

Orff-Schulwerk in Spain through its disseminators¹

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ENG Abstract: Professionals involved with the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain have had few opportunities to share that part of their lives in the academic sphere. Their testimonies are essential to reconstructing the processes by which active music education methodologies have circulated and been received, from their points of origin to the various regions where they have been adopted and developed. This article aims to provide an overview of various aspects of the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain, based on the perceptions, experiences, and narratives of specialists who have played—and continue to play—a significant role in promoting and implementing this pedagogical approach. To that end, a qualitative research design was employed, centered on a strongly structured biographical interview, validated by experts and conducted with 24 participants. The data collected through this instrument were coded into eight categories addressing issues such as training in the method and associated scholarships, conceptual understandings of the approach, the role of government policy, strengths and weaknesses in its implementation, and future prospects, among others. The analysis offers an in-depth study from which names, opinions, criticisms, and anecdotes emerge—elements not found in previous literature. Cross-analysis of the diverse perspectives allows for a deeper understanding of the arrival and expansion of the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain. Furthermore, the study reveals the extensive human network formed around this pedagogical approach and its main national circuits. Ultimately, the findings underscore the ongoing efforts of its proponents to ensure that music education in general—and the Orff-Schulwerk in particular—maintains a prominent place in the Spanish educational system, which has often neglected or instrumentalized the arts.

Keywords: *Orff-Schulwerk; active methodologies; reception; mediating agents; music education; Spain, interview.*

Summary: 1. Introduction; 2. Methodology; 2.1. Development and validation of a data collection instrument; 2.2. Identification and formation of the sample and data collection; 2.3. Data analysis; 3. Results; 3.1. Biographical data of the informants; 3.2. First contact and connection with Orff-Schulwerk; 3.3. Training and Orff-Schulwerk Scholarships; 3.4. Politics and Orff-Schulwerk; 3.5. Practice of Orff-Schulwerk; 3.6. Spain and Orff-Schulwerk; 3.7. Definition and strengths/weaknesses of Orff-Schulwerk; 3.8. Future of Orff-Schulwerk; 4. Conclusions; 5. References.

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1. Introduction

The study of the introduction and institutional dissemination of the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain, initiated in previous works (De la Hoz-Díaz & Ayala-Herrera, 2023; De la Hoz-Díaz & Marín-López, 2024a), must necessarily be complemented by the perspectives of those who became involved in this innovative way of teaching and experiencing music, approached from frameworks closer to the connected history of education and network theory (Fuchs, 2007). Most of these mediating agents, essential to the history of the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain, are well-known individuals. Alongside the soprano Carmen Pérez Durías (1926–2013) (De la Hoz-Díaz & Ayala-Herrera, 2023), one of the first to come into contact with this new music pedagogy was José Peris (1924–2017), a composition student of Orff in Munich and author of the book *Música para Niños* (Peris, 1965), an embryonic testament to the method in Spain (Miguel, 2022; De la Hoz-Díaz & Marín-López, in press). Another key contributor has been Montserrat Sanuy (b. 1935), who, after receiving scholarships to attend the Orff Institut in the 1960s, disseminated Orff's ideas across various educational settings, formats, and media. Among her most notable publications is the Spanish adaptation of the first volume of *Musik für Kinder* in

1969, co-authored with Luciano González Sarmiento (Sanuy & González, 1969). María Dolors Bonal (b. 1932) has also made a significant impact in the Orff world, particularly in Catalonia. Trained in Salzburg, she co-founded the avant-garde music school *L'Arc* in Barcelona in 1966 with Pilar Anglada, Esther Boix, and Ricard Creus (Arnaus, 2022). Special mention should be made of Elisa María Roche (1943–2009), a student at the Orff Institut who worked tirelessly both as an educator and policymaker. She led the educational reform of the LOGSE (Roche, 1994; 2010) and promoted the formation of the group *Ocho por Uno*,¹ which would later become the seed of the Asociación Orff España (hereinafter AOE).

These names represent just a small portion of the larger community that has gradually formed around the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain. Despite the relevance of this collective, there are few scholarly publications focused on amplifying their voices and pedagogical perspectives (Carrascosa, 2015; Echevarría, 2005; Harding, 2016; Lago *et al.*, 2007; Roche, 2000). This stands in contrast to the relatively greater number of studies devoted to the theory and practice of the method, such as those published by the AgrupArte press (Haselbach *et al.*, 2013), or others with a more applied and experiential orientation (Bernat, 2019; Santamaría & Martínez, 2018). A budding line of research, rooted in the history of music education, aims to clarify the mechanisms of circulation and reception of the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain through the lenses of patronage (De la Hoz-Díaz & Ayala-Herrera, 2023) and official dissemination and training structures (De la Hoz-Díaz & Sánchez-López, 2024b).

In light of the above, the main goal of this study is to understand key aspects of the reception of the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain through the accounts of some of the individuals directly involved. To this end, two specific objectives are proposed: (1) to identify and interview an initial network of individuals linked to the introduction and development of the Orff-Schulwerk in Spain, and (2) to clarify a set of categories that shed light on the most relevant aspects of this process. Ultimately, this work serves as both a tribute and a recognition of all the professionals who helped establish the Orff-Schulwerk as one of the most significant music pedagogies in the country.

2. Methodology

This study followed a methodological framework structured in several phases: (1) the development and validation of a data collection instrument (interview); (2) identification and selection of the sample and data collection; and (3) data analysis and the preparation of the research report. In terms of timing, the study was conducted over a period of one year and six months, as the second phase was delayed due to the need to coordinate interviewee availability.

2.1. Development and validation of a data collection instrument

Once the study objectives were defined, the first step was to design an interview guide. Based on Ginesi (2018), it was decided to create a strongly (though not fully) structured interview that would allow the exploration of adjacent or complementary topics following Wengraf's (2012) spectrum. This approach sought to prevent deviation from the interview's core objectives while avoiding conceptual drift or repetitive, irrelevant contributions (Hernández, 2014). Many of the questions required participants to reflect on past experiences, thus involving a memory exercise and some degree of preparation. Consequently, in early exchanges, several informants requested to receive the questions in advance to better articulate their responses.

