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RIG Newsletter

American Orff-Schulwerk Association, Research Interest Group (RIG)
Editor, Dr. Isabel Barbara O'Hagin, RIG Chair/

Research Committee Update

By Michael Chandler, AOSA Research Committee Chair

On behalf of the AOSA Research Committee, I bring you greetings! I would like to let you know about the progress of our work over the past two years and to inform you of exciting changes taking place that we hope will further support and promote academic research in Orff Schulwerk. It is also my wish to express sincere thanks to Dr. Kathy Robinson, Research Advisory Panel Chair (RAP) and Dr. Isabel Barbara O'Hagin, Research Interest Group Chair (RIG) for their tireless service to AOSA's research endeavors during their tenure.

Are you aware of AOSA's Research Grants and Research Partner Grants? The **Research Grant** exists to encourage research in varied applications of Orff Schulwerk and to promote the Orff Schulwerk philosophy and process. Documentation of the findings is made available through the Isabel McNeill Carley Library. Awards of \$100 to \$5,000 may be granted for selected research proposals, and you need only be a member of AOSA and complete the application requirements to be considered for a research grant. Application deadlines are January 15 and July 15 each year. Grant recipients are asked to share their research findings with AOSA at the conclusion of the study through a presentation at an AOSA National Conference. A summary article of the findings should also be submitted to *The Orff Echo* for publication consideration. The researcher may also submit the full study to any other professional journal for publication.

The **Research Partner Grant** encourages joint research by a music teacher, as the primary investigator and team leader, and an experienced researcher. A maximum of three proposals may be awarded up to \$800 each per year to cover expenses related to the research project. As with the Research Grant, the research team agrees to present the findings of their work at an AOSA National Conference following the study and to provide a summary article for consideration by the Editorial Board of *The Orff Echo* for publication. The complete study may now also be initially submitted to any other professional journal for publication. Applications for these two grant programs may be

found on the AOSA Web site under both the “Scholarships & Grants” tab and the “Research” tab. Just go to www.aosa.org to learn more!

If you visit the AOSA Web site and click on the “Research Tab,” you’ll see several new additions. This Web location is now the one-stop spot for information about AOSA’s research activities. Are you interested in applying for one of AOSA’s two research grant programs but need some guidance for a topic? Just click on the **AOSA Research Committee Initiative 2007** link to read an extensive list of topic ideas under three different areas: student musical learning and understanding; adult teacher education; and historical and philosophical foundations. Would you like to see what research projects in Orff Schulwerk have already been completed? Click on the link to the **Orff Research Webliography**, an online, interactive bibliography hosted by the University of Kentucky.

Another great source for materials to assist you in your research may be found by clicking the link to the **Isabel McNeill Carley Library and AOSA Archives**. One-of-a-kind research materials, letters, and the archives of AOSA comprise the Isabel McNeil Carley Library housed in the Sibley Library at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. On the Research Tab, you’ll also find links to the **RIG Newsletter** and the **History Interest Group** as well as links to the **Call for Poster Session Proposals** and applications to **AOSA’s Research Grants**. Visit the Research Tab at www.aosa.org today to access all of these resources.

Another exciting way we hope to encourage more research in Orff Schulwerk is to offer a **Teacher Training Course Research Packet**. The packet provides information about AOSA’s Research Grants, the Call for Poster Session Proposals, applications to both grant programs, and a sample poster session submission. It is our hope to reach a greater number of potential researchers who might already be enrolled in a graduate program in music education or music therapy as well as those who teach in those programs.

Finally, I’d like to let you know about the **AOSA Select Research Topic**. This program will be developed in the coming months and will focus attention on research with a specific topic in mind during each six-month grant application period. The Research Committee will offer a specified amount of funding for the select research topic based upon recommendations of the Research Advisory Panel. During any given grant application period, additional proposals are welcomed that relate to research in other topic areas. Watch for information about the first AOSA Select Research Topic soon!

Visit the Research Tab
at www.aosa.org
today!

If you're not part of the Research Interest Group, or if you know a colleague who is not yet a member of RIG, please contact Dr. Isabel Barbara O'Hagin at ohagi1ib@cmich.edu. On July 1, I will complete my tenure as Chair of the Research Committee, and my colleague Paul Hallsted will serve as Chair. I wish the best to you in all your work and thank you for your interest in Orff Schulwerk research and in the American Orff-Schulwerk Association.

