

Heresies #10

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Women and Music

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Issue 10
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Open Meeting:

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HERESIES is an idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective. We believe that what is commonly called art can have a political impact, and that in the making of art and of all cultural artifacts our identities as women play a distinct role. We hope that HERESIES will stimulate dialogue around radical political and aesthetic theory, encourage the writing of the history of *femina sapiens*, and generate new creative energies among women. It will be a place where diversity can be articulated. We are committed to the broadening of the definition and function of art.

HERESIES is structured as a collective of feminists, some of whom are also socialists, marxists, lesbian feminists or anarchists; our fields include painting, sculpture, writing, anthropology, literature, performance, art history, architecture and filmmaking. While the themes of the individual issues will be determined by the collective, each issue will have a different editorial staff made up of women who want to work on that issue as well as members of the collective. Proposals for issues may be conceived and presented to the HERESIES Collective by groups of women not associated with the collective. Each issue will take a different visual form, chosen by the group responsible. HERESIES will try to be accountable to and in touch with the international feminist community. An open evaluation meeting will be held after the appearance of each issue. Topics for issues will be announced well in advance in order to collect material from many sources. It is possible that satellite pamphlets and broadsides will be produced continuing the discussion of each central theme. In addition, HERESIES provides training for women who work editorially, in design and in production, both on-the-job and through workshops.

As women, we are aware that historically the connections between our lives, our arts and our ideas have been suppressed. Once these connections are clarified they can function as a means to dissolve the alienation between artist and audience, and to understand the relationship between art and politics, work and workers. As a step toward a demystification of art, we reject the standard relationship of criticism to art within the present system, which has often become the relationship of advertiser to product. We will not advertise a new set of genius-products just because they are made by women. We are not committed to any particular style or aesthetic, nor to the competitive mentality that pervades the art world. Our view of feminism is one of process and change, and we feel that in the process of this dialogue we can foster a change in the meaning of art.

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Heresies

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Centipede" by Kathleen St. John. The score is written on a large sheet of paper and is shaped like a centipede. The head of the centipede is at the top, with a large, detailed drawing of its head and antennae. The body of the centipede is formed by a series of horizontal staves, each representing a different instrument or voice part. The legs of the centipede are represented by the staves extending downwards from the body. The score includes various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. There are also handwritten annotations and markings throughout the score, including the word "Heresies" at the top right and "LAM SEN" at the bottom right. The score is for strings, alto choir, and light percussion.

Kathleen St. John. Centipede, a musical composition for strings, alto choir, and light percussion. From the Insecta Collection. 1978. © 1978 Kathleen St. John. All rights reserved. Kathleen St. John, a composer, teaches at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia.

A Critical Approach to the History of Women in Music

Jeannie G. Pool

The study of the history of women in music is a relatively new area in Women's Studies and in musicology;¹ so new, in fact, that there has been very little discussion on methodology. An approach that incorporates both a feminist perspective and the rigors of the best music scholarship has yet to emerge, although various theories have been hinted at in practice.

Several books are being written under publishers' contract, articles are being published in magazines and journals, courses are being given on the subject at colleges, new concert series are planned in many areas of the country, and a few oral history projects are under way. The Ford Foundation recently gave a grant for the planning of a biographical dictionary of American women musicians, and two major conferences on women in music are being planned: in Bonn for the fall of 1980 and in New York for the spring of 1981. More recordings are being released. New scores are being published every year.

In the midst of this tremendous activity and new interest in the subject by the general public, we should pause for a moment to re-examine our goals and develop an approach which will facilitate our obtaining these goals.

Studies of women in music have been for the most part biographical, concentrating on women composers; few of these attempt to discuss the music. These studies are of notable women—exceptional women, the "women worthies" who, despite society's prejudices and restrictions on women musicians, gained some fame and recognition during their lives, insuring their mention in music history.² Published biographical studies cover Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Francesca Caccini, Barbara Strozzi, Antonia Bembo, and Pauline Viardot-Garcia, among others.³ Many other biographical studies are in progress—all in search of the great women composers.

These studies comprise what is essentially a reclamation movement,⁴ already well under way on women in literature, the visual arts, and political history. Yet the biographical stage in discovering women's history must be understood first as a defensive response to remarks by men (and by some women) that women have not been *great* in the arts or in any other sphere of life. Researchers of the history of women in music did not set out to learn the whole truth about the history of women in music, to define the ground for the inquiry, or to establish criteria for what constitutes significance in discussing women's history; they began in response to attacks on women's creative abilities in music.

Linda Nochlin, who has done considerable work on women in the visual arts, points out that the feminist's reaction to the question, "Why are there no great women artists?" is to dig up "examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists throughout history."⁵ This has also been the case for music. Articles have appeared in

Jeannie G. Pool is a music historian, critic, and writer who specializes in the music of women composers. She lives in NYC.

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music publications from the mid-19th century to the present which insist that women have not been great composers and therefore probably will never become great composers—so women researchers have attempted to "find" some great women composers to refute this general opinion.

Nochlin goes on to say that although this research is worth the effort and adds to our knowledge of women's achievements, "such efforts, if written from an uncritically feminist viewpoint, do nothing to question the assumptions lying behind the question. . . on the contrary, by attempting to answer it and by doing so inadequately, they merely reinforce its negative implications."⁶

The underlying assumption is that *women have not shown, nor are they capable of, greatness*. The question is intended to throw us off balance, to make us flinch, to put us on the defensive. Every time we hear this question, we hear the echo of another: Women have never been great composers so why should women even try to compose? We feel compelled to produce some great women of the past to justify our aspirations today.

As Nochlin points out, presenting notable women from the past does not in and of itself deal with the assumptions behind these anti-female questions. Furthermore, it fails to assist us in developing a true picture of women's participation in and contributions to the history of Western music. To begin to understand why the notable woman approach fails us, let me pinpoint some factors that determine the "notability" of a woman musician.

Many of our great women musicians are only known to us today because of their connections with famous (notable) men in music history—as wives, daughters, sweethearts, favorite students, or patrons. Often the details of the lives of these women are found buried in the pages of the biographies and memoirs of the men.

Other women musicians are known to us because they achieved fame or "notoriety" in other areas of their lives—women of royal families; women like Hildegard von Bingen, known as a spiritual leader, healer, visionary, and advisor to kings and nobles; or women like Pauline Viardot-Garcia, remembered as one of the great *prima donnas* of the 19th century. Their composing has been considered purely incidental and is mentioned in footnotes or in short anecdotes.

Other notable women are those who were sufficiently well-known in their lifetimes as musicians, in periods of history which have passed on historical records to document this recognition by their contemporaries. These women have been rediscovered through close examination of primary sources of the past by scholars specifically interested in women.

Immediately this realization should compel us to question the basic concepts of modern historiography when applied to women's history. First, we must recognize that the standard periodization and categories of what is historically significant have been male-defined and impose certain limitations on the study of women's history. "Notable"

Anne Boleyn

Marie Antoinette

Barbara Strozzi

Anna Amalia of Weimar

Pauline Viardot



women who have survived within male-defined and male-recorded history are women who are notable as defined and determined by men. The reasons that others, perhaps equally deserving of rediscovery, may never be known to us are as significant in the study of women's history as the stories of the women who have survived.

Musicology as a discipline has been closed to or has trivialized the questions being asked about the history of women in music. The questions men raise (or women trained by men in the tradition) concern the things men want to know about women, and not what women want to know about themselves. The role of women in music history has been left out, underestimated, or glossed over. The male orientation of the discipline itself makes it suspect and open to question.

It is now time that we put research on the history of women in music on a feminist ground, challenging all those basic concepts of history which have led men to conclude that women have never shown and in fact are incapable of greatness in music. We must develop our own (working) definitions, our own categories for the pursuit of the subject, and we must reject those which have served to hide the true history of women in music.

A feminist analysis of history begins with the recognition that women comprise a definite sociological group which has been subjected to certain behavioral patterns and specific legal restrictions, as well as confined to clearly delineated roles. It assumes that these patterns of women's expected behavior have not been rationally determined or mandated by physiology and that these restrictions have been enforced by those holding power. Therefore, certain questions should be posed concerning specific periods of time: Were women allowed to develop, or were they restricted, and if so, how? Did women hold positions of power, have influence, and if so, in what spheres of life?⁷

Most of the biographical studies of notable women composers thus far have failed to present the "facts" of their lives within the context of women's position in society. One reason for this is that many of these studies have not been done by feminist historians; they were prepared for acceptance by the established, reactionary discipline of musicology, which has yet to come to terms with the questions raised in connection with women in music history.⁸ These studies often point out attitudes against women becoming composers as a way of establishing the exceptionality of the particular women being discussed, but there has been a failure to develop a new basis for the discussion. The lack of a feminist perspective in approaching the history of women in music in itself indicates a failure to be thorough in dealing with the subject matter.

Unfortunately, those studies made by feminist scholars on women in music have generally been unacceptable in terms of quality music scholarship, employing less than rigorous methods and hardly ever discussing the compositions. Music scholarship has its own set of problems, of

which feminists scholars are generally unaware—and a feminist history of women in music presents many more complications.

Edith Borroff recognized in 1975 the failure of both Women's Studies and musicologists to give adequate treatment to the subject of women in music:

The generalist in Women's Studies claims the potential of women as a basic tenet but does not document it; the musician looks for the documentation but does not ramify it. The history of the creative life of women falls between: neither group is directly concerned with historical perspective with this aspect of their interest.⁹

Feminists have tended to proceed on a basic assumption that women have not had a "dog's chance"¹⁰ to create, but our studies require a more exacting analysis. Feminist artist Judy Chicago, unlike other contemporary women writing on women in the arts, included women composers in *The Dinner Party* and was able to pinpoint a difference in the circumstances of women writers and composers. She points out that only the publisher stood between a woman writer and her audience, but for women in music it was more difficult because for centuries women were unable to obtain a serious music education. A composer or conductor cannot bring her work to visibility without the participation of many other people, requiring "patronage, support and real commitment of the musical world—none of which women have received."¹¹

Yet it is not completely accurate to insist that women have never received "patronage, support and real commitment of the musical world" because, although such patronage, support and commitment have never been given to women consistently and in sufficient quantity, there have been notable exceptions at particular moments in history. In putting together a feminist history, we must identify those factors which contributed to making an environment conducive to women's creating music and those which made it difficult or impossible. What kind of music education was available for women? Performance opportunities? Patronage? Institutional support? Once these factors are identified, we might see which elements should be encouraged today to create a supportive atmosphere for women composers.

For instance, during the Middle Ages the creative women musicians came from the monastic life¹² or were women of property with rights of inheritance like the women troubadours of Southern France.¹³ During the Baroque, daughters of professional musicians who served as apprentices to their fathers, women of monastic life, and women of the nobility became composers. In the 19th century composers emerged from those women who insured economic independence (and therefore control over their lives) through performance careers, mostly pianists, but also some opera singers. Of course, some women composers do not fit neatly into these categories, but we can make some generalizations about which factors were involved.

Establishing these factors will lead us to a more realistic

Louise Farrenc



Clara Wieck Schumann



Amy March Cheney Beach



Cécile Chaminade



Nadia Boulanger



perspective on women's participation in musical life generally, during specific periods of history. This history can help us develop further insight into the present-day situation of women musicians. And knowledge of this history gives women a new base of confidence from which to work out their lives. "Without self-confidence we are as babes in the cradle," as Virginia Woolf put it. Without knowing that there is a long tradition of women's creativity in music, we are not confident, as men are with their great-men-in-music role models. Women, without this history, are fragile, tentative pioneers, groping in the dark, striking out on seemingly new territory because we do not know the stories of those women who accomplished these goals before us. Without this knowledge we are babes.

Reclamation: restoration to use. This history of women in music is ammunition and should be researched and written with that goal in mind. It is for the sake of living women—not for those musicians now dead and buried; not for posterity; not for rounding out the archives.

Four categories of women's history have been identified in the article "The Problem of Women's History."¹⁴ The history of women in organizations, which is essentially the history of feminism, comprises the largest category. The second major form of writings on women is biography—the notable women studies. The third category is the history of social ideas, which is often based on prescriptive literature. The fourth category, which the authors of this article believe holds the greatest possibilities for the future, is "social histories." Social histories attempt to connect women's experiences with historical development by asking what it was like for women during specific periods in history. The authors state that this new approach attempts:

... to integrate women into the mainstream of American historical development rather than isolating women as a separate category. Although most new social histories could still be classified in institutional, biographical or prescriptive categories, more historians are placing their work in a larger historical and social context.¹⁵

It is becoming increasingly evident to researchers that there is a need to place the history of women in music in a larger historical and social context, while adhering to some of the basics of high-quality music scholarship. It is now realized that to treat the material on women in music separately, as if women had been outside the mainstream of musical life, is a distortion and serves to perpetuate discrimination, rather than end it. In working out a social history of women in music from a critical feminist perspective, it will be affirmed that, although we can find a number of talented composers in the past, the most substantial contributions by women have not been made in composition.

It is within the context of the roles to which they have been confined that women have made their contributions—in music education; as founders, builders, and preservers of society's music institutions (performing and educational); and as supporters of the music industry (as consumers), in-

cluding purchase of music, books about music, instruments, and concert tickets. In these areas women have exerted considerable influence, an influence that has not been passive, but active, purposeful, and well-directed. It is clear, particularly in the history of women in America, that if women had not exerted influence in these areas, the contributions made by women composers and performers would hardly have been possible.

We are also discovering that a history of women superstar musicians does a disservice to women. If we present a history which insists that significant contributions are only made by superwomen who mystically and without pain or strain juggled the roles of creative genius; dutiful wife, daughter, and mother; hostess and public figure, we are offering women an impossible role model. Our history of women in music must offer strength and confidence for women today by establishing the specifics of how these "great" women of music managed their lives, how they lived and how they felt about their lives—to demystify "genius." In addition, we need to acknowledge that music history was made by a large group of musical citizens, who contributed in various ways to musical life, and many of these musical citizens were women.

The research methodology developed by scholars involved with women's history must in the long run affect methodology in musicology. The study of women in music will compel the discipline to reconsider prevalent attitudes and ideas about what constitutes "greatness" in music. Ultimately we will be forging a new history of music—a history that includes women not in footnotes, supplementary chapters, or special indexes, but as an integral part of the telling of history. Music can no longer be presented as the history of great men musicians.

We are learning that the writing of women into history necessarily involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance, to encompass personal, subjective experience as well as public and political activities. It is not too much to suggest that, however hesitant the actual beginnings, such a methodology implies not only a new history of women but also a new history.¹⁶

It is a considerable task: to develop a feminist perspective; to employ the most rigorous skills of feminist and music scholarship; to make the history useful in the struggle of contemporary women musicians to end the discrimination against them; and, in the process, to forge a new vision of history, a social history that tells the stories of women and men in musical life. A communications network is already developing among feminists and musicologists for mutual support and collaboration in pursuit of these aims. We are on the threshold of some exciting developments for women and for music scholarship.

This article is adapted from Jeannie Pool's new book *Women Composers of Classical Music*, to be published in 1980 by G.K. Hall.
1. The focus of this article is on women's participation in classical music

or concert music. It does not attempt to address the questions related to women's participation in folk, popular, or jazz music in Europe or America, or the music of non-Western traditions.

2. See Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: A 1975 Perspective" in *Liberating Women's History*, ed. Berenice A. Carroll (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976) for a discussion of the origins of the terms "women worthies," "compensatory history," or "contribution history."
3. For a survey of the literature about women in music see my *Women in Music History: A Research Guide* (1977) available by writing P.O. Box 436 Ansonia Station, NYC, 10023 and *Women in American Music*, a bibliography compiled under the direction of Adrienne Fried Bloch and Carol Neuls-Bates to be published by Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn.
4. One meaning of reclamation is "restoration to use," a meaning that suits our purposes here. We are rediscovering this history, not for the sake of the women of the past, now dead and gone, but for the women musicians of today. It is a history that has little use, unless it is being used in a political way to better the conditions for creative women living and working in our own time.
5. Linda Nochlin, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" in *Woman in Sexist Society*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: Times Mirror, 1972), p. 481.
6. *Ibid.* It seems that Nochlin, by adopting this question as the title of her essay, does not follow her own dictum and gives the question further validity.

7. See Hilda Smith, "Feminism and the Methodology of Women's History" in *Liberating Women's History*, pp. 368-384.
8. There are some feminist musicologists, but they are receiving considerable grief from their male colleagues, who assume generally that if it is something they are not aware of, despite many years of study, then there must not be much validity to its pursuit.
9. Edith Borroff, "Women Composers: Reminiscence and History," *College Music Symposium*, XV (Fall 1975), p. 28.
10. In *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929), Virginia Woolf wrote: "Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry [music] depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time. Women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. Women, then have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry [music]" (p. 112).
11. Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1979), p. 197.
12. See Barbara Grant's article in this issue.
13. See Meg Bogin, *The Women Troubadours* (New York: Two Continents Publishing Group, 1976).
14. Anne Gordon, Mari Jo Buhle, and Nancy Schrom Dye, "The Problem of Women's History" in *Liberating Women's History*, p. 76.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

THE UNQUESTIONED ANSWER

Laurie Spiegel

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with 16 measures. The notation is a single melodic line on a five-line staff. The first system includes dynamic markings such as *poco*, *mf*, and *f*. The second system includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *mf*, and *f*. The lyrics "di min u en do niente" are written below the second staff, with "di" under the 10th measure, "min" under the 11th, "u" under the 12th, "en" under the 13th, "do" under the 14th, and "niente" under the 15th. The piece concludes with a final double bar line at the end of the 16th measure.

Laurie Spiegel, a composer living in NYC, is best known for her electronic music.

The final 16th-note of each measure should be played strongly throughout, as though a slight anticipation of the first note of each measure. Pedal down throughout, if piano. © 1976 Laurie Spiegel, ASCAP

An Interview with the Sybil of the Rhine: Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Barbara L. Grant

The characters in the following interview are Hildegard (bold) and the interviewer (roman). Hildegard speaks as abbess of the Benedictine convent which she founded on the Rupertsberg near Bingen, in Germany. She had struggled for years, accompanied by severe bouts of illness, to secure autonomy for her foundation from her former abbot, Kuno, at Disibodenberg, where she and her nuns had been housed until circa 1150. She also established a daughter house at Rudesheim-Eibingen in 1165. In her very old age, she began to travel and preach in the Rhine valley at the request of people who knew her reputation as prophet and advisor. It is painfully obvious to me that I am interviewing a "token woman," or what Tillie Olsen calls an "only,"¹ yet she fascinates me. That her voice was heard so persuasively in her own time, that her songs were sung at all, adds to the ever-growing evidence that, during the Middle Ages, the convent was truly a "Catalyst for Autonomy."²*

Lady Abbess, women today are outraged by the loss of important musical roles by women during Antiquity and into the Christian era.³ The impetus for composition and performance created by women's traditional function as singers of laments and dirges, of praises and incantations, at critical moments of life was taken away very early. By the fourth and fifth centuries, with the triumph of the Christian Church over the various heretical sects which had allowed women more authority and participation,⁴ Christian women were finally confined to the unnatural and withering position of being unable to teach, preach, sing, or celebrate outside their homes. In Drinker's words, it sounds like a sad litany: "In the Didascalis of 318 the singing of women in church was forbidden; in the Council of Laodicea (367), congregational singing was abandoned and the musical portions of the service were placed in the hands of a trained choir of men and boys; in the Synod of Antioch (379), women were forbidden to join with men in chanting the Psalms."⁵ How do you feel about the Pauline injunction used against women singing in church?

