

Wir stellen vor ...

We present ...

In dieser neuen Rubrik möchten wir in unregelmäßiger Folge herausragende Institutionen aus verschiedenen Teilen der Welt vorstellen, die in ihrem pädagogischen Konzept die Prinzipien des Orff-Schulwerks integriert und ihren soziokulturellen Bedingungen entsprechend adaptiert haben.

Die Redaktion

*Under this new title we will introduce from time to time, prominent institutions from different parts of the world who have integrated the pedagogical concepts of the Schulwerk and have suitably adapted its socio-cultural requirements.*

*The editor*

## Jittamett Kindergarten – Bangkok

*Sofía López-Ibor  
Krongtong Boonprakong*

*Imagine a school in which children learn about almost everything by simply being exposed to a deep sensorial experience in a paradisaical environment...*

*Imagine a school where dance, art and music are not something supplemental but stand at the center of the program...*

*Imagine a school for children, that feels like home, where playing and learning spaces are integrated and where the teachers are there to support and admire children...*

*Imagine children playing a stone passing game and then solving a math problem...*

*Imagine an integrated curriculum let by an inspired group of young teachers...*

*I am talking about the Jittamett Kindergarten in Bangkok.*





*It was 14 years ago when Barbara Haselbach and I were invited to teach a workshop in Bangkok by Mom Dusdi Paribatra – one of the most influential educators in the country of Thailand. One of the participants in that course was Krongtong Boonprakong the owner and director of the Jittamett school, which is right now a leading institution in the country in pre-school and Kindergarten education. By coincidence I just found the list of the participants in the above-mentioned workshop and I realized that at that point Krongtong’s school was just a project in her mind. How could she build in such a short time, what I would describe as an ideal school?*

*The Jittamett Kindergarten program was born in the mind of Krongtong as a place in which children could be children. She was initially inspired to become a teacher by observing the needs and wishes of her own daughter. Her starting point was reflecting on her own childhood. Seeing Krongtong participating in workshops and leading classes with kids you can really see how she enjoys exploring the playful free minded childlike spirit. She does not hold a degree in education, so she knew she needed to “run an extra mile” to receive training. She chose Reggio Emilia, Project Zero, Montessori and Orff Schulwerk as her pathway. She remembers:*

*“Back in 1999 when one of my early childhood knowledge explorations began, I had the opportunity to attend a music and movement workshop (Orff Schulwerk). The teachers were Professor Barbara Haselbach and Sofia Lopez-Ibor. My learning from that workshop had actually shaped the direction of Jittamett’s program. On that workshop, I also had the chance to meet a very respectable teacher – Archan Mom Dusdi Paribatra, who introduced the Orff Schulwerk concept in Thailand in 1975 with seminars taught by Dr. Hermann Regner, Barbara Haselbach and Karin Schuhmacher.*

*Archan Mom recommended that I spend a year as a guest student at The Orff Institute, University Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria, in the summer of 2000. I also took the level training at The San Francisco Orff Course. Archan Mom insisted on and assisted me in preparing a team of teachers before starting the school. Building the team of teachers was a parallel project to building the real*



*school itself. Brick after brick and workshop after workshop we became who we are now. The school officially opened on November 2000”.*

*The school is in a quiet neighborhood outside Bangkok. Entering the school facilities you can immediately perceive the wonderful design of the building where the outdoor and indoor spaces are integrated in an organic way, making the wall that separates work and free play in most schools very thin. The school building has verandas and patio spaces where teachers and children can sit to work on particular projects. The spaces are filled with children’s art and works of contemporary Thai artists for the children to enjoy. Huge tropical plants and a covered patio give shade for outdoor games. Sand, water, mud, wood, bamboo and natural materials to play with fill the corners of the yard.*

*“With this vision and our recognition of the importance of environment for learning, our space is filled with natural settings and materials to promote sensorial experiences. Nature surrounds the children and becomes like a close friend, creating the bond, the understanding, respect and love for it. The children’s feet experience senses while interacting with gravel, stones, sand, wood and earth. The difference in temperature and textures of these natural materials also create the awareness and different responses for children in terms of learning.*

*These are a few examples on topics that we believe children will not learn only being told about them. They learn better through their own observations and interactions, while also benefiting from the beauty of the scenery. Our building has different levels and allows children to see the space in different perspectives. At times, they will see their playground at eye level or get to see and feel it differently from another perspective on a higher floor. The variety of trees, leaves, flowers and seeds that grow, their change in shapes and colors, allow children to observe and recognize the similarities and differences among them. Children develop an understanding of the truth about natural changes that exist on earth: changes that produce growth and deterioration by human or natural causes.*

*Besides our focus on free play in a natural outdoor environment we also put great emphasis on the*





classroom environment and the organization of activities. Teachers nevertheless still play a very crucial role for children's learning and development by setting up the space and activities to best support on how and what we want to see in children." The Orff Schulwerk program does not only belong to the music and dance classes led by Krongtong Boonprakong and her collaborator Tik Sataporn Laitihong. They have a strong influence in all areas of the curriculum. As the teachers have participated in Orff courses they all use some elements of music, dance and drama in their classes. All teachers work on a performance project every Friday that will be shared with the students first thing on Monday. This might be singing a song, doing a drama skit, or exploring a material through movement or dance. Books are read and sung, poetry is danced and drawn and science is explored through the Orff media.

The school has an impressive visual arts program that is connected to the Orff Schulwerk in multiple ways. Anne Warangkana Siripachote, the art teacher, approaches the projects through movement and dance, singing songs and reading children's literature. Anne, Sataporn and Krongtong have collaborated in the production of my book "Blue is the Sea" with impressive integrated projects of music and visual arts. As it happens in the Schulwerk, the pathway to create an art piece is a wonderful rich experience in which the theme is explored in multiple ways. Reading a story might lead to a shadow play to experience the idea of pattern and contrast and then end in a collage project. A music and movement class about trees in which the children explore and play with real tree leaves might end with a detailed drawing of the leaf itself. The art gallery in the school is connected with the music room and the interaction of the arts is clear in all projects.

If you have an opportunity to travel to Bangkok take a detour on your vacation to visit our friends at Jittamett. You will not regret the visit!