A first draft of the interview guide was thus developed, comprising twelve questions divided into three dimensions: biographical, topical, and reflective, drawing on the work of Ginesi (2018), Brinkman (2017), and López-Cano & San Cristóbal (2014). This provisional guide was validated by twelve experts in the field from nine different institutions. They received an email outlining the study's aims and instructions for the validation process. Individual reports from each expert were compiled into a collective assessment, using the same template employed in the partial validation. Responses were collated, and each validator was assigned a color code. The instrument was deemed appropriate for its intended purpose, though suggestions were made to improve the phrasing of certain items, including complementary sub-questions or the addition of new questions, such as one addressing future prospects. These suggestions were incorporated, and the necessary adjustments were made to produce the final interview guide, consisting of 21 questions grouped into four dimensions (see Table 1).

Table 1 Final interview guide following expert validation

BIOGRAPHICAL DIMENSION	
Q1	How and when did you start in the world of music?
Q2	What has been your musical training—both formal and non-formal? And your general and music-specific pedagogical training—formal and non-formal? In which institution(s) did you study?
Q3	Have you dedicated yourself to music education? In what field? At which educational level(s)?
Q4	Where have you lived and worked throughout your life? During which periods? What motivated your relocations and how have they influenced your professional musical development?

1 A group made up of Javier Benet, Mariana di Fonzo, Sofía López-Ibor, Luz Martín León-Tello, Fernando Palacios, Leonardo Riveiro, Elisa Roche, and Polo Vallejo. This group, brought together around Elisa Roche, aimed to train in the Orff-Schulwerk and to promote its dissemination (López-Ibor & Bonal, 2021).

THEMATIC DIMENSION	
Q5	Continuing with the theme of this interview, how did you learn about <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> ? What is/was your connection with it?
Q6	Who are/were your mentors in <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> ? What did these contacts mean for you, personally and musically?
Q7	What specific training or courses have you taken on <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> methodology? When and for how long? Where? With whom? Do you have training in other music education methodologies?
Q8	Have you received any grants to study <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> in Spain or abroad? Which institution funded them? Where did you travel? For how long?
Q9	Which institutions or individuals organized, promoted, or developed music education training (especially in active methodologies) during your time?
Q10	Do you believe that educational policies have supported the adoption of <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> in Spain? In what way? Do you see alignment with educational policies in other countries?
Q11	Are you or have you been a member of any institution/association related to <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> ? Which one(s)? What were their goals, missions, or activities? What motivated you to join?
Q12	How have you applied <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> throughout your professional career? Have you felt constrained by official curricular frameworks?
Q13	What institutional <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> materials— instruments, methods, adaptations, repertoire—have you used with your students? Have you created any materials of your own, published or unpublished?
Q14	Have you mentored students who have helped disseminate and develop <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> ? What other channels do you consider effective for spreading these ideas?
REFLECTIVE DIMENSION	
Q15	Do you consider <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> to be a method—understood as an ordered, systematic way to achieve specific outcomes with predefined procedures? If not, how would you define it?
Q16	In your opinion, what are the key features and strengths of this methodology compared to others? And its weaknesses? What elements have worked best or worst in practice? Has this depended on the context?
Q17	What do you think motivated the introduction of <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> in Spain? Do you think it was delayed compared to other countries? Do you identify any peculiarities in its reception in Spain compared to non-German-speaking countries?
Q18	Who do you consider to be the main advocates and promoters of <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> in Spain? And its detractors?
Q19	Have you discussed your experiences with this methodology in conferences, seminars, or workshops? Do you have any anecdotes or know any relevant stories related to <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> in Spain?
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION	
Q20	Who do you think could provide relevant information about <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> in Spain?
Q21	Outlook: Do you believe <i>Orff-Schulwerk</i> is still relevant or should it be adapted for today's society? What are the main challenges ahead?

Table prepared by the authors based on expert validation.

2.2. Identification and formation of the simple and data collection

The sample size was initially unknown, as there was no existing, closed catalogue of individuals associated with *Orff-Schulwerk*. Therefore, a snowball or chain sampling method was employed, starting with three initial names. As the investigation progressed and responses were gathered to question P20, the final sample was established. A total of 40 individuals were contacted, of whom 24 agreed to be interviewed (Table 2), giving their consent for their responses to be used exclusively for research purposes. Their names and ages are disclosed due to the relevance and significance of these data for Spanish music education and because they are included and/or published in previous studies. Three generations of interviewees can be distinguished: a first generation, composed of individuals born between 1930 and 1940, pioneers in introducing the method to Spain (e.g. Montserrat Sanuy, Nicolás Oriol, Barbara Haselbach); a second generation, born roughly between 1950 and 1965, trained by those who had direct contact with *Orff-Schulwerk* (e.g. Fernando Palacios, Polo Vallejo, Sofía López-Ibor); and a third generation, born between 1970 and 1990 (e.g. Elia Bernat, Carmen Domínguez, Xavi Rocamora), students of the two previous generations and current advocates of *Orff-Schulwerk* in contemporary music education.

Although in-person interviews would have been the ideal format, the geographical dispersion and availability of the informants led to the use of telephone or video calls. A small number of participants chose to respond in writing for various reasons, with the resulting loss of spontaneity acknowledged. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes on average and were all recorded for transcription using the Whisper tool.² The resulting transcripts (averaging 4,500 words per interview) were checked against the recordings and sent to the participants for final validation.

Table 2 List of informants who participated in the study, by year of birth

NAME AND SURNAME	YEAR OF BIRTH	INTERVIEW DATE
Montserrat Sanuy	1935	09/12/2023
Barbara Haselbach	1939	10/30/2023

2 See full interview transcripts at: <https://ruja.ujaen.es/items/bb627928-fd4c-428b-8b24-63cb9e8b8933> y <https://hdl.handle.net/10953/5776>

Nicolás Oriol	1940	05/16/2023
Maravillas Díaz	1951	11/06/2023
Fernando Palacios	1952	09/27/2023
Ignacio Sustaeta	1955	11/18/2023
Mariana di Fonzo	1958	10/24/2023
Polo Vallejo	1959	06/05/2023
Sofía López-Ibor	1962	07/19/2023
Ángela Morales	1963	09/26/2023
Ester Bonal	1964	10/22/2023
Raquel Pastor	1974	04/09/2024
Elia Bernat	1975	03/11/2024
Mireia Aguiar	1976	10/11/2023
Carmen Domínguez	1979	03/21/2024
Eloi Fuguet	1979	03/20/2024
Marta Santillán	1980	12/12/2023
Erola Ramis	1982	02/01/2024
Helena Cuaresma	1985	04/25/2024
Iris Gil	1988	02/24/2024
Víctor Soria	1988	25/10/2023
Xavi Rocamora	1988	31/10/2023
Luis García Vázquez	Unknown	01/12/2023
Leonardo Riveiro	Unknown	07/11/2024

Table prepared by the authors.