You mean "Mulier in ecclesia taceat?"⁶ You forget that I am a Benedictine abbess, that I have lived in a Benedictine house since I was eight years old, and that our entire life is one of sung prayer and praise. Our work, the *opus dei*, aside from the physical work we do, is singing the Divine Office. We sing Matins in the middle of every night; and Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline every day. The Offices are made up of Antiphons, Responsories, Hymns, and above all Psalms. We sing 150 Psalms every week! There is the daily liturgy of the Eucharist, the Mass, with each chant proper to the time and season, plus all the ordinary chants: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus dei. Nothing is spoken—not even what you would call the Gospel readings, or the lessons in the Offices; all are intoned or sung. It is the

Barbara L. Grant is a musician working on a book of Hildegard's liturgical songs and studying to be a teacher of the Alexander technique.
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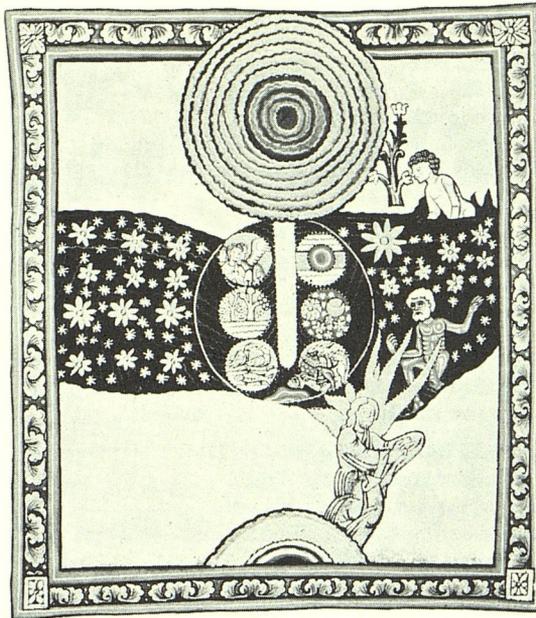
Benedictine way and, I would add, the only proper way to praise God.

I can see that music pervades the whole structure of your everyday life and work, but I'd like to turn now to your own creative works. You have produced so very many things, a really impressive number and variety of works: several books of visions, one of them dazzlingly illuminated at your own scriptorium; an herbal including the healing properties of plants; a treatise on medicine which outlines the order and functioning of the body in relation to that of the physical world; a morality play with music; not to mention the many liturgical songs, which you continue to write, and the hundreds of letters you have written.⁷ It seems hard to believe that you only began to write when you were forty-two! How do you explain that?

You probably know about the charismata, the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit? They include the gift of speaking with wisdom, the gift of speaking with knowledge, faith, the grace of healing, the gift of miracles, the gift of prophecy, the gift of discerning spirits, the gift of tongues, and the gift of interpreting speeches. These gifts were much more common in places like Jerusalem and Corinth in the Apostolic Age than they are now, but even then, a gift of the Holy Spirit, a charism, was extraordinary and not given to just anybody. St. Paul himself insisted on the subordination of charismata to the power of hierarchy. Therefore, although it is true that a woman may not teach or preach publicly, no human being can predict or control the working of the Holy Spirit, and if a woman should receive a charism, as I did, and if it is confirmed by the hierarchy of the Church, as mine was, then we can be absolutely sure it is authentic.

What is your particular gift, and how was it confirmed?

My charism is the gift of prophecy, which doesn't mean simply telling the future; rather, it "consists in knowledge and in the manifestation of what is known. The knowledge must be supernatural and infused by God because it concerns things beyond the natural power of created intelligence; and the knowledge must be manifested either by words or signs, because the gift of prophecy is given primarily for the good of others, and hence needs to be manifested."⁸ Now "I had been conscious since my earliest girlhood of a capacity for insight into the most divine, hidden, and wonderful things...but I revealed this to no one except to a few religious people who lived in the same observances as I did, but in the meantime, until God willed to manifest these things by his own grace, I suppressed these things in silence."⁹ But this incredible light, this light that has illuminated all of my visions, came to me most insistently when I was going into my forty-third year. It is a "burning light of great brilliance...entirely flooding my brain, my heart, and my breast, like a flame that does not flicker but burns with glowing warmth, as the sun warms everything that it shines upon!"¹⁰ I don't go into trance or ecstasy, nor do I see these visions with my outer senses. I

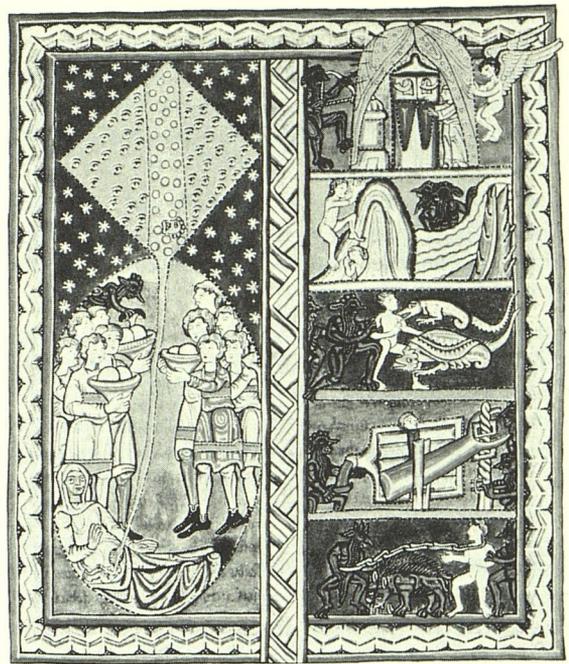


Illumination from manuscript HS 1, originally executed at the Rubergsborg Scriptorium. This plate illustrates Book II, Vision 1 of Hildegard's *Scivias* and is her vision of the Redemption. By permission of Otto Müller Verlag, Salzburg, Austria.

simply open myself to receive them with my interior senses. The visions are full of color and movement, very specific, and often filled with sound as well. For example, early on an insistent voice told me that I must manifest these visions: tell about them and write them down! Frankly, the whole idea of this terrified me, and I don't mind telling you that this struggle went on for years and years. My refusal to write them down was not because of stubbornness, but rather because of fear — fear of what certain men might say about my authority to speak, about the authenticity of my visions.¹¹ I was finally stricken with a horrible illness that pinned me to my bed for what seemed an interminable agony. This scourging compelled me to obey the voice of Wisdom, the voice from God. This, and the never-failing encouragement of two devoted people, enabled me to begin recording my visions. They are both now dead. One was my beloved Sister in Christ, the nun Rikkarda who, over my official written protests, was snatched away from me as abbess of Hildesheim.¹² The other, who died only recently, was my magister Volmar, who came with me from Disibodenberg, acting as my faithful supporter, confessor, fellow-collaborator, and sometimes recording secretary of these mysteries that are revealed to me.¹³ As I began to record the visions, my strength slowly began to return and the illness subside. Meanwhile, by a stroke of fortune, Pope Eugenius was holding a synod at Trier at the beginning of the year 1148. He sent some men to examine me at Disibodenberg, then himself read portions of the *Scivias*, the record of my visions, which I had so far completed. He then confirmed my charism and encouraged me to continue.¹⁴

Charles Singer, the historian of science, echoed by several contemporary psychoanalysts, interprets the light in your visions as a symptom of "scintillating scotoma."¹⁵ He talks about your bouts of illness as migrainous and insists on a pathological basis for your visions. What would you say about that?

It's utter nonsense. Illness didn't cause my visions! My illness came from not being able to manifest the visions, from being afraid to give them form and life through my own voice.



From *Scivias*, Book I, Vision 4. The wisdom of God enters the unborn child through the soul into the mother's womb. The panels on the right represent the snares and pitfalls of life. By permission of Otto Müller Verlag, Salzburg, Austria.

Now let's talk about the liturgical songs. How and when did you write them? Also, would you say a few words about the title you've given to the whole collection? It's rather an unusual name for a cycle of liturgical songs. Notker, for example, called his a *liber hymnorum* (Book of Hymns), but you call yours *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (Symphony of the Harmony of Heavenly Revelations).

There are now about seventy-five songs in the collection, plus the text and music for the morality play Ordo virtutum.¹⁶ Quite a while ago, between 1151 and '58, I collected the songs I had already written into a cycle,¹⁷ arranged in groups according to their subjects, and gave them that title because, just like the visions, they are revealed to me and give musical form to divine mysteries. Music is the highest form of praise for me, and I intend my songs as an earthly counterpart to the music of the spheres, harmonizing the human, physical, and divine worlds into beautiful, ordered sound. I wrote most of the songs for our own use here at our convent, and the largest number are about the Blessed Virgin. There are Antiphons, Responsories, and Hymns for special Offices, and a few long Sequences for feast-day Masses. A few of them were written in response to requests from elsewhere: old Abbot Kuno asked me to write some songs for their patron saint Disibode, and I have done a few in honor of local saints at Trier. Recently I had a copy of the collection made in the scriptorium to send to our Cistercian friends at Villers, at Brabant. Those monks are appreciative of our spirituality here. They have plagued me with requests to answer thirty-eight complicated theological questions, some of which I have answered in writing.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it takes a great deal of my time and reasoning, and I prefer sharing the songs and visions that have been given to me.

After the Virgin, the largest number of your songs are for the Virgin Martyr Ursula and her 11,000 women. Just as you seem to incorporate the Hebrew *hokma* or female Wisdom figure, as well as particular aspects of the Roman Aurora and the Egyptian Isis in your powerful depiction of the Virgin, so your

Ursula has a strong resemblance to the old Germanic Hörsel, a moon goddess. Your several songs for her seem the most lyrical of all your compositions. Could you tell us something about Ursula and your feelings about her?

I'm sure everyone knows all about Ursula. Her name is on everyone's lips, convents vie for her relics, and her feast day is celebrated in churches and monasteries throughout the Rhine valley and into the lowlands.

Unfortunately, Lady Abbess, St. Ursula is very little known in our day.¹⁹ In simplest terms, Ursula is attested to in an ancient fourth-century stone inscription in Cologne, and, according to legends circulated in the ninth through eleventh centuries, Ursula was a Christian princess from Briton betrothed by her father to a pagan prince. She herself was dedicated to remaining a virgin, and begged her father for three years' time to go on a pilgrimage with women friends. Her wish was granted, and she set off with her maidens in several galleys on a journey which took them up the Rhine, then overland to Rome to visit the tombs of the apostles. On their return to Cologne, they were slaughtered by the Huns. Then, early in the twelfth century, while rebuilding the walls of the town of Cologne (obviously situated in the midst of an ancient Roman cemetery), huge numbers of bones were discovered. They were believed to be the bones of Ursula and her martyred companions, whose number (due to a simple scribal mistake) had now grown from eleven to eleven thousand. These things were confirmed and elaborated by visions of Elizabeth of Schöneau, a correspondent of yours, Lady Abbess, and the popular response and revival of feeling about this woman throughout the Rhine valley and into the low countries was overwhelming. That's the basic legend, isn't it? And you wrote songs in order to create the Office on her feast day?²⁰

Well, I would hardly call it a legend! The source for Ursula's life is a *passio*, a passion, which is just what it says. She pledged herself in the Christian faith to a life of chastity, to a divine marriage of the soul, which is not better than, but different from, a physical marriage. She stood her ground through martyrdom, much to the surprise of those who didn't choose to take her seriously. Her participation in this event has ramifications for all of us and carries salvation history further into the fullness of time.

You seem to be saying something about the role of women in that history. Thirteen of your songs are about Ursula; fifteen, about the Blessed Virgin, and these in the strongest and most passionate language. The Virgin is a cosmic figure; she is "remembering" the body of Christ.²¹ In another of your songs, the virgins are "building in the dawn"; they are identified with Paradise; they are rebuilding the new Jerusalem.²² Could you be more specific and less mystical about the role of women in these songs?

I would be loathe to say any more than I have already stated in the songs. In fact, the songs speak for themselves.

Well then, perhaps we could hear a few of the songs for Ursula—an Antiphon and a Responsory? Your Antiphons are straightforward structurally. Each consists of one line which gets attached to the appropriate Psalm or New Testament Canticle to place it—in this case in the Feast of St. Ursula—at whatever Office you are doing. The Responsories are also traditional in form, with a recurrent *repetenda* sung by the choir and the verses sung by a *cantrix*. The whole piece is sung as a response to a lesson of some kind.

Here is an Antiphon about Ursula:

O redness of blood
Which flowed from that great height
Because touched by Divinity,
You are a flower that winter never wounded
With the snorting blast of the Serpent.²³

And a Responsory:

A distilling honeycomb
Was the Virgin Ursula
Who longed to embrace the Lamb of God.
Honey and milk under her tongue,
Because she gathered to herself
A fruit-bearing garden and blooming flowers
In a swarm of Virgins.

Therefore rejoice daughters of Zion
In this most glorious dawning,
Because she gathered to herself
A fruit-bearing garden and blooming flowers
In a swarm of Virgins.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Because she gathered to herself
A fruit-bearing garden and blooming flowers
In a swarm of Virgins.²⁴

If we turn to the Sequences, yours are formally very different from those "regular Sequences" of the twelfth century, such as the hundreds that came from the Victorine School. Those have end rhyme, often double rhyme, consistent binary meter, and a very strict pattern for versification. Musically, those "regular Sequences" have the same melody for each pair of strophes, so both textually and musically they look like this: AA₁ BB₁ CC₁ DD₁, and so on. You usually hold on to the concept of parallel pairs of strophes, but in a much looser way.²⁵ Strophe A₁ becomes a kind of elaboration on or variation of Strophe A, both musically and textually. The verse of the text is what we would now call "free verse"; that is, it follows no formal pattern of versification, but instead hangs together through its syntax and through an elaboration of symbols and images that interconnect organically from beginning to end. Two of your Sequences even abandon all parallelism and become totally without repetition. The Ursula Sequence is one of these, isn't it?

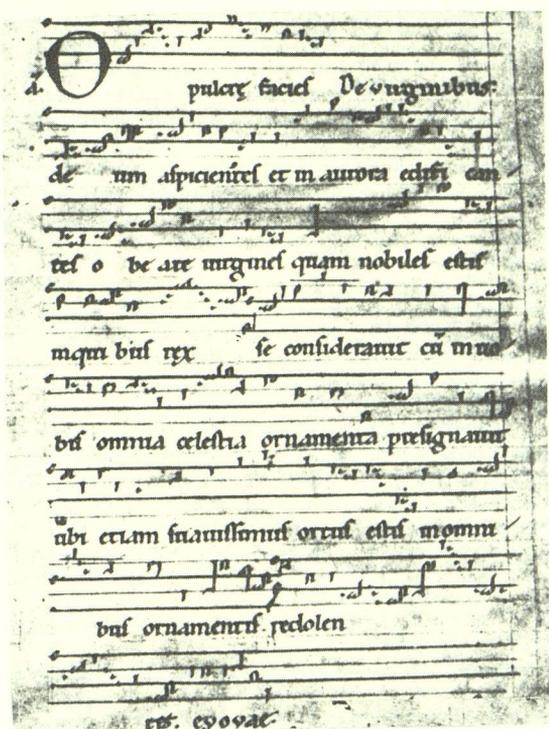
I'm not sure I follow all of that, but it did turn out to be quite rhapsodic, starting as it does with the sensual language of the "Song of Songs" as it applies to that personified woman, Ecclesia or Mother Church.²⁶

O Ecclesia, your eyes are like sapphire,
Your ears like the mountain of Bethel,
Your nose as a mountain of incense and myrrh,
And your mouth as the sound of abundant waters.

In a vision of true faith
Ursula loved the son of God,
She abandoned her espoused along with the world
And gazed into the sun,
And she called to the fairest young man, crying out

"With great yearning
Have I longed to come to you
And to sit at your side
For the heavenly wedding feast,
To stream towards you in a strange way, like a cloud
Which streams sapphire in the purest air."

And after Ursula had so spoken,



Antiphon as it was notated in the 12th century in Hildegard's monastery. From Rupertsberger Riesenkodex, Wiesbaden, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Hs. 2, in Gmelch, Joseph, *Die Kompositionen der heil. Hildegard* (Dusseldorf: Schwann, n.d.), p. 11, "O pulchrae facies".

De Virginibus

Ant.

O pulchrae fa-cies, De-
um aspi-ci-entes et in auro-ra
a-di-fi-can-tes, o be-a-tae virgi-
nes, quam no-bi-les e-stis. Inqui-
bus Rex se con-si-deravit, cum
in vo-bis om-ni-a caele-sti-a orna-
men-ta praesi-gna-vit, u-bi et i-am
sua-vis-si-mus hor-tus e-stis, in om-
ni-bus orna-men-tis re-do-len-
tes. E-uou-a-e.

The same antiphon in Gregorian transcription. From Barth, Ritscher, and Schmidt-Gorg, *Hildegard von Bingen Lieder* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1959), Antiphon #38, pp. 97-98.

O pul-chrae fa-ci-es,
De-um a-spi-ci-entes et in-
au-ro-ra a-di-fi-can-tes, O
be-a-tae vir-gi-nes, quam no-bi-les e-
stis, in-qui-bus Rex
se con-si-de-ra-vit, cum in-vo-bis
om-ni-a cae-le-sti-a or-na-men-ta
praesi-gna-vit, u-bi et i-am sua vis si mus
hor-tus es-tis, in om-ni-
bus or-na-men-tis re-do-len-
tes.

Performing edition of the antiphon in modern notation by B. L. Grant. Anyone performing the piece is encouraged to make her own performing edition, since there are many rhythmic subtleties and phrasings possible within the basically equalist rhythm. Thanks here to Ellen Tamm who sang through some of the possibilities with me and suggested some good changes.

12th Century Antiphon About the Virgins by Hildegard von Bingen

You beautiful faces
Beholding God and building in the dawn,
How noble you are.
In whom the King reflected himself
When he showed forth in you
All the heavenly jewels;
And as you are also redolent with
The odour of all those jewels,
You are also the sweetest garden.
— translation copyright © 1979 B. L. Grant.

Popular opinion about it spread among all peoples everywhere.

And the men said, "The innocence of this ignorant girl! She doesn't know what she's talking about!"

And they began to make fun of her
In great swells of harmony
Even up to the time when the burden of bearing the fire
Fell upon her.

Then everyone came to recognize
How defiance of the world is like the mountain of Bethel.
They even identified that sweetest fragrance of incense
and myrrh,
Because defiance of the world surpasses all perfumes.

Then Satan took over his members
Who bodily cut down her flock
In their most graceful, womanly natures.
And all the elements heard this wrenching cry
And themselves cried out before the throne of God.

"Wach! the red blood of the innocent Lamb
is poured out in abundance with her marriage pledge."

