwerk classroom, is reminiscent of *Electric Company* TV segments from the 70s, when the cast said the beginning letter sound, the ending word family sound, and then put them together. Additionally, this book series inspires cross-curricular collaboration that can be tied in with the National Core Arts Standards. For example, students could:

- **Create** (write and illustrate) their own stories using a given word family.
- **Perform** the vocabulary in music class on an instrument of their choice.
- **Respond** by giving feedback on stories and performances, prompted with “I liked,” “I noticed,” or “It was interesting when.”
- **Connect** by partnering and sharing something in their own lives relating to another classmate’s story.

Zug the Bug and the companion books are wonderful, easy-read stories to incorporate visual, aural, and kinesthetic modes of learning. If you are looking for an engaging book to use as a springboard for early literacy connections, this is an ideal addition to your children’s literature repertoire. ■

AMY BROWN is assistant professor of music education, pedagogy and practice at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her prior experience includes 25 years of teaching elementary music in Las Vegas, Nevada, and Tampa, Florida. She presents at various local, state, and national conferences, including, most recently, the 2021 AOSA National Conference in North Charleston, South Carolina. Amy has served as president and historian of the Nevada Desert Valley Chapter and is currently the course director for the UNLV summer AOSA Teacher Education Levels Courses.

50

Z*ug the Bug*, by Colin and Jacqui Hawkins, is a cartoon-style book with colorful pictures and rhyming short words, using the letter U, to tell a story. This book, most appropriate for kindergarten through Grade 2, is one in a series of five that focus on teaching word families. Other titles include *Tog the Dog*, *Pat the Cat*, *Mig the Pig*, and *Jen the Hen*. These books are out of print but are readily available used and come in either traditional hardcover or big-book options. Each page features a mini-story with two additional characters whose dialogue is displayed in speech bubbles.

Zug the Bug is a perfect book to reinforce how music relates to other subject areas. Orff Schulwerk teachers might consider guiding students to perform with body percussion, sing the “ug” words with simple *so-mi* melodies, play unpitched instruments, read and notate the rhythm of the “ug” words, and create rhythms using vocabulary word chains.

During our reading-themed week in March, my students paired up and shared as many words as they could think of that rhymed with “bug,” with bonus points for words not in the original story. To reinforce early reading, I wrote all the words on the board. A simple rhythmic poem can begin with “bug” and expand to students’ additional words. For example: U (rest) G (rest). Ug ug ug (rest). B U G (rest). Bug, bug, bug (rest).

Students can use body percussion and/or rhythm sticks to perform the poem or portions of it.

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

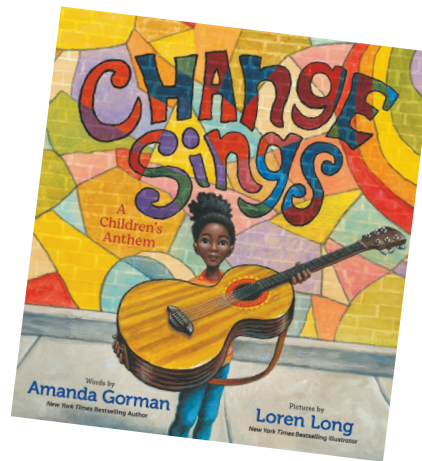
Reviewed by **Misty Kikoler**

Change Sings

Written by Amanda Gorman

Illustrated by Loren Long

Viking, 2021



Love, dream, hope, chant, forgive, include, accept, unite ... these are the themes of *Change Sings*. Written by presidential inaugural poet and activist Amanda Gorman and illustrated by Loren Long, *Change Sings* is a call for readers to use their talents and abilities to make a difference in the world.

The book opens with a young girl playing a guitar. As she cares for other children in her community, they join her efforts to serve the neighborhood. Gorman and Long show that even small acts of service can make a big difference. Long's rich, colorful illustrations showcase a beautiful, diverse community working together to create change. *Change Sings* is a window showing students how to become better global citizens and a mirror representing children of various colors, abilities, sizes, and religions.

