

Reflections on the 2016 World Village by Brian Maxwell

I was greatly honored to be selected as the recipient of the 2016 Wild Card Scholarship. The scholarship is generously provided to one member of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association by JaSeSociety, the Orff-Schulwerk Association of Finland, to encourage and enable participation in the JaSeSociety International World Village. The participants in this year's World Village came from Australia and Brazil, from Iran and Turkey, from the United Arab Emirates and Italy, and from many other countries. We gathered at a secluded resort hotel, Hotelli Keurusselkä, a few hours north of Helsinki, Finland. The hotel sits on the edge of a sparkling, clear lake and is surrounded by a forest of pine and birch trees. The hiking trails were lined with lingonberries, bilberries, and raspberries. Century-old lichen spread around rocky outcroppings and boulders. This idyllic setting was the perfect place for us to set aside other concerns and focus on learning from master teachers, sharing experiences with new friends, and making music.

Jackie Rago was one of the principal presenters at the World Village. In her sessions, entitled "Orff Goes Latin", she helped us develop our playing technique on maracas, led us through a number of challenging dance steps, and taught some excellent songs of welcome. Her lively cuatro playing added excitement and interest to the original and calypso music she shared with us. In one session, we explored Venezuelan *quitiplas*. Jackie taught us an exciting, polyrhythmic piece that we performed by covering and uncovering the openings of cut pieces of bamboo tubes as we struck them against the floor. Jackie's warm personality and energetic repertoire filled participants in her sessions with great joy.

Soili Perkiö was the other principal presenter at the course. Her sessions were entitled "Orff Goes Nordic". In one session, she led us through explorations of "five" that included dance and ball-play in 5/4 meter and introductory lessons on the five-string *kantele*, a Finnish zither. In another session, a simple Finnish children's game about a little dog expanded and transformed a number of times, with iterations that explored vocal and body percussion call and response improvisations, movement exploration, and instrumental work. Returning to my room at the close of each day, I tried to outline the sessions she had offered to us. I was astounded each time by the subtle intricacies of what she had planned and delivered. Her teaching process was so incredibly clean, it seemed to be invisible. We were so fully engaged in play that it would have been easy to fail to notice how intentional each step was and how extremely well-crafted the sessions were. Most striking of all was what an exceptional person Soili is. She is beautifully kind, wonderfully warm, and without conceit or pretension. One day between sessions, JaSeSociety's president Juuso Kauppinen described the pillars of Finnish Orff-Schulwerk as being the creative, the artistic, the pedagogic, and the human. Soili Perkiö is the very embodiment of the mastery of these.

In addition to learning from Jackie and Soili, participants in the course also had the opportunity to attend sessions presented by other course participants. One standout among these presenters was Pati Oliveira from Brazil. She taught a beautiful *ciranda* by embedding it within a story. This, in addition to making the experience quite engaging, provided participants with cultural context for this music and dance. Another standout presenter was Ilke Alexander from South Africa. Her gentle, observant, and encouraging nature greatly enhanced her presentation of a Zulu children's song with passing game and a lovely wedding song from Botswana that included

movement and body percussion. The international group of presenters provided good exposure to a variety of teaching styles, added to the ideas and repertoire I'll be trying out with my students this year, and ensured that the World Village had a truly international flavor.

The final day of the course included a surprise. Our group took a paddleboat from the hotel dock and crossed the lake to the town of Keuruu. We walked from the port until we came to a beautiful wooden church. As we stepped inside the painted interior, we were delighted to hear the sound of a nyckelharpa and kantele duet coming down from a balcony. Participants quietly looked around the church, then found seats to enjoy the concert. This trip across the blue waters, visit to a tranquil and beautiful space, and gift of beautiful music was the perfect way to say farewell to the World Village and to begin our journeys home.

I am extremely grateful for the generosity of JaSeSoi. In addition to providing the funding that allowed me to participate in the World Village, it was clear that the members of the organization had taken great care to create an experience that would be powerful and meaningful. I am appreciative of the members of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association who were involved in the scholarship application and review process. Finally, I am thankful for the warmth and encouraging spirit shared by the wonderful people I encountered at the World Village and to all who contributed to making the course so inspiring and restorative.