Let all the heavens hear this
And with consummate music let them praise the Lamb of
God,

Because the throat of the ancient Serpent
Is strangled in those pearls
Which expresses in matter the Word of God.²⁷

How nice that Ursula's lovely women become a powerful necklace of pearls! Finally, I would like to ask you a bit about the music itself. I have read that your music is not "pure chant" (whatever that is): that you use folk-like elements and mix the authentic and plagal forms of modes indiscriminately within the same piece. I have also read that it is diatonic rather than modal, that it has too many leaps and too wide a range.²⁸ I find many of these characteristics to be consistent with regular Frankish practice in melody-writing, as opposed to the chant melodies that originated in Rome; nevertheless, your music is more dramatic, more personal, and much more lyrical than that found in the Gregorian repertory. Would you care to comment on that?

The songs lie in a range congenial to women's voices which, of course, differentiates it from most of the standard chant repertory, Gregorian or Frankish. The use of the leap of the ascending fifth is very common in our part of the world—very expressive and consonant. As for the rest, my songs are given to me. I am merely a mouthpiece, a vessel, the trumpet of the Lord. The songs are what I hear. Often texts come directly in a vision from the heavenly Voice, the Wisdom of God. Some of the melodies are perhaps new and different from what people are used to, but they are also given. Music is a connection through the Holy Spirit with the heavenly harmony I hear and express in song. It is our connection with life before the Fall. It is a taste, a smell, an echo of the Paradise of Greenness we have lost.

*The footnotes are intended to locate specific information and provide sources for anyone who wants to work on Hildegard; it is my hope that the interview reads through without them.

1. See Tillie Olsen, *Silences* (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1978), p. 39. I am grateful to J. G. Pool who sent me back to re-read Tillie Olsen's use of this Civil Rights term as a better way of thinking about what we have been calling "token women."
2. See Electa Arenal, "The Convent As Catalyst for Autonomy: Two Hispanic Nuns of the Seventeenth Century," in *Icons and Iconoclasts: Women in Hispanic Literature*, ed. Beth Miller (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming).

3. For a general picture of this phenomenon, see Sophie Drinker, *Music and Women* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1948). For specific evidence in the early Christian era, see Johannes Quasten, "The Liturgical Singing of Women in Christian Antiquity," *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 149–165. Also informative is Jane Shatkin Hettrick, "'She Drew An Angel Down': The Role of Women in the History of the Organ, 300 B.C. to 1900 A.D.," *The American Organist*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (March 1979), pp. 39–45.
4. See, for example, E. H. Pagels, "What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity," *Signs*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter 1976), pp. 293–303; and E. H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 48–70.
5. Drinker, *Music*, p. 179.
6. Let Women Keep Silence in Church!
7. Latin texts of most of the letters, the *Physica*, and Hildegard's first and third books of visions are in Migne, *Patrologia latinae*, Vol. 197 (Paris: Garnier, 1882). *Analecta sanctae Hildegardis opera spicilegio solesmensi parata* (ed. Jean Baptiste Pitra, *Analecta Sacra* VIII, Typis Sacri Montin Casinensis, 1882) also contains some important correspondence plus her second book of visions. The Latin text for the medical book can be found in *Hildegardis Causae et Curae*, ed. Paulus Kaiser (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903). Within the last twenty years good German translations have been made of all these works, but there are none in English. The words and music for the songs and the morality play are available in Latin and in German translation, in Barth, Ritscher, and Schmidt-Görg, *Hildegard von Bingen Lieder* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1969).
8. "Prophecy," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911), p. 473.
9. From Hildegard's "Preface" to the *Scivias*, her first recorded book of visions, written over a ten-year period (1141–1151). See Migne, *PL*, Vol. 197, Cols. 383–384. English translations throughout the article are mine.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. The correspondence protesting Rikkarda's removal and indicating the depth of Hildegard's feelings for her is found in Migne, *PL*, Vol. 197, Cols. 156–163.
13. At one point, Hildegard calls him *symmista*, a Greek word meaning colleague, or fellow-priest, but she also speaks, after his death, of how much she appreciated the fact that when he was writing down her visions, he didn't edit them. So we know that he did some of the recording of her work.
14. From the *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis* by the monks Codefridus and Theodoricus, which is included in Migne, *PL*, Vol. 197, Cols. 94–95.
15. Charles Singer, "The Visions of Hildegard of Bingen," in *From Magic to Science* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1928), p. 232.
16. See Gmelch, *Die Kompositionen der heil. Hildegard* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, n.d.) for facsimile of this collection.
17. "Prologue" of Hildegard's *liber vite meritorum*, in Pitra, *Analecta sacra*, pp. 7–8.
18. The thirty-eight questions and solutions are in Migne, *PL*, Vol. 197, Cols. 1038–1054. The collection of songs which Hildegard sent to Villers is now known as codex 9 at the Abbey of Dendermonde, in Belgium.
19. Although October 21 is St. Ursula's feast day, nothing is left in the Roman liturgy for her but a commemoration. According to *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, it was a project of Pope Benedict XIV to suppress the feast entirely, probably because of its very broad popular appeal.
20. It was common practice during the Middle Ages to write music and texts for new Offices, especially to honor local saints, and hundreds were added during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in monasteries all over Europe.
21. See song #13 in Barth et al., *Lieder*, pp. 224, 226.
22. See songs #38 and #39 in Barth et al., *Lieder*, pp. 256, 258.
23. *Ibid.*, #44, p. 264.
24. *Ibid.*, #45, pp. 264, 266.
25. This is similar to the structure of Hebrew poetry in the Psalms.
26. For an illumination of this impressive figure, done under the supervision of Hildegard to illustrate her visions, see Plate 14 in Maura Böckeler, *Wisse Die Wege* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1954).
27. Barth et al., *Lieder*, #54, pp. 270, 272.
28. See Joseph Schmidt-Görg, "Die Sequenzen der heiligen Hildegard," in *Studien zur Musikgeschichte des Rheinlandes* (Köln: Arno Volk, 1956), pp. 109–117; and Immaculata Ritscher, "Zur Musik der Heiligen Hildegard," in *Colloquium Amicorum Joseph Schmidt-Görg zum 70 Geburtstag* (Bonn: Beethovenhaus, 1967), pp. 309–325.

Music and Healing

Ann Cain McGinnis

In the last seven years, I, like countless other women, have undergone radical psychological and physical change; for the last two years I have used music to facilitate this process of self-revelation and healing. When I volunteered to write this article, I wanted to understand better the process I had been participating in. However, when music is used in healing, exploring our inner selves, or reaching outward toward what is beyond our isolated and individual selves, it becomes magical, spiritual, and difficult to talk about. I cannot say exactly how music soothes and heals, opens inner channels, makes headaches and backaches go away, or transfers language skills from left to right brain hemispheres in stroke patients—or brings human beings closer to each other. What I can do, after research and talking with other women who are using music in a healing way, is describe, simply, my experience and theirs.

To heal, according to *Websters'*, is to make sound, well or healthy again and is derived from an Old English word *hāl* meaning "whole." I like to talk about healing as a process of becoming whole because I feel this process reflects the larger meaning of the women's movement and the first work of our times: reclamation of and attending to what has been denied or lost (both inwardly and outwardly in the collective world), integration of self and the movement toward individual wholeness, and the creation of a way of living where all life is held precious and sacred.

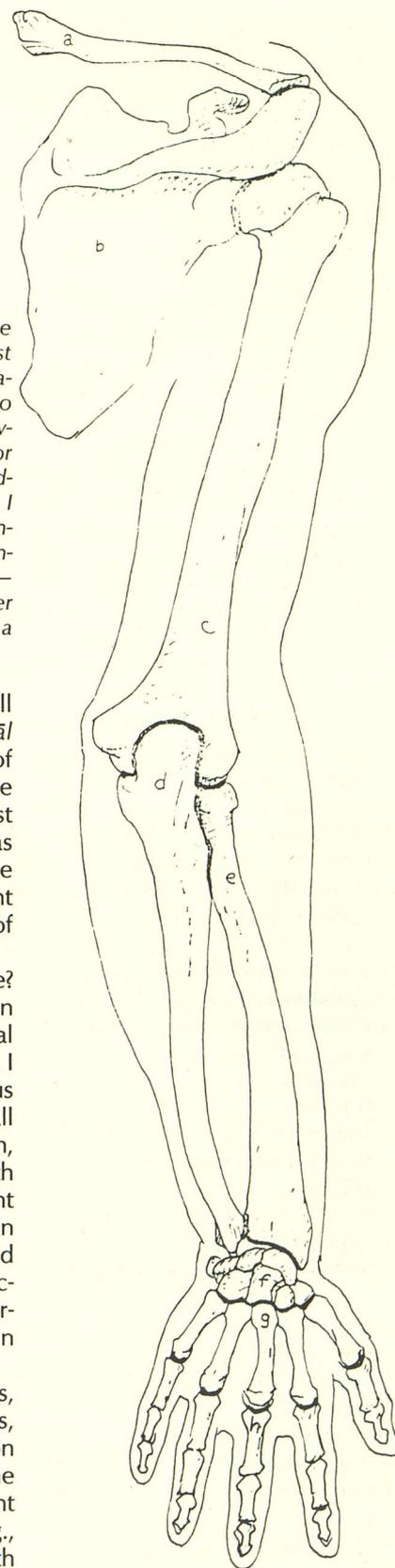
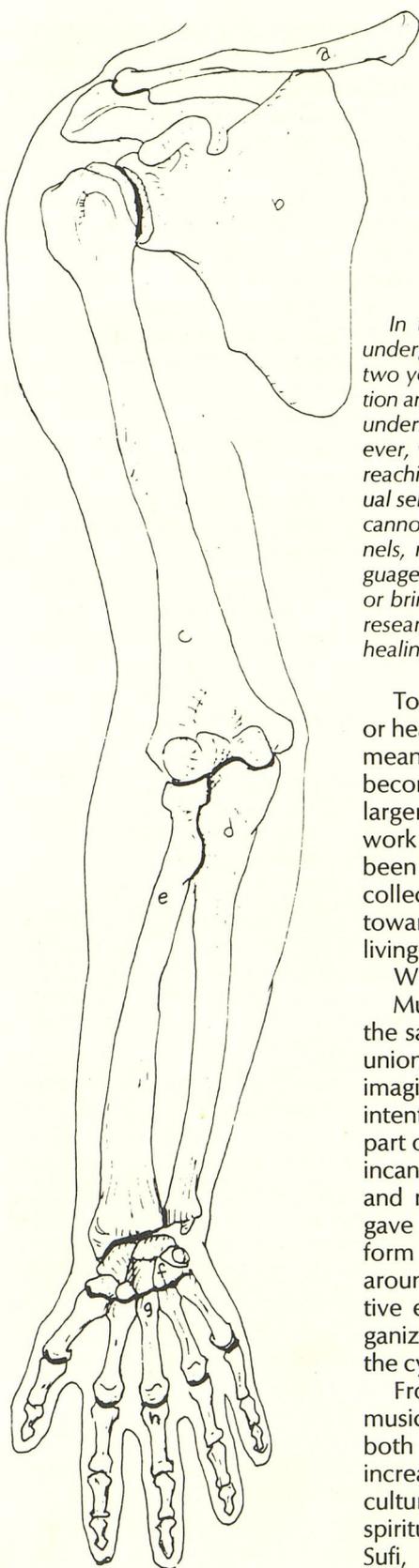
What does music have to do with making oneself whole?

Music and dance (sound and motion) have always been the sacred tools by which people have established spiritual union with what is unknown and invisible. The first dancing, I imagine, was movement which surrendered conscious intention to felt rhythms, the larger rhythms which we are all part of. The first music, I imagine, was the voices of women, incantations for the birth and nurturing of new life, for death and mourning, and rebirth.¹ Early sounds and movement gave form to a cycle of birth, death and rebirth—human form expressing felt life rhythms connecting the world around and within us. The early myths rose from this collective expression: the Great Mother and a way of living organized around the earth and active human participation in the cyclical processes of the earth.

From these prehistorical, prepatriarchal beginnings, music has continued to be the tool for making connections, both inwardly and out into the world. As male domination increased, this tool became esoteric and inaccessible to the culture at large. Yet music as a way of knowing our inherent spiritual unity persisted. Music in Far Eastern cultures (e.g., Sufi, Hindi), shamanistic rituals of Africa, Asia and South America carry this knowledge at least on an unconscious level.² In Western culture, Pythagoras and his rarely mentioned poet-musician wife Theano created an elaborate cosmology organized around their perception of world vibra-

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tions or music of the spheres.³ Paracelsus, the 16th-century alchemist and physician, prescribed music as the remedy for melancholy and feelings of isolation and desperation.

Music as a spiritual tool weaves itself through Rosicrucian and other cabalistic groups and into our own times. And indeed with our discovery of the unconscious and penetration into the molecular and atomic world, we know that the events of our lives are connected to a far greater energy than is readily apparent. Behind what is visible is what is invisible, and this knowledge has always been known and transmitted through music.

Yet beyond accepting that all matter is in motion, vibrating and rhythmically connected, no one seems to know how music aids us to awareness or how music heals. The music therapy literature is filled with studies on "what" happens: empirical examinations of heartbeat and blood pressure, calming effects in psychiatric settings, socializing effects on angry youths and skid row alcoholics, learning effects on the multiply handicapped, relearning effects on brain-damaged stroke patients. Studies have been made on the relationship between sound and physical and psychic health, acoustic stimulation and hormonal secretion, sound and plant growth, and sound and fetal growth. Music and alpha waves have been studied; the experiencing of music and meditation have been compared and studied; and music and the effects of LSD have been compared and studied!⁴

There is no doubt that music is beneficial and powerful. Jean Mass, a music therapist working with the Lighthouse in Manhattan (a development center for the blind) and in the Therapy Training Program at Turtle Bay Music School, says music is a basic need and doubts anything equals its power to act upon the human organism. But she does not know how music acts in this therapeutic way. She does believe it offers alternatives, or access to hidden resources—the places we have not yet touched. For example, most brain damage she encounters is in the left hemisphere, where clients are language-impaired. However, if they can learn music, by a technique called melodic intonation, language can be recovered from the left hemisphere and housed in the right. By singing a simple chant while at the same time rhythmically touching the body of the client (sound and motion) and showing a picture of the desired activity (e.g., eating, going to the bathroom, brushing teeth), the client begins to sing the words back and eventually makes the necessary nervous system connections between the word and its lost meaning. Another example is a 3½-year-old girl with a history of brain seizures who had no concept of language. She couldn't even coordinate her brain wave signals well enough to walk. Yet as Mass sang directions to her, she learned to respond, and loved the drum so much she learned to walk to get it.⁵

Mass refuses to use the word "patient." She says she "cures" nothing; she is a teacher who demonstrates ways for her clients to explore themselves. Interestingly, no woman I've talked with or have read about describes herself as a "healer"; rather, each agrees music is a means whereby people can learn to heal themselves. That we have the power within us to heal ourselves is a wonderful and radical concept. With regard to the politics of our lives, the notion that we need very little *done to us* (perhaps we need *nothing done to us*) is also a threatening concept.

Giving form to sounds and/or experiences which offer a sharpened perception of how each sound is part of all other

sound, and how we are all part of all sound and rhythm, is one aspect composers interested in holistic music are exploring. Composer and teacher Ruth Anderson further characterizes holistic music as sound that clears channels or resonates chakra areas,⁶ perhaps offering an altered state of consciousness. Annea Lockwood, also a composer and teacher, feels we are returning to something ancient and lost until now by creating music which brings attention to our oneness or integration with the universe. One of her works, *Singing the Earth, Singing the Air*, is a participation piece where people lie on the earth and allow themselves to sense the earth's vibrations, letting those vibrations come out through their voices without controlling the voice. It is designed, she says, to feel oneself as part of the earth and as one with the universe. She began exploring environmental sound out of a desire to stop manipulating sound and to come to know the vitality in everything, no matter how inanimate—to learn how marvelous the naked and unviolated thing itself can be: the sound of glass, rock, earth: human life.

Other composers using the healing process as the basis for their work have come to this place from a need to heal themselves. Pauline Oliveros became concerned toward the end of the '60s about her own psychic and physical health and about the ways in which people related to one another. She noticed that by singing long tones or playing extended tones on her accordion she felt better, physically and emotionally. Then she began exploring similar activities with other women, and found the same beneficial effects; rather than manipulating sound in a goal-oriented way, they found themselves allowing subtle changes to occur voluntarily, creating sound from an entirely different mode. Eventually her creations (which moved far from traditional conception and notation) articulated this exploration, questioning what we accept as boundaries and relationships. Her intention was to do what seemed beneficial, not only the sound itself, but also the way people related during the making and experiencing of the sound.⁷

Ruth Anderson used music to find her way back to health after an illness from which she wasn't expected to recover. She began exploring inner sound in meditation and, after a long period of being unable to compose, began writing music again. Her first piece was a meditation which she called *Points*,⁸ an electronic mantra-like work using only sine tones (theoretically pure sounds having no overtones, similar to the sound of a wet glass being rubbed around its rim). Her intention was to create something only for herself, organized on breathing rhythms; something having as little color as possible, that did nothing, simply mantra.⁹ When Anderson played this work for her graduate class, as an example of how to mix sine tones, her students, tired from working all day, felt rested and energized by the music. When this happened again and again, she began realizing that the sine tones themselves acted like sonic acupuncture. From there she began exploring music and healing with three other women (another composer, a psychic healer, and a medium who is also a singer), and became interested in the human voice as well as an electronic medium.

If all matter is in vibration, one of the most exciting and relaxing ways of exploring our own vibration and vibrational relationships is with our own voice. There is a theory that each of us has a personal key note or tone which, when discovered and sung, brings on a feeling of centeredness and well-being.¹⁰ A technique called toning is a way of decon-

gesting or clearing energy paths by singing sustained tones. A simple description of this is: sit comfortably, back straight, and begin making low sounds when exhaling. The sound is not an intended tone, but rather the tone that emerges. If left alone, the tone will follow the energy paths throughout the body. It will change pitch, get stuck in congested places, and remain there until the congestion is clear and fluid.¹¹

Jeriann Hilderley, a teacher-musician-composer, uses chant as massage (again sound as acupressure) and as a way to self-affirmation. The centering, meditative aspect of chanting dissipates scattered and unfocused thoughts by enabling us to organize ourselves in a more inclusive, holistic mode. Our voice, our own specific sound, is our identity and the most intense, vitalized manifestation of our breath (our life). Hearing ourselves and sensing the vibration and resonance throughout our bodies as we tone, chant or sing can give us a sense of relaxation and unity within ourselves and with the world beyond ourselves.