Change Sings is recommended for 4- to 8-year-old children. With adult guidance, the content is accessible to young readers. Older students can use this book, too, as a springboard into a larger project or performance. They would likely have a better understanding of the vocabulary and catch on to some of the more nuanced language and accompanying illustrations. For example, in the text, "I don't make a taller fence, But fight to build a better bridge," the accompanying illustration shows children building a ramp for a child in a wheelchair. Although younger

students can grasp this on a simple level, richer conversations might follow with third- through fifth-grade students.

This book could be used in assembling a performance using songs, dances, speech pieces, and instrumental works that match some of its common themes. As a standalone piece, the story can inspire composition and improvisation using the author's powerful language. For example, Gorman's words and derivatives—"Scream, include, forgiveness, change-maker, acceptance"—in Long's vivid mural illustration, could be incorporated with Keetman's rhythmic building bricks. Older students familiar with the Orff Schulwerk approach can take these chunks, either as a class or in small groups, and create an original piece with text, instruments, and movement, bridging their exploration of songwriting and musical anthems.

In addition to the musical components, the book inspires many opportunities for collaboration with classroom and visual arts teachers. For instance, students could write poems to describe how their own change sings or, modeling Long's mural, they might paint a performance backdrop or, on a smaller scale, illustrate their own words as a mural.

Change Sings is a must-have book in any culturally responsive elementary music classroom. "We all hear change strumming. Won't you sing along?" ■

MISTY KIKOLER is a National Board Certified elementary music teacher in the Park Hill School District in Kansas City, Missouri. Misty recently received her doctorate in educational leadership from Baker University. She has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I-III. Misty is a member of the Heart of America Orff Chapter, AOSA, and NAFME.



Writing for AOSA

ONLINE
SESSION

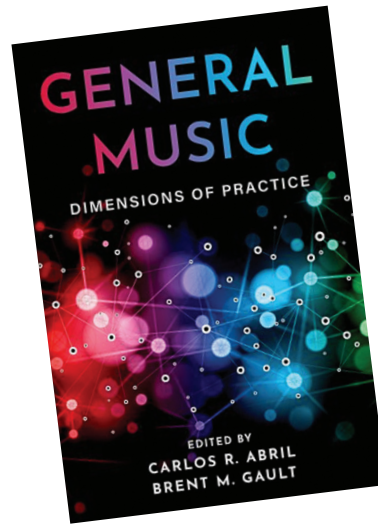
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2024
8:00PM–9:15PM EST

AOSA is hosting a session for all who are interested in learning about how to write for *The Orff Echo* and *Reverberations: Teachers Teaching Teachers*. Whether novice or expert, if you have ever wanted to write for AOSA and would like to be part of a dynamic discussion of article topics, yours and those of your colleagues, check the AOSA news page and your *Membership Essentials* email for upcoming details of this session!

Reviewed by Judith Thompson-Barthwell

General Music: Dimensions of Practice

Edited by Carlos R. Abril and Brent Gault
Oxford University Press, 2022



We should treasure the person who can be a generalist, the conduit for a world of wonder and awe. —Yo-Yo Ma

As general music educators, we need to embrace our importance as generalists in steering young music makers toward their pride, success, enjoyment, and possibilities. The general music educator can draw from a wide array of areas of knowledge and music practices. Our power lies in the ability to direct our students, as a group and individually, toward their musical needs, desires, and deeper understandings.

General Music: Dimensions of Practice, edited by Carlos Abril and Brent Gault, contains many possibilities for how to think about and focus on what is best for today's students. Through well-researched articles centered around the 2014 National Standards of Performing, Connecting, Creating, and Responding, new and diverse ways of engaging or thinking about music are presented. Each chapter is a piece of a holistic puzzle, ideas for teachers and teaching artists to explore and consider in their practice. Alternating between music making (performing and creating) and the meaningful dimensions of music (connecting and responding), each chapter includes background and rationale, guidance ideas for engaging, and suggestions for how to assess growth.

The previous book edited by Abril and Gault and published in 2016, *Teaching General Music:*

Approaches, Issues, and Viewpoints, examined a wide variety of approaches for teaching general music, whereas this book could be considered the next step in the direction of exploring current best practices in music education.