2.3. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using various methodological approaches. On one hand, a biographical-narrative analysis was applied (Ocaña, 2006) to examine the full set of interviews. Biographical narration is one of the most suitable frameworks for analyzing "past experiences and future expectations that influence the perception of the present" (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994, p. 56), and it offers the opportunity to construct knowledge through interaction with the interviewer (Ferm *et al.*, 2016). Rather than aiming for a full and detailed biography of each individual, the analysis focused on a specific topic—Orff-Schulwerk—which forms either a central or partial part of the interviewees' careers.

Given the qualitative nature of the study and the large volume of information handled, it was essential to organize and code the data to ensure the required rigor and systematization. Manual open coding was applied to the interview transcripts. To this end, responses were categorized through a deductive-inductive process, taking into account the interview questions, the topics addressed, and the researchers' expertise (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). As a result, eight categories were established, more specific than the dimensions of the interview guide and closely related to the questions posed (see Fig. 1). The entire process was guided by the spiral model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994).



(fig. 1). Analytical categories and their relationship to the interview questions.

3. Results

3.1. Biographical data of the informants

This category helps to identify the origin of each informant's relationship with music and to contextualize their educational and professional background. Three main types of initial contact stand out: family tradition or influence; local music bands; and extracurricular activities such as choral ensembles or music schools. Noteworthy examples include Ángela Morales, whose first encounter with music took place at the Colegio

Carmen Cabezuelo in Madrid—an institution under the *Sección Femenina*, which promoted many Orff courses (De la Hoz-Díaz & Sánchez-López, 2024b); Erola Ramis, who joined the choir at the *L'Arc* music school, where she met Dolors Bonal, the school's director; Mariana di Fonzo, a student at the *Collegium Musicum* in Buenos Aires (Argentina), founded by Guillermo Graetzer; Nicolás Oriol, whose interest in music was encouraged by a nun at the *Colegio de las Teresianas* on Calle Goya in Madrid; and Sofía López-Ibor, who attended *Colegio Santa María de los Rosales* in Madrid, where Nicolás Oriol also taught. These cases illustrate how early connections and networks began to form among some of the interviewees.

A common feature among participants is their training in formal musical and/or pedagogical settings. Musically, many studied at conservatories, typically specializing in an instrument—especially recorder (e.g. Ángela Morales, Eloi Fuguet, Ester Bonal, Mariana di Fonzo). Pedagogically, many were trained as primary school teachers, with younger generations often specializing in music (e.g. Helena Cuaresma, Nicolás Oriol, Víctor Soria), or earned degrees in music pedagogy at higher education institutions (e.g. Erola Ramis, Fernando Palacios, Ignacio Sustaeta). In non-formal settings, they participated in a wide range of activities, from choirs and instrumental ensembles to private lessons or instruction in private music schools, as well as courses on active music education methodologies both in Spain and abroad. While this academic profile is broadly shared, there are exceptions—such as Carmen Domínguez, a trained architect who eventually shifted her professional focus to music education, particularly in relation to Orff-Schulwerk.

Professionally, all interviewees have been—and continue to be—involved in education, working across the full range of age groups and educational levels (from early childhood to adult education), including projects aimed at individuals with special educational needs or at-risk populations. Primary and secondary education are particularly prominent, along with teacher training—a key aspect in enabling Orff principles to be passed down across generations.

Lastly, mobility has played an relevant role throughout their careers, largely driven by the pursuit of training and employment opportunities. Most participants are based in major cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, where educational offerings are broader and more diverse. Their international specialization in Orff-Schulwerk mainly took place in Salzburg (Austria) (e.g. Carmen Domínguez, Luis García, Leonardo Riveiro, Montserrat Sanuy) and San Francisco (United States) (e.g. Mireia Aguiar, Xavi Rocamora, Marta Santillán, Víctor Soria). Beyond the Western context, Helena Cuaresma and Polo Vallejo stand out for their experiences in various African locations. This reveals that the arrival of Orff-Schulwerk in Spain was not a static or one-sided process, but rather a connected one, shaped by prior international movements in which the necessary structures and tools for its implementation were established.

3.2. First contact and connection with Orff-Schulwerk

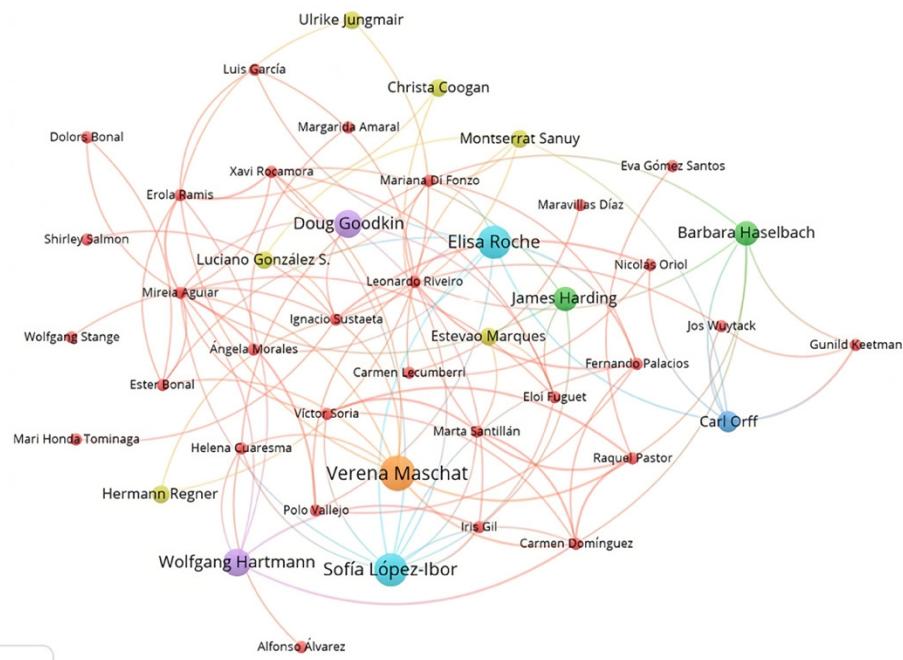
This category encompasses themes such as the initial encounter with Orff-Schulwerk, the mentorship received, and long-term involvement with the pedagogical approach, especially at the associative level.