Connecting with the world vibrations and sensing ourselves at one with them has been the intention of all the great chanting traditions. David Hykes, who explores the chants of the world and directs a group of chanters called the Harmonic Choir, says "all these traditions derive from an originating 'source stream' of music."¹² He quotes 1978 Nobel Prize-winning astrophysicists Penzias and Wilson, saying the "Song of Creation, an actual vibration, is echoing

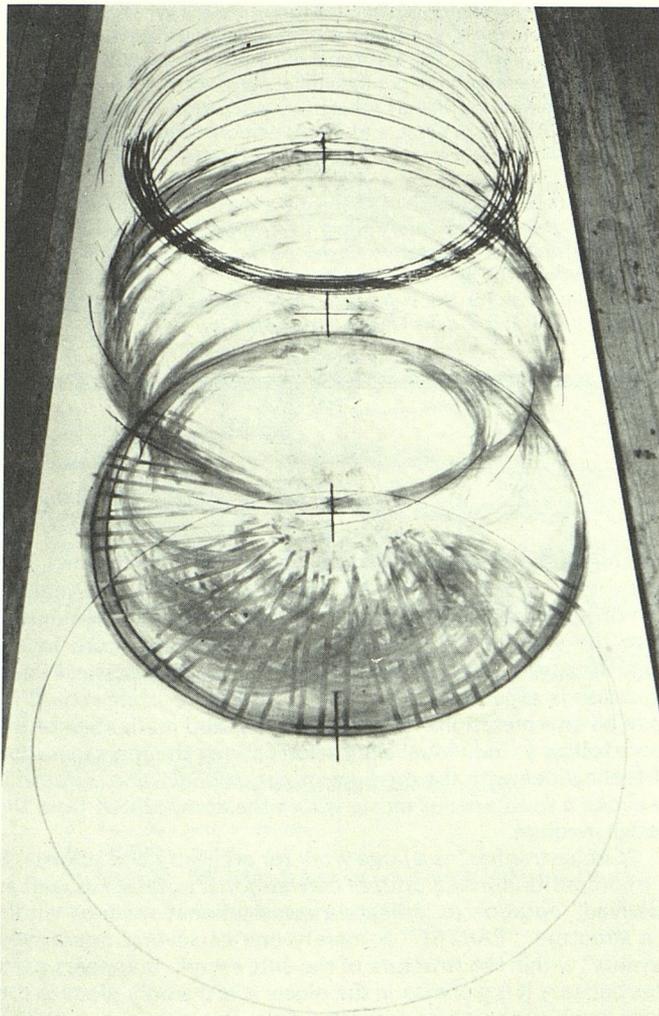
everywhere in the universe."¹³ The spiritual implication of this knowledge (our literal potential for knowing what is now and what has been forever—or more simply our inherent connectedness to all that is and has been) is awesome.

My own experience during the many phases of change was great confusion. Often in the process of isolating fragmented aspects, reintegrating and healing, I knew nothing of my relationship to the world vibrating outside my skin. During the spring two years ago, some days the best I could do was to sit on a park bench knowing for certain only the heat of the sun and my breathing. There were times when I picked up my guitar and played without knowing, on some level, what the guitar was. Yet out of some unconscious and not understood need, I played and sang and improvised sounds. This was soothing and strengthening. Then I began singing long tones (toning) in a meditation, feeling different sounds resonating different parts of my body. It was in this process, combined with lessons in movement, that I began to soften tight, defensive muscle tissue (a body organized around fighting), open blocked areas, and discover the inner workings of what is truly my own miraculous being.

Each time a blocked area of my body was opened up, unfinished emotional energy was discharged (muscle tissue and the nervous system hold the fears we have been unable to resolve). And my relationship to the world changed because I was exposing a new area to sensation and allowing myself to feel that sensation. Because I was receiving new sensations (new messages from newly opened nerve paths), I experienced confusion. My form of the world had been changed—the grid used to organize information (which is myself—the sum of all my cells: my vision, world-view) expanded and a healing process had to take place before I could interpret messages clearly again.

Confusion is generally manifest in an "uhmm" sound (like "uhmm, I don't know"—the inability to make connection, the loss of words). Emotionally, I experienced this confusion as feeling disconnected, seeing what was outside of me as though I were underwater. When I changed the "uhmm" sound into a long tone which resonated the area being opened, I felt relief and the experience became pleasant. The sensation was that the rawness (the discomfort) was being soothed and healed. When I asked Pauline Oliveros about this process, she speculated that the long tones gave the freshly opened tissue something to organize around, that I gave attention to the tissue in such a way as to bypass or go under the emotional confusion and allow relaxation and healing.

Not only is music/sound enormously valuable in exploring our inner selves, it is wonderful for exploring beyond our boundaries of what we know of living together. Music, particularly vocal music, allows us to transcend our existing notions of human relationships and affords a way of learning to trust our intuitive, rhythmic sense of what we are for one another. For instance, in music therapy situations, patients often have great difficulty relating to others, and choral singing is a technique used to facilitate communication. In a singing group, the participant is able to find a closeness without feeling threatened because the sound and the sense of making sounds with others transcend verbal identities/boundaries. The vibration and resonance of sound and rhythm allow communion often initially impossible at a verbal level. Sound and rhythm coming before the word.



Valery Taylor. *Untitled*. 1974, charcoal on paper, 4' x 12'

At another level, three women who call themselves Sumitra (a Hindi word meaning "great friend") do a concert series in the New England area, and hold group workshops on music and its healing power. The concerts consist of original and traditional music, songs, and some improvisation. The workshops are wholly improvisational and consist of group exercises (or events). Below are two examples:

We stood in a circle. Each person took her or his turn standing in the center. Each thought of one word and one color. The group held hands and in unison chanted the name of the person in the center three times while raising their arms upward. The sensation was that the sound was being directed from the group to the center person's toes upward through the top of the head.

As I stood in the center I literally felt sensation rise through me as the group's tone rose. And the feeling was one of safety and well-being, of connectedness.

We sat in a circle. A poem was given (a Navajo chant in this instance) and we each were to sing a line or two of the poem or make any sound we wished. After the first sounds were given anyone in the group could add to the sound or improvise. As the poem progressed, the voices of the group gathered color and texture and dramatically moved in great waves. When it had finished, by collective consensus, we all felt dramatically alive.

These exercises are not unlike the *Sonic Meditations* of Pauline Oliveros, in that they create an environment where communal awareness can be experienced at a deep, rhythmic level. For example, one meditation just recently done at an avant-garde music festival in New York was about tuning. The instructions to the participants were twofold: (1) sing only long tones, one per breath, making your tone a contribution; and (2) then tune to someone else's tone and alternate between the two tasks. The instruction to the composer was to close her eyes and let herself be aware of all the sounds and not to lose her concentration. After 15 minutes, the piece ended together—group consensus. After this particular performance, a woman told Oliveros she had had a backache and found it gone after the piece (not an unusual phenomenon).

There is much for us to explore and learn, but what I know now is that music holds the potential for opening us to experience ourselves and our world in different ways. It holds the potential for allowing us a way to find new possibility within ourselves and new forms for living together on our earth. And our future on this earth utterly depends on how aware we are of ourselves and of our connectedness to the life energies around us. At every level of living, music is a way to know.

1. For an interesting speculation on the origin of music, see Sophie Drinker, *Music and Women* (Washington, D.C.: Zenger, 1977 [reprint]).
2. Peter Michael Hamel, *Through Music to the Self* (Boulder: Shambala Publications, 1978), p. 7.
3. Drinker, p. 90.
4. There is a *Music Psychology Index* listing thousands of pieces of academic research.
5. Robert Jones, "The Potent Weapon of Music Therapy," *High Fidelity/Musical America* (Aug. 26, 1976).
6. In Eastern tradition, the five (or seven) spiritual centers in the human body, corresponding to various physical organs.
7. See Pauline Oliveros, "On Sonic Meditations," and "Software for People," Center for Music Experiment and Related Research, University of California at San Diego, CME-27, 1973 and CME-28, 1979, respectively, for a theoretical/philosophical discussion and examples of her music.
8. *Points* is recorded on 1750 Arch Records (S-1765): *New Music for Electronic and Recorded Media*.
9. I like to think of this work and works like it as "the beginning": the sound and rhythmical root from which new form begins. It is the place which increasing numbers of women are coming to after having said "no" to the destructive forms around us. This rhythmical place is where inner life resonates with what is outside ourselves and where we begin creating and living our lives out of felt need: movement and intention from our individual places of authority.
10. For an interesting, though subjective, discussion of key notes see Corinne Heline, *Healing and Regeneration Through Music* (Los Angeles: New Age Press, 1976). Also see Hamel, *Through Music to the Self*.
11. For a detailed discussion of toning by a woman who uses this technique to help others learn to heal themselves, see Laurel Elizabeth Keyes, *Toning: The Creative Power of the Voice* (Marina del Rey, Cal.: DeVorss, 1973).
12. Program Notes for the Harmonic Choir, Nov. 25, 1979, Concert at Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City.
13. *Ibid.*

PARTBE

In traditional linear notation, duration of time is implied through linear visual association. The visual/notational language in the event "PARTBE" is to give the order of the cued entrances, but presenting them in a sequence which is itself overlapping on the page. Time connotation is therefore broken and the event allowed to proceed in its own time. This is merely an aspect.

The intention was through the medium of graphics (or more appropriately *drawing*) to impart the quality of the particular elements improvised. For example: the electric guitar solo is cued by the number 4, given the range of the dynamics of the solo; it is given representation by the appearance on the score of a dominating large mountainous monster—appearing, then releasing its form through dispersion into sustained white noise. In time, as this occurs (or after this), successive "blocks" of percussion are cued in over the existing sound realms (as given by the large geometric shapes—the heavy punctuation—and as given by the graphic detail—the inner rhythmic structures or beats felt).

The importance of the way the music is notated is that it is

La Donna Smith

utilizing *automatic drawing* as a means to compose music. The music itself is derived from the act of this drawing or visualization of aural sounds. Performing musicians realize the content from the suggestions notated and interpret the score in the same manner that any *visual* art is perceived, but musical interpretation is expected. The effect of the score itself should inspire an interpretation. The improvisation and realization of the score follow as individual expression follows the representation of feeling/idea with the medium of pen and ink. The purpose is to evoke a spontaneous music within the composition from the design medium.

"Orchestrophes" is a large work for orchestra and soloists. It is a composition which utilizes conventional notation as well as "derived" notation to indicate improvisational sections within the structure. "PARTBE" is merely one of several *improvised* "events" within the structure of the entire work. It appears complex because it is a climax in the piece. It is the only place in the piece in which the whole orchestra does a loop (at least visually).

La Donna Smith is a composer living in Birmingham, Alabama.
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NEW LANGUAGE BEING CREATED	WAILING ENTERING INTO	MOTHER MOON CHANTING INTO	SHE IS COMING	THE SKY AROUND THE EARTH	CIRCLING OF THE EARTH	LA LA SOLO: REBIRTH	ALL ONE SACRED HOME	WE LIVE IN THE HOUSE	ALL ALONE ALL ONE AUM	ALL ONE ALL ONE
h	Rocking Am Om	milk moon melody chord	melody chord			KEY CHANGES	all one	basic theme melody	PRAYER	
making new sounds new words	wailing, a release into	chanting an image of wholeness	rebirth for creating future spirit is coming	awareness of all planets relatedness	orbit too	rebirth of woman's spirit	melody sacredness of life is known	melody we are part and I am whole	ALL ONE ALL ONE AL (transformation words) possible all one	ALL ONE AL (last) affirmation
making new sounds new words	o who o who take	gentle humming with chant	take up Mother Moon from voice 1	MOON	sky and the earth and the sun and the moon 2x3	LA LA SOLO sacred RESPONSE	Sacred Home AUM	LA LA VOICE MEMORY		
DM CHORDS ROCKING	melody play			soft plucking melody	AM DM		LA LA theme MEMORY			
		2nd time roll puncta trans					roll our sacred home	roll		

HER MUSIC

Jeriann Hilderley

by moving into the sound meaning of words. A new language contained in an old chest of words. Remembering an old chest of sacredness of the female cyclic rhythm. Relationships of all three of the female I am within of being. I am part of the whole. The whole of myself. A new joy comes forth I have found myself into knowing I am not alone. We are all one all alone AUM. we are all one all one

on those high school band shelves, and I began to play with them and to play with the music in me. I made a 10-foot priestess-musician-witch with a handmade xylophone attached to her. This is how music would be for me. The instrument, the music, inseparable from my own female body/mind. She would teach me about rhythm, tone, melody, harmony—more than any live teacher had ever done—for she was a living image out of my own psyche. Working with as many kinds of percussion instruments as I could find, from every country in the world, I constructed music to intertwine with my sculptures and the dancers who personified them. I was creating a world I could feel part of, a world I believed in.

Then came the Vietnam War. I found it necessary for my creative life to have a direct relationship to political/economic/social realities. Now I began to clearly see the patriarchal power system causing rape and murder, exploitation and oppression; these were not only words, they were real events enacted everyday on the Vietnamese people, on women, on Third World people. I woke up and was startled by what I saw. As best I could I imaged this reality in my work. My paintings showed women I knew trying to sing and scream at the same time; my ritual dramas portrayed the atrocities of war. I joined the crew of angry artists against the war in New York City and with friends formed a street theater collective. I began to look at capitalism's priority of product over process, profits over people, and its inability to take care of waste materials. The technology created by scientists and engineers had become irrevocably separated from the content/meaning of our lives in the same way many of my male sculpture teachers had so blindly separated technique from content in creative work. I began to understand my creating as ritual, a healing as well as a self-expressive process. So I became a cultural worker among women and formed a women's ritual theater group, innovative in that the awareness of our

own lives offered the necessary raw material for our dramas. We explored our past through improvised images which were gradually set into structured re-enactments of the most essential events in our lives.

My songs for the street plays and ritual dramas became material for giving myself and others poignant images of women loving, struggling, fighting, working, becoming, in relationship to each other. I could not stop the screams, the cries that were being released from my body. The words took longer to find. Emotions moved into sounds, into their word meanings, with the slow motion of clouds, the slow evolving of seed to plant to bud to flower I had witnessed in my mother's garden. The notes I played on my instruments moved between keys to the places where the exact intonation of crying, talking, chanting, existed. I was finding my language. I could release the pain in my body and embrace the natural rhythms of my sense organs. The sorrow and pain from inadequate direction would take a long time coming out. I would begin to stand for hours, weeks, years in front of my marimba, with the hard rosewood keys from Africa and the resonating aluminum pipes from Detroit, the same marimba I shared with my twin sister when we were growing up. On this instrument I remember and recreate my past into the present through long improvisational pieces. Playing my guitar or drum, I music myself into a space I can express myself in.

In my songs I sing out the first song woman made, the song of her giving birth, the song of her claiming herself as the creator of all life, the song of her refusal to be murdered, the song of her awakening. The song of woman is not separate from the breath and body of woman. Woman's song is the song of the earth, of all nature refusing to be destroyed. As I remember how I found my music in me, I think of all the women I know struggling like myself to find their own music—all of us releasing our creativity with a new clear power.

EVERYTHING CHANGES and GROWS

Julie J. Weber

I began by realizing the incredible mass of energy with which I was dealing. I was still in my last year of high school, and my prime link with music at the time was my piano studies. Suddenly I realized the great impact of music and how it had been subtly but quite firmly weaving itself into my person. Up until then I had not planned on music as a career, so it was a surprise even to me when I decided to become a music major. The more music touched me, the more I wanted, and the more I learned, the more I wanted to know. Everything about it was exciting.

I was innocently planning to get a degree and certification as a music teacher when I was blessed with a new professor, a composer named Ruth Anderson. With minimal verbiage, she helped me to open up one channel after another of discovery and exploration. In her classes music was listening, *doing*, caring, and paying attention. It was her crisp phrase, "Write, don't think," that led me into composition. I was amazed that it hadn't occurred to me before to write my own music. The prospect of composing was intriguing. I couldn't wait to get at it. I wrote a one-page piano piece during sophomore intercession. That was it. That was all I needed. I knew I would continue.

I began my investigation into contemporary work and discovered electronic music, an area of which I was totally ignorant. I hadn't even known of its existence. It appealed to my exploratory nature. I knew I had found a treasure. I began experimenting with tape recorders, recording everything within ears' reach. It was a great ear opener; my life became increasingly exciting with vibrant sound. Every sound became important to me—the sounds of pieces of wood, stones, sand, buttons, seeds, pine cones, glass, metal, preparing and eating food, water, body movements, singing and speaking, bells such as Tibetan Ting Cha and Russian sleigh bells, baby rattles, etc.

In graduate school I began to compose in an electronic music studio and became particularly interested in the psycho-acoustic aspect of sound. I noticed that if a sound is constant it is often temporarily "turned off" by the listener. At some later point, however, the listener will remember having heard and physically experienced that particular sound over that whole period of time. Even though the listener's attention turns to other sounds in the composition, those "turned off" sounds are heard on another perceptual level.

Electronic sounds offer the possibility of extending the spectrum of our sound perception. With traditional instruments I focus on using sounds particularly idio-

matic and inherent to the instrument or sounds that demonstrate an extended use of the instrument, such as multiphonics (chords) in woodwind instruments, electronic amplification, or recording and electronic modification. The idea is to discover and use a broader dimension of the sound spectrum available to us. Basically I consider these sounds not to be new or invented sounds but sounds we don't usually pay attention to. The recognition of these sounds brings the life force of creativity to them.

With the realization that music is not "just ears," I began to explore the use of other media with music as well as the interlocking of our perceptual experiences. My interest was not in placing media side by side, not even to complement one another, but rather in how one medium could grow out of and perhaps prosper from its direct relationship to another. A good example is the great visual impact of musical scores. I like to make scores that are sculptural, operated by electricity. That is, they move and light up. In "Turnative," a piece for prepared-piano and electronic sounds, the notation is written on a clear Plexiglas disc. Behind it is a second, translucent disc with outlines of triangles in red, blue, and yellow. This second disc indicates tempi. All other necessary notation is contained on the first disc. The notation is written in segments which are continuously linked to one another throughout the disc. The performer chooses a segment that is right-side-up and simply follows through to the neighboring linked segments. These discs are mounted on a motor and stand. The score rotates at one-third revolution per minute. Thus the performer needs to focus only on one area and the notation will continually change. The score is lighted so that no other light is needed. Light from the score falls on the performer's face and hands.

In the past few years I have become involved with the study of memory in relation to our total structure and, most recently, with aspects of sillence and the total sound mass of the instant. In "Silences," a large three-part work using electronic sounds, stringed instruments, and mixed voices, I explore the hearing of sound, its internalization, and then its recall into the conscious state. It is a common hearing experience to all of us, but one of which we remain relatively ignorant because of its rapid assimilation into the unconscious. A cross-section of our perceptual levels reveals multiple layers of coexistence which endlessly emerge and retreat with incredible simultaneity. I see the three parts of this piece as being performed individually or as a set. The soloists will have a specifically notated score written on Plexiglas sheets in the shape of a pyramid. The pyramid, lit from within, will be mounted on a tray or pedestal and will rotate very slowly so that the performers will be able comfortably to read the notation as it changes. The pyramid-shaped

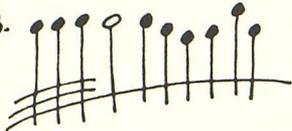
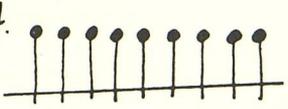
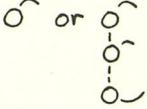
Julie J. Weber is a teacher of music in public school and a studio assistant in electronic music at both undergraduate and graduate levels. She is a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and CAPS grant recipient.
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score will be in direct relation to the slow-fast visual use of the performance space and to the sparse-dense aural texture of the sound structure. The large-group instrumentalists and vocalists will be situated throughout the entire space, including the audience area and the soloists' space. They will change location ever so slightly at intervals of time—at first longer, then getting progressively briefer during the course of the performance. The performers' physical location will approximately reflect the state of sound at all times. As the sounds become denser in texture and occur at more frequent intervals, the performers will be physically closer to each other and will be changing locations more frequently. The performers are instructed during the rehearsal period to find tiny sounds on their instruments and in their personal environments. They are to bring these sounds and the feelings evoked from them to the performance. Instead of electronic feedback, this kind of live feedback is what I have

been groping for. To me, the electronic sounds in "Silences" are a personal expression of feedback of my particular, personal internalization of sound.

