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September 5, 2023

Dear Elementary Music Educator,

Idaho Orff and Idaho Music Educators Association welcome back the Elementary Orff Ensemble to the 2024 IMEA Professional Development Conference at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, February 1-3, 2024! The directing team of Orff Specialists David Thaxton from Reno, Nevada, and Ardith Collins of New York City, will be back by popular demand and will be singing, speaking, moving, and playing with elementary students, 4th – 6th grades, Thursday and Friday, February 1st and 2nd with a performance on Saturday morning, February 3.

Interested students should be able to match pitch and keep a steady pulse and must be recommended by you, their music teacher. Students from around the state, outside of the Treasure Valley area, will be welcomed but must be housed in a local hotel room with a parent or guardian or with family/friends in the area with a parent or guardian.

Idaho Orff and IMEA leaders are anxious to bring the creativity of the Orff Schulwerk process to Southwestern Idaho. Student participation along with your observations of the rehearsals and Orff Specialists’ techniques and strategies will be a win-win experience! We are anxious to share the joy of the process with all of you and to help advocate for you, your programs, classrooms, and for what you do for your students.

What is Orff Schulwerk and why should my school become involved? This is a great question! The Orff approach to the teaching of music is based in the rhythms of language. Much like learning to read words, Orff instruction focuses on syllabication, which is linked to decoding text, maintaining a steady pulse which is linked to reading fluency, and musicality, which is linked to prosody, or reading with expression. Intertwined in all the rhythmic work is singing, which helps children decipher pitches, and, in turn, assists them in listening skills and hearing the subtle nuances of the sounds of letters, word beginnings, and endings. Activities in an Orff classroom can help you help your general education teachers teach reading!

Children and other beginners learn first through the body. Experiencing pulse, rhythm, high and low sounds, fast and slow, quiet and loud, are all things a learner first and foremost learns through movement. Moving the body is a main element of the Orff approach and helps to maintain student engagement and interest in the music classroom. During our Orff Ensemble rehearsals, our students will create the movements they use to accompany their singing and speaking, which is the final component of the Orff process – creating or improvising – a crucial 21st century skill.

Your students do NOT need experience with the Orff instrumentarium or with the Orff process to be a part of this ensemble. Pitch matching, keeping a steady pulse, and being able to work with others are the only requirements along with your recommendation. Students will have some song material and instrument parts to learn before arriving on February 1, but you will have the music and practice tracks by early December. The ensemble is meant to be an experience for students and music educators alike, as we hope to increase the visibility of Idaho Orff and IMEA as professional organizations here in Idaho. We exist to promote music education across our state among students, parents, administrators, and other community stakeholders, and to help YOU be successful as a music educator.

Student fees for this All-State opportunity are $155 and include lunch, snacks, necessary music, and the Idaho Orff/ IMEA Elementary Ensemble T Shirt. Registration will begin soon with forms due on October 30 and fees due on November 30. If your school PTO has funds available that they are looking to spend wisely, this could be an opportunity to include students who may not have the financial means to attend on their own.

Should you have any questions about this opportunity for you and your students, please contact one of our 2024 Idaho Orff/IMEA Elementary Orff Ensemble team members below.

Warm Regards,

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