



American Orff-Schulwerk Association



Gunild Keetman

Background: Gunild Keetman

Gunild Keetman (1904-1990) was a composer, performer and teacher who played a critical role in the development and spread of Orff Schulwerk (*Orff Schoolwork*). Carl Orff frequently said that the Schulwerk could not have come into being without Keetman's essential contributions.

In 1926 Keetman enrolled as a student at the Guntherschule, the innovative school for music and dance founded by Orff and Dorothee Gunther in Munich, Germany. In 1928 Keetman became a teacher there, with primary responsibility for the instrumental work. In 1930 she took leadership of the school's dance orchestra; her compositions and performances with the Gunther Dance Group were acclaimed in tours across Europe. In 1936 she composed the music and directed the Guntherschule music/dance performance at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games held in Munich. She continued her work at the Guntherschule until 1944, when the German government took control of the school. The building and its contents were later destroyed in wartime bombing.

By 1932 Keetman and Orff had begun their collaboration on the first of an extensive series of books summarizing the kind of music making developed at the Guntherschule, *Elemental Music Practice: Pieces for Small Percussion*. Keetman produced six more collections of pieces between 1932 and 1934. These were the original Orff-Schulwerk publications.

After the war Orff and Keetman again collaborated, adapting for children the improvisational approach to music education they had pioneered. Their first efforts with children were commissioned as radio broadcasts for German schools, with Keetman teaching the lessons. From 1949-56 Keetman taught children at the Mozarteum Academy in Salzburg, Austria. Her work with teacher training began in 1961 at the establishment of the Orff Institute, which she co-directed until 1966 with Orff and Wilhelm Keller. (The dedicated building known as the Orff Institute opened in 1963.) Thereafter Keetman, Orff, and others from the Institute traveled extensively – e.g., various European countries, Canada, Japan, Senegal – introducing Orff Schulwerk to potential teachers through workshops and short courses.

Examples from the radio broadcasts were notated and published in the five-volume collection (1950-54) titled *Orff-Schulwerk: Musik für Kinder* (Music for Children), with additions in *Paralipomena* (1966). These materials serve as models for creating improvisatory elemental music with children in the classroom. From 1963 to 1975 Keetman co-directed with Orff 10 recordings of music from the Schulwerk volumes, titled *Musica Poetica*. From 1980 to 1986 she collaborated with Danish teacher and composer Minna Ronnefeld on eight books of musical compositions to be used by Schulwerk teachers. Six more books from the collaboration with Ronnefeld were published posthumously.

Compositions for recorder by Gunild Keetman

1932: *Spielstücke für Blockflöten und kleines Schlagwerk*

1951: *Spielstücke für Blockflöten, Book A*

1951: *Spielstücke für Blockflöten, Book B*

1956: *Stücke für Flöte und Trommel I*

1950-1954: *Orff-Schulwerk: Musik für Kinder, Volumes I-V* (with Carl Orff)

1958-1966: *Orff-Schulwerk: Music for Children, Volumes I-V* (with Carl Orff) translated and adapted by Margaret Murray

1973: *Stücke für Flöte und Trommel II*

1980: *Elemental Recorder Playing with Instructions for Ensemble Playing and Improvisation* (with Minna Ronnefeld) translated and adapted by Mary Shamrock in 1999

1991: *Country Dances. From the English Dancing Master, by John Playford* (with Minna Ronnefeld)

1991: *Old French Dances. In Simple Settings for 2-3 Recorders (SSA), and Small Percussion* (with Minna Ronnefeld) in French and German.

Other compositions by Gunild Keetman*

1932: *Pieces for Small Percussion*

1933: *Dance: Orff-Schulwerk*

1933: *Pieces for Playing and Dancing: Ecstatic Dance: Orff-Schulwerk*

1935: *Little Recorder Books 1 and 2, Orff-Schulwerk. Elemental Music Practice*

1948: *The Christmas Story* (with text by Carl Orff)

1963: *Japanese Children's Songs*

1965: *Book of Pieces for Xylophone, for One Player*

1966: *Book of Pieces for Xylophone, for Two Players*

1966: *Book of Pieces for Xylophone, for Large Xylophone*

1970: *Rhythmic Exercise*

1973: *Practice Exercises and Pieces for Timpani*

1973: *Paralipomena* (with Carl Orff)

1989: *Taiwanese and Chinese Children's Songs*

* For a complete list of the hundreds of Keetman compositions, see: *Gunild Keetman: A Life Given to Music and Movement* by Hermann Regner and Minna Ronnefeld (Mainz: Schott Musik International, 2004).