My interest in the psychological connections of sound to our total being has led me more and more into larger, multimedia works which are more like theater pieces. In them sounds do not take on a "composed" attitude. Rather than arranged sounds, objects with their attached sounds are used, or natural sounds are recorded and then used in performance along with live sounds. These works are called "OSO" pieces (OSO Tells, OSO Feels Good, OSO Weeps). OSO is the name of the character that is my whole self. The pieces evolve from OSO's consciousness. I find that in these pieces I can express myself in a completely personal way, allowing the revelation of my perceptual discoveries to flow freely. Since music is so close to me, the sounds, instrumental or otherwise, are my very special sounds.

Examples of the "inherent nature" of some fragments:

1.  inherently fast
the beams serve both to indicate duration and legato style
2.  inherently slow
the beam serves predominantly as an indication of legato playing style
3.  inherently in a moderate tempo
the first 3 notes being fast and the fourth note being the longest
4.  a fragment with no durational changes is inherently metric
5.  a brief chord
6.  a long chord
7.  a long note or chord the length of which is determined by its acoustical sonority (let ring).

Julie J. Weber. Score excerpt from *Turnative*. © 1972.

Is There a Feminist Aesthetic in Music?

Teresa Giordano:

Aesthetics is a set of ideas—a philosophy that examines the nature and form of expression. Aesthetics comprises thought and judgment and the ideas expressed in works of art. The ideas that make up an aesthetic come from experience. And these ideas are brought to bear, in a critical manner, on works of art. Some ideas are institutionalized—marriage, religion, government, education—and believed (most of the time) to be “true.” Some ideas are personal—valuation and sense of self within the context of institutionalized ideas. Some ideas are radical—they arise in reaction to experience and then depart from what is generally accepted.

History gives us a long list of men who have embodied their ideas in artistic expression and men who have critiqued these works. This is the aesthetic we refer to, the body of ideas that tells us what constitutes beauty or truth in expression. We bring some personal ideas to this theme but, in my opinion, it is for the most part dictatorial.

Women are now trying to develop a new perspective, one that departs from this institutionalized set of ideas. We can see the emergence and assertion of a female aesthetic. We are forming our own set of ideas of the nature and form of beauty. And we are judging both our own art and the art of men from this new perspective and from new, radical ideas about ourselves and the ways we choose to live within or despite what we’ve been told is true.

If we consider art to be the expression of what we experience and particularly how we experience, artistic forms cannot lie outside our experiences as women. Art communicates, articulates, and gives form to our experiences.

The elements that compose an aesthetic—feeling, expression, and experience—are for the most part bound to cultural and societal expectations. Women are supposed to be pretty, alluring, ornamental. And so, in line with these expectations, women’s creativity has historically manifested itself in the decorative arts and in fashion, areas not considered “fine art.” Women are expected to be supportive and nurturing, and so their contributions to the arts have generally been restricted to their serving as “patrons” or giving financial and emotional support to male artists. Women are expected to defer power to men, and so they have played a “behind-the-scenes” role in art. Even when women have made important contributions, credit has not been given, with the result that women’s work in the arts is often impossible to document.

To a large extent, we have hardly been permitted to experience our creativity. For one thing, we grow up in a male-dominated society. Our norms and standards are learned in a culture shaped for the most part by men. Our conceptions of beauty and expression are transmitted through sources influenced for the most part by men. We are left with a male value system which can’t be expressed because it is super-

imposed and *not* natural to what we feel and experience. And so some women imitate men’s art, and many avoid artistic expression. Others express their aesthetics in their day-to-day lives—in the way their homes look, in their dress, in the lullabies they sing to their children, and in the children themselves.

Male and female experiences differ to the extent that men create culture and women experience it. If we are true to our own experiences, if we allow ourselves to express what we experience and not what we think we should be experiencing, our art *must* differ from men’s. Our aesthetic emerges from *our* truths and ideas.

The “woman artist” is something special, the “feminist artist” something still more special. “Women’s art” is radical, a departure from male-defined values. This alone speaks to the suppression of our creativity. Ideally, male and female will become whole. Aesthetics will become, not a set of ideas dictated by men, but a philosophy arising from the integration of the female and male perspectives. However, this integration is not yet in sight.

We must keep our history in mind. Be mindful of women’s oppression and what we created both despite it and because of it—from boldly designed quilts and intricate lace patterns to the tremendous but often ignored influence of women in blues and jazz. Because our oppression is part of our history, it is ultimately part of our aesthetics and our everyday expressions.

External reality and subjective perception fuse to make art. Women’s art provides a basis for analysis of ourselves and our place in society. Traditionally woman, as “portrayed” in men’s art, has been used to represent a male conception of beauty or evil. Rather than seeing our image in men’s art, we can look to our own art to see where we have come from and where we are going. Women’s art speaks of our development; it gives us the room to create a new image.

Teresa Giordano is a writer and feminist living in NYC.

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Jeannie Pool:

Society—during those periods when women have been permitted to pursue musical composition—has always tried to dictate *what kind* of music is appropriate for women to write. Light songs about love and nature, easy piano pieces, and pedagogical works for children have been deemed appropriate for women composers. Women have been expected to write music of sweet sonorities, of short duration, in simple forms, suitable for the parlor.

It has not been considered appropriate for women to write symphonies, operas, oratorios, requiems, or even chamber music. It has not been appropriate for women to write military marches, anthems, or songs about war; to write in complex or lengthy forms; to write for brass or bass

instruments; to write music requiring more than two performers or intended for the concert stage. Nevertheless, women have written all these kinds of music since the Middle Ages.

These directives to women about the kind of music they should write—when they have been permitted to compose at all—are as much a part of a female aesthetic as some of the current theories positing that women, given their female nature, should write in certain forms (circular, with the climax in the middle—believed to parallel the female orgasm), in certain keys (some have said F Major is a “female” key), or for certain instruments (those considered to be “feminine” instruments).

Both variations of a female aesthetic have been and are oppressive to women composers. Aesthetics relate to gender only in terms of the politics of women’s having been oppressed in male-dominated society for centuries. This oppression has severely limited women’s participation in the creative arts and has often dictated the forms in which women have created.

We owe it to our women composers to provide an atmosphere of support and encouragement which gives free rein to their creative faculties, unbound by notions of a female aesthetic that indicates what and how women should be writing music. We must not seek in any way to limit our women musical geniuses as they were confined in the past.

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Anna Rubin:

As a composer and historian of women in music, I am deeply interested in the renaissance of women in music. I feel that there are several exciting developments which distinguish this work, including different modes of presentation and different relationships between audience and performer. However, I would like to focus on just one aspect, which I find most interesting—relating to what I call “intent-focus.”

Women’s music—both more popular styles as well as contemporary classical music—frequently shows a passion and intensity both in content and means of expression. I would call this tendency “dramatic expressionism.” This dramaticism hearkens back to the romanticism of the 19th century and more directly to the expressionism of many early-20th-century composers: Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Berg, Bartók, and Strauss. The intent, then as now, was to portray intense and heightened states of consciousness. Women figured in some of these earlier works as symbols of Evil, Nature, Temptation (e.g., in *Wozzeck*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, *Verklaerte Nacht*).

What distinguishes the current expressionism of women composers is a radical shift in focus. Our focus is on women’s experiences and emotions. A variety of feelings are explored—despair, joy, terror, pleasure—from the point of view of woman as subject. Locating ourselves as the valid center of creative force is the most essential element in creating an authentic women’s art. And I believe that women’s art which derives from this sense of self is the most potentially moving force in Western art.

I see this dramatic expressionism partly as a rebellion against the extremely austere, abstract, and “cool” aesthetic of the fifties and early sixties (especially the works of Boulez and Babbitt). It is also a reaction to the nonpersonal, aleatoric modes of Cage, Stockhausen, and others. On the



Diana Davies. *Campesinas* (UFW).

other hand, I do not see in it the aggrandizement of self so characteristic of many Western male composers (Strauss, Stockhausen, etc).

While words can hardly do justice to the world of sound, I would like to give a few examples of women’s works to amplify my point. Kathleen St. John, now living in L.A., composed a piano-clarinet duo called *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*. Composed of 13 sections, the work demands extreme technical facility and uses many avant-garde instrumental effects. Taking the Iphigenia myth as her focus, Kathleen has created an incredibly powerful statement of rage, horror, and terror. The audience is engulfed in an unrelenting wave of sound which seems to sound the bottom of women’s pain.

Lois Vierk, also in L.A., wrote a clarinet trio *Song* employing glissandi and extremely high notes. The clarinets trade a melodic figure leading to a joyous climax—which seems to glory in the wonder of sound in itself.

A work of my own, *Songs to Death*, is a setting of three poems by Sylvia Plath for soprano, cello, and piano. In this homage to Plath, I attempted to match the intensity of the verse (the poems deal with suicide and death) by instrumental means. Plath’s suicidal impulses are explored through sound so that (I hope) listeners can experience and ultimately purge their own self-destructiveness.

I would also like to note the works of L.A. composer Beverly Grigsby, the early works of Carey Lovelace, the extremely evocative prayer settings of Lilli Boulanger in the early 20th century, the orchestral vigor of Ethel Smythe, the pieces of Louise Palma and the Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz, the elegant intensity of Thea Musgrave and so many others.

There is of course enormous diversity of styles and harmonic usage, ranging from traditionally harmonic to atonal

and serialistic. Women are also borrowing from the wealth of world music and using whatever resources are at hand to create an authentic self-expression.

Anna Rubin, a composer/teacher, is currently completing an MFA in composition at California Institute of the Arts. She has a background in the social sciences. © 1980 Anna Rubin

Elizabeth Sacre:

The task facing the feminist who wishes to investigate woman's role in music history is manifold: to discover what historians have recorded, to speculate what historians forgot or refused to record, to search for overlooked or misplaced records. It is important to understand the extent to which women who did express themselves musically were exceptions in a predominantly male world, adopting, even amplifying prevailing codes and receiving praise or scorn for their efforts. Such an inquiry raises the problem of a "feminine aesthetic": Is it a useful concept as we attempt to rewrite women's history? Can it be applied to a discussion of music as it has been to that of the other artists?

I want to suggest that the same distinction between decorative and pure art exists in music as in the visual arts and that it tends to fall along sex lines. Historically, women have been musically active. Literature and paintings abound with examples of the female musician playing her harpsicord or her piano, singing lullabies or folk songs, accompanying dances or entertaining guests. To be a lady required accomplishment in music.

The fact of women's musical activity then is not in question. What is curious and worthy of investigation is why, since most women, particularly among the leisured classes, were taught to play and sing, most of the names associated with "serious" music belong to men. There seem to be at least two ways to approach this puzzle.

One is to insist that there were women making music fit to be taken seriously, that is, composing as well as performing, but that, given the role of women in society, they did not have access to the means of recognition and distribution that were available to their brothers and fathers.

Another is that, given woman's traditional nurturing and decorative roles in society and particularly in the family, she had few opportunities to do other than interpret men's compositions and that, if she did compose, her efforts were confined to the cradle, the fireplace, or the best parlor. She played, as it were, second fiddle.

Any attempt to reclaim the history of women's music has to begin from the assumption that both of these are valid. As this issue of *Heresies* demonstrates, there is a history, smudged, distorted, and partially lost though it be. It is important that we work to make it as complete and coherent as possible. It is also true that, given woman's narrow position in society, her musical capacities have been domesticized and channeled. Just as men have made "art" and women "craft," just as men have been "chefs" and women "cooks," so too, within music, the distinction has flourished. Once this is recognized, our next step is to be critical of the traditions we have inherited, acknowledging that the confined spheres within which women have made music have had positive and negative effects on their creations. They were restricted, it is true, but it remains important to discover the beauty, intelligence, and sensitivity that were expressed musically despite, or sometimes even in response to, such restrictions. Perhaps we might discover a paradoxical

vitality that characterized women's music precisely because its expression was forced to be impassioned and intense, a quality that might even warrant the designation "feminine aesthetic." But if we decide to use the term to explain a quality unique to woman's musical art, we must allow it to be dynamic and self-critical, tolerant of its own ambiguousness.

Elizabeth Sacre, an Australian, received her Ph.D. in literature and education from Columbia University Teachers College. She is a member of the Heresies Collective.

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Valerie Samson:

After gathering information on the theories and works of both female and male composers in the San Francisco Bay Area, I noticed some consistencies among the women that suggested a feminine aesthetic. This is what I found:

Women here are interested less in being composers than in being people who LIVE—and compose and write and design, etc. Their art becomes not less important, but freer to take its own form and to be integrated into their lives.

They see composing as a means of bringing them closer to other people, rather than as a means to distinguish themselves. A woman might prepare and present a performance with the same intent that she would prepare and present a special dinner for friends.

Compositions often involve the other arts in addition to music. They can be theater, rituals, or celebrations, for example. No possibility for enhancing the experience of the audience is left unexamined. At Janice Giteck's opera *Wigita*, based on the Native American legend of the coming of Cornman, the audience is served popcorn and cider and joins the performers in dancing to popular Native American tunes before and after the opera. Even beginning composers feel no hesitancy in using the other arts when they are the most potent means to express an idea. It indicates not only a willingness to take risks, but an enthusiasm about art that encourages anyone to participate.

Compositions are for specific occasions and performers to such an extent that they would be difficult to export and re-create elsewhere. In Janice Giteck's opera, the trombonist must also play the digeridu and the part of Coyote. Most of the other players have multiple roles designed specifically for them. Also, the multi-media nature of most work makes tape recordings poor representations of the work.

Does all this mean that women are more social and more concerned about the audience than about art in its timeless purity? Does it mean they are non-career-oriented dilettantes, only interested in living the good life? Or are they harbingers of world change, daring to bring together varied ingredients to create new experiences capable of reuniting the family of humans?

California has often been looked to as a barometer of change, and I see that the environment here has had a profound impact on development for composers. Its force is such that inborn differences, if they exist between women and men, are not the deciding factors in a composer's aesthetic. Yet women composers here, as a group, exhibit characteristics thought to be Californian far more consistently than men. . . .

To be allowed to develop freely, using diverse materials, drawing from diverse sources for diverse audiences and occasions, might sound like a composer's dream. In reality,

women have this freedom and everything else that California fosters. When something this exciting is at hand, trying to break away from a male aesthetic, or any other aesthetic, feels completely unnecessary. The stereotyped ideas of what composition is and who composers are never seem to have made it westward across the Sierra Nevada.

Valerie Samson, a composer and musicologist, has written for *Ear and Composer* and worked with Hysteresis and the Composers' Cooperative in California.

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Carol Sudhalter:

Is there a feminine aesthetic? It's a question I can't answer yet. The "mystery" of just how much difference there is between the inner makeup of women and men is clouded over by cultural differences, byproducts of how women and men live, producing very different behaviors and sensibilities. Who is to say how much is inherent and how much is cultural? When women are completely equal to men in rights, can hold the same jobs, receive the same pay, and not be bound to childbearing and housework and subservience—when that day comes—will women play music and write poetry differently from men?

I can only speak from what I see now. I have heard some women improvising music in a way that seemed different from men. I believe that women have gained sensitivity by being oppressed, and that their music and poetry today express that oppression. Women are closer to their feelings than many men, more in touch with emotional interactions

between human beings. For example, Paula Robison is the greatest musician I know. She is a fabulous teacher. She shares so much with her students. She laughs, tells anecdotes, plays, asks questions, tells lots of stories about the composer to illustrate how the music should be played. She uses that humanistic approach, the woman's contact with emotions, that I am talking about. I have never known a male teacher who was as completely inspiring, although I have had some great men teachers.

Women are using the musical structures and forms and are concentrating on playing in the style established by men performers because women are competing in a man's world with a male-defined value system. Why? Because this may be the only way to make it. There is a long way to go before complete equality exists, before types of music invented by women, unique in form, are accepted to the point that women musicians can succeed financially, by just playing their own music.

A friend of mine, a woman vocalist, put the problem in a kind of interesting way—women have been nibbling around the edges, not considering it our right to actually go out there and do our own thing. For the first time now, I see a generation of women with a different plan! I see young women *not* oriented to failure and obsequiousness. I see women in their twenties and teens asserting themselves in any number of fields and in their personal relationships without question as to their right to do so. I see young girls, five, seven, and nine years old, taking up sports and music, and whatever else they do, with a defiance and competitive



Diana Davies. *Biafran War Refugees Sing Hymns at Dawn at Food Relief Center for 3,000 Homeless People in Umuahia. 1969.*

spirit that tells me they will never let any signs of male domination get in their way. When I see this, I think that the failure orientation that many of us grew up with ten years earlier may be becoming a thing of the past. Women going into professions today assert themselves in a very natural way, whether they feel they are feminists or not. They are advancing women's rights with every step. It is a wonderful time in that respect.

There is really a new road being laid down for and by women in music—let's see where it goes!

Carol Sudhalter is a jazz musician and music teacher who plays tenor sax, baritone sax, and flute.

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Judith Tick:*

The polemics surrounding the female composer inevitably affected the kind of music she wrote and the ways in which it was received. The conflict between her role as a woman and her role as composer was resolved through the development of sexual aesthetics, which analyzed music as a combination of feminine and masculine traits; therefore music written by women should and did express "femininity."

As descriptive metaphors, the terms "feminine" and "masculine" were not alien to 19th-century music criticism. Schumann, for example, described a pair of Schubert trios in just such terms; Opus 99 was "more passive, lyric and feminine," while Opus 100 was "active, masculine and dramatic." Furthermore, as metaphors used to describe the expressive range of music, such language did not *logically* need to confine the woman composer. Just as Schubert could write masculine or feminine music, so could she. . . .

However, because of the climate of prejudice against female composers, the language of Romantic music criticism degenerated into the language of sexual aesthetics, in which the potentialities of the individual female composer were defined through the application of sexual stereotypes.

Femininity in music was comprised of delicacy, grace, refinement, and sensitivity. It was defined as the "eternal feminine" or the *ewige weibliche*, descending from Goethe's concept of womanhood. Because of the great vogue of German music in the late 19th century, especially Wagnerian opera, the German term for the feminine ideal was frequently used by American critics. Wagnerian heroines, moreover, were the prototype of the "eternal feminine" in their fathomless capacity for self-abnegation, while Wagner and Beethoven were the prototypical "masculine" composers. Female instrumentalists were advised to limit their repertory to Chopin and Mendelssohn, less alien in feeling.