Readers will be pleasantly surprised at the connections the featured writers make with the situations their college students will and do encounter in the everyday teaching of children. For example, this book shares current research of what is working in America's music classrooms today. The focus is on the digital age in which our students learn and the need for those from middle and upper elementary to high school to have a voice and a choice in their education, starting with and relating to their views and understandings. The generalist music educator works as a facilitator to guide, organize, and direct students toward their best music education.

Those who hold Orff Schulwerk at their core will also appreciate the diversity of a wide variety of approaches for teaching general music. Orff Schulwerk teachers have always been interested in multiple approaches (i.e., singing, playing, moving, watching, listening), from imitation to creation and connecting with related and integrated arts. They have also embraced other theoretical and philosophical understandings as well as methodologies and applications as they fill in gaps and complement classroom situations. *General Music: Dimensions of Practice* can

introduce younger and older teachers to even more approaches to capture the interests of our 21st-century students.

After the introduction, which explains what the book is about, how it is organized, and who it is intended for, each section shares several thought-provoking articles. Readers can choose one section or a chapter of interest, in any order. Several chapters have a companion online supplementary resource to review as well.

The first section, “Performing,” begins with an article about the importance of singing, using the one instrument we always carry with us. Logically, the next articles explore Orff instruments, fretted instruments, band instruments, and ways of bringing world music into the music classroom with instruments.

Next, the “Connecting” section embraces and explores many ways of associating and connecting ideas, including within the music curriculum, other subject areas, and diverse musical cultures. Children of today also need to make connections with themselves and others (windows and mirrors), and some need meaningful music relationships to reflect their living, social, and historical environments for music classes to feel relevant. The generalist music educator’s role is to allow multiple ways of knowing to occur. Making musical connections important and meaningful in the lives of all children is the focus of the chapters in this section.

Creating, though it can be messy even with a structure, is a necessity with young people today. Children need to have opportunities to create as they learn to feel confident and try out their identities. The “Creating” section offers

explorations into music composition, production, song writing, and the use of digital media in the classroom. Creating naturally evokes critical thinking skills that involve conducting, symbolic representation, pre-production/production/post-production activities, listening, and many other aptitudes, whether students work in person or online. Readers will find a plethora of ideas to consider about organization and ways to think about involving students in this section.

The last section, “Responding,” presents three chapters—responding through movement, listening, and analysis. Each of these chapters refers to deeper understanding of what happens in the music classroom by responding to what is heard. It presents lesson plan ideas readers will find helpful and applicable.

General Music: Dimensions of Practice combines the tried and true of what has worked in education and includes new understandings of how today’s children learn. This book also describes some newer or unknown applications, and challenges educators to re-examine how, why, and what they teach. ■

JUDITH THOMPSON-BARTHWELL has been a member of AOSA since 1975. A music educator for 44 years in public and private schools, she is retired but stays involved with children by volunteering in music classrooms in the Detroit area. She also mentors working educators as invited. Judy was an AOSA Movement and Basic Levels Teacher Educator for many years and has served on the AOSA National Board of Trustees as a trustee and treasurer and on several AOSA sub-committees. She received the Michigan MEA Music Educator of the Year Award in 2012 and the AOSA Distinguished Service Award in 2021.

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

AOSA Professional Development Conference	inside back cover	Sonor	inside front cover
Beatin’ Path	33	Studio 49	2
Music Is Elementary	13	Teaching With Orff	5
Peripole	back cover	West Music	1
		Yamaha	9



JOIN THE AMERICAN ORFF-SCHULWERK ASSOCIATION

Members enjoy multiple benefits, including a subscription to *The Orff Echo*. For more information or to join, visit AOSA online at www.aosa.org

AOSA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Josh Southard
President-Elect	Patrick Ware
Vice President of DEIA	Manju Durairaj
Interim Vice President of DEIA	Victor Lozada
Recording Secretary	Kathy Hummel
Treasurer	Karen Petty

