



# LEADERSHIP

## Nurturing Advocacy for the Schulwerk: Advocacy at the National Level

By Donna Staton, Cherryville, North Carolina

**W**here does a crafty phrase like “So Cal So Cool” originate? Creative word chains penned by personalities of hosting chapters cleverly lure us to their region for an AOSA National Conference. The imprinted words resurface in our memories years afterward reminding us of unforgettable conference experiences and their servant leaders.

Hosting a national conference is a vision implanted in the minds and hearts of chapter members. A passion coupled with commitment drives a group of dedicated teachers to enlist as national and local committee chairs and conference workers. A genuine desire to give back to AOSA invites volunteers to consider, “Where do I fit?” “What contribution can I make to Orff Schulwerk?”

Leaders who get on board for this adventure are grounded in the belief that Orff Schulwerk is the answer for music education in our schools. They use all their abilities and gifts to rally one another and produce a lasting mark for music and movement education. The match of personalities and positions within the servant leadership team implores the group to organize committees, encourage workers and seek out the best presenters and performing groups in the nation who impart the spirit of Schulwerk.

A national conference chair serves as network correspondent to conference personnel, volunteers and the National Board of Trustees. Dreams of a vision cast in the hearts of local chapter members are fleshed out among these entities. The common purpose held among each calls us to a new level of awareness. Resolution to meet the challenges of music education in America is foremost. Linking the nation’s educators to an effective and fulfilling approach is vital to the mission.

One primary mandate in conference planning is to build a program that identifies and meets the needs of a diverse population including first-time attendees, master level students and researchers. Presenters that are selected demonstrate how to incorporate music, speech and movement with various ages, cultures and curricula. Guided exploration provides new material, ideas and techniques to stimulate, revitalize and empower participants.

The benefits are priceless. New teachers gain a better understanding of the Orff Schulwerk approach in sessions and conversations with on-site mentors. Veterans recharge and go forth with new determination. University students spark interest from their first glimpse of active music making. Administrators express positive feedback professing the value of Orff trained teachers. Proud parents are grateful for the experiences provided to their children.

The thrust of a national conference becomes a widespread national campaign. State and local arts organizations graciously underwrite projects. Businesses and industries provide generous donations and sponsorships. Dignitaries and guests free busy schedules to welcome, host or introduce sessions. Family members roll up their sleeves and invest precious gifts of time and talents.

An endeavor of this magnitude boldly challenges everyone to learn, lead and laugh. Some days there seems to be no correct answer to the questions. The tasks at times consume, and the load can make you want to sit and cry. The goal of shaping a beautiful product keeps things in perspective, and all the parts eventually come together miraculously.

I was warned that I would never look at a conference the same way after I served as national conference chair. I found this to be true. I was fully confident that those behind-the-scenes workers, giving generously of their time and energy, were shining with enthusiasm, faithful to complete a tremendous work.

Are you thinking, “What prompts people to take on life-sized tasks such as hosting a national conference?” Reflect on the day you were invited to your first Orff Schulwerk workshop. The participants were energized and motivated. Refreshment was in the air. Aren’t you thankful that you were introduced to the approach that changed your teaching career? Could you give back what you have received in service to a local chapter or to the national organization? Your soul and spirit is captive to the process and the people. Shall we plant and harvest a generation!

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