

Beyond Borders, Beyond Nationality
THE AOSA INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH FUND

“We shared the joy of music. I taught movement activities, improvisation and songs to Akademia students who shared their local favorites ... with me. On my third day, I was taken to the teachers’ college in nearby Bytom where I worked with future classroom and music teachers,” Rob Amchin reminisced in an article for *Reverberations*,¹ (a publication of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association) upon his return from teaching in Katowice, Poland. Rob was assisted through the AOSA International Outreach Fund to travel to Poland where he worked with teachers, children, and Orff Schulwerk colleagues. He is one of several Americans who have traveled to parts of the world where Orff Schulwerk is being introduced or reinvigorated as a viable approach to music education. He and others have shared their teaching gifts but have been richly rewarded in turn through the songs, language and dances, which reflect a vast diversity within the generous host countries.

The AOSA International Outreach Fund is less than seven years old but has already made an impact on many music educators throughout the world. The participants –who sometimes travel great distances to experience Orff Schulwerk for the first time – tell of rich discovery as teachers and children take part in new and exciting approaches to music learning and share their own music and dance. Jacque Schrader, the first American to use the Fund, describes her experience in Nitra as follows, “As the days went on, it was clear I was learning every bit as much as the students. I discovered that a simple gesture goes further than fifty words, that good music and movement brings people together and that laughter and playfulness transcend any language.”²

Frau Liselotte Orff made the initial donation to the International Outreach Fund with hopes that the spirit and energy prevalent among many American music teachers would help spread the Orff Schulwerk approach across its borders. The Fund provides partial travel assistance for an American teacher trainer to work in an overseas course. The host location bears all other expenses and assumes responsibility for organizing the course around the needs and interests of its participants. AOSA members have already taken the initiative to participate in this collaborative effort, with Jacque Schrader traveling to Slovakia, Doug Goodkin to Russia and South Africa, Rob Amchin to Poland, and Dan Johnson to Costa Rica. This summer several teacher training courses will become established as Elaine Larson, along with Danai Gagne and Donna Fleetwood, teach in Hong Kong, and Mary Helen Solomon goes to New Zealand. In the last year, applications from four continents have been reviewed by the AOSA International Outreach Committee.

While international workshops and courses have been sponsored by the Orff Foundation for some time, the formation of this Fund and its committee is meant to complement the work that has already been set in motion by supporting the spread of Orff Schulwerk. Dr. Hermann Regner, former Director of the Orff Institute and Head of the Orff Foundation

¹ *Reverberations*, Vol. 5, No. 2 November 2005

² *Reverberations*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Summer, 2002

at the time the International Outreach Fund was established wrote that he "hoped that this fund would enable a start to be made in making the exemplary work and the rich experiences available through the Schulwerk in the USA known beyond the boundaries of America."

Alliances are growing between potential sponsors and American teacher trainers whose work they have come to know. Orff Schulwerk in the U.S. reflects many teaching styles and approaches that are characteristic of a large and diverse country. Personal connection between a sponsor and teacher trainer, developed through shared learning or teaching, creates an awareness of a teacher's suitability for a particular course. A mutual desire to help those who are unable to travel great distances to study brings them together to plan the best way to reach the participants, who are typically teachers – with and without experience - and university students as well as children. Sometimes instruments are plentiful, but there is often the need for activities that don't require them. Doug Goodkin recalls his teaching in Russia, "As there were very few Orff instruments, we spent our days exploring body percussion, games, movement and simple rhymes in various languages. We had one particularly inspiring session exploring the considerable sonic potential of some beautiful wooden chairs. I was impressed with the musicality, sensitivity and creativity of the participants and deeply moved by their poetic testimonies at the end of the course."³

The shrinking of our world through the advancement of technology, communication and mobility also provides a close up view of the uniqueness of cultures and how they are set in sharp relief against the movement toward globalization. Like a piece of cloth, which from a distance looks muted but at closer range turns out to be woven with colorful threads, approaches shared by Orff Schulwerk teachers throughout the world can give voice to the elements which define a culture – the rhythms, melodies, words and dances which shape a society. As this approach is introduced, those special characteristics should provide the basis for developing strategies and materials to educate and provide aesthetic and emotional grounding for students.

The committee awards funds in two ways: through applications made by institutions or organizations proposing a course that demonstrates the value of Orff Schulwerk and its widespread use; secondly, by encouraging qualified AOSA teacher trainers to apply for participation in this effort. Those who have contact with interested sponsors can help promote the development of overseas courses. If a group or organization wishes to sponsor a course, the IOC is also prepared to make a good match between a qualified instructor and the proposed course. Financial support for expansion of the International Outreach Fund comes from donations of AOSA members and Orff Schulwerk advocates throughout the world.

For additional information and applications, go to AOSA's Web site at www.aosa.org and select *About AOSA/ About Us*. Scroll below *Orff Around the World* and you will find the *Organization Application to Request an AOSA Teacher Trainer*. Personal accounts of

³ *Reverberations*, Vol. 3, No. 3, February, 2004

the teachers and their experiences abroad are located below. You may also write AOSA Headquarters at info@osa.org to request more information.