

Report on Singapore Orff level 1 and Hong Kong 2nd Orff Conference

By Susie Davies-Splitter

On Sat 25th July, 2009, I left Melbourne for Singapore to meet up with Sarah Brooke from Melbourne and embark on a musical adventure. Sarah and I were privileged to be invited to present the first level 1 Orff Course in Singapore accredited through ANCOS (Australian National Council of Orff Schulwerk) to 23 participants from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China. The course was organised by Pat's Schoolhouse, who's founder Patricia Koh, is a passionate Orff supporter and has a dream to bring the gift of music into the lives of many children within the Asian region and beyond.

Pat's Schoolhouse is made up of more than a dozen early childhood centres throughout Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Children at these centres receive several music classes per week from a music specialist. Each centre also has a complement of Orff instruments. Many of these music specialists attended this training and have also taken part in a number of other professional development opportunities throughout the year. In 2008, Pat's Schoolhouse also organised the first Orff Conference 'Musaic' to over 300 participants from around Asia.

For the Level 1 course, six subjects were covered during the week including Pedagogy, Orchestration, Vocal, Recorder, Movement and Dance and Technique and Improvisation with Orchestration homework and peer teaching.

Two of Pat's Schoolhouse teachers, Christina The & Patricia Lim were mentored in two subjects each with the goal of eventually having accredited Orff trainers in Singapore.

This is what Christina and Patricia had to say.

"Not only did we have the level training that week, but the two of us were also being mentored to be trainers as well! What an exciting time it was for Pat's Schoolhouse! We were a little apprehensive at the start, but with the relaxed manner of mentoring from both Sarah and Susie, we felt more certain about the tasks we had to complete. Their positive outlook in everything that was presented made it easier for us to develop confidence in our presentations. Sarah and Susie were very encouraging, working from our strength to strength. Their willingness to share their experiences and provide suggestions also helped improved our presentation style and activities. We also learned how to observe the participants and work with them through the daily small group activities. We found the discussions after each day most helpful and insightful as we shared about our observations with Sarah and Susie. It was during these discussions when we got a glimpse of what makes a good trainer better – the ability to observe what certain participants needed in terms of support and how to go about providing that support whilst still challenging the rest of the group. What a priceless opportunity! It was undoubtedly a magnificent experience for all involved that week. And we hope to have more of such trainings in Singapore in the future."

Mai Xu, a course participant from China is a music teacher with 12 years' experience and has attended many Orff workshops. When she first heard about the Orff level courses she didn't think she needed to do level 1. After Sarah explained the difference between level courses and workshops, she decided to join the course to fill any teaching gaps. She now understands more about the Orff philosophy and feels more confident about teaching. She had this to say.

“Many thanks to ANCOS and Pat’s SchoolHouse for giving me the opportunity to join the Orff level 1 course. Many thanks to our wonderful presenters Susie Davies-Splitter and Sarah Brooke. You not only taught us Orff pedagogy but also brought lots of happiness and enjoyment. Also, many thanks to my lovely classmates. No matter what nationality we are, we share experiences, helped each other and learned from each other. I hope in the next year, I will join the level Two. That will be a good opportunity to improve myself.

Mai Xu - China

After a wonderful and exhausting week of training we had a couple of days off and had the privilege of attending the Singapore National Day Parade preview with Patricia Koh. It was a smorgasbord of music, dance, choirs, bands, aerial and sea display, battle ships, sky divers, tankers, armies and 50,000 people in the audience cheering, clapping and singing. What a feast for the senses!

We continued the adventure as we travelled over to Hong Kong to present at the 2nd HOSA (Hong Kong Orff Schulwerk Association) three day conference for teachers. Sarah and I began and completed each day with an ‘All In’ and ‘All out’ session which consisted of games, ice breakers, songs and folk dances. For the rest of the day, participants were split into two groups that ran concurrently. Various topics were covered such as folk dance, Orff instrumentarium, singing games, recorder, world music and improvisation. At the end of the last day, the organisers, invited VIP’s, Sarah and I made speeches and the participants were treated to a range of games, dances, songs and a jam session to celebrate the conclusion of the conference. Certificates and photos followed.

Here is a glimpse of the history of HOSA written by Sophia Chan, President.

“Being deeply impressed by the Carl Orff educational approach which offers an opportunity for active and creative music-making to all children, not just the musically talented ones, I together with 9 like-minded educators helped to establish the Hong Kong Orff-Schulwerk Association in the year of 2008.

I still remember years ago, there was no proper channel in Hong Kong for teachers to learn about Orff Schulwerk. I was very lucky to have an occasional chance to get in touch with this excellent music approach in the 1990s. Since then, I was fascinated with the approach and endeavoured myself to introduce the Orff Schulwerk to people in Hong Kong. With great aspirations, I hope more and more people will get to know and make good use of this knowledge. After 10 years of continuous efforts, Orff Schulwerk has successfully gained significance in the minds of fellow kindergarten educators.

In 2007, I participated in the “Orff Schulwerk Teacher Training Courses” at George Mason University and came to know about the American Orff-Schulwerk Association (AOSA). This memorable learning journey inspired me to start thinking of establishing a local chapter in Hong Kong. At that time, the United States, numerous places in Europe, Australia and the rest of the world already had their own local Orff-Schulwerk Chapters. Even Mainland China and Taiwan have had their own associations for 20 years.

In light of this, I started sharing with my friends May Tan and our fellow committee members about this pioneering work to establish a Chapter in Hong Kong. Driven by great passion for Orff Schulwerk, in 2008, we were able to set up the “Hong Kong Orff-Schulwerk Association” (HOSA), which is a non-profit organization. Our aim is to gather like-minded people to acknowledge the work of composer Carl Orff and his colleague

Gunild Keetman, a team that has creatively developed the application of the synthesis of speech, music, movement and instruments into educational settings and to spread Carl Orff's spirit, promote and glorify the essence of Carl Orff's mission.

After the establishment, HOSA invited three of the senior professors of the music department from different tertiary institutes to be our consultants. We also began to cooperate with different tertiary institutes in Hong Kong to hold various Orff workshops. In 2008, we invited four experienced Orff instructors from overseas to come to Hong Kong to conduct workshops. We were so grateful to have Ms Danai Apostolidou-Gagne, Ms Donna Fleetwood and Ms Elaine Larson from AOSA to be the instructors of the first Orff Music Summer Camp and Ms Soili Perkio from Finland to teach in the first Orff Winter Music Camp. In 2009, we invited Ms Susie Davies-Splitter and Ms Sarah Brooke from Australia to be the instructors of the second Orff Summer Music Camp which was held from 5th to 7th August. Enrollment was rather keen with nearly 70 teachers signed up. After the 3-days tuition, we received many positive responses.

Participants were delighted to learn about the Orff approach and went away with the belief in their ability to put the ideas into practice at work. They thought the Orff approach to be very inspiring and creative. All were impressed with the ideas and teaching methods that Susie and Sarah shared with them, with many of the participants indicating that they will attend the upcoming training courses organized by HOSA and that they would certainly recommend them to their friends and colleagues.

It is a fruitful year for the Hong Kong Orff Schulwerk Association. We now have about 70 members and many kindergarten teachers have taken part in our courses. Some schools even invite us to design some training courses for their teachers specifically. It is really encouraging! Besides, from this year we start to issue our newsletter to members and schools in Hong Kong. Hopefully, more and more people in Hong Kong will benefit from the Orff Schulwerk Association.”

Our thanks go to Patricia Koh and Pat's Schoolhouse teachers, Sophia Chan, May Tan and the HOSA board for making our trips so memorable.