

Street Song / Gassenhauer

A 500 Year Old History

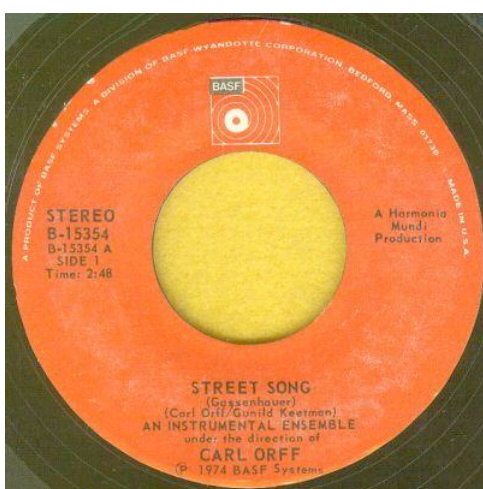
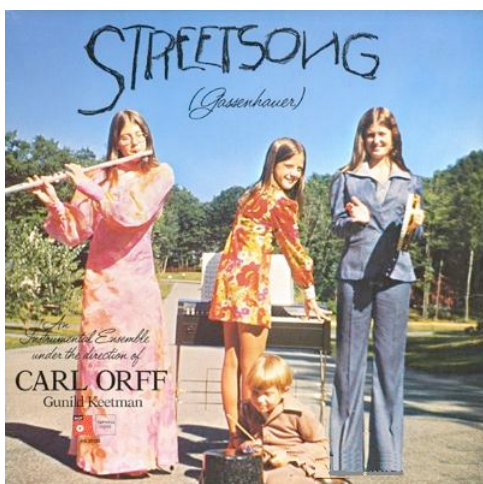
By Mark A. Francis

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If one selection from the vast body of Orff Schulwerk literature has come to symbolize and represent the approach, it is *Street Song* (*Gassenhauer* in the German edition) that has earned such an honor. Indeed, the piece is so tightly connected to the Schulwerk and Carl Orff's name, that many are not familiar with the origins of the work or its place within popular arts and culture. The English edition score adapted by Margaret Murray can be found on page 48 in Volume III, and page 52 in the German edition. The end-notes in Volume III (found on page 111), state that the song represents variations on a piece for lute by Hans Newsidler (1536). More accurately, Newsidler [Neusidler] wrote variations on an already existing theme that can be found in manuscripts dating back as early as 1517. Neusidler settled in Nuremberg in 1530 establishing himself as both a lute teacher and *luthier*, or lute maker. Between 1536 and 1549 he published eight books of lute music. Four centuries later Orff's educational collaborator Gunild Keetman, inspired by Neusidler's variations, composed and arranged the Schulwerk version of *Gassenhauer* and included the piece in her own published collection of music.

The popularity of the work grew quickly as the Schulwerk was disseminated around the world. Early Schulwerk recordings used the piece as the central theme of the album, and it is the only Schulwerk selection to ever be released as a single. In 1976 WCLV, northeast Ohio's leading classical music radio station, was using the piece as the theme for one of its



afternoon programs. (Incidentally, Cleveland, Ohio is home to both AOSA and the first Orff Schulwerk chapter in the United States). That same year, American composer Ian Krouse incorporated the theme into his own composition titled *Antique Suite*. Hollywood discovered the song, which would go on to appear in numerous movie film scores and television commercials, most notably *Badlands* (1973) with Martin Sheen, *Finding Forrester* (2000) with Sean Connery, and *Monster* (2003) with Charlize Theron. Tony Scott's film *True Romance* (1993) featured the music of composer Hans Zimmer who wrote his own *Gassenhauer* version honoring Keetman's earlier endeavor. New *Street Song* recordings continue to emerge, as do video and audio presentations on media sites such as YouTube and Vimeo. What began as a dance tune often associated with the vulgarity of street life, has become a source of inspiration for the highest level of musical art, song, improvisation, composition and creativity.