

The Orff Schulwerk Murray Edition: How It Came into Being

BY MARGARET MURRAY

Carl Orff was present at the June 1956 Columbia recordings of *Carmina Burana* in Cologne with Wolfgang Sawallisch conducting. He must have given Walter Legge copies of the German Orff Schulwerk volumes some time during that recording. Walter Legge was a producer for EMI (Columbia/Angel/Electrola records) and my husband, Walter Jellinek, was one of his assistants. Walter Legge was very taken with the German Orff Schulwerk volumes and plans were made to record material from the first two with German children and instrumentalists. Having been born in Vienna my husband was obviously fluent in German and he was chosen to take on the responsibilities of Artists' Manager, the person who liaises between artists and recording engineers.

The recordings of material from Volumes I and II took place in Munich in November/December 1956 and January 1957. Orff and Gunild Keetman were in charge with Keetman doing all the conducting. As a performer and teacher on piano and cello, the world of Orff Schulwerk was something totally new to me. I was fascinated with Orff's treatment of language, even more than with the unusual sound of the percussion ensemble. We recorded every morning and afternoon, and Orff, Keetman, my husband and I lunched together at a nearby Gasthof where we talked about the Schulwerk and what was to become of it. Walter Legge visited the recordings in January and was so taken with what he heard that he wanted to make an English version. "We can repeat the instrumental pieces. We only need someone to find equivalent English words for all the speaking and singing." Without referring to me at all my husband instantly said, "My wife will do that!"



Marjorie Lea, Margaret Murray, and Fran Mathey.

I did not have much time, for the plan was to record in early summer. We were based in Switzerland at the time, but I had the good fortune to find an excellent collection of English nursery rhymes in a Swiss bookshop. This was a start, and when we returned to London, a visit to the British Museum Reading Room in search of folklore was very productive. Then, various groups of children had to be found and coached and we had to collect a group of percussionists. Eventually the recordings were fixed for a period of two weeks in mid June 1957. We invited Keetman to oversee and conduct it all and we imported a set of Studio 49 instruments. There was no photocopying in those days so instrumental parts had to be hand-written. We were visited by Daniel Helldén¹ and Minna Ronnefeld,² who [together] provided the body percussion accompaniment to "My little pony needs new shoes"; I think it was Helldén who played the recorder in one of the Volume II pieces.

It was an enjoyable but critical time, for we were most anxious to get it "right" and we were, therefore, most pleased when Orff expressed his approval on hearing pressings of the recordings in August. It was then that he said that since I had already adapted a large part of both volumes for the recording, why not do the rest of both books and have them printed? Because my maiden name would obviously be more suitable for an English production, the "Murray" edition was launched.

VOLUMES I AND II (PUBLISHED 1958 AND 1959)

I was keen to retain all the purely rhythmic and instrumental material. It was also clear from the beginning that translation should be kept to a minimum, and that original, indigenous material should be used wherever possible, which presented no problems with the speech material, since this consisted largely of proverbs and

PHOTO ELLINGER, SALZBURG

sayings. With some of the songs, I was able to use nursery rhyme texts instead of translating and the printed accompaniments remained unaltered. With my limited knowledge, I didn't have the courage to ask, "Why can't we pitch some of these songs in F or G?" Had that been possible, some native songs, particularly Scots pentatonic, could have been included. As it was, none of these songs had their key note at the bottom of the vocal range, so I could not use them. Later of course Orff would say, "But of course I intended that all that C major material could be transposed!"

For Volume II, I was particularly pleased to find poems and words from poets such as William Blake and Sir Walter Scott that fit the German songs in mood and meter. Apart from "Summer is icumen in" (which was already in the German volume), it was not easy to find material that could be harmonized with just tonic and supertonic chords—I was much happier with these same chords in a different relationship in Volume IV.

VOLUME III (PUBLISHED 1963)

In February 1961, Orff wrote that he was going to found a "Zentralstelle" (the beginnings of the Orff Institute) and would be running an initial course in July at the Frohnburg.³ I replied that




Performing "Dashing away with the smoothing iron"
From l to r: (standing) Laughton Bird, Jean Nelson, Marjorie Lea, Margaret Murray (seated, front row) Polyxene Mathéy, Gunild Keetman, Kory Shandler, and far right, Barbara Haselbach

I would be there in July, and that following his request to continue adapting the volumes, I was looking for songs that could be included in Volume III and would bring them with me.

The situation at this course, with instruments available and people to play them, was ideal for trying out possible accompaniments to these songs and I remember particularly "Dashing away


with the smoothing iron" and "No, John, no." At first I would meet with Gunild and with a few instruments we would try out various ideas for the bass and one or two accompanying patterns. When we had found what we felt was feasible, we assembled such people as Frau Polyxene Mathéy⁴, Barbara Haselbach⁵ and Kory Shandler (Vancouver) to play the various parts. In the course of trying out the accompaniments, they would add ideas of their own. When we had a satisfying version of each song, we would ask Orff to join us. I always had first to explain to him what the song was about, and then, with me singing and the others playing the accompaniment, Orff would listen and comment. In the main, he was satisfied and I then had to go from player to player to find out exactly what they had been playing so that I could write out a full score. During the second week of the course, there were public lectures at the old Mozarteum in Salzburg and there was a concert at which Keetman worked with two groups of children, and Laughton Bird and Marjorie Lea (Canada) and Jean Nelson (New Zealand) sang our two songs with the accompaniments played by those named above.



