

Judith Thompson-Barthwell: Treasurer



BIOGRAPHY

Judith Thompson-Barthwell is an Orff music educator of 44 years teaching general/vocal music, dance, and choir K-12. 2012 Michigan Music Educator of the Year, she has taught in many Orff courses in the U.S. and two in Europe. She has served in leadership roles locally, Michigan state-wide, and in AOSA nationally. She is the current NBT Treasurer.

CANDIDATE FORUM

1. What do you see as the role of Orff Schulwerk?

Orff's ideas about music and dance education have continued for almost 100 years. The Schulwerk's philosophy of today is broad and deep because of that history, which is now over 50 years in the United States. I continue to see Orff Schulwerk as a leader in music education. The ideas of Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman have become a part of the normal fabric of education as witnessed in the 21st Century skills of creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.

Over all other music education theories of today, Orff Schulwerk is unique in its approach of movement and improvisation in the classroom. Acknowledging the creativity in every person is at the core. Yet, utilizing the enriching findings of other approaches in process-oriented pedagogy does not take away from the integrity of the Schulwerk. Orff is child centered and playful, drawing from the child's own experiences and allowing children to express themselves. With artistic teaching, it is my experience that every child can find a way to own their music and become their own musician.

I also see Orff at the forefront of the responsive classroom. As our school groups become more diverse with children of special needs and from different backgrounds, the literature we use and the ways we teach about cultures of this country and of the world aid in breaking down barriers, building confidence and giving understanding that only the media of music and movement can do. The Schulwerk embraces child development and helps build global citizens. Orff Schulwerk is indeed powerful and far reaching in its impact on today's students.

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

People reason better when they reason together. I strive to uphold this tenet. The National Board of Trustees is composed of many Orff leaders who represent regional leaders across the country who are well versed in many areas that are helpful to the running of AOSA. My leadership strengths involve listening to others with various viewpoints and awareness of how to use the skills they bring to our organization. I also am organized and thoughtful on issues. I prioritize and sometimes initiate ideas to put on the table for consideration when it seems appropriate.

Leadership also involves service to make sure the work of AOSA runs smoothly. I possess skills of observation and cultural competency which help in communication with others. Years of educational experience have led to assisting and uplifting the work of the teachers in the trenches. Having worked in groups on the local, state, and national level of music education, I have a sense of how to help our music education brothers and sisters of need and promise.

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?

Assisting the members of AOSA positively impact children is the main focus of the National Board of Trustees. The Treasurer is a member of the National Board of Trustees whose role is to keep our organization financially responsible. The Treasurer serves on several committees that use funds to help our constituents, and set policies that keep communications, professional development, and membership relations running as smooth as possible. In addition, being Treasurer involves looking at the big picture - where we are, where we've been, and where we want to go. As such, the Treasurer assists in long range plans of promoting our proven approach of teaching the whole child in music and movement education to as many local areas as we possibly can reach, while increasing membership. As Treasurer, I would fulfill these roles to serve our members throughout the nation.

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

My vision for AOSA is to maintain the integrity of Orff Schulwerk through our commitment to active music and movement making with child creativity, while increasing our impact in the United States. We are always trying to do more. We already have financial assistance available, and even though AOSA does very well in this area, it is never enough. Thus, my vision includes more - more ways to reach out to teachers to support their situations; more friendly technology platforms to meet the ways people communicate in order to lead them back to the principles of Orff Schulwerk; more Orff in college curriculums that create interest in pedagogy techniques that work in the classroom; a larger digital mentorship program; more professional development courses throughout the country; more understanding of cultural differences in the United States; more identification of leaders from diverse backgrounds; and more comprehension of how Orff education works with school curriculum. In other words, more Orff for all children.