Some informants do not have a clear recollection of their first contact with Orff-Schulwerk. The most common response refers to teacher training courses discovered by chance through educational advertising or, more recently, via social media or personal recommendations from figures such as Elisa Roche, Dolors Bonal, or Sofía López-Ibor. In these trainings, participants sometimes received only a brief introduction to Orff-Schulwerk, which sparked a desire for further specialization, as Mireia Aguiar explains: "I went after the trainers, mainly, and got to know them in depth because I was very interested in this methodology" (M. Aguiar, personal interview, 10/11/2023). Many of the Orff courses in Spain were organized by the Subdirectorate General for Music, the Association of Music Professors of Faculties and University Schools—particularly during the 1980s—by AOE, or at the request of schools and institutes. Since its founding, the Orff Association of Catalonia (hereinafter AOC) has also offered this type of program. The motivations for undertaking such training are diverse; in some cases, Orff-Schulwerk presented itself as a professional challenge (as in the case of Eloi Fuguet), or even as a life philosophy (as described by Sofía López-Ibor and Carmen Domínguez). In short, there is no single path of entry; rather, multiple avenues have led individuals to this approach.

Mentorship is a common element in these trajectories. The participants identified a broad list of 26 individuals who played a mentoring role, with Verena Maschat being the most frequently mentioned (16.36%), followed by Elisa Roche (12.73%). The former served as a source of inspiration for many educators (X. Rocamora, personal interview, 10/31/2023), while the latter is remembered with particular admiration and gratitude: "[Roche] was absolutely everything in Spain's music education" (F. Palacios, personal interview, 09/27/2023), a sentiment also shared by Sofía López-Ibor (personal interview, 07/19/2023). Other mentors mentioned—though to a lesser extent—include Sofía López-Ibor (especially among the younger generation), Wolfgang Hartmann, Barbara Haselbach, and Christa Coogan, all of whom were encountered in international training contexts. In this way, a human network has formed around Orff-Schulwerk in Spain, bringing together multiple Spanish generations and international figures who have served both as learners and as instructors or mentors.

Figure 2 illustrates this human network of interviewees and mentors, highlighting the points of convergence among them. The larger the node, the more frequently that figure was referenced. Ultimately, all individuals are connected, whether directly or indirectly, through intermediaries.

(fig. 2). Network diagram of interviewees and their mentors with Orff Schulwerk.



Finally, over time, all participants' connection with Orff-Schulwerk has materialized in their involvement with either AOE or AOC (see López-Ibor & Bonal, 2021, p. 183, for the origins of both associations). In general, all are or have been members of one or the other, with the exception of Ignacio Sustaeta, Maravillas Díaz, and Nicolás Oriol. In fact, some were founding members of AOE in 1996 (Fernando Palacios, Polo Vallejo, Leonardo Riveiro, Mariana di Fonzo, and Sofía López-Ibor); others have been honorary members, such as Montserrat Sanuy; or have held leadership roles, such as Mariana di Fonzo and Sofía López-Ibor, who alternated the presidency in its early years, and more recently Víctor Soria and Carmen Domínguez, the current president. AOC, founded more recently in 2020, emerged from the desire to replicate the initiatives being organized in Madrid (E. Ramis, personal interview, 02/01/2024). The initiative was spearheaded by Mireia Aguiar—currently president—together with Erola Ramis and Xavi Rocamora, under the guidance of Polo Vallejo. Both associations share the same goals: to promote the method, offer training opportunities, and build a network of individuals and collaborative spaces to strengthen the overall structure. Beyond these national organizations, some interviewees are also involved in and collaborate with other associations such as the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum of Salzburg or the American Orff-Schulwerk Association. López-Ibor is a paradigmatic case, as she is a member—and in some cases founder—of numerous Orff associations worldwide.

3.3. Training and Orff-Schulwerk Scholarships

Within specialized Orff training, four main types can be identified: (1) summer courses in active music methodologies promoted by Orff associations; (2) *Levels*, a three-tier system of certified Orff training accredited by the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum of Salzburg; (3) the *Special Course* organized by the Orff Institut in Salzburg; and (4) the *European Mentorship Program*, a specialized teacher training program in Orff pedagogy (Coogan et al., 2022). The format and/or location of these courses also varies. Summer courses may take place nationally or internationally, and are widely available. *Levels* are usually offered by Orff associations that have obtained certification. At present, both AOE and AOC include these in their training programs, but at the time when the interviewees undertook their training, *Levels* were offered in Salzburg—at the Orff Institut—and in San Francisco—through the International San Francisco Orff Course. Over time, more institutions worldwide have begun to offer certified training on all five continents. The *Special Course*, a postgraduate degree in Orff-Schulwerk offered by the Orff Institut, is held annually in different languages (P. Vallejo, personal interview, 06/05/2023). Lastly, the *European Mentorship Program* began in person but was adapted to an online format with annual meetings due to the pandemic (Coogan et al., 2022).

While the majority of the interviewees' training in active methodologies focused on Orff-Schulwerk, many also completed specialized programs in other pedagogical approaches, primarily Dalcroze and Kodály, followed by Willems, Wuytack, and Gordon; some training experiences were not formally certified, such as Montserrat Sanuy's engagement with the successors of Justine Ward.

Regarding scholarships and financial aid, there is a notable lack of public funding allocated to Orff-Schulwerk training programs. Applicants typically had to rely on support from associations or private institutions, often from abroad. Only ten of the informants received financial aid, most of which supported participation in *Levels* training in San Francisco or courses in Salzburg.