By 1900 the aesthetics of the "eternal feminine" in music had been extended to include form and style as well as emotive content. Vocal music was the essence of *ewige weibliche* because it "appeals more directly to the heart" (T.L. Krebs). Since harmony and counterpoint were "logical," they were alien subjects. Instead of musical intellect, a woman was supposed to rely on her "imagination," from which "beautiful melodies could flow." The "higher class of compositions," that is, symphonies and operas, were masculine forms because they relied on structural thinking and their emotive content was broad and powerful.

When women did compose in the "higher" forms, they were thereby venturing beyond the sphere of the "eternal feminine." The best example is the critical reception of the first symphony written by an American woman, the *Gaelic*

Symphony by Mrs. H.H.A. Beach.

Amy Cheney Beach, known professionally by her husband's name, was the foremost female composer of her generation. Like her contemporaries, she wrote a great many songs. But she was the only woman to write symphonic and chamber music of significant stature.

The premiere of the *Gaelic Symphony* on October 30, 1896, was a controversial event. As an erstwhile member of the Boston group of composers, Beach emulated their eclectic style, assimilating the harmonic vocabulary of Brahms and Wagner as well as the current fashion for folk tunes into her long, rather high-flown work.

Its critical reception is a perfect example of the double standard by which the music of women composers was judged. No matter what the merits of the piece, both its virtues and its faults were alleged illustrations of the eternal feminine. While the *Women's Journal* chronicled the event on November 6 as one that gave them "no slight satisfaction and pride," other critics were not quite so generous. The *Boston Tribune* critic Philip Hale, for example, attempted to avoid condescension, but still related the defects of the orchestration to her sex: "Occasionally she is noisy rather than sonorous, Here she is eminently feminine. A woman who writes for orchestra thinks 'I must be virile at any cost.' . . . The only trace of woman I find in this symphony is this boisterousness." What Hale meant by virility was excessively heavy orchestration. The implication is that because of prejudice against women composers, Beach overcompensated by overwriting.

The moral was obvious. Women who sought after virility by writing in the higher forms defeated themselves. . . .

The "eternal feminine" aesthetic therefore provided a referential vocabulary in which the music of female composers could be judged by a double standard that placed them in a double bind. When they composed in the smaller "feminine" forms such as songs and piano pieces, they were thereby demonstrating their sexually derived inadequacies to think in the larger abstract forms. If, on the other hand, they attempted these forms, they were betraying their sexual identities by writing "man-tone" music.

Sexual aesthetics therefore functioned as a way to assign female composers a peripheral place within composition. It qualified the effect that the emergence of the female composer had in altering the sex typing of composition in that it *sanctioned* male domination of the higher forms of composition. The female composer had her "sphere" and by 1900 it was generally confined to the small forms of domestic music-making: the parlor piano pieces and the parlor song.

Judith Tick is Assistant Professor of Music at Brooklyn College, CUNY. Her dissertation is on American women composers before 1870.

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*Judith Tick's statement originally appeared in the *Yearbook for Inter-American Research*, edited by Gibert Chase (Austin: University of Texas, 1973). It will be reprinted in *Women Making Music*, edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, to be published by the University of California Press (Berkeley) in 1981.

The quotations are from: Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, trans. P. Rosenfeld (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 121; T.L. Krebs, "Women as Musicians," *Sewanee Review*, Vol. 2 (1893), p. 77; Philip Hale, "Beach's Gaelic Symphony" (Nov. 1 1896) and "Women as Symphony Makers" (Nov. 4, 1896), *Boston Tribune* (Microfilm Collection, New York Public Library).

Critics/Performers/Composers

While putting this issue together, we had several discussions related to music criticism/feminism/women composers and performers. We decided that a positive way in which to take up these issues was to publish the responses by women music critics, composers, and performers to a questionnaire.

CRITICS

When reviewing performances of women's music and/or women performers, do you feel a conflict between your commitment to feminism and your standards for objectively judging quality in music and performance?

Is there a feminist music critic? If so, what are her goals, aims, and standards for judging music?

Beth Anderson

**Composer and Editor of *Ear* and
Report from the Front**

Yes, a great conflict. When I see a woman doing something I can't praise, it hurts, but I know if I lie, or say something I do not currently believe to be true, it will undermine us both. If I go to a concert and don't appreciate what I experience, I try to find out what the composers or performers were trying to do. I ask what was going on in an attempt to discover whatever can be praised—the concept, the composition, the thought process that may in the future lead to more interesting work. This courtesy must be extended to all musicians by good critics. Some musicians do not want to talk to the critic, and some institutions make it impossible for a critic from a paper other than the *New York Times* to get backstage. In that case, it is necessary to simply report my perception, make suggestions, and try not to do any harm (assuming I don't feel it deserves it), while not being able to be particularly (and still honestly) helpful. Any kind of review is doubtlessly more helpful than none.

I believe it is possible to be a feminist and a music critic, but it is difficult to know just how these qualifications interact in print. The people who write for the feminist press like everything by women, and, as a composer, that published love is wonderfully supportive. However, I'm not sure that completely fills my definition of good criticism. The critic needs to be tremendously well informed, so as to suggest directions for further growth and to place the music historically and philosophically.

The goals and standards of a feminist music critic must be the same as any great critic. However, she would simply pay more attention to women making music, since that is her professed bias. Unsympathetic male critics usually do not state their biases and so, when they ignore women making

music, it is simply assumed that the women's music is not worthy of their attention. Since I obviously do not believe this to be true, I would say they had biases too. At a recent music critics' conference, Brian Eno said that he thought critics should publish a list of their ten favorite records at the top of their columns, so that readers would know their biases. This sounds like a great idea because then it would not be necessary to read criticism as though it were pure in spirit!

If a feminist music critic only attends concerts by women, her articles may be separated from "mainstream criticism," and if she always says that women's music is great (even when it isn't), she risks developing the reputation of a music idiot. The feminist critic must work very hard, in order to avoid the mistakes of other critics. She must not trivialize her profession with an unstated bias, but she must honestly propagandize for what is best in what she values. Above all, she must maintain the trust of the composers, performers, and reading public.

Holly Cara

Photojournalist and Music Editor of *Sojourner*

I try to judge a performance with my whole self and not ignore anything I perceive. Because I review women in folk and rock music, as well as women performing women's music, I do come up against some things I can't tolerate as a feminist. When this conflict arises, I try to see the overall value of the art and message, as well as conceding my problems with it. I think it's highly important to keep a wide perspective even while opposing an artist's idea or approach.

Yes, feminist music critics do exist, though I hesitate to subdivide the title, implying a dichotomy between "feminism" and "music criticism." I don't think there need be a dichotomy; and if one exists it is due to our

linear wish to label everything. Everyone's criteria for reviewing music are different, and this is due to our individual cultural backgrounds, exposure to and understanding of different forms, as well as feminism. I would like to think that the standards of a feminist music critic stem from her innate knowledge, and not from a pre-set mode of "political correctness." I would also hope that a feminist music critic considers the feminist implications of a performance along with the artistic content. As far as aims and goals are concerned, the reviewer's aim should primarily be an honest analysis of women's work, and a desire to see more women given the chance to work creatively in music.

Cathy Lee

**Promoter and Goodwill Ambassador
among Women in Jazz Music
and Jazz Players in Women's Music**

I feel that "objectivity" as a critical standard today has been compromised by many centuries of misogyny. Because women's contributions to music have for so long been misrepresented or ignored, no one can speak about (genderless) music with assurance that the reader will understand that term to include women equally with men. Compensatory educational efforts are required.

I believe we can validly assume that men favor men, that women favor women, that friends favor each other, and that each individual is the most accurate and most severe judge of her own work. Therefore I consider the artist herself to be the primary source. I also believe that *admitted subjectivity* in criticism from non-primary sources is the most "objective" criticism we can achieve. The critic states her biases at the outset, so each reader can judge the judge's opinions.

As a feminist, I feel less conflict writing about women's music in feminist publica-

tions. I feel freer to offer suggestions for improvement, knowing that the readers inherently appreciate the value of female creativity overall. Since that same assumption cannot be made about the readers of general or music publications, my conflicts between objectivity and feminism arise there more readily; I deal with them by writing only about those women whose performances are in my opinion flawless.

I feel that *anyone* who reacts to woman-hating content in music—as art or as business—by working to eliminate it, rather than pretending not to hear it, is a feminist music critic. The subgroup of feminist music critics who write for publications take advantage of the potency of large-scale public relations to command the attention of those responsible for music as it exists today. My goals, which I think are representative of many feminist music writers, are: to research the contributions that women have made and are making to music; to inform others of the prejudices (gynophobia manifested as racism, homophobia, and sexism) that women in music have faced and continue to face; to encourage others

in media—especially men—to make special efforts to counteract unintentional and/or deliberate biases toward men; and to support every woman who chooses to risk threatening the patriarchal power structure by pursuing a woman-centered (or self-centered) course in the music business or art.

“How well does she play?” is the question I ask of a musician, compared with other women who play the same instrument in a similar musical style. (Privately I compare women to men, and have always reached the conclusion that they play at least as well, if not better in many cases. I will not do this publicly, though, because men already get enough ink elsewhere.)

Kristin Lems

Writer of Songs, Poems, Essays, Reviews, and a Rock Musical

I am dissatisfied with a great deal of the reviews I see and receive for their likely adherence to one or more of the following tendencies: (1) a platitudinous gush of private reactions, (2) a relative lack of study of text, (3) a reluctance to put the art in any

kind of context—whether historical, political, or aesthetic. It appears that many feminist reviewers are inadvertently drafted, and are more feminists than writers or reviewers.

Feminist criticism should be extra careful to examine what the material is attempting to say and how well it's doing at it. The bias: a prevailing belief in the desirability of deepening and broadening the feminist movement. This is a bias I freely admit to as a reviewer and as an artist.

We must, as reviewers, question whether those “objective critical standards” we are weaned on are, like “objective journalism,” defenses of the status quo, or of an elite that benefits from the existing standards. I do not mean throw out or lower the standards, but not to consider the standards one has inherited as “above reproach.”

Finally, I am distressed by the refusal of most well-known male and female music/arts reviewers to even handle feminist art. They don't think it's important enough to put in their regular columns; thus resigning feminist performers to being reviewed by well-meaning recruits who are not up to the task.

PERFORMERS AND COMPOSERS

**What do you want to hear from a music critic about your music and/or performance?
Is there a feminist music critic? If so, what are her goals, aims, and standards for judging music?**

Nancy Fierro

CSJ, Pianist, Recording Artist, and Member of the Music Faculty at Immaculate Heart College

I value the contribution of the music critic, who is for me the articulate voice of the audience. What I want to hear from the critic is her/his honest and reasonable evaluation of my projection, expressed with a constructive attitude and from the standpoint of any existing, qualifying context.

I do not feel that my being a woman is a qualifying context. Women have had a strong tradition of proficiency in performance. However, if in a performance I choose to make a political statement (playing a piano recital entirely of music by women), I then expect the critic's remarks to be grounded in her/his knowledge of the historical situation from which the music came (i.e., sociological barriers inhibiting women's creativity and self-development). But I always want the critic to be a critic and not an apologist.

Some time ago, I was asked to review a concert of women's music for a feminist publication. The publication was radically feminist and I felt supportive of the movement and its efforts. Not wanting a negative critique to appear anti-feminist, I wrote only

positive evaluations of the concert. Unconsciously, I felt constrained in giving an objective opinion.

I no longer support this position. I believe that if a community or collective is to be vital and powerful, the members must be highly conscious individuals capable of responding to values and realities extending beyond the focus of the collective. In this sense, a feminist music critic would be one who is concerned as much about the integrity of her criticism as she is about promoting women in the arts.

Victoria Bond

Conductor and Composer

I believe that a music critic should first be well informed regarding the performance, performers, and compositions being presented. After that, an intelligent and constructive point of view is useful and informative to all concerned. Personal opinion, naturally, must figure largely into any critic's commentary, but when these opinions are not based on any sound or concrete knowledge, then they are of little value.

I don't believe that there is any difference between male and female on the level of mind and spirit, therefore I don't believe

in a purely “feminine” point of view. You're either a good critic or not—and that's that!

Lucille Field Goodman

Associate Professor of Music, Brooklyn College, CUNY, and Soprano who sings Women's Music

I want to hear from the music critic an open appraisal of my singing, the works I have chosen to perform, the proficiency of the musicians performing with me, the audience response. I don't want an analysis of my looks but it's OK to assess my stage presence. The timbre of my voice is more important than the brightness of my smile.

If one has chosen a program of women's work, then a feminist response is vital. The critic must have the historical and musicological background to speak of the music being performed and to not put it in the male context. The sort of judgmental writing critics are apt to indulge in would do little credit to the music of women from early times to today. A political reference is inevitable and giving the sociological reasons for the dearth of performance and indeed of output is imperative. If one more person says to me that I must take extreme care that the women's music is “good” because the critics

will tear the work apart rather than appraise my ability, I will shriek.

Katherine Hoover

**Composer, Flutist, and Producer of
Festivals of Women's Music
sponsored by Women's Interart Center**

I would prefer if critics could admit how subjective their opinions actually are... this is *not* a put-down, most people's reactions to music are quite subjective and differ on different days. It would be refreshing also if critics were prepared for new music, so that they could distinguish between writing and performance problems. A solitary hearing of a single performance is often inadequate to pass judgment on any unknown work.

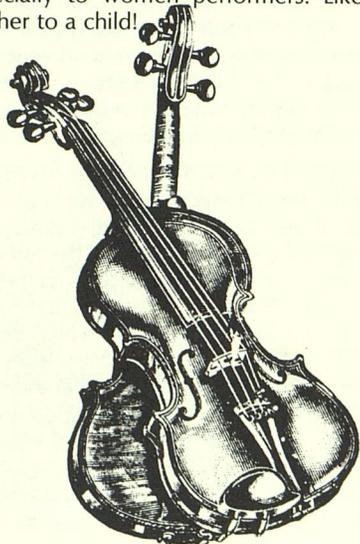
A "feminist" critic should be somewhat informed about the history of women in music, both as performers and composers. Such knowledge would, I hope, help to counter the condescension with which critics *still* review women, particularly as composers. The standards of *music* should *not* be different for men and women. At this point women still have to "prove" themselves in a way that men don't—which is proof of general ignorance of the amount and quality of women's work in music, past and present.

Virginia Eskin

American, Pianist

I must say that as a performer, critics are not that important to me in the first place. I understand their function but so often I do not agree with what they have written, either good or bad. Basically, they should report and describe the event, with whatever personal twist they want to put on it. After all, it is mainly for people who have *not* attended.

I don't believe sex should enter into performances—I hate it when critics write that I play "like a man" or have masculine tendencies. How denigrating it is to me and to other performers. I think that women critics are more vicious in general, at this time, especially to women performers. Like a mother to a child!



Grażyna Bacewicz (1909-1969)

Judith Rosen

Last year marked the tenth anniversary of the death of Grażyna Bacewicz, one of the outstanding composers of the 20th century.

As was the case with many women who succeeded in the historically male-dominated field of composition, she was born into and nurtured by a family which held music and the arts in high esteem. The youngest of four children, she was born in Łódź, Poland in 1909.¹ Her father, a music teacher, began Grażyna's musical training when she was five years old. She soon joined her brothers and sister in performing chamber music for the enjoyment of the many friends who accepted the Bacewicz family's hospitality. She gave her first public recital at the age of seven, playing a violin solo for a benefit concert. At age ten she entered a private music school in Łódź and took classes in both violin and piano. Her first compositions date from her thirteenth year, but Bacewicz, feeling they were too naive, suppressed these early works—an act which reflected her lifelong demands upon herself. She would always be her own most severe critic.

After graduation from the local school, she moved with her eldest brother to Warsaw where she entered the Conservatory of Music to study violin, piano, and composition. In keeping with her expanding view of the world, she also studied philosophy at the University of Warsaw. The following years saw the end of her formal piano training, and in 1932 she graduated from the Conservatory with two diplomas: one in violin (which she had studied with Professor Josef Jarzebski) and one in composition (under the tutelage of Professor Kazimierz Sikorski). While at the Conservatory, she met Karol Szymanowski, a member of the faculty, who suggested, as he did to many other hopeful young Polish composers, that she study with Nadia Boulanger or, as she was known in Warsaw at the time, the "Professor of Poles." Taking his advice Grażyna went to Paris; while working with Boulanger, she had the good fortune to study with the eminent violinist Carl Flesch.

Before returning to Warsaw in 1934, she embarked on the first of many concert tours as a violin soloist, receiving critical acclaim throughout Europe. In 1936 Bacewicz entered the Orchestra of the Polish Radio under the direction of Gregor Fitelberg. During her two years as principal violinist with the orchestra, she perfected her mastery of the instrument and also enriched her understanding of the complexities of orchestral instrumentation. Even with the demands of the orchestra, she continued to pursue her career as a composer—in 1934 her works were presented at the Warsaw Conservatory of

Judith Rosen is researching the history of women composers, lectures at California universities, presents radio documentaries, and is currently writing a book.

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Music and in 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War, she returned to Paris for a concert of her own compositions. This dual career as a violinist and composer continued until 1955, when she channeled all of her energies into composition, leaving the concert stage behind.

During the nightmare years of German occupation, when Bacewicz and other Poles were isolated from the civilized world, Grażyna married Andrzej Biernacki, a physician and amateur musician (in 1936); gave birth to her only child, a daughter, Alina (in 1942); and cared for her sister Wanda (who had been seriously wounded in one of the many bombings). In spite of these responsibilities and the oppressive surroundings (or perhaps because of them), she continued to compose—her strength and courage seemed to increase with every hellish event of war that she experienced. Once, in the midst of a bombing raid, she had to leave her suitcase filled with compositions in her home, but miraculously hers was one of the few houses in the area that survived the attack. Her humanistic qualities shone during these years. Her home was often a refuge for the hungry and a sanctuary for the continuation of Polish culture. Concerts to raise money for a general relief fund were given in secrecy. Yet, during this time, she quietly and with great personal fortitude found time to compose her *Sonata for Solo Violin*, *I Symphony*, *II String Quartet*, *Suite for Two Violins*, and the *Overture for Orchestra*. With the August 1944 uprising in Warsaw, her family was forced to leave and live out the remainder of the war in various towns outside the capital.

In the years immediately following the war, her music began to develop its own distinctive style. Previously, as a student at the Warsaw Conservatory, she had been influenced (as were so many others of the time) by the brilliance of Karol Szymanowski. Her studies in Paris helped to free her from this influence. Applying the knowledge of classical forms with a contemporary approach, her compositions evolved into the neoclassical form, so popular at the time. This neoclassical style culminated in her *String Concerto* (also referred to as the *Concerto for String Orchestra*) of 1948. In this work ancient and classical themes are transformed into vital, exciting musical expressions. The immediate popularity of this composition confirmed her worth as a composer, and she took her place among the best of the contemporary composers. It had its American première in 1952 at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., to enthusiastic reviews.