Reports from RIG Research Representatives

Region I: *reported by Amy Beegle*

During the summer of 2007, **Donna Poppe**, Orff specialist and Professor of Music Education at Pacific Lutheran University, joined an archeological excavation located in the northeastern corner of Egypt's Nile Delta. Her sabbatical research focused on recording the work songs of that specific region as Egyptian laborers literally dug in the dirt. Music was collected from both teenage and elderly workers on site. Recordings, translations and photos were collected, and gender differences in song were noted. Both Upper and Lower Egyptian songs were gathered. Call and response songs were common, as well as improvisations using quarter tones.

Region VI: *reported by Hilree Hamilton*

The University of St. Thomas has an Orff Schulwerk focused master's degree as one choice in their graduate music education program. The following descriptions highlight the work of two graduate students who have completed master's theses in music education.

Tara C. Finne submitted her thesis titled "The Effects of the Orff Schulwerk Approach on Social Listening and Cooperation" in November, 2007. Finne, certified in Orff Schulwerk pedagogy, collected data by videotaping six music sessions in which she taught active listening lessons using Orff Schulwerk techniques. Six judges, three of whom were music educators and three of whom were non-music educators, viewed the video tapes and responded to a questionnaire relating to listening and cooperation skills throughout each lesson.

Her findings revealed that between 75 and 100 percent of the students displayed listening skills in the Orff Schulwerk-based lessons. Five of the judges rated between 62.5 and 100 percent of the students displayed cooperation skills, while the sixth judge identified between 50 and 83.3 percent of the students displaying cooperating skills. The researcher concluded that these results documented that both listening and cooperation skills are natural outgrowths of Orff Schulwerk-based pedagogy.

Click on the link to the **Isabel McNeill Carley Library and AOSA Archives:**
www.aosa.org

RIG Research Representatives:

Region I: Amy Beegle
Region II: Sheila Woodward
Region III: Don Taylor
Region IV: Jennifer Shank
Region V: Patricia St. John
Region VI Hilree Hamilton

Contact your representative to report research-related news and activity!

Amy Beegle submitted her thesis titled "An Examination of Orff-Trained General Music Teachers' Use of Improvisation with Elementary School Children" in July of 2001. In this project, Beegle observed, videotaped, and interviewed three elementary music teachers with varying amounts of Orff Schulwerk training. Beegle's findings indicate that the three teachers valued and included improvisational experiences in their curricula, demonstrated similar teaching techniques in their lesson structure, actively planned for the inclusion of improvisational techniques as developmentally appropriate to students in their classes, and displayed teaching practices that encouraged improvisation (directions, modeling, and feedback). The three teachers used improvisation as an opportunity for students to find individual expression and also as a means of having students learn specified music concepts.

"...both listening and cooperation skills are natural outgrowths of Orff Schulwerk-based pedagogy."

Region IV: *reported by Jennifer Shankman*

At the University of Mississippi, Doctoral-level research advised by **Dr. Alan Spurgeon** will investigate the history of the founding of AOSA including the personal history of key leaders in the organization. At the University of Southern Mississippi, there are two Orff research projects underway at the present time. One involves two undergraduate students examining the use of ostinatos with small children. The second study is being conducted by a graduate student working on a survey of Orff materials for adult non-musicians.

Region III: *reported by Don Taylor*

Dr. Cynthia Colwell, from the University of Kansas, continues to produce a variety of research articles related to Orff Schulwerk instruction. She is currently working on content analyses titled, "A content analysis of AOSA and AMTA national conference programs," and "A content analysis of the Orff Echo and the Journal of Music Therapy and the Music Therapy Perspectives." Additionally, she is conducting an online survey regarding teachers' use of storybooks in Orff Schulwerk classrooms.

Following up on his article, "Refining Learned Repertoire for Percussion Instruments in an Elementary Setting" in the Fall 2006 issue of the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, **Dr. Don Taylor** recently completed a study investigating children's ability to synchronize a bass ostinato with others in a variety of contexts. Upper elementary students' performances were recorded in three conditions: (1) playing with a recording of metronome clicks to help maintain the steady beat; (2) playing with a recording of the bass part alone; and (3) playing with a recording of a full Orff ensemble. Dr. Taylor teaches elementary music education courses at the University of North Texas and plans to present his findings in the spring of 2008.