Three different time periods can be distinguished based on the awarding institutions. In the first generation, scholarships were granted by the Juan March Foundation or the *Sección Femenina*, and it was “a stroke of luck to be recruited for a funded training program or a job” (M. Sanuy, personal interview, 09/12/2023).³ The second generation, contemporary with the *Ocho por Uno* group, received funding from the Spanish or German Ministries of Foreign Affairs, or from the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*. The most recent support, targeted at the third generation, has come from the organizers of the *San Francisco Levels* program itself. In this regard, López-Ibor has at times personally covered the expenses of young Spanish students. Additionally, both AOE and AOC now offer their own scholarship systems, specifically aimed at participants with limited resources.

Broadening the scope to general music education, many institutions and programs—both nationally and internationally—provide funding for this purpose. However, most calls for applications present a mismatch with the Orff-Schulwerk philosophy, since grants are usually awarded to pedagogical or instrumental performance projects, whereas Orff-Schulwerk “straddles the line between pedagogy and music” (E. Ramis, personal interview, 02/01/2024).⁴

3.4. Politics and Orff-Schulwerk

This section gathers the opinions and insights of the interviewees regarding Orff-Schulwerk in relation to Spanish educational policies and in comparison with other countries. Most agree that there was a pivotal legislative moment and a key individual: the *Ley Orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo* (LOGSE) and Elisa Roche. That law provided momentum for music education and encouraged the adoption and development of active methodologies. Until then, music teaching – and particularly Orff-Schulwerk – had received little attention in compulsory formal education, with a few exceptions, such as when the Orff method “experienced a significant opening through the training courses organized by the *Sección Femenina*” (M. Sanuy, personal interview, 12/12/2023).⁵ However, the interviewees also note that no law has ever demonstrated a clear or explicit interest in these 20th-century pedagogies, which have mostly been introduced thanks to the efforts of individual teachers: “Policy and education do not go hand in hand—let alone music education” (M. Santillán, personal interview, 12/12/2023).⁶ Elisa Roche’s work marked a turning point; deeply committed to the cause, she spearheaded what became a veritable educational-musical revolution, revising the curriculum with support from other forward-thinking colleagues such as Mariana di Fonzo and Marga Aroca. Fernando Palacios pays tribute to her legacy: “The most extensive, most powerful, and most revolutionary contribution to music education in this country has gone completely unrecognized. And it has a name: Elisa Roche” (F. Palacios, personal interview, 09/27/2023).⁷

Informants lament that the tireless work of the 1990s has not endured over time. They feel that the initial interest in music education at the basic level has gradually eroded in subsequent legislative reforms, due to both its diminished curricular weight and its reduced time allocation compared to other subjects. Another major concern is the lack of teacher training and the mismanagement of funding, which has led, for example, to instrumental resources being left unused in storage closets due to a lack of musical knowledge—or simply indifference. They also point to the absence of educational plans that meaningfully incorporate creativity, expressiveness, and communication: “And that isn’t achieved through Orff-Schulwerk alone—it’s achieved by painting, dancing, and reading” (E. Fuguet, personal interview, 03/20/2024).⁸

Additionally, the interviewees generally demonstrate a broad awareness of education systems in other countries, which enables them to compare these with the Spanish context. They observe that Spain has often lagged behind in the field of music education, falling short of the standards set by Nordic countries (such as Finland) or North America (such as the United States or Canada). Specifically in the case of Orff-Schulwerk, the approach is deeply rooted and widespread in Germany and Austria, where it originated; however, in those countries, the figure of a specialist music teacher does not exist within schools, but rather within dedicated music academies. Orff-Schulwerk is also highly prominent in Finland and the United States thanks to the support of institutions such as the Sibelius Academy and the JaSeSoi Association in the former, and the American Orff-Schulwerk Association and structured, long-established centers such as The San Francisco School in the latter. At this last institution, Sofía López-Ibor teaches alongside Doug Goodkin and James Harding. Other countries that have adopted elements of Orff-Schulwerk tend to be more conservative and prioritize their own national pedagogical methods, as is the case in France and the United Kingdom.

3.5. Practice of Orff-Schulwerk

The application of Orff-Schulwerk in Spain has taken place in a variety of contexts and formats, including formal education, educational projects, established instrumental ensembles, and private group sessions. According to some interviewees, there are more limitations within conservatories, which are characterized by a professionalizing technical focus and individual instruction—whereas Orff is a methodology geared toward collective work, emphasizing lived and social experience over the teaching and learning of musical

3 Original quotation in Spanish: “una suerte que te buscasen para realizar alguna formación becada o para trabajar.”

4 Original quotation in Spanish: “estamos a caballo entre lo que es pedagogía y lo que es música.”

5 Original quotation in Spanish: “tuvo una apertura importante durante los cursos organizados por la Sección Femenina.”

6 Original quotation in Spanish: “Política y educación no van de la mano y, mucho menos, si hablamos de educación musical.”

7 Original quotation in Spanish: “No se ha reconocido en absoluto la labor más ingente, más grande y más revolucionaria que ha tenido la educación musical de nuestro país, que tiene un nombre y apellido: Elisa Roche.”

8 Original quotation in Spanish: “y eso no solo se consigue con el Orff-Schulwerk, se consigue pintando, bailando y leyendo.”

notation. Since Orff-Schulwerk also incorporates movement, some dance schools have adopted it partially in their programming (R. Pastor, personal interview, 04/09/2024). In any case, official regulations have not restricted its implementation, as they allow teachers enough leeway to interpret the curriculum in a flexible and personal way. After all, Orff-Schulwerk principles are highly adaptable to any musical activity, though they do require specific space and resources.