Never satisfied to rest on the laurels of any one composition or prize, her passion for composing continued, with the result that her music was in a constant state of evolution. The 1950s saw the abandonment of the neoclassical style and the creation of new and imaginative works. In 1953 Bacewicz premiered her *II Sonata for Piano*. The piece is filled with technical difficulties, not for their own sake but for the essential execution of the original concept. Each of the three movements possesses exciting, passionate rhythms that build to climaxes and then ebb into contemplative moods. Her musical growth continued throughout the 1950s, which saw the completion of her *IV* and *V String Quartets*, *I Piano Quintet*, two symphonies, and the *V Sonata for Violin and Piano*, among others.



Grażyna Bacewicz

In 1956 the Polish working class rioted against the Russian regime of political terror and against the low standard of living. This protest resulted in a more liberal Polish Communist Party rule that, though it has supported Russia politically, has allowed more religious and cultural freedom. The new freedom given music was symbolized by the first Warsaw Autumn Festival held in the fall of 1956. Each year since then these festivals have provided a platform for contemporary music. At the festival in 1959 *Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion*, in which her style changes subtly, was premiered. The vigorous rhythms and sharply contrasted themes contained in her earlier works are evident, but here these are combined with a new boldness and dynamism. For this composition Bacewicz received the first prize from the composers' tribunal of UNESCO, selected from over sixty orchestral entries. It is this work that points to the direction she was to take in the succeeding decade.

Stimulated by contemporary ideas (such as those of her countrymen Serocki, Baird, and Penderecki), she next began to experiment with serial techniques. The *VI String Quartet* of 1959 was the result. Though she did not continue in a direction of strict dodecaphony, her experiments aided the growth of her compositional abilities. She never used electronics in her music, but she supported their use by others. All new musical idioms were filtered through her and served to expand the horizons of her individuality.

Thus *Pensieri Notturmi* (1961) explores the problems of tone color and the limits of possibilities for string instruments. This was followed by the completion in 1962 of the *Concerto for Orchestra*, which is marked by a clarity of structure that frames vigorously contrasting sections. The year 1965 was a most prolific one, resulting in *Musica Sinfonia in Tre Movimenti, Divertimento for*

I
GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ (1958)

Grażyna Bacewicz. *Music for Strings, Trumpets, and Percussion*. 1958.

String Orchestra (which is similar in mood to her earlier *String Concerto* but embodies a newer musical idiom), *II Piano Quintet*, *VII Violin Concerto*, and *VII String Quartet*.

The *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* (1966), one of her most energetic works, is written in a style that avoids the use of conventional melodic elements. The listener, however, would be hard pressed not to "feel and hear" them, much in the same way that a stranger senses the true feelings expressed in a foreign language without literally comprehending the exact words being spoken.

Continuing in its tradition of presenting new works, the Warsaw Autumn Festival of 1967 premiered *Contradizione for Chamber Orchestra*. This work calls on each of the thirteen instrumentalists to display individual virtuosity. This forceful and at times ethereal work has been performed by several American orchestras in recent years. Having written for the cello (in the concertos of 1951 and 1963), Bacewicz turned her attention to the viola, and in 1968 the *Viola Concerto* was written and dedicated to one of Poland's outstanding soloists, Stefan Kamaza. In the same year she wrote the short, but memorable, *Esquisse pour Orgue*.

Bacewicz not only wrote for a wide variety and combination of instruments, but she also wrote for the stage. The Warsaw radio presented her comic opera *The Adventures of King Arthur* in 1959. Her ballet *A Peasant Becomes King* was written in 1953. A humorous ballet, *Esic in Ostende*, was written in 1964. Then she undertook to write the music for *Desire*, a ballet based on Picasso's play *Desire Caught by the Tail*, which would prove to be her last work. She approached this task with the same philosophy she applied to all of her music. She did not confine herself solely to the written word. Musical autonomy was the key, and as she had said previously about music in general, she now said about the ballet in particular: "Music doesn't express any normal life emotions. It expresses itself and its own emotion."² Her work on the ballet was constantly interrupted due to a demanding schedule, which included serving on numerous musical competition juries, traveling throughout Europe as an honored guest at performances of her works, and teaching a composition class at the State School of Music in Warsaw.

In December 1968, when the ballet was almost finished and before departing from Warsaw, she did something she had never done before—she left detailed instructions for the completion of the last four minutes of the

work. Whether this act indicated a premonition of death, we will never know. She died unexpectedly in January 1969. Though the ballet was completed according to instructions, the Grand Theatre of Warsaw did not accept the ending, and at its first performance the production ended on the last note that Grażyna Bacewicz had written. As a testament to her extraordinary musical capabilities, the ballet did not seem to end abruptly; for in the words of her sister, Wanda, "The order that had always prevailed in her work took the upper hand even in this critical moment. The decision of the Grand Theatre, I felt, was justified. Nothing had to be added to my sister's work."³

With all of Bacewicz's achievements, awards, and fame, her life remained simple and modest. Stories about her sympathetic nature and her compassion for all who crossed her path abound. Her self-imposed demands and discipline together with a natural creative genius have left the world with some of the finest music of this century.

1. The 1913 birthdate previously attributed to her in many musical dictionaries and papers was corrected in a letter to this writer from Wanda Bacewicz, sister of the composer.
2. Wanda Bacewicz, "Desire: A Ballet by Grażyna Bacewicz," *Polnische Musik* (1973), No. 2 (29).
3. *Ibid.*

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Discography

- String Quartet #7*, Musical Heritage Society 1889Y*
- II Sonata*, Avant AV-1012
- On the MUZA Label: ****
- Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion*, SXL 0171
- Musica Sinfonia in Tre Movimenti: Pensieri Notturni; Overture; Concerto for Orchestra*, XL 0274
- Divertimento for Strings*, SXL 0586 and SX 1134
- Piano Quintets #1 and #2*, SXL 0608
- Concerto for Viola and Orchestra; Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra "In Una Parte" for Orchestra*, SXL 0875
- II Sonata; Maly Tryptyk; 10 Etudes for Piano*, SXL 0977
- VII Concerto for Violin*, Warsaw, Autumn 11969, 3XW 1183
- Contradizione*, Warsaw, Autumn 1967, 3XW 890
- Concerto for String Orchestra*, SX 1256
- Sonata #4 for Violin and Piano*, XL 0505
- Quartet for 4 Cellos*, Warsaw, Autumn 1964, W 969
- String Quartet #6*, Warsaw, Autumn 1960, W 679
- Concerto #2 for Cello and Orchestra*, Warsaw, Autumn 1963, W 877
- String Quartet #3; String Quartet #5* SX 1597
- String Quartet #4; String Quartet #7* SX 1598

* Available by mail order only: Musical Heritage Society, 14 Park Road, Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724.

** Available from: Polish Record Center of America, 3055 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60618 or Ars Polona, PWM Foreign Trade Office, 00-068 Warszawa, ul. Krakowskie Przedmiescie 7, Poland (PWM is the only source for scores of Bacewicz's compositions.)

FLORENCE B. PRICE

J. K. Thompson

Unfortunately, most of us have overlooked the fact that a sizable body of concert music has been and is being created by Black composers. The obscurity of Black composers is the result of the social convention brought about by years of tradition. According to Alex Bontemps, "this nation, 200 years after its birth, still harbors old and degenerate racial attitudes, attitudes that have persisted... despite the contributions in the arts from Black Americans" (*Ebony*, 30:115).

It is a mistake to assume that, satisfied with their contribution in the jazz field, Black Americans do not mean to achieve in other realms of art. The late Charles Cameron White, Black composer and past president of the National Association of Negro Musicians, wrote: "The sum of accomplishments is but an imperfect indication of what the black race is capable of in America" (*Etude*, 42:305-306). The Black musician, however fortunate she or he may be, does have a much harder struggle than the white musician. By demonstrating the genuine value of much music written by Black composers, perhaps we can solve the problem of the Black community's unconscious boycott of classical music and the white community's attitude concerning Black composers and their music. True, it is difficult enough for white classical composers to get a hearing, but for Black composers it becomes almost impossible. T.J. Anderson, a contemporary Black composer, says: "As far as whites go, blacks are good jazz musicians, but the classical tradition is reserved for whites" (*Newsweek*, 83:82)—and one might add "for men." This may be one reason the Fifth Annual Workshop on Afro-American Music was devoted to the role of Black women in music. The workshop, held in Atlanta in January 1976, focused on the careers of four Black women composers who "have made notable contributions to the American musical scene." Florence B. Price and her student Margaret Bonds were two of these four women.

Florence Beatrice Price (née Smith) was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on April 9, 1888. She graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1906, where she studied with George W. Chadwick and Frederick S. Converse. She continued her studies in Chicago, and settled there permanently in 1927 after marrying Thomas J. Price, a lawyer, in 1912. Her studies included work at the Chicago Musical College, American Conservatory of Music, Chicago Teacher's College, and University of Chicago. It was also in Chicago that Price became the teacher and colleague of Margaret Bonds.

As a composer, Price's compositions involve many different media. Though she is probably best remembered for her arrangement of "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord," perhaps her most important work is her Symphony in E-minor. With this symphony, she became "the first black woman in the United States to win recognition as a composer," according to Raoul Abdul (*Blacks in Classical Music*) and Eileen Southern (*The Music of Black Ameri-*

cans: A History). It was awarded the first prize of \$500 in the 1932 Rodman Wanamaker Music Composition Contest. Her symphony was introduced by Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Century of Progress World's Fair on June 15, 1933, making it the second symphony by a Black American composer to be premiered by a major American orchestra (the first was William Grant Still's symphony, played by the Rochester Symphony Orchestra in 1931). The *Chicago Daily News* reported: "It is a faultless work, a work that speaks its own message with restraint and yet with passion... [It is] worthy of a place in the regular symphonic repertory." Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed the symphony several times following its première.

Price was a pianist as well as a composer. She was invited to play at a concert sponsored by the Friends of Music at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Alain Locke (*The Negro and His Music*) says Price was one of the outstanding Blacks in the category of American native-born and native-trained musical talent; she was also one of the few Blacks given the honor of being invited to play with a large symphony orchestra. This honor came in 1932 when Price was asked to perform her concerto with Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at Orchestra Hall, Chicago. In 1934, when Margaret Bonds performed Price's concerto with the Women's Symphony Orchestra, the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* reported: "It is full of fine melodies... the piano part was expertly set upon the keyboard."

Price's death in 1953 leaves us with incomplete information about her life (more information may be found in an article by Barbara Garvey Jackson in *Black Perspectives in Music*, 5:1). The following is a partial listing of her compositions:

- Orchestra*
- Symphony in E-Minor
- Concert Overture on Negro Spirituals
- Symphonic Tone Poem
- Violin Concerto No. 2
- Piano Concerto (in one movement)
- Ethiopia's Shadow in America (1932 Wanamaker Honorable Mention)
- Fantasie Negre (based on two spirituals; recently reduced to a two-piano form and interpreted in dance by Katherine Dunham)
- Piano*
- Piano Fantasie No. 4 (1932 Wanamaker Honorable Mention)
- Sonata in E-minor (1932 Wanamaker Honorable Mention)
- At the Cotton Gin (1928 prize from G. Schirmer)
- Cotton Dance (1931 Wanamaker Honorable Mention)
- Vocal*
- In the Land 'O Cotton (1925 Holstein second prize)
- Memories of Dixieland (1927 Holstein second prize)
- My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord (recorded by Leontyne Price)
- Songs to the Dark Virgin (text by Langston Hughes; introduced by Marian Anderson)
- Other*
- Negro Folksongs for Counterpoint (for string quartet)
- Little Negro Dances (for chorus and orchestra)

J. K. Thompson is a graduate student in music at Kansas City Conservatory.
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CLARINET

10"

12"

6"

8"

7"

4"

5"

8"

TROMBONE

8"

5"

6"

9"

10"

12"

8"

7"

Daria Semegen. III Movement from *Jeux des Quatres*, for B-flat clarinet, trombone, violoncello, and piano. 1970.

Once More, With Feeling

Daria Semegen

Someone asks, "Why do you compose music?"

Perhaps because I am perpetually curious about what will happen when various sounds are arranged together in certain ways; perhaps because it is interesting to deal with time as a working space. Because I feel like it. Indubitably, it is possible to add intellectual, philosophical, and other high-minded reasons which would betray a background in academia and the reading of dictionaries on rainy days.

The encounter with music as a creative means of expression came relatively early in life. Age seven was crucial, since my first piano lesson taught me that some sounds could be stored on paper via notation and could be rearranged in the manner of building blocks to create different

shades of emotional expression with seemingly endless variation. The impact of this revelation was, in subsequent years, to be the bane of several devoted piano teachers whose student would rather subscribe to the "write your own" idea of music than spend seemingly endless hours practicing that written by others. Did the world really need another less-than-perfect rendition of Mr. Thompson's Third Piano Study or Chopin's magnificent F Major Ballade? With all due admiration for my performer colleagues whose patience, art, and skill I have always admired with amazement, my answer was a flat "no." (May those with perfect pitch forgive me.)

The musical boredom of early piano studies contributed

CELLO

PIANO

Each player plays the first vertical column of four time blocks and then proceeds to the next column of four time blocks, playing each in sequence from top to bottom. Then all eight time blocks are to be repeated once, in any sequence, at random—depending on the preference of the individual player.

Although players should begin together with the first time block, it is not necessary to begin or end any time block together after this point. The score is available from: Composers Facsimile Edition, 170 West 74th St., NY, NY 10023. © 1971 Daria Semegen. All rights reserved.

immensely to the necessity to create something more interesting and challenging to play and listen to. From this childhood impression grew an ever-present awareness that as a composer I am the first listener to my own music, and beyond the myriad possibilities of cerebral compositional intrigues and musical theories, the actual physical sound and the listener's own personal response to it are what really count the most. This is my real link with the world as a composer in the most intangible and abstract art, which cannot be seen or touched but exists as invisible sound waves reaching the listener in an arcane and subtle communication.

Music as color and texture, gesture, and expression rendered in sound has analogous counterparts in the visual arts, in multimedia work, in dance, theater, and poetry. Ideas and inspiration garnered from the perception and appreciation of other art forms are indispensable. Through their own unique communication they provide the dimension, perspective, and understanding which revitalize my own work and enhance aesthetic sensibility. Sometimes my

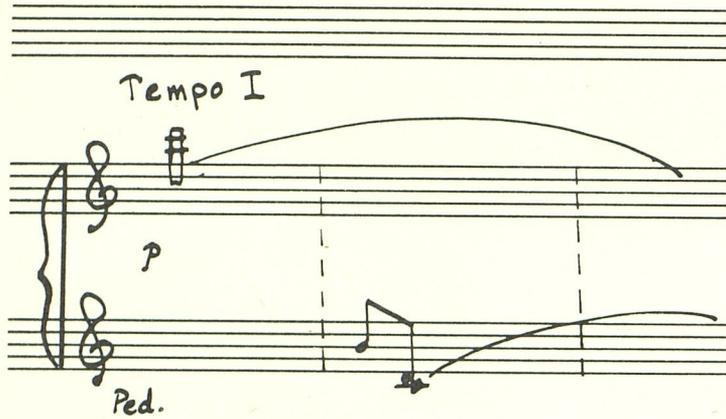
working methods in musical composition are closely related to other art forms. The chance element in several of my works is akin to a similar device found within an intricate three-dimensional mobile which retains the essential ratio of its parts, moving randomly within their assigned spaces, creating varied shapes, articulating the total space. Precise, defined lines, sweeping gestures, and stark, contrasting expressions of a solo violin work may reflect similar qualities found in a pen and ink drawing.

As a composer of both instrumental and electronic music, I am especially aware of technology's contribution to extend the timbre possibilities of orchestration without overshadowing the unique timbre and idiom of each acoustic instrument. I find these new tools cannot change or solve the perplexing compositional problems often encountered in creating a new work whose ultimate purpose is to communicate with my audience, once more, with feeling.

Daria Semegen is on the music faculty of SUNY at Stony Brook, Long Island. © 1980 Daria Semegen

Letters from a Composer

Lynn Wilson



July 25, 1978

Well, it has been fifteen days now since I started my great journey to myself as a composer. I must confess it has been wonderful and also "blah." I have a tendency to ride myself very hard when I am not producing up to what I consider my capabilities—I expect consistent High Performance from myself. When my emotions or physical side suddenly rear their heads (collectively or separately) it requires all of my self-knowledge to respect these parts of me—to give myself room to not be consistent—and to mother myself. And so the last six days have been spent battling myself about my inability (or unwillingness) to produce the next measures of my sonata for cello and piano. I have had to look at the most recent section and understand the deserved criticism from my teacher for unidiomatic writing for piano. I have just recently begun to understand the weaknesses of my melodies and am finally learning skills to overcome my tendency to take a melody sailing downwards without a thought to balance and coming to cadence in both cello and piano at the same time always—in other words frequent starts and stops—which detract from a stream.

At my premature enthusiasm at finding that I can now write an idea that can go on for measures at a time and express a sense of unity and cohesiveness, I lost track of what my piano is capable of doing. I have been studying Bartok's String Quartets for the first time in my life (pause for post-orgasmic sigh!) and have been so taken by his exquisite and tasteful counterpoint that I decided I would do that with piano in answer to my cello melody. Well, it was boring—and it's been difficult to rewrite. I hope I haven't bored you by going on and on about my writing process but, as it's the most important thing happening in my creative life right now, I thought I'd at least try to share it with another musician. Tell me what you think—perhaps you are reminded of your own process in writing and I am curious as to how you deal with stalemates in your writing—or if all flows as a stream for you.

September 25, 1978

The latest update from the West Coast encampment includes tales of three composition teachers interested in me as a student (I should have such lovely *dreams!*). I have decided, after asking all three about their familiarity with sketching, to go with Ruth Still (she is based at Immaculate College), a Juliard grad who spent a summer with Nadia B. in Paris about five years ago studying sketching. Ruth has plans to give me lots of exercises so that I become more familiar with handling different idioms—quartal/quintal harmony, synthetic scales, etc.—as well as having me use different forms and moods with emphasis on my learning how to use sketching to the best advantage for me. I respond well to strong organizational skills in a teacher—particularly if I see an obtainable goal in the not too distant future.

These letters were written by Lynn Wilson to Jeannie Pool, after they met at the Fifth National Women's Music Festival in Champaign, Illinois, in 1978. At 30 Lynn had just decided to quit her career ladder job as a social worker and to pursue her passion—music—and particularly her ambition to become a composer.

October 5, 1978

I had my first composition lesson with Ruth Still—I think this arrangement of studying with her is going to work out quite fine. She is very specific in her critical analysis of my "Cello and Piano." A major part of her attractiveness to me as a teacher is that she knows what she is looking for, has the expertise to evaluate the effectiveness of my technique, and can clearly describe what it is I've done that has or hasn't worked. Her assignment to me was to take the first two measures of the piano (which hold the germ of most of the movement's content), see how many transformations I can come up with—to write and not censor myself while working with the early ideas—and then analyze what I come up with. With this material I should have much more to choose from in revising an early section of the movement (which does not work well at this point). Her overall first impression is that I have fine, creative ideas and that my technique is not advanced enough to support and expose them in their best light. Funny—that was my evaluation too—why else would I be looking for someone to help me learn to sketch? I came back home and started on it—I can't express to you how exposed and vulnerable I feel putting all my ideas down. She doesn't want me to erase anything! I simply bracket what I would change and go on.