AOSA NATIONAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Region I	Dan Gullick and Fauna Woolfe
Region II	Armando Campos and Nora Golden
Region III	Jeaneau Julian and Natasha Thurmon
Region IV	Heather Klossner and Michele Sampson
Region V	Karin Puffer and Matthew Stensrud
Region VI	Melissa Marotta and Katie Settleberry

AOSA CONFERENCE CHAIRS

2023 National Conference Chairs (Albuquerque, NM)
Jill DeVilbiss and Sarah Fairfield

2024 National Conference Chairs (Des Moines, IA)
Lisa Hewitt and Rosemary Pilonero

THE ORFF ECHO COPYRIGHT POLICY

AOSA members may make up to 50 photocopies of up to two articles from one issue for educational purposes only. *The Orff Echo* requests that the masthead pages (Table of Contents pages) also be photocopied and distributed with the article(s). Non-members, or members wishing to make more than 50 copies, must seek permission in writing from the editor. All publications, non-profit or commercial, seeking to reprint material from *The Orff Echo* must request permission by writing to the editor.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE ORFF ECHO

The Orff Echo is your resource for new or time-tested ideas, thought-provoking concepts, philosophical investigations, work that supports AOSA's diversity statement, and other discussions about the Orff Schulwerk approach. Check the editorial calendar on this page to learn about upcoming features. We also accept articles on any subject as well as children's and Supporting Our Learning book reviews, cover art, and coda content/photos for every issue. Contact an issue coordinator or the editor for more information.

