

Peta's Patsch

We are very fortunate to now have an International Correspondent on our Editorial Team. The unforgettable Peta Harper has taken her amazing talents to Salzburg for 9 months of inspiration and enrichment at the Orff Institute, studying in the Postgraduate Special Course "Advanced Studies in Music and Dance Education", generously supported by the ANCOS Donations Fund. Those of you who have been fortunate enough to experience music with Peta will know of her intuitive body percussion focus. We are delighted to introduce her reflections during this period, in her special column, aptly titled, "Peta's Patsch". Thank you Peta for sharing your exciting experiences with us!

Gruß aus Salzburg!

It's unbelievable to think that I have been here in Salzburg now for 2 months as a student of the Special Course 2010-2011, or as known by its official name, the Postgraduate University Course 'Advanced Studies in Music and Dance Education Orff-Schulwerk 2010-2011'. On the one hand it feels like forever, being somewhat au fait with getting around, shopping, doing laundry, ordering coffee in German. But on the other hand it feels like I've only been here for one day, having just tried a sample of what's yet to come in the year.

I am fortunate enough to be living here with my husband Phil, and we're staying in the International Kolleg, which is 2 blocks away from the Institute. I only have to cross one road to get there and I get to walk in a straight line. How lucky is that!?! We have now bought bicycles, and there have been a few note-worthy incidents on them already. Having said that though, it is so much fun to be able to ride into town in 10 minutes, or ride to a nearby town, Hallein, in approximately 30 minutes (depending on how many obligatory photo stops there are... the husband's patience normally dictates this). It's absolute heaven to be surrounded by so much artistic history and current events (the bells of Salzburg are ringing now as I write this). We are spoilt for choice here, and it's only time and money that dictate our limits.

The people in the course are absolutely wonderful, and from day one there was this wonderful cohesion and understanding, which Orffians typically bring. There are 16 participants in all – 3 ladies from Columbia, 3 ladies from the USA, 4 Iranians (2 ladies, 2 men), 2 Spaniards (1 lady, 1 man), 1 man from Singapore, 1 lady from NZ, 1 Italian man and myself. The group dynamic is great, there's someone for every occasion. It's a very special thing to be working with such caring, talented, humble, intelligent, and funny people...I guess that's why they call it the 'Special Course'!

When in contact with family and friends, the questions most commonly asked are along the lines of "What's your week like?", "What classes do you do?", and "What have you learnt so far?". Being so conscious of the opportunity and responsibility of bringing back and sharing what I have learnt with my fellow Australians overwhelms me and I don't know where to start in answering these questions, however, in keeping with my attitude over here, I'll give it a go!

Two weeks are never the same! Everyday is like the first day, with so many new experiences and sensory overload. We have some regular classes that occur on a weekly basis, such as Dance Technique (you should see that one!), Didactics, and Improvisation and Choreography, but then we have visiting teachers who we see intensively during the gaps of our regular classes and on weekends. For example, we've just had a brilliant weekend with Werner Beidinger from Germany, and when Sofia Lopez-Ibor was here, we had her for 42 hours in 2 weeks! Poor Sofia having to teach so many lessons in such a short space of time, but true to form, she was brilliant.



The subjects that we have studied so far are Movement and Dance Technique, Composing and Arranging, Choreography with and for Children, Experiencing Rhythm, Ensemble and Improvisation, Didactics of Elemental Music and Dance (with 2 different teachers), Percussion Ensemble, Movement Accompaniment, Pedagogy and Practice Teaching (yes, we've already had our first peer-teaching exercise... it's just as scary here as it is in Australia), Composing with and for Children, Music for Different Age Groups: Infants, Basic Choreography and Improvisation, Music and Dance for People with Special Needs, Vocal Work with Children and Theory and Practice of Instrument Building. There are also several projects that we are/will do, and there are even more classes we will be doing next semester.

I think the scariest experience we've all had so far is doing Andrea's Dance Technique class. It's pretty humbling having to dance diagonally across the room one at a time. To be part of a class where people are prepared to put themselves on the line like that and show their vulnerability is a pretty special thing. You can't help but feel closer after an experience like that (a traumatic one for most of us!). Having said that though, the difference in our abilities between the start of the course and now are fabulous (it must be the ballet shoes I bought). We even have a dance routine that Andrea has taught us. Yes, it may still need a little refining, but we think we're pretty good!

And now for the hardest question, what have we learnt so far? My response of course is 'How long is a piece of string?'. I feel like my head and body are blank canvases that have been filled in/up, and just keep getting painted over/re-filled every day. I struggle to make sense of the plethora of information swimming around in my head, my bag and my room. We are surrounded by such rich resources and sources of information in the forms of people, libraries, and experiences, that to make head or tail of it all feels impossible.



Photo: The Orff Institute, Salzburg. Courtesy of Peta Harper



For me what stands out so far is that we've been given so many reminders. I will do my best to identify but a few:

* The Orff-Schulwerk approach is inclusive and multi-sensory. It is for everyone regardless of age, experience or ability.

* When teaching students with special needs, our job is to adapt our practices to suit our students' abilities and needs. Our challenge is to find out what they can do, and base our activities around this.

* Ask the children 'Why are we doing this?' so they develop an understanding of what they're doing beyond the superficial.

* Emotions play a large part in the Orff-Schulwerk approach. We want to foster positive feelings for lifelong learning, and conversely, draw on these feelings as stimuli. An experience with a positive emotion is more readily retained (especially in the long-term memory), so we want to connect this with our activities.

* Movement is the centre of everything we do (e.g. pulse, heartbeat, nerves constantly firing, walking, breathing, etc.). Our personal movement is our energy and own rhythm. It is what creates us – it is our own personal expression. It is this fundamental that the approach is based around and draws upon.

* How do we teach children to be creative? Give them the tools. Give them the vocabulary. Give them the time to play with it!

* In Orff-Schulwerk all of the senses are included (including the kinaesthetic sense). It is not the reproduction of something, but the ability to receive and contribute (input – output).

So, whilst we have been making a lot of music and dances, it is these points I have been chewing upon and thinking how to apply to my own situation back in Australia. So far I have only accumulated questions and no answers (the answers just seem to be more questions). Hopefully after one year I can answer just one of my questions!

Until the next edition, Auf Wiedersehen!

Peta Harper.

Music Education via Orff Schulwerk Techniques

How it all comes together.

MEDIA	TECHNIQUES	SKILLS	ELEMENTS/CONCEPTS
Vocal Sounds	Simultaneous imitation:	Listening:	Duration
Vocables	- same media	- auditory awareness	Pitch
Speech	- different media	- auditory discrimination	Dynamics
Singing	Over-lapping imitation	- auditory sequencing	Tone Colour
Body Percussion	Canon	- auditory memory	Structure
Non-melodic Percussion	Echo	- auditory imagination	Style
Melodic Percussion	Question & Answer	Movement:	Form
Environmental Sounds	Ostinato	- body awareness	
Movement	Exploration	- space awareness	
Dance	Alteration	- axial movements	
Visual	Arrangement	- locomotor movements	
Listening	Composition	Vocal:	
Notation:	Games	- physical production	
- graphic		- rhythmic control	
- traditional		- pitch control	
Instruments:		Playing Techniques for playing...	
- ethnic		- non-melodic instruments	
- traditional		- melodic instruments	
- electronic		- composing	
		- arranging	

Based on ideas from *Discovering Orff* by Jane Frazee, formulated by Dr Carol Richards.

Layout - Cathy Aggett.

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