

Candidate for Region V Representative: Katie Traxler



Biography:

Katie Traxler teaches PreK-5th grade music at PS 51 in New York City where she is currently serving her 4th year as president of NYCCAOSA. A Louisiana native, Katie hails from Louisiana State University and completed Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education courses I & II at Belmont University (TN) and Level III at Trevor Institute (NYC.)

CANDIDATE FORUM

1. What do you see as the role of Orff Schulwerk in music education today?

Orff Schulwerk is one of the only approaches to teaching young children that allows for every child at any age level and with any amount (or lack of) musical skill to engage fully in music-making with success and joy from the very start. The Orff approach provides music educators with a way into the brain, the body, and the heart simultaneously, engaging children in music, movement and drama in ways that no other method does. No matter the size of your budget or space, educators who are trained in OS have the tools to empower and inspire their students to truly express themselves through the arts with what the students bring to the table. Through risky improvisation and composition activities, students are challenged to create and understand music at incredibly high levels. Yet these rigorous tasks are performed with ease because we guide children from the start with simple, elemental building blocks of sound and silence through speech and movement. Orff Schulwerk is the most beautiful and organic form of differentiation in music education that has ever existed. It allows every child to contribute, to be a part of something bigger than himself or herself, and to grow as a person and as a musician in their own skin. I believe this is the greatest gift we can give our students. As more and more educators see the benefits of the Orff approach, more school communities will explore this phenomenal way of learning through music and movement, and in turn produce life-long musicians and creative thinkers.

2. What are your leadership strengths, and how do you think they would contribute to the work of AOSA and promoting Orff Schulwerk?

My two biggest strengths that have helped me to serve my local chapter and my surrounding music education community over the past decade are my passion for helping others and my organization and time management skills. With the help of my executive board, our local chapter has started a number of new initiatives to support music educators in our area including new scholarships to attend the National Conference, an instrumentarium lending program, improved social media platforms to connect teachers in the city, and we have even taken over hosting the NYC Orff Certification Course. I am constantly looking for ways to improve our offerings to our members and to offer support to teachers in any way I can. When something doesn't work out, I am excited to go back to the drawing board to regroup and try again, especially when I know the efforts will help someone become a better teacher in the end. My organization and time management skills have also been extremely helpful in the leadership positions I've held in my school, in my capacity as Grant Director for SAI, and in serving my wonderful NYC Orff chapter. As teachers, we wear a lot of hats. I have learned to efficiently juggle many roles throughout the school year in order to serve my professional community and my students, as well as negotiate the intense amount of paperwork and communication that accompanies each of those jobs. When focusing more of my time and energy on AOSA, these skills and traits would allow me to serve a greater number of educators by helping others learn more about OS and the opportunities available to them through our incredible organization.

3. What is the role of the National Board of Trustees as it relates to the general membership and how would you fulfill this role?

Much like the executive board of a local chapter serves the members of its immediate community by seeking out their needs and interests while finding innovative ways to meet those needs and explore those interests, the National Board of Trustees provides similar support for its general membership. I would be happy to fulfill any role that the NBT sees fit for me to undertake. I think that my particular experience as a grant director and writer for SAI Philanthropies would be helpful to the Financial Assistance committee, while my experience as a mentor teacher, cooperating teacher, and workshop facilitator and presenter might be of use to the Professional Development committee. I would be honored to help with any committee that is within my skill set.

4. What is your vision for AOSA and orff Schulwerk in the future?

The recent changes to the Orff Echo and Reverberations publications and the new online social media presence, including the amazing new website layout, have shown firsthand the steps AOSA is taking to educate our nation about Orff Schulwerk. While

our look may have changed, our mission is as solid and steady as ever. I believe that with the team of educators AOSA has working for it, we will continue to offer the best professional development and professional network of support that all teachers, new and seasoned, are craving. Many teacher preparation programs and universities are unable to provide the kind of specialized pedagogical training that our teacher education courses, national conferences, local workshops and master classes provide. I believe that AOSA will continue to fulfill that need and guide music educators in their work during a time when education is becoming more focused on data collection and assessment rather than educating the whole child through the arts. AOSA needs to continue to help educators demonstrate the powerful benefits of creative music and movement in a person's life and support us in fighting for that sacred right to "play."