

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Joan Stansbury



### Fruit Salad

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*“AOSA is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive membership, promoting an understanding of issues of diversity and inclusion, and providing teaching and learning resources that respect, affirm, and protect the dignity and worth of all.”*

—[www.aosa.org](http://www.aosa.org)>Resources>Diversity Matters

**W**hat is your cultural background? Where did your ancestors come from? When and why did they come to America? Answers to these questions are as abundant and diverse as the people they involve, and each story is unique and compelling.

My parents were both first-generation Americans, one family immigrating from Sicily and the other from Canada, in the early 20th century. In those days, America was a melting pot. Immigrants were expected to assimilate into mainstream culture as quickly as possible, typically within one generation. Individual cultural identity was discouraged and quickly lost, just as individual fruits go into a blender to become a fruit smoothie. In contrast, 21st century America has grown to resemble a fruit salad, where contrasting cultures live side by side while retaining their individuality. Cultural differences are more widely accepted and celebrated than ever. Think of your favorite restaurants, the faces appearing daily on TV and

in movies, and the number of languages spoken in our schools and communities.

As Orff Schulwerk teachers, how can we reflect that rich fruit salad of cultural diversity in our curricula while being both sensitive and authentic? These questions were the focus of the 2015 Orff Forum in Salzburg, Austria, where I was honored to represent AOSA. Members of 36 Orff-Schulwerk associations and affiliated schools/institutions came together for 3 days to discuss “Interculturality and Orff Schulwerk.” Discussion points included: why—the reasons and aims of intercultural music and dance education; what—materials and their cultural context; how—models of intercultural teaching and learning.

As teachers discussed the joys and challenges of more culturally diverse music and movement curricula, the consensus was that, at its heart, Orff Schulwerk is not culture-specific. We can successfully teach body percussion, singing, moving, and instrument playing without being tied to a specific culture or country. Second language children can easily succeed in our activities. The musical experience is enriched, however, when we introduce and explore another culture through its original language, traditions, songs, and dances. A world of music (pun intended) is waiting to be discovered, sung, spoken, danced, and played. But sometimes we don’t know where to start, and leaving our comfort zones can be daunting. Here are some questions to consider that may help clarify your focus on diversity:

- Am I comfortable teaching music outside of my culture? If not, who can help me?
- How and where can I find materials that are authentic, yet accessible to me and my students?
- What do I want students to learn from this material?
- How can I teach the material with respect and sensitivity?
- Can I apply the Orff Schulwerk process? (If so, be clear that the material has been arranged or altered and is no longer in its original form. There may be times to leave well

enough alone and keep the song or dance in its original form. Always cite the source.)

- Do I know my students? (For example, a student from another country whose parent teaches at a local university will have a different experience hearing music from her home culture than a student who arrived from a refugee camp. What could be a source of pride for one could be a source of anxiety for another.)

The Diversity Committee is a key component in AOSA's initiative to be more inclusive in our attitudes and teaching. The committee is dedicated to addressing questions, raising awareness, and providing education and resource support for our members. They continue to expand and update our website resources on the "Diversity Matters" webpage, which you can find under the Resources tab in the open area, and under the Teacher Tools tab in the members-only area. This webpage provides diversity- and multiculturalism-related lesson plans, book reviews, and a glossary of terms, as well as world music references. The "Advocacy Tools" webpage features advocacy

brochures for parents and administrators in English and in Spanish (January 2016). In addition, articles pertaining to diversity will be appearing in *Reverberations* and upcoming issues of *The Orff Echo*. I would like to acknowledge and thank current committee members Judith Barthwell (chair), Armando Campos, Luis Delgado, Alice Pratt, Sally Trenfield, and Cecilia Wang, as well as two members of the original committee whose terms have ended, Thom Borden and Manju Durairaj, for their commitment and contributions to our diversity initiative.

Our world is a complex and beautiful mixture of musical and cultural variety. I can't think of a better way to explore it than through Orff Schulwerk! ■

**JOAN STANSBURY** enjoyed a 30-year music teaching career in Lexington, KY. Since retiring, she has taught music methods courses and supervised student teachers at the University of Kentucky while also teaching Musikgarten classes for preschoolers. Joan held many offices in the Kentucky Orff Schulwerk Chapter before serving at the national level as AOSA's 2002 national conference treasurer, Region VI representative, 2012 national conference co-chair, vice president, and current president.