According to the interviewees, the most commonly used materials in implementing the approach include Orff instruments, particularly barred percussion (Studio, 49), various editions of *Musik für Kinder* (De la Hoz-Díaz & Marín-López, 2024a), and self-produced materials or those acquired during training. The most frequently consulted editions are the German volumes (I and V), as well as the Spanish (Sanuy & González, 1969), Latin American (Graetzer & Yépés, 1961), and American (Regner, 1977) editions. These manuals include works of notable pedagogical and compositional value. The five German volumes have only been fully translated into English, in a version prepared by linguist and music educator Margaret Murray (S. López-Ibor, personal interview, 07/19/2023). For Nicolás Oriol,

these manuals weren't fully applicable at the school level because the children couldn't read music. So making them work progressively meant skipping over huge gaps, and it took many years. I mean, given the amount of time available for music classes—about 45 minutes to an hour a week—it was inconceivable (N. Oriol, personal interview, 05/16/2023).⁹

The many educators connected to Orff-Schulwerk in Spain have created a wealth of pedagogical material, most of it consisting of musical arrangements, whether for training sessions or for daily teaching. Unfortunately, much of that material remains unpublished and “stayed in the students’ notebooks” (A. Morales, personal interview, 09/26/2023). Nonetheless, there is a valuable body of published work, including books by Kotzian & Vallejo (2018), López-Ibor (2011), López-Ibor & Maschat (2006), Sanuy (2011), Sanuy & Pliego (2015), and Vallejo (2002; 2016). Also notable are the teaching resources from the *Todos Creamos* project, coordinated by Fernando Palacios.¹⁰ Other materials are in the process of being edited and published, such as *Miniaturas* by Polo Vallejo and works by Helena Cuaresma and Eloi Fuguet. In the field of dance, Orff-Schulwerk resources have also been developed, particularly activity sheets listing “titles, lyrics, context, or step notation” of traditional and historical dances¹¹ –though often considered more as personal archive materials than for formal publication (R. Pastor, personal interview, 04/09/2024).

These resources have been used with students at various levels, as well as with adult learners, with the goal of disseminating the pedagogical ideas of Orff and Keetman. In this sense, some interviewees speak of having “disciples,” though most agree that the term is somewhat outdated and overly grandiose. Still, they believe that their teaching has served as inspiration or a seed for others to discover Orff-Schulwerk. The central idea is to foster “green shoots” (V. Soria, personal interview, 10/25/2023), to the point that “those who question you most at first end up adopting and taking an interest in these ideas” (L. García, personal interview, 12/01/2023).¹² To this day, musical practice and training remain the most effective and meaningful vehicles for spreading the method, thanks to their experiential nature. However, there is a lack of spaces for debate and knowledge production on the topic. Very few of the interviewees have attended or are aware of academic conferences or scholarly events focused on Orff-Schulwerk. Most gatherings remain informal and rarely involve dialogic confrontation. Still, some events were mentioned, such as the *1st Congress on Education through Dance* (2022, first edition), where Orff-Schulwerk had a significant presence.

3.6. Spain and Orff-Schulwerk

A key part of this study is to uncover the historical background of Orff-Schulwerk’s arrival in Spain: its major milestones, the key figures involved, and the roles they played over time.

Three “very visionary and courageous women,”¹³ Montserrat Sanuy, María Dolors Bonal, and Elisa Roche, traveled to Salzburg to train at the Orff Institut (C. Domínguez, personal interview, 03/21/2024). Composer José Peris, a student of Orff, had made contact somewhat earlier; Orff ultimately entrusted the pedagogical transmission of the method to Montserrat Sanuy, a role that Peris never assumed (M. Sanuy, personal interview, 09/12/2023). Nonetheless, Peris was instrumental in initiating the exploration of Orff-Schulwerk in Spain (De la Hoz-Díaz & Marín-López, in press). As Barbara Haselbach noted: “He probably noticed that in the time of the Franco regime much was subdued or missing in education. He inspired young Spaniards to go to Salzburg and to study at the Orff-Institute” (personal interview, 10/30/2023). The goal was to reform traditional conservatory structures and move beyond music theory, as well as to meet the “need for knowledge, openness, and cultural exchange” (L. Riveiro, personal interview, 11/07/2023).¹⁴ This desire for change has been passed down through generations and remains relevant today. Also crucial in this process were the

9 Original quotation in Spanish: “estos manuales no eran del todo aplicables en la etapa escolar porque los niños no sabían leer música. Entonces, hacerlo progresivo para que lo pudieran aplicar [suponía] dar unos saltos abismales y era un proceso de muchísimos años. O sea, con el tiempo que había en los colegios para dar clase de música, que eran aproximadamente de tres cuartos de hora a una hora a la semana, era inconcebible.”

10 To learn more about the project, the teaching guide for the 11th edition is available at the following link: <https://www.cndm.mcu.es/nodo/22341>

11 Original quotation in Spanish: “el título, la letra, el contexto o la notación de los pasos.”

12 Original quotation in Spanish: “los que más te cuestionan en un primer momento acaban adhiriéndose e interesándose por estas ideas.”

13 Original quotation in Spanish: “mujeres muy visionarias y valientes.”

14 Original quotation in Spanish: “necesidad de conocimiento, apertura e intercambios culturales.”

arrival and long-term residence in Spain of individuals closely associated with Orff-Schulwerk, such as the Germans Verena Maschat and Wolfgang Hartmann.

The pedagogy of Orff and Keetman began to spread in Spain during the 1960s, mainly through the training courses organized by the *Sección Femenina*, just a few years behind other countries (De la Hoz-Díaz & Sánchez-López, 2024b). Still, there is a common belief—held by some interviewees—that the reception in Spain was delayed. The increasing involvement of music teachers in choral groups during the 1970s and 1980s also contributed to the dissemination of Orff's ideas, though, as noted earlier, the decisive moment came in 1990. However, for some participants, the main issue is not so much when the pedagogy arrived but rather “how quickly and effectively those ideas were adopted by Spanish teachers” (I. Gil, personal interview, 02/24/2024).¹⁵ Some voices suggest that the method was taken up more as a tool to enrich existing music education than as a comprehensive pedagogical system (E. Fuguet, personal interview, 02/24/2024). López-Ibor, in her broad overview, argues that “it wasn't a late arrival [to Spain],” and that “what has been done in various countries is quite similar; the difference lies in the scope and scale of that work” (personal interview, 07/19/2023).¹⁶ Other educators, such as Xavi Rocamora (personal interview, 10/31/2023), are more categorical, asserting that Orff-Schulwerk has yet to be fully implemented and that much remains to be done. Spanish Orff associations are striving to keep the method alive and to grow the human network around it. For this reason, AOE has recently sought to establish agreements with educational institutions and music teacher organizations such as the *Confederación de Asociaciones de Educación Musical del Estado Español*.