Region V: reported by *Patricia A. St. John*

Music Learning in Community: Finding and Making Meaning Collectively and Collaboratively

by Patricia A. St. John

Curious about the *teachable moment*, I have focused my research on the social aspects of music-making, investigating the community of learners, the discovery of relationships, and the found resources in the environment to better understand how interactions and intersections assist learning (e.g., St. John, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e). Some fundamental questions serve as a guide: *What role does social context play in young children's music-making? How do children negotiate the learning space? What does scaffolding look like in a music setting? How does this inquiry impact my practice?*

I have found the complementary lenses of *flow experience* and Vygotskian theory, specifically scaffolding through the *zone of proximal development*, to be most useful in establishing the framework. Findings from my dissertation¹ (2004) prompted me to examine instrument-play more deeply. More recently, I have extended the scaffolding protocol to include Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, using Cole & Engeström's (1993) expanded version of the basic mediational triangle, to explore specifically how children use instrument free-play to find and make meaning. To this end, I have just completed the third of three consecutive studies (2006d, 2008a, 2008b) investigating preschoolers' free-play with instruments and analyzing their use of social knowledge, musical understanding, and *division of labor* to scaffold experience. Below, I offer some findings and related implications for practice.

From Research Finding to Practice Implication: Children seek opportunities to belong (St. John, 2003b): with whom to be (invitation); to whom to look (imitation); from whom to depart (initiation). Each is contingent upon their perception of the challenge presented and consequent requisite skill. Inviting a learner into participation, finding someone in the community of learners to imitate, or initiating an activity to raise their own challenge level, children scaffold the learning for self and others.

🎵 *By nurturing relationships with and between children, **teachers encourage** a sense of community. This becomes the enabling foundation from which learning springs as participants contribute what they **can** do. As good teachers we build on these strengths, acknowledging multiple points of entry. As children find connections, emotionally and cognitively, a community emerges.*

"When a music maker belongs in a community and identifies with that community, the community is increased by the gift, and even the music itself is increased."

Maya Angelou, Foreword to *A Well-Tempered Mind* by Peter Perret and Janet Fox (Dana Press, 2004, ix)

¹ Instrument play was the most flow-producing activity among five categories: singing; focused listening (ear-training); rhythm activities; playing instruments; and movement.

The social dimension of collective music-making influences individual experience: it provides a relational context from which to draw interactions.

From Research Finding to Practice Implication: Children employ deliberate strategies to facilitate their own learning; the community of learners plays a powerful role in scaffolding experience as children play off each other's contributions (St. John, 2004, 2006a).

By designing collective and collaborative experiences, **teachers enable** children to become active participants in their own learning, seeking out who and what is most needed next. As children decide where they need to take the experience, we may be *required to reinterpret our intention based on the children's responses to presented material.*

From Research Finding to Practice Implication: Children are keenly aware of each other in the learning community. The social dimension of collective music-making influences individual experience: it provides a relational context from which to draw interactions. Situated-ness (Lave & Wenger, 1991) enables the learner to find not only where to be, but with whom to be. The use of space, persons, and materials in the environment empowers the learner to discover content and facilitates flow experience.

♪ *By providing opportunities for children to “play” with the content and with each other, **teachers acknowledge** the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning among the community. With freedom to explore, manipulate, and negotiate the material, children discover competence and confidence. Stepping aside, we are compelled to trust the child's agency and acknowledge the powerful role of peers.*

By providing opportunities for children to “play” with the content and with each other, **teachers acknowledge** the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning among the community.

♪ *By affording time for unstructured exploration and pretend play, **teachers encourage** self-efficacy in their students. Through exploration, experimentation and expansion, children find cognitive connections between multiple social entities, express cultural knowledge, and realize musical understanding. They discover musical concepts and develop musical skills, even when this exploration looks unrelated to conventional music standards and traditional musical behavior. We are challenged to re-evaluate how children's play from seemingly unrelated musical content informs their musical development and musical understanding.*

*Contact Dr. St. John, pas163@columbia.edu, for a full report and complete references.