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VOLUME IV (PUBLISHED 1966)

There were many British songs to choose from here, for we have a wealth of modal folk songs in these islands. The French songs could be left as they were, since in those days French was the most likely foreign language to be on a school curriculum. For some of the German songs Orff wanted to keep, I was able to find original English texts so that translation was kept to a minimum. With regard to the English song accompaniments, the same procedure occurred as for Volume III. I went to the course in Salzburg in July 1963, taking many songs with me, and again Gunild and I started work on them first. This time I remember one particular Orff contribution: I was only able to find one English phrygian song, the beautiful "Evening Prayer" (p. 80). It was collected by Cecil Sharp who acknowledged that it was in the phrygian mode on A and then promptly published it with a piano accompaniment in F major. In our original version, we had four introductory beats on glockenspiel at the beginning of each verse. It was Orff's suggestion that we change these to six—a typical Orff nudge out of the expected.

VOLUME V (PUBLISHED 1966)

This volume was so obviously at a more advanced level that the general

policy was to leave the German originals that Orff wanted to retain as they were and supply a verse translation in the notes at the back—mostly done by a talented friend of mine, Elizabeth Hankey. There was one new feature: the German original contained Orff's setting of a chorus from Sophocles' *Antigone* in the German translation by the poet Friedrich Hölderlin. It was Orff's idea to ask me to find a good English translation and ask Dr. Regner to make what turned out to be a most impressive setting for it.

Once again it was at a course, in 1964, that the English song accompaniments were put together and I have two particular memories, as described below.

First, that wonderful flow of sixteenth notes in "The loyal lover" (p. 42) is pure Keetman, particularly the bass xylophone part, and not a note was changed. For the second, we produced a very different version of "John Barleycorn" (p. 58) and when Orff heard it he immediately said: "Ach, nein Kinder!" [No, children!] and promptly sat down at the piano, playing the basic ostinato that has been given to the bass xylophone in the book. I'm pretty sure too that it was his idea to have all the other included bar instruments playing a counter cross-rhythm to the bass.

I fear that this volume is hardly ever used, which is such a waste. If you want to challenge a group rhythmically, there is plenty of scope for this in the "Rhythms for Development" (pp. 74–94) and in the notes at the back. In my original copy, I find that there are many amusing pencilled texts to help students I must have worked with commit them to memory so that they could play them with freedom. ■



Margaret Murray studied piano and cello at the Royal College of Music in London and then up until 1952 worked as a performer and as a teacher in various schools. She began work on the Orff Schulwerk volumes in the late 1950s. In 1965, she inaugurated and then led the annual English-speaking Orff Schulwerk Summer Course at the Orff Institute until 1977. From 1964 until 1976, she lectured and organized Schulwerk courses in all parts of the United Kingdom and taught at courses at the Orff Institute in Salzburg, and in South Africa, Australia, and the United States. Since 1976, she has translated many books and articles about Orff and Orff Schulwerk from German into English. In 1964, she founded the Orff-Schulwerk Society (now called Orff Society UK) and still holds the post of honorary secretary.

1. Daniel Helldén (1917–1998) Swedish composer and pedagogue, who worked on the first two volumes of the Swedish Orff Schulwerk in 1956–1957. He gave a lecture on the German-speaking Summer Course at the Orff Institute in 1963, bringing his wife and four children with him and making music and improvising with them before a delighted audience. In the end, he did no more of the volumes, preferring to go his own way, writing a series of books for Swedish schools and students.

2. Minna Ronnefeld trained in Denmark as a pianist and became a music teacher in Copenhagen, trained later at the Mozarteum in Salzburg where she met and studied with Gunild Keetman, and became a teacher there herself as Keetman's successor from 1955–1959. She was much involved with music education and radio productions in her own country and from 1970–1998 she was lecturer and then professor at the Danish College for Teacher Training. Since then she has been involved in many capacities with the Orff Foundation and the Orff Institute. She has produced many publications (including the Orff Schulwerk book of Danish songs) in Danish, German, and English (some of these in collaboration with Keetman). She has visited the United States on a number of occasions.

3. Frohnburg is a palace very near to the Orff Institute. In the 1950s, it was being used as a dormitory for students at the Mozarteum. It also had two good-sized teaching rooms.

4. Polyxene Mathéy (1902–1999) started her musical career as a successful pianist, but somehow found her way to the Güntherschule in Munich (where the Schulwerk started) and got to know Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman. She studied there in the mid 1930s and then went back to Athens where she started her own school for rhythmic and gymnastics. She renewed contact with Orff in the late 1950s and came to the First International Course in Salzburg in 1961 as a student, subsequently teaching every summer after that until 1968. I vividly remember her vital, joyful teaching and the way she instilled the Greek 5/4 and 7/8 dance rhythms into us. She produced two books of Greek dances in the Orff Schulwerk series and worked tirelessly in Athens and the rest of Greece for the promotion of music education.

5. Barbara Haselbach studied German, musicology, and modern dance in Vienna and Bern, became professor of dance didactics at the Orff Institute, and was for a time a director of the Institute. She edits the *Orff-Schulwerk Informationen* and acts as a guest lecturer at conferences worldwide. She has written numerous publications on music and dance education and aesthetic education themes.