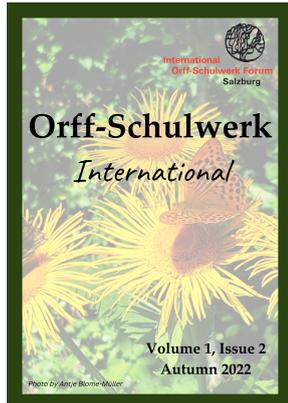




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Publication Review: Orff-Schulwerk in Diverse Cultures: An Idea That Went Round the World

Edited by Barbara Haselbach and Carolee Stewart,
Reviewed by Robyn McQueen



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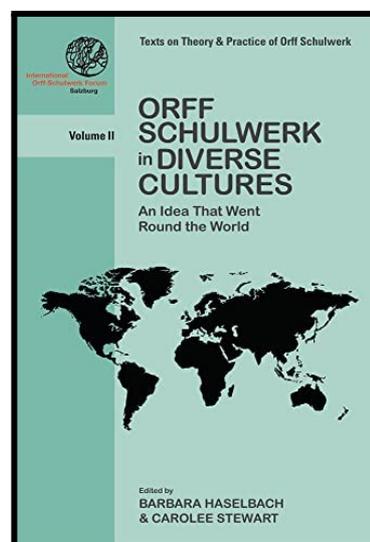
Orff Schulwerk in Diverse Cultures: An Idea That Went Round the World (Texts on Theory and Practice of Orff Schulwerk, 2)

Edited by Barbara Haselbach and Carolee Stewart

Pentatonic Press, 2021 (260 pages)

Reviewed by Robyn McQueen

This is the second volume in the series *Texts on Theory and Practice of Orff-Schulwerk*. The first volume, *Basic Texts from the years 1932-2010* (ed. Barbara Haselbach) is well known by Orff students around the world, as the German and English edition of 2011 has been followed by translations published in Spanish, Farsi, Chinese, Greek, and Russian. Two further volumes are in preparation. While the first volume captures the exciting formative decades of Orff Schulwerk (OS) as it developed in Central Europe, this second volume gives expression to the challenges and aspirations of Orff educators in the more globalised realities of the 21st century. Five articles in the theory section address the dissemination and adaptation of OS. These are followed in the practice section by contributions from Orff Schulwerk Associations (OSAs) in Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Oceania, and selected European countries.



The dedication to both the memory of Herman Regner and to ‘all the children and teachers who love to sing and dance and play’ prefigures the profoundly personal tone that imbues the whole work. The great achievement of this book is the fact that Barbara Haselbach, Coralee Stewart, and their team have succeeded in commissioning and translating articles from so many Orff scholars and practitioners around the world. This success demonstrates both the high regard in which they are held and their personal connection with so many people through years of travel, teaching, and scholarship. More than snapshots in a family album, these articles read like a family tree revealing multiple relationships that gave rise to and now sustain the growth of OS practice around the globe. Neither is this merely a collection of family fireside stories. Each contribution is grounded in the social, political, theoretical, and pedagogical contexts of its author/s, many of whom have contributed to the scholarship and practice of Orff Schulwerk over decades. If you have time for nothing else, I recommend reading the introduction because it gives a historical perspective and rationale for the work, touching on some of the themes that emerge later. In the appendix the list of contributors reads like a roll of honour, as each writer has contributed to the dissemination of the Schulwerk, often in a voluntary capacity and at times against the tide of public opinion or educational fashion. While every organisation has its own story to tell, the division of contributions in Part II into geographical areas, each introduced with a map, serves to underline the value of connections between OSAs that are geographically, and often culturally close to each other.

