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It began with "Wir senden den Schulfunk..."

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## It began with "*Wir senden den Schulfunk...*"

Wolfgang Hartmann

With these words, a new music education programme was announced on Radio München (now Bayerischer Rundfunk) on 15 September 1948. It was aimed at students in Bavarian primary schools. The children were invited and instructed to create their own pieces of music, based on well-known rhymes, riddles, songs and dances. Printed sheet music and explanatory texts were not required.

76 years ago, the Orff-Schulwerk was launched as a radio programme; an unusual way of bringing a new educational concept into the classroom. But it was obviously successful: it was heard and understood, first and foremost by Bavarian students and their teachers. But music teachers from other countries soon became aware of these programmes, in which children played music and encouraged other children to make their own music (the presenter promised at the end of the first programme: *'Dear children outside at the loudspeakers. We have musicians here in the studio. But soon we won't need them anymore. Then we'll make our own music.'*) Today, three quarters of a century later, we know that the Orff-Schulwerk has long since found its place in educational systems all over the world. What is even more important is that it has been able to integrate itself into the respective cultural reality wherever it is used. A big "thank you" is due to all the teachers, music educators, artists and scientists who contributed to Orff and Keetman's music education ideas reaching children all over the world.

If we look back at these beginnings, we can see how fortunate circumstances and the political conditions of the time worked together. This also explains why the Orff-Schulwerk found its way to the public via the medium of radio:

The end of the Second World War was only a few years away. With its collapse, the Nazi regime had come to an end and there was room for a new democratic development. Without having to fear political reprisals, Carl Orff could now devote himself to his compositional work. The half-finished score of his opera *Antigone* lay before him. His pedagogical interests had been pushed into the background. When the NSDAP came to power in 1933, everything that had been developed during the time of the *Günther-Schule* had to come to an end.

In 1948, it was a decisive impulse from outside that led to Carl Orff once again focussing on his pedagogical visions. This time, however, the political circumstances were not an obstacle; on the contrary, they contributed to the realisation of Orff's Schulwerk concept. As is well known, Germany was occupied by the victorious powers after the war, with the south of the country being administered by a US military government. The Western Allies had planned an extensive democratisation programme for Germany, and public radio stations were to play an important role in this – 'education through radio' was the guiding principle. With this in mind, Radio München began its own educational radio programme in 1947, similar to stations in the other federal states. In Munich, the young journalist Annemarie Schambeck was responsible for setting up and running this programme format. When it came to deciding what should happen

in the area of music education, she received an equally decisive and trend-setting suggestion at a crucial moment. It came from her colleague, the author and musicologist Walter Panofsky. Carl Orff recorded this decisive moment in his Documentation Volume 3:

Dr. Panofsky, a colleague at the Bavarian Radio, an ever-understanding friend who was also well-acquainted with my work, had found a copy of that record *Einzug und Reigen der Kinder und Mädchen* from the Festival of the 9th Olympic Games, Berlin, 1936, in an antique shop. He had played it to the head of the school broadcasts, Annemarie Schambeck. She had never heard any Schulwerk music before and was so affected by it that she spontaneously asked me: "*Can you write music like this that children could play themselves?*" (Orff, 1978, p. 212)

According to Panofsky (1963, pp. 70-71), 'Orff's acceptance was rather hesitant, and not impulsive' when Mrs. Schambeck called with the request, and 'he obviously did not find it easy to start again from the beginning'. Moreover, this radio work also cost him time and energy, which he actually wanted to devote entirely to his stage work.

I was nevertheless attracted by the proposition, for it was not a revival of something that had come to an end... What I was now being offered was something completely different. A music exclusively for children that could be played, sung and danced by them but that could also in a similar way be invented by them - a world of their own. (Orff, *ibid.*)

When also Gunild Keetman agreed to be a co-author, Carl Orff's decision was much easier. And the work began...

However, the announcement of the new programme series was not received uniformly positively. Older colleagues in particular showed certain reservations. But Annemarie Schambeck was determined to broadcast the entire series of 14 individual programmes, even if there was strong opposition. 'It became clear how decisively important it was that an independent institution outside the schools' walls had become a protagonist of the Schulwerk' (Panofsky, p.72). However, the response was extremely positive, and the entire programme had to be repeated in the same school year.



Gunild Keetman rehearsing with children (1948)  
©Ulrike Friedrich. Carl-Orff-Stiftung/Archiv: Orff-Zentrum München



In the Radio Studio of the BR (from left to right): Walter Panofsky, Carl Orff, Gertrud Willert-Orff,  
Gunild Keetman and Rudolf Kirmeyer (1948)

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Carl-Orff-Stiftung/Archiv: Orff-Zentrum München



In the recording studio of the BR. The children's group is directed by Gunild Keetman, Carl Orff is listening in the audio cubicle (1948)

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The Orff-Schulwerk on the radio attracted more and more attention and triggered a development that brings to mind the image of an ever-growing snowball:

1949 The teachers wanted to have the new instruments used in the radio studio in their own classrooms. Production of the xylophones and all the other elemental instruments therefore began in 1949 (Studio 49).

In the same year, Gunild Keetman began teaching children at the Mozarteum Music Academy (now the University of Music) in Salzburg. Teachers had the opportunity to see how she taught the Schulwerk.

1950 For many teachers, just listening to the Schulwerk on the radio was not enough. They also wanted to look at the scores that were used in the programmes.

The music publishing house Schott's Söhne in Mainz therefore began printing the first volume of the five-volume series *Orff-Schulwerk - Musik für Kinder*.

1961 The Orff Institute was opened as a special department of the Mozarteum Music Academy and received its own building in 1963.

Very soon, the first Orff-Schulwerk associations were founded in different countries. These were usually founded by graduates of the Orff Institute after returning to their home countries.

Carl Orff therefore recognised the need to establish and expand contact and professional exchange with these Orff-Schulwerk associations. This led to the establishment of the "Centre for the Orff-Schulwerk". Over the years, under the direction of Hermann Regner, and later Barbara Haselbach and Shirley Salmon, this centre was restructured and renamed several times. Since 2014, it is called *International Orff-Schulwerk Forum Salzburg*.

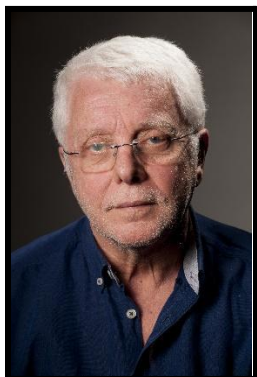
Today, 76 years after the Orff-Schulwerk first "went over the airwaves", we can still see the Orff-Schulwerk "snowball" growing. How lucky we were that Walter Panofsky found this meaningful "black disc" in an antique shop - and also knew what to do with it...

One more remark:

Bavarian Radio's school broadcasts remained faithful to the Schulwerk for many decades. First Hermann Regner, former director of the Orff Institute, and then Wolfgang Hartmann produced series of programmes relating to the Orff-Schulwerk until the 1990s, such as "Children make music – New ways to Orff-Schulwerk". The Schulfunk broadcasts were eventually discontinued.

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