Proactivity and participation are essential for implementing this methodological approach. Without resorting to clichés, some interviewees believe this is possible in Spain thanks to the generally open and spontaneous character of Spaniards. Other factors also helped foster the method's early reception in Spain, as noted by Haselbach: “I found a strong musicality, a wonderful musicality, and also a way of understanding music physically” (B. Haselbach, personal interview, 10/30/2023). Nonetheless, the reflective dimension required to engage deeply with the method is weaker than in other cultures, such as those of Northern Europe, where “you get more reflection, but less spontaneity” (M. Di Fonzo, personal interview, 10/24/2023).¹⁷ On another note, some traditional Spanish folk instruments have integrated well with Orff instrumentation, such as tambourines, sleigh bells, or castanets. On the latter, Sanuy recalls that when she was studying in Salzburg, Orff asked her to bring castanets made in Spain, which he later incorporated into a performance of his *Carmina Burana* (M. Sanuy, personal interview, 09/12/2023).

Although the rich and diverse Iberian folk tradition fits well with this pedagogical approach, Spanish educators have often had to overcome difficulties related to infrastructure and access to instruments. López-Ibor (personal interview, 07/19/2023) recounted being invited to give courses under unimaginable conditions. Added to this are the suspicions that Orff-Schulwerk provokes among course participants, mainly due to a lack of familiarity and prejudices about aspects such as group work or physical contact with others. According to the interviews, students particularly value two things: practice—over theoretical explanation (H. Cuáresma, personal interview, 04/25/2024)—and understanding the meaning of the songs they perform (C. Domínguez, personal interview, 03/21/2024).

Orff-Schulwerk in Spain owes its existence to a long list of educators who have carried out admirable work in promoting and disseminating the method (see Fig. 3). In general, these advocates have worked in primary and secondary education and in teacher training. Many have also offered Orff-Schulwerk training internationally.

(fig. 3). Disseminators of Orff-Schulwerk on Spain, as identified by the interviewees.
Interviewed for this study marked with an asterisk.

- Aguiar, Mireia*
- Álvarez, Alfonso
- Angulo, Manuel
- Barrio, Presentación
- Bernat, Elia*
- Bonal, Ester*
- Bonal, María Dolors
- Calvo Niño, María Luisa
- Di Fonzo, Mariana*
- Ferré, Oriol*
- Gómez Santos, Eva
- González Sarmiento, Luciano
- Goodkin, Doug
- Harding, James
- Hartmann, Wolfgang
- Lecumberri, Carmen
- López de Arenosa, Encarna
- López Ráez, José Luis
- López-Ibor, Sofía*
- Martín Léon-Tello, Luz
- Maschat, Verena
- Morales, Ángela*
- Oriol, Nicolás*
- Palacios, Fernando*
- Pastor, Raquel*
- Roche, Elisa
- Royo, Charo
- Salmon, Shirley
- Santillán, Marta*
- Sanuy, Montserrat*
- Stange, Wolfgang
- Sustaita, Ignacio*
- Vallejo, Polo*
- Wuytack, Jos

15 Original quotation in Spanish: “la velocidad y efectividad de esas ideas en el profesorado español.”

16 Original quotation in Spanish: “la llegada [a España] no fue tardía” [...] “lo trabajado en distintos países es bastante similar, pero cambia la dimensión y extensión de ese trabajo.”

17 Original quotation in Spanish: “consigues más reflexión, pero menos naturalidad.”

3.7. Definition and strengths/weaknesses of Orff-Schulwerk

When asked to define Orff-Schulwerk, the interviewees offered a wide range of descriptions. Almost unanimously, and in line with Orff's own thinking, they agreed that it is not a strict method in the sense of a systematic and ordered procedure with formulas leading to specific outcomes: "A method is like a girdle, and whoever wears one does so because they need it [...]. I think children are often confined, and that's the least creative thing imaginable because you can't grow" (M. Sanuy, personal interview, 09/12/2023).¹⁸ That said, there are divergent views: Nicolás Oriol (personal interview, 05/16/2023) defines it as "a method consisting of a set of strategies to facilitate the logical learning and understanding of music,"¹⁹ while Víctor Soria describes it as "an ordered method, but one that requires a great deal of training and reflection" (personal interview, 10/25/2023).²⁰

Thus, Orff-Schulwerk is so abstract from a methodological standpoint that it defies categorization under a single term. Among the definitions gathered from the interviews, the following stand out: "a way of understanding teaching and life," "methodology," "educational system," "pedagogical approach with core principles," "system of materials," "form and vision of transmitting music," "new conception of music education, collective improvisation, and socialization," "movement offering didactic models," "musical education proposals," "pedagogical ideas," and "musical philosophy," among others. Despite their differences, these expressions converge in a complex definition: a set of pedagogical principles, combined with a collection of materials, that constitutes a new conception of music education within a system dependent on how the individual conceives and communicates musical teaching.

This pedagogy presents many strengths, though it also has its weaknesses (see List 1). In any case, as with other active methodologies, everything depends on the context in which it is applied, the initiative and engagement of the teacher, and the individual characteristics of the learners.

List 1 Strengths and weaknesses of Orff-Schulwerk

STRENGTHS
Freedom, flexibility, adaptability, and structure
Variety of resources and materials for musical practice
Naturalness in experiencing and making music—music is learned by doing music
Playful character without being mere play
Use of accessible language and accompaniments
Rhythm as a core element
Emphasis on folk traditions
Collective learning in which the process takes precedence over the outcome
Use of instruments
Encouragement of creativity
Development of emotional expression and social interaction
Combination of expressive media
Integration of speech, music, and movement
Embodyment of dance and movement on an equal footing with music
Possibility of interdisciplinary connections
Humanistic education and holistic student development
Encouragement of reflection on the learning process
Artistic and personal empowerment
WEAKNESSES
Complexity, fragmentation, and variability that can create insecurity in teachers
Lack of systematization
Dependence on context and teacher strategies
Risk of relying on isolated activities without exploring the method as a whole
Limited knowledge of the instruments
Requires ongoing professional development
Problem of "anything goes": does any activity involving Orff instruments qualify as Orff-Schulwerk?
Need for adaptation to children's physical development
Difficulty balancing the didactic, interpretive, and compositional dimensions
Challenges in transitioning to music reading and writing
Limited training in vocal expression
High cost of quality instruments
Teacher disengagement due to lack of immediate success

List compiled by the author based on participants' responses.

