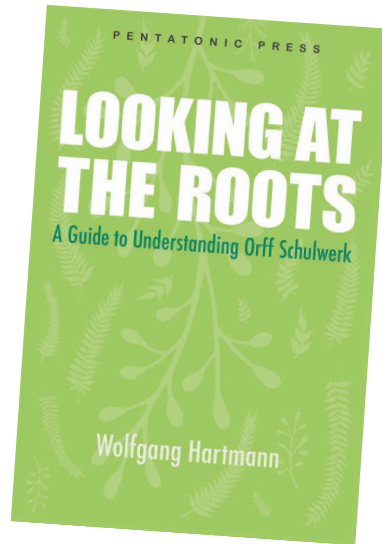


Reviewed by **Martha O'Hehir**

## Looking at the Roots: A Guide to Understanding Orff Schulwerk

Written by Wolfgang Hartmann  
Pentatonic Press, 2021



**B**oth new and masterful practitioners will find *Looking at the Roots: A Guide to Understanding Orff Schulwerk* by Wolfgang Hartmann, one of our foundational teachers, to be an extraordinary resource for the Orff Schulwerk community. It is also a current, definitive, and concise document to represent Orff Schulwerk to those looking at it from outside. Salient themes are introduced in each of the book's 11 short chapters, two extensions, the chronology of Orff and Keetman, and the mini "Who's Who."

The Schulwerk's emphasis on facilitating human artistry is supported throughout the book. The author includes stories of vision and resourcefulness in the biographical material on Orff, Keetman, and others, bringing to life their quests to find and bequeath a music pedagogy that nurtures the human spirit as a co-creator in this world. Inspirational entry points for future lessons and for personal growth in innovation and imagination abound.

Almost hidden in these pages are some long-lost but notable ideas to explore; these are strategies and concepts that arise in the text without fanfare, yet are ripe with possibility. For instance, in the chapter devoted to coaching instrumental teachers into the world of elementary general music teaching, Hartmann describes "pioneer level" and "play level" to explain the appropriate

function and use of didactic (convergent) and open-ended (divergent) teaching processes within the curriculum. A bygone art that formerly was a mainstay of the Schulwerk is "singing storytelling." This form of improvised opera appears in the chapter on Orff's youth (he created many of these as a child), in the chapter on Orff as a composer, conductor, and pedagogue, and again in Extension Two, along with several vivid examples of creative student compositions that model how easily this can be worked into our lessons. For those who struggle with developing compositional and improvisational prompts, many entry points and inspiring lesson ideas are embedded in the text, especially in the two extensions at the end of the book.

**Whether you study this alone or with colleagues, you are likely to feel as if you have come into "the inner circle" of the world of Orff Schulwerk.**

If you are interested in history and the biographies of Orff's colleagues, "Bringing Schulwerk to Life" introduces readers to most of the important early contributors. Chapter 4 is a transparent view of the historical context in Germany in which the founders of the Schulwerk navigated. Chapter 5 is devoted entirely to Gunild Keetman, Orff's primary co-composer and pedagogical colleague. Chapter 9 places the

Schulwerk in context with the work of Kodály, Dalcroze, Laban, Gordon, and others, which provides the reader with an introduction to the gifts and limitations of each approach and suggests how they can be blended together. Chapter 11, “Orff Schulwerk Today,” and Extension One, combined, provide a feast of written resources, authors, programs, institutes, and opportunities worldwide for meeting our Orff-extended family and continuing our professional development internationally. The chronology of Orff’s and Keetman’s lives also lists major landmarks in the development of modern music education.

I envision several applications of this book. Certainly, anyone writing a thesis or dissertation with an emphasis on the Schulwerk will find it an indispensable addition to their research of literature, providing a concise contextual overview of the Orff Schulwerk approach and its foundational materials, proponents, intent, and universal applications. It is an ideal guide for our teacher educators and directors, both for their own professional development and as a resource for those whose programs include question and answer sessions and/or conversations on history, philosophy, and roots of the Schulwerk. University professors responsible for introducing students to various approaches to music education will find this small book with its short chapters an ideal resource for probing not only the Schulwerk, but also the companion music education philosophies and how they support each other. It can help pre-service and in-service music teachers create a scaffold for

developing their philosophy of music education and a strategic plan for professional development.

This book could easily serve as a chapter’s book study, a PLN, as required reading between AOSA Teacher Education Levels Courses, or as a supplement to some Master Classes. With this in mind, there is a companion review of this book, including a syllabus, in the August 9, 2022 issue of AOSA’s digital publication, *Reverberations*, which is available online in our Resource Library. The syllabus is organized as a table and includes eleven topics, proposed readings with page numbers, and some guiding discussion questions. Whether you study this alone or with colleagues, you are likely to feel as if you have come into “the inner circle” of the world of Orff Schulwerk.

We can immediately use the valuable tools and information the author has provided to create a strategic career plan that reflects promise and opportunity. *Looking at the Roots: A Guide to Understanding Orff Schulwerk* broadens our knowledge and invites us to go as deep into the Schulwerk as our hearts desire. ■

**MARTHA M. O’HEHIR** holds master’s degrees in music education from Shenandoah Conservatory and in educational leadership from Johns Hopkins University. She has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and Master Classes and has served on the editorial boards of *The Orff Echo* and *Reverberations*. Martha helped create the first PLN on *Elementaria* and adapted Schulwerk pedagogy for teaching adults to improvise in modes on their various instruments at the bedside. She currently serves on *The Orff Echo* editorial board.