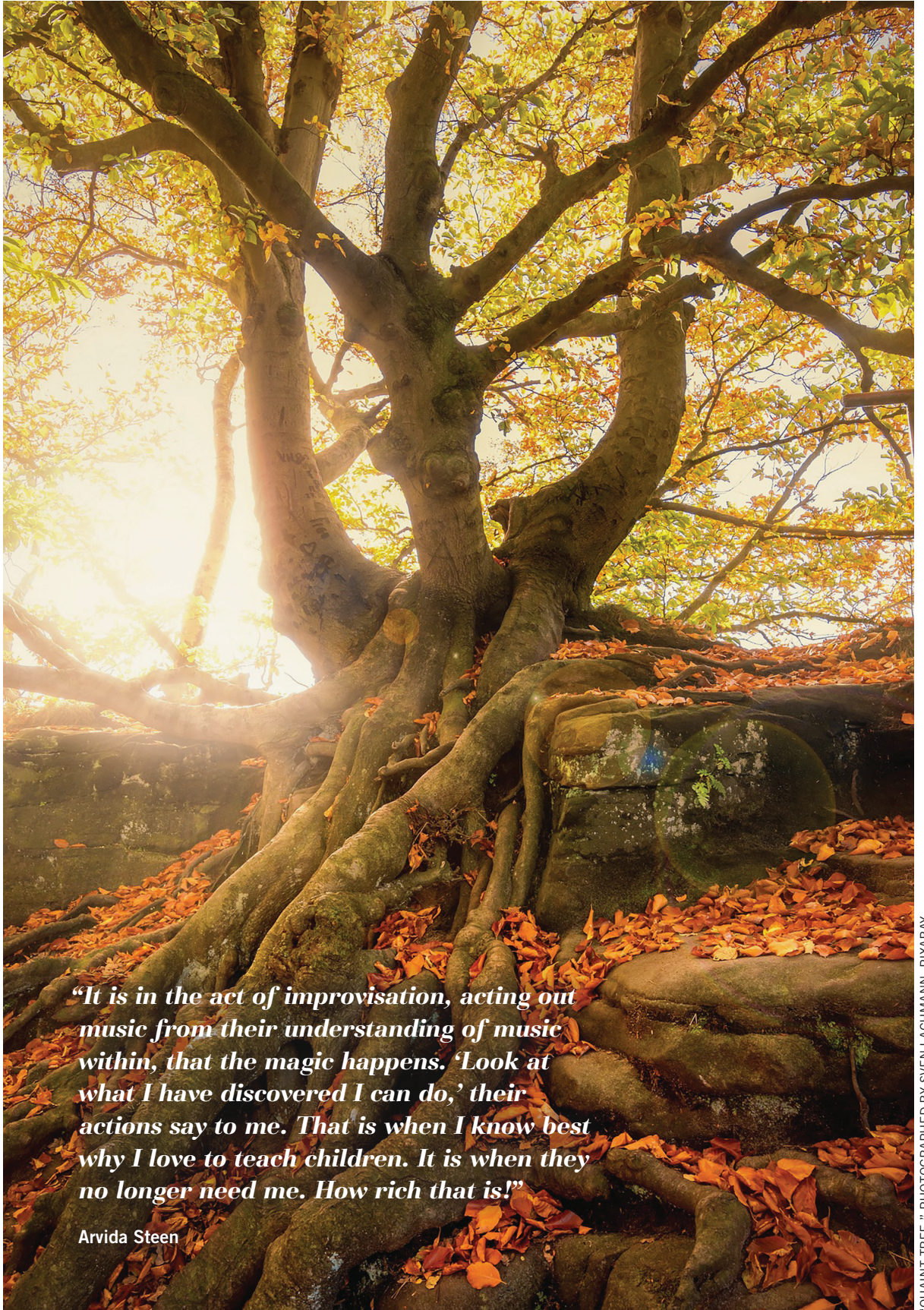
AD INQUIRIES

Tiffany English
Executive Director
American Orff-Schulwerk Association
1284 SOM Center Road, #264
Mayfield Heights, OH 44124
(440) 600-7329
tiffany@aosa.org

THE ORFF ECHO EDITORIAL CALENDAR

The Orff Echo seeks and publishes open submissions as well as feature topic articles that summarize the focus of the issue. If you would like to contribute, contact one of the issue coordinators or send your inquiry to echoeditor@aosa.org

Issue	Feature Topic	Coordinator(s)	Contributor's Deadline
Summer 2024	Be	Christine Ballenger Diana Hawley Erika Knapp	November 15, 2023
Fall 2024	Connect	Ian Cicco Austin Cooper Alan Spurgeon	February 15, 2024
Winter 2024	Open Submission	TBD	May 15, 2024
Spring 2025	Media	TBD	August 15, 2024



“It is in the act of improvisation, acting out music from their understanding of music within, that the magic happens. ‘Look at what I have discovered I can do,’ their actions say to me. That is when I know best why I love to teach children. It is when they no longer need me. How rich that is!”

Arvida Steen

“QUAINT TREE.” PHOTOGRAPHED BY SVEN LACHMANN, PIXABAY.

¡Viva!



2023 AOSA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

November 1 - 4, 2023 • Albuquerque, NM

Peripole® Halo® Gold Recorder



Still The Best Classroom Recorder Made!

- Smooth, even tone with accurate tuning and intonation!
- Superior Sound!
- Complete Enrichment Kit Included!
- New Lower Price!

Recorder Features:

- Two piece, Renaissance shape with textured ABS construction. Looks and feels like a wooden instrument.
- Curved windway for optimal sound.
- Easy to produce low notes without shrieks or squeaks.
- Includes Enrichment Kit.

Enrichment Kit Contents:

- **Peripole® Halo® Hanger Neck Strap** -
 - Holds recorder in true vertical ready-to-play position.
 - Won't slide up and interfere with thumb position or windway.
 - Includes **Safety-Snap®** breakaway unit.
- **Extra-Wide zippered case** designed to hold recorder with Halo® neck strap attached.
- Stick-On Velcro **Thumb Spot** to help position the right thumb.
- Online access to **Peripole® Fingering Chart** with printing/photocopy permission at peripole.com.
- Cork grease and cleaning rod included.

P6000 SOPRANO
BAROQUE FINGERING

P6001 SOPRANO
GERMAN FINGERING

P6250 ALTO
BAROQUE FINGERING

P62501 ALTO
GERMAN FINGERING

**The Official
Recorder of
the Carnegie
Hall Link-Up*
Program.**

SOPRANO
P6000, P6001

◀ ALTO P6250

800.443.3592
PERIPOLE.COM

Peripole® Halo® Recorders
and Halo® Hangers are
Protected by Trademark
and Trade Dress