3.8. Future of Orff-Schulwerk

Orff-Schulwerk remains a significant reality within music pedagogy in Spain, even though it is not present in all educational institutions. The interviewees unanimously agree that Orff-Schulwerk is still relevant and does not require updating, precisely because one of its core principles is its inherent adaptability (Hartmann &

18 Original quotation in Spanish: "un método es como una faja, y el que lleva faja es que la necesita [...]. Pienso que muchas veces se aprisiona a los niños y esto es lo menos creativo que hay porque no se puede crecer."

19 Original quotation in Spanish: "método con un conjunto de estrategias para facilitar el aprendizaje y conocimiento lógico de la música."

20 Original quotation in Spanish: "método ordenado pero que requiere mucha formación y reflexión."

Haselbach, 2017). This adaptability has facilitated its widespread dissemination, supported by the contextual factors discussed earlier (R. Pastor, personal interview, 04/09/2024).

Nevertheless, changing times bring new challenges. The issue that most concerns the Orff community is technology. We live in an increasingly digitized and technologized society that aspires to be governed by virtual reality and artificial intelligence (Bellver & Romero-Wenz, 2022). Orff-Schulwerk must find its place within this context without losing its essence—experiencing music in a lived and embodied way. It is difficult to imagine this convergence when the body itself is the central instrument. Therefore, the most feasible path for digital integration might lie in the use of virtual instruments rather than in the digitization of the physical materials. While it is important to stay current, updates should not be forced; as Víctor Soria states, “Orff-Schulwerk is a wildflower in the garden of today’s screen-driven times” (personal interview, 10/25/2023). Additionally, the obsession with showcasing everything on social media requires greater awareness among educators: having an online presence does not guarantee the quality of an activity. What matters more is having a real audience that follows the performance through to the end and provides constructive feedback (E. Ramis, personal interview, 02/01/2024). This concern is linked to today’s culture of speed, which has permeated even educational institutions, including universities. This trend worries proponents of the *Slow Professor* approach, who advocate for thorough, high-quality academic work that resists the aggressive productivity and managerial logic of the corporate model (Berg & Seeber, 2022).

Other key challenges include adapting to students’ decreasing attention spans, integrating contemporary language through composition and improvisation, maintaining a sense of purpose in teaching, and fostering collective learning in an increasingly individualistic society. There is also ongoing concern regarding the place of music in educational legislation. Teachers must engage politically to ensure that Orff-Schulwerk is better understood, more deeply implemented, and officially recognized within the education system (N. Oriol, personal interview, 05/16/2023)—in pursuit of a committed and activist form of music education.

4. Conclusions

This study has brought to light and expanded upon several aspects of the reception of Orff-Schulwerk in Spain by foregrounding the perspectives of key individuals involved in its dissemination. First, a primary network of nearly fifty influential figures in this process was identified. In particular, 24 professionals from various age groups—spanning from the initial introduction of the method in Spain in the 1960s to the present day—were interviewed. This group constitutes a sufficiently representative sample from which to draw meaningful insights. A structured interview guide, previously validated by experts, was used and could serve as a model for similar research. Analysis of the interview data has made it possible to reconstruct a series of dimensions (biographical, thematic, reflective, and complementary) and categories related to Orff-Schulwerk in Spain. These shed light on how the method was first accessed and adopted, the training and scholarships received, the mentorship roles played by key figures, its implementation, its relationship with state education policies, perceptions of its current status, and concerns regarding future challenges.

First and foremost, the findings confirm that the adoption and continued relevance of this pedagogical approach in Spain can be attributed not so much to institutional support (present mainly at the outset) or curricular mandates (more evident with the implementation of the LOGSE), but rather to the initiative, commitment, and dissemination efforts of at least three generations of professionals, as well as the pivotal influence of mentors such as Sanuy, Bonal, Roche, and López-Ibor. This must be understood in conjunction with a spirit of associationism and network-building—essential to this pedagogical “pollination”—mirroring the international model. While the emergence of such affinity groups (e.g., *Ocho por Uno*) is outlined, further research is needed to explore the processes behind their formation and their internal dynamics, which in some cases extended into personal relationships (Miguel, 2021). In this regard, the strong emotional attachment and reverence for the methodology observed among many interviewees occasionally led to biased opinions, conceptual gaps, inaccuracies, and a lack of critical distance—traits that paradoxically verge on dogmatism.

The study also highlights certain resistances to adopting the method in various educational contexts. These arise from the method’s own conceptual ambiguities, the insufficient (and often informal) training of educators, and issues related to the allocation and management of resources. It is generally acknowledged that Orff-Schulwerk has found greater implementation in general education than in conservatories, given its active and experiential nature, which contrasts with the more technical, codified, and theory-based orientation of formal music instruction. Regarding adaptation to the Spanish context, beyond assumptions about cultural affinity, future studies should investigate how Orff materials (instruments and manuals) are actually used in training programs, as well as compile and publish the original materials created and transmitted during workshops and courses—much of which is currently preserved only in private archives, notebooks, or participants’ memories.

Among the limitations of this study, aside from the extended timeframe required for data collection, are those inherent to the instrument itself, which can constrain the depth and spontaneity of responses. This limitation was mitigated by providing the interview questions in advance. In light of potential biases that may have influenced the categorization and final interpretation of data, readers are encouraged to consult the full interview transcripts (available as a separate document), which represent valuable firsthand testimony for the recent history of music education in Spain and of Orff-Schulwerk more broadly. Finally, it should be noted that other professionals not included in the present study could provide additional insights on the topic. A key avenue for future research would therefore be the expansion of the sample to include all those individuals mentioned during the interviews, as well as international experts familiar with the early years of Orff-Schulwerk in Spain and its current status. Only through such efforts will it be possible to fully understand the scope of this ever-evolving pedagogical vision.

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