RIG Research Representatives Reports, continued

Region II: *reported by Sheila Woodward*

At the 2007 AOSA National conference RIG session, **Dr. Woodward**, shared an extract from a DVD documentary on a music diversion program for juvenile offenders. Using standard Orff approaches of imitation, exploration and improvisation, students in the USA and in South Africa were given the opportunity to learn to play African marimbas (on which the Orff xylophones were based) and djembes. The program aimed to provide music skills as a healthy diversion from crime and to assist in reintegrating the students back into society. For more information see: Woodward, S.C., Sloth-Nielson, J. and Mathiti, V. (2008) South Africa, the arts, and youth in conflict with the law. *International Journal of Community Music* Volume 1, No. 1 69 - 88.

In other previous research, Dr. Woodward made recordings of womb sounds that demonstrate how music transmits into the womb. Her current research at the University of Southern California involves presenting sounds and music to premature infants.

>From Research to Practice by Isabel Barbara O'Hagin

Get ready, get set, go! Our bi-annual AOSA Research Partnership Grant proposal deadline is soon approaching! Start planning your proposal before the July 15 deadline. If that's too soon for you, plan ahead this summer by working with your collaborative partners to prepare a grant proposal before the next deadline--January 15. Michael Chandler's opening article in this newsletter provides details on how to apply for the AOSA Research Grant and Research Partner Grants. Collaborative research projects further your professional development and the dissemination of these research findings can help us promote the philosophy and unique processes of the Schulwerk (Music for Children) of Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman. The practical applications of research can pay off when we help our students develop the intellectual tools and learning strategies to become successful in music and to develop to their fullest potential.

Questions we may ask of ourselves throughout our careers can propel us to deeper thinking and action research with subsequent data adding to our knowledge base as teachers. Some of these fundamental questions may resonate with your own inquiry-based efforts: *How can I better teach my students? Which techniques and strategies are best with the students in my classroom, in this specific time and place—in this context? What are the effects of instructional approach A and B on students' learning in areas X, Y, and Z? What are my students thinking and feeling about music in THEIR lives? In what ways does an Orff-Schulwerk-based music education affect our musical experiences as adults?*

In what ways does an Orff-Schulwerk-based music education affect our musical experiences as adults?

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.aosa.org

I encourage you to take the first step toward preparing your research grant proposal this summer. Think of this as a step toward your professional development. Many teachers in the field pursue a master's degree, and quite often, a research component is part of a required course or final thesis. Moreover, most graduate programs allow for independent study credits for those undertaking research projects. For those of you who are not pursuing graduate credits, a collaborative research effort may provide a boost to your overall learning--efforts that will help you to improve your teaching skills. Action research has many components. It can lead you to analyze your strengths and areas to improve, leading to enhanced, best practice. Action research is research conducted by teachers in the classroom for the primary purpose of improving their own professional practice. Engaging in action research and selecting an important topic to all involved can help you not only revise and improve your practice, but it can help you build stronger relationships between your praxis and your students. Remember—"It's All About Relationships!" I invite you to join the community of researchers within our AOSA ranks. Your voice is needed! Let's hear from you!

AOSA History Interest Group

The AOSA History Committee was formed in 2000 in recognition of a need to preserve AOSA's history. Three major goals were identified in 2007. The first goal is to identify, gather and preserve materials of historical significance. The second is to facilitate the archiving of those historically significant documents and materials. The third is to encourage and conduct historical research on behalf of AOSA and to make available such research to the membership. Current members of the History Committee include Judith Cole, Chair, Jeff Burns, Mark Francis, Esther Gray and Barbara Grenoble. To date, their activities have focused on recording conversations with selected AOSA Founding Members and Distinguished Service Award Recipients, scanning photographs and documents for preservation and reviewing the holdings of the Isabel McNeill Carley Research Library. The History Committee has identified numerous worthy projects to be conducted both in the near future and over a long-range time span. These projects will require a larger group of people than presently are serving on the committee. Are you interested in the history of Orff Schulwerk in America, and would you enjoy participating on the History Committee? If so, please contact a member of the committee to receive an application form. Are you interested in the formation of a History Interest Group? If formed, what would be the function of the History Interest Group? If you answered "yes" to the first of these questions and can speculate about the response to the second, please let us know by sending your responses to the following questionnaire to **Judith Cole** at jweloc@aol.com.

Name:

Mailing Address:

Phone:

Email Address:

Are you interested in participating in a History Interest Group?

What is your background in historical research?

What aspects of Orff Schulwerk history interest you most?

In what projects would you like to see the History Committee engage?