The text is presented in two main parts. Part I covers the themes of dissemination and adaptation of Orff Schulwerk, with articles by Herman Regner, Mary Shamrock, Michael Kugler, Wolfgang Hartmann, and Doug Goodkin. It is a gift to the reader to find these all together in one place. Hartmann's article provides a clear summary of the principles of the Schulwerk. Considering the variety of expressions and contexts of the Schulwerk that have arisen as a result of Orff and Keetman's intentional openness, such a clear articulation of these guiding principles provides an important reference point. Shamrock's chapter draws and builds on her 1995 book *Orff Schulwerk: Brief History, Description, and Issues in Global Dispersal*, and offers some very practical suggestions for facilitating OS in cross-cultural settings. The second, larger section of this text concerns the practice of OS around the world. The 24 contributions are presented in sections, one each for Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. The editors take care to explain the rationale behind their invitations to selected countries to contribute. 'Because the focus of this collection is primarily on "diverse cultures," contributions from Asia, Africa, North and South America, and Oceania are the focus, supplemented by a few European contributions that have a special feature to show' (p.4). Likewise, they indicate the type of content they requested be included:

...various topics were requested for the contributions: these included a historical overview of the development of the Orff Schulwerk in the country; the inclusion of country-specific sources (songs, texts, games, dances, instruments, etc.); the relationship with an often different musical system; the inclusion in the respective teaching system, and the difficulties of adapting to such a system; the target groups addressed, and so on. (p.5)

As I read the contributions from each country, several themes stood out to me, which I will relate below. However, none of this was far removed from the realities of teaching, and before long I found myself on a series of delightful diversions visiting Orff websites the world over. These websites offer a great resource of teaching materials. I was also able to follow links to *YouTube* clips (e.g., demonstrating various styles of Korean music) and to some national curriculum documents. I found it so helpful to have trustworthy examples not only to broaden my own experience and knowledge but to share with my students.

Three common themes in the chapters on Orff practice are

1. the necessity for teacher development and training alongside the provision of written materials and instruments,
2. the diminishing time allocated to arts education in teacher training programmes, and
3. the sometimes sudden impact of social and political forces on education philosophy and resourcing.

There are many stories of how groups were formed, sometimes independently and sometimes with the support of schools or universities. Some countries have experienced peaks and troughs of interest in OS over the years and various reasons are given for this. In some cases, political and administrative changes have been detrimental. In others, an absence of government requirements has allowed such a creative child-centred approach to flourish. Contributors in non-Western countries raise issues such as the problem of adapting the Orff repertoire to a musical culture that has little in common with it. Likewise, the Orff instruments may not be compatible with traditional music featuring microtones. Diversity not just between, but within countries is acknowledged and each OSA is finding ways to

integrate immigrant and indigenous perspectives. Each chapter has its own list of references and resources. A combined bibliography and discography of works in English and German is offered in the appendix. Another helpful addition is the comprehensive list of OSAs with dates of formation and website addresses. This would be another jumping-off point for hours of web browsing. Black-and-white photographs of children and teachers at play, and of instruments, complement each account and emphasise some of the things we all as Orff practitioners have in common. I did notice some spelling and formatting errors, such as a redundant bullet point and unnecessary bold type. I found these surprisingly distracting and hope they will be corrected for any further editions or print runs.

In 2017, as president of Orff New Zealand Aotearoa (ONZA) I had the privilege of attending Forum meetings in Salzburg. Reading this text took me right back to those moments listening to reports from selected OSAs. Politics, personalities, finances, government regulations, and trends in educational thought are all woven together in the background of the rich tales that are told. The reader is invited to consider, not just theoretically, but in very practical ways, the challenges faced and the creative solutions that make possible the continued work of applying the principles of OS in diverse contexts. Changes to the way we communicate that were accelerated by the global pandemic have enabled deeper, wider, and more frequent conversations between members of the Orff community worldwide. Such interactions will be enhanced by this text, as the content inspires questions both conversational and scholarly. Readers will find both comfort and challenge; comfort in the fact that others have faced obstacles and found solutions, and the challenge to pick up some tools and continue cultivating the growth of the wildflower 'for all the children and teachers who love to sing and dance and play.'

Information on how to order the book in your region is provided here:

https://www.orff-schulwerk-forum-salzburg.org/_files/ugd/8289b4_8244225dfb6b40c78a1254e2d6f bdf52.pdf

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