January 2, 1979

I have just been sitting here, propped up in bed with an Xmas gift—reading a bio of a photographer, Gertrude Käsebier. I was struck by how old she was when she first recognized that her medium was photography—she was 40! She lived from 1852-1934. According to this life sketch she did not begin to receive a great deal of attention until 1897. I suddenly felt quite connected to her. I began to glance at other biographies in this collection of women photographers and the string that pulled all their lives together for me was the flash of recognizing the drive and conviction—perhaps more—the giving of oneself over to what is more important than just about anything (once the priorities arrange themselves in proper perspective), the communicating of self to self (and to others) in the most creatively skillful way one possibly can. It was then that I remembered your encouraging me to read biographies of other women composers. I remember not being terribly drawn to your suggestion at that time. Suddenly I am ready to learn from them...

My music is going to be wonderful in three to five years. Right now my technique needs so much attention. I am so scattered that I can barely get through a page with any kind of symmetry or sense of organization that pleases me. My teacher is exactly right in having me concentrate on counterpoint—until I can organize a decent melody *consistently*, how can I begin to think of a movement, much less an entire work? Although I have not entirely abandoned the cello sonata, she is on hold for a few weeks.

February 28, 1979

I'm in such a different place with my career from you. It seems like it will be centuries before I feel ready to spread my name around the country. Counterpoint is slow, grueling work. Occasionally I have my days when I see the fruits of my work—when the lines flow and the interweaving of parts comes with ease. More often, however, I want to climb walls from the task I have set before me.

I am struggling with the ending of this damned medley for women's chorus. Two more lines to set. My part writing improves near the end of the medley. My counterpoint study is showing. . . I am gaining a solid understanding of melody writing and line against line which I firmly believe will be invaluable to me as I write for larger groupings of instruments. My studies are geared to teach me how to think in longer spans—organize ideas so that they are under *my* control rather than the other way around. I want my ideas to work in union with my creative spirit—rather than having to wrestle them to the floor every time I want to write something.

April 13, 1979

I find it very important to be playing piano *regularly*. While my main focus is composition, there is something about connecting with the rite of playing—playing other people's music—that helps keep my appreciation fresh for how wonderful this world is and how fortunate we are (I am) to have music flowing through it.

Good news—I have made a commitment to myself that the Bennington Composer's conference is an important addition to my education.

May 8, 1979

I'm furiously trying to finish three short pieces for clarinet to send to Bennington. I have no other current samples of my work. I'm aware that when the money for scholarships goes, it's gone, but I'm moving as fast as my creative subconscious will let me.

Flash: I started eight weeks of flute lessons (private) last Saturday with a Julliard/Julius Baker grad. I'm also dividing my one-hour lesson in conducting in half now, half voice, half conducting. I want a chorus, but it looks unrealistic until I return from the East in August. I've started to conduct my latest arrangement (*Workin' Girl Blues* by Hazel Dickens) with the chorus but it's not exactly Palestrina! They are starting to feel burned out. We have so much music left to learn—even with assigning one of my medley songs, the second fugue of Kosse's *The Return of the Great Mother*, and part of Bernice Reagon's *Joanne Little* to a small group that sight reads. Ah well, without these little life challenges I suppose it would be mighty dull.

May 29, 1979

I spent an hour or so yesterday at the UCLA Music Library looking at scores by Berio, Penderecki, Badings, Ligeti—and for the first time I felt quite connected with contemporary notational techniques. I was able to see that my goal was not to use these techniques simply to be associated with 20th-century music, but rather to absorb (through my pores, if possible) these modes of communicating, so that I can then pull from me what I want to say. The vocabulary will simply facilitate my writing music that has not been written before.

July 4, 1979 (from Bennington)

Just got out of class. We discussed form—structure, harmony, notation, tension—elements we will need for our chamber piece. She wants to see a sketch tomorrow. I finished my flute piece this morning—24 hours on one composition—that's unbelievable for me! Of course, I want to look at it some more; the climax bothers me. I want feedback tomorrow from my teacher and the rest of the class on it. I feel a need to look and listen to many things to see how tension is built up.

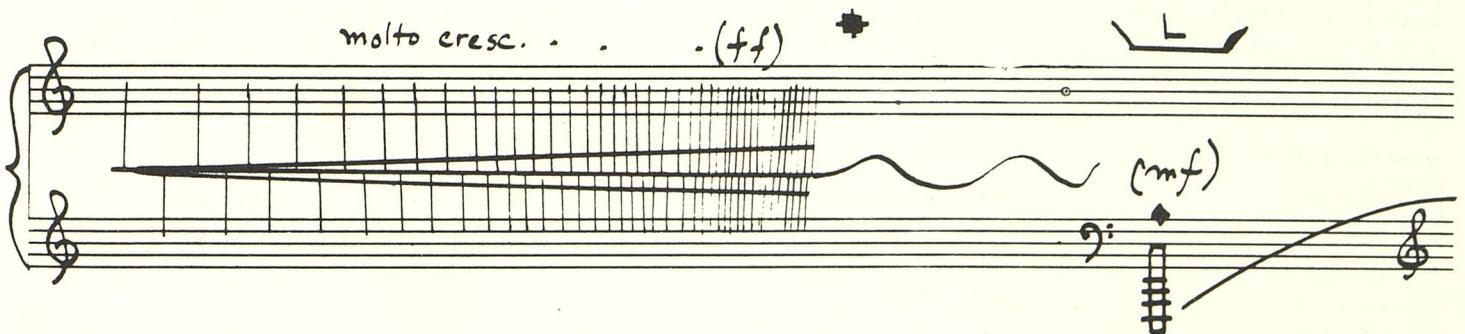
Writing a lot gives me the experience of growing more familiar with *how* I write. I'm trusting my ideas more than I ever have (I don't have much choice, given the deadline pressures here) but I'm having far less fear that I won't *like* my ideas. Rather, it's becoming "What am I doing to discover about myself during this writing session?" I'm braver—willing to risk this chamber piece even though there are so many technical things I don't know and in many ways I don't think I'm ready to attempt it. I suppose I need to write it just in order to find out *exactly* what areas I need to concentrate on in learning to write for groups of instruments. I could spend forever preparing and having a vague sense of not being ready and only knowing vaguely why.

July 18, 1979

Well, here it is—hot off the presses—my solo flute piece. Finally I've written something using only one idea. Development—sometimes I sense there are whole huge areas I can't yet bring out of me, that I don't know yet how to tap into many of the ways I can make my ideas grow. Our teacher, who is from Poland, uses this expression: "Your motive, your idea, melody—should be constantly growing up."

Lynn Wilson is a composer and pianist who lives and studies music in West Los Angeles, Cal. She is currently writing a series of Preludes for Piano.

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Lynn Wilson. *Preludes for Piano*. © 1980

MY PERSONAL APPROACH TO MUSIC

Beth Anderson

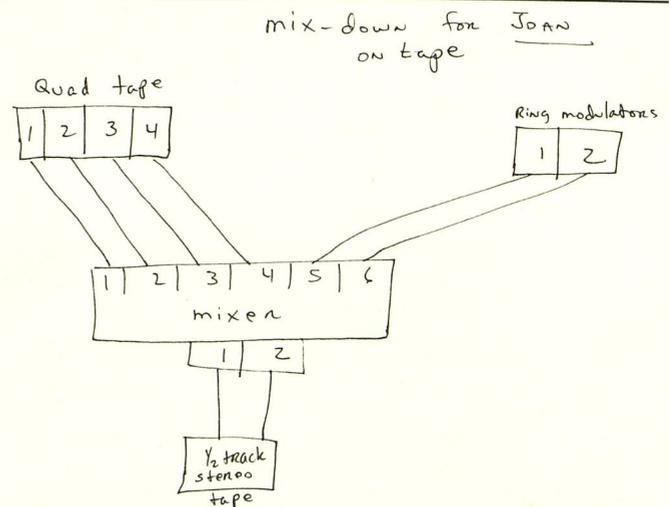
When I first considered myself to be a composer (at age 10), music seemed to be primarily about writing down inspirations—in what I was told was an infinitely repeatable form. By 15, I had discovered serialism (a much more left-brain way of arriving at a composition). Although I no longer work with serialist methods, I still use their relatives—puzzles and numbers and repeating codes or games. In college I fell in love with the ideas and music of John Cage, and soon after that, with the music and personal image of Pauline Oliveros. These two composers have been co-rulers in my aesthetic life up until very recently, and as a result (or was it a simultaneity?) my work opened up and became a more experimental acoustic and electronic form of music. It has been reviewed as being a “new music of a decidedly non-academic experimental, post-Cagian sort.” (John Rockwell, *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1975, p. 80).

Now what does that mean, and why did I choose to make this kind of music instead of folk-rock or new wave or avant-garde jazz? I know that—given my life experiences (way of making a living, sexuality, values, politics, morals, education, class, race) plus whatever talent or soul I have—this is what I have come up with. I think that when composers are developing a style, they don't consciously decide what kind of music they are going to write. They simply make the music, and whatever comes out is theirs. By the time I got around to having friends who were in rock bands, for example, I had developed a more abstract aesthetic. I tried to play in a band and even wrote a few songs in that direction, but it didn't feel like the right path for me.

About seven years ago at Mills College in California, a group of women musicians organized Hysteresis. We performed each other's music and shared our electronic equipment with each other. We made an impact on the community, but the real explosion took place inside of us. In this group I found support and cooperation and a new sense of self-respect, belonging, and direction. The creation of this union had a strong effect on my musical ideas, as well. The mystical-political concept that 4 is the most feminine of the feminine numbers (a double duple) influenced the number of players in my ensemble, *Peachy Keen-o*. Numerological methods of arriving at decisions led me to decide which instruments to use in *Tulip Clause*: only the ones whose names added up to feminine, that is, even numbers. Since letters could be transformed into numbers, I realized that words could become pitches. So I decoded a portion of Gertrude Stein's *Q.E.D* to arrive at pitches for the two violins and voice, which created the feeling of the three characters involved in her text. Since Ms. Stein chose to veil her true meaning, I put part of a text by Kathy Acker (whose meaning was similar but overt) underneath the acoustic material. I felt a great

strength in the combination of Gertrude, Kathy, and myself—and called the music *She Wrote*.

I had become so political in my approach to composition that I went in search of historical and living heroines to “collaborate” with and to celebrate. In 1973 I made an opera (*Queen Christina*) about the lesbian queen of Sweden. The women's community in the San Francisco Bay Area was invited, and a contingent of very political women (apparently not interested in “experimental, post-Cagian” music) came and then left in protest.



Beth Anderson. Mix-down for *Joan* on tape. 1974.

It was a disappointment to me that the people I felt close to politically would not necessarily support my aesthetic output.

In 1974 I was commissioned to make a work for the Cabrillo Music Festival in Aptos, California, and I chose to make an oratorio (*Joan*) on the life of Joan of Arc. The coding procedure from *She Wrote* was used in *Joan*, but by then I had discovered that codes could modulate, not from key to key, but from seven notes to six to five to four to three to two to a one-note code in which all the letters of the alphabet would be deciphered as one pitch. *Joan* was a big piece for full orchestra, divided into five parts and spread over the hall in the form of a cross, four singers (representatives of the knights, the clergy, Joan, and the saints), one dancer on high scaffolding (representing the peasants), 19-channel live mix with live electronics, quad tape, and lighting cues in place of a conductor. The text this time came from the English translation of the Old French translation of the original documentation of her trial in the fifteenth century. It is interesting to see how a support group such as Hysteresis can influence one's choice of text/topic/instrument/compositional method.

The People Rumble Louder Than The Poet Speaks.
 People Rumble Louder Than The Poet Speaks The.
 The Rumble Louder Than The Poet Speaks The.
 Rumble Louder Than The Poet Speaks People The.
 Rumble The People Louder Than The Poet Speaks.
 Louder The People Rumble Poet Than Speaks The.
 People The Rumble Louder Speaks Than Poet The.
 Louder Rumble Poet The Speaks The People Than.

The People The Rumble; Rumble Louder, People Louder.
 People Rumble, Rumble Louder. the, the, the Rumble.
 Rumble Louder Louder Louder Than People, People Rumble-Poet.
 Louder Than Than The Louder Rumble Louder The...
 Than The The Poet Than Poet Speaks Speaks.
 The Poet Poet Speaks The Than Than The...
 Poet Speaks Speaks People Poe+ Speaks Poet-People
 Speaks The People The Speaks The The Than...

Beth Anderson. *The People Rumble Louder*. 1975.

Six months later I moved to New York City. I no longer had a group with which to work, nor a studio for electronic manipulation or recording, nor a community of idealistic and talented performers who were interested in performing new music for little or no fee. New York forced me to think smaller, tighter, lighter, cheaper, and in a more focused way. I once asked an audience, "What transports and sets up easily, requires no performers other than the artist, little equipment, if any, and costs nothing?" and the reply was, "New York art."

I had worked in text-sound before I moved, and in spite of the fact that I believed that recording equipment was vital for production, I decided to make text-sound without the splices. The genre uses a text as the sounding material of the music, and because of that, anyone who can speak can perform it. This solved the problems of the studio and the performers, but sacrificed my interest in pitched ensemble music.

At this point, the relationship of feminism to my work and the evolution of the form of my music are in violent flux. Recently I made a suite of fully notated music for skating rink, using violin and cello primarily, with some voice and electric bass near the end. The pitches and rhythms were derived, by coding, from definitions of the word "skate," but the overall sound is something I might describe as minimalist-neo-Baroque. (This was not made

for a rink on disco night!) I continue to write songs and text-sounds for myself and for the audience, and to use tape when studio time becomes available.

Even two years ago, the *New York Times* (May 16, 1978, p. 42) was using my "overt concern with my identity as a woman" as an excuse to dismiss the music. In the next year, I tried to erase that part of myself in the hope that the sound would be more likely to penetrate a listener biased in that way. During this phase I felt very disconnected from myself and my older work.

Then, a New York performance space, the Kitchen, gave me a wonderful opportunity to heal myself when it did *not* include my work in its festival of new music. I decided that since criticism had affected my composition and since the established critics could not review this music fully due to space limitations, I would become a critic for the duration of the festival and edit a daily xeroxed edition, *Report from the Front*. Out of this hectic experience, I have rediscovered a sense of belonging and have begun to see how my music might change again. The instability of aesthetic is a sign of growth. I no longer fear being eclectic or political—it's part of my approach to music.

Beth Anderson, a composer and a critic, co-edits *Ear* magazine.
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Ruth Crawford Seeger

A Study in Mixed Accents

Barbara Jepson

In looking at the work of Ruth Crawford, it is important to consider two integrally related aspects—the avant-garde composer and the folk song collector-editor. The article below by Barbara Jepson provides insight into Crawford's musical training and her innovative compositions. The article on the facing page by Karen M. Cardullo details Crawford's work in American folk music. Together they suggest a full portrait of this important musical woman.



Ruth Crawford Seeger

In 1930, Ruth Crawford became the first woman to receive a Guggenheim fellowship in composition. Today, along with innovators like Charles Ives and Carl Ruggles, she is considered one of the truly avant-garde composers of the early 20th century. Her works utilized techniques such as tone clustering, *Sprechstimme*, serialization of rhythm and other elements of composition besides pitch, expressive silence, and spatial separation of performing groups (see glossary)—techniques commonplace in the music of the post-1950 serialists but unusual and experimental in her own time.

Crawford's life was as full of the unexpected as her music. Well on the road to artistic maturity with her *String Quartet* in 1931, she virtually stopped composing in 1933, shortly after the birth of her first child. Because she and musicologist Charles Seeger ultimately had four children, it seems reason-

Barbara Jepson covers classical music for *Washington Market Review*. Her articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *High Fidelity/Musical America*, *Music Journal*, *Feminist Art Journal*, and *New York Arts Journal*. © 1980 Barbara Jepson

able to assume that the combined responsibilities of motherhood and housekeeping simply made composing impossible for the next 18 years. However, closer examination of her life reveals a more complex explanation.

Ruth Crawford was born in East Liverpool, Ohio, in 1901. Her father was a Methodist minister; her mother, the daughter of a Methodist minister. The family lived on modest means and moved frequently from parsonage to parsonage throughout the U.S. Ruth was the younger of the two Crawford children; her brother Carl was five years her senior.

Her father, whom Crawford remembered as a warm, cheerful person with a strong interest in people,¹ died after four years of illness when she was 13. Her mother, whose own upbringing had been incredibly rigid (she was not allowed to grow flowers because they couldn't be eaten²), played an important role in her daughter's musical and personal development. An independent woman, Clara Graves Crawford had left her own parents at the age of 16 to "prove a claim" in Colorado with her older brother. With the proceeds, she bought a pump organ. Later she became one of the first women stenographers, and bought the Sohmer piano on which her daughter practiced as a child. Crawford remembered her first introduction to that piano vividly:

On my sixth birthday. . . my mother did two things. She took me out on the front porch with great mystery, brought out her sewing basket, and gave me my first lesson darning socks. Later she took my hand to lead me down the street to another surprise. This she did with a sort of mixture of solemnity and triumph, for it represented something she had wanted and been deprived of all during her childhood. She took me to my first piano lesson.³

Ruth Crawford's musical ability developed quickly. After graduation from high school, she supported herself by heading the music department in a settlement kindergarten and teaching piano at the School of Musical Art in Jacksonville, Florida, where her family was living at the time.

At the age of 20, Crawford entered the American Conservatory in Chicago with just enough money saved for a year away from home. In subsequent years, she earned her tuition by working as an usher and coat checker in theaters on the "Loop," and by teaching piano and theory in the Chicago area. The nine years Crawford spent at the conservatory working toward her Master's degree were significant; she spent those years seriously pursuing music at an age when most of her female contemporaries were pursuing husbands.

Several events occurred during this time which were to greatly affect her future. First, as early as her second year at school, Crawford's interest began to shift from performance to composition. Studies in harmony, counterpoint and composition with the German-American composer Adolf Weidig were

(continued on p. 40)

Ruth Crawford Seeger was one of the first composers involved in American folk music. To date, a few articles have been written about her as a composer of 20th-century avant-garde music. But she also spent 20 years of her life working with varied facets of folk music, bringing to this activity her gifts as a skilled craftswoman. Her commitment to folk music followed the tide of interest as it swelled from the narrow hold of the academic community to national awareness and appreciation.

In the 1920s, Ruth was active in a group of composers and musicians who met at the home of Djane Lavoie-Herz to discuss and perform contemporary compositions. There she became friends with Alfred Frankenstein, who later introduced her to Carl Sandburg. It was Sandburg who introduced her, from a poet's perspective, to folk song, and he strengthened her already-existing social and political consciousness.

Sandburg asked Ruth and other members of the Chicago music community to assist in transcribing folk tunes and composing piano accompaniments for his book *The American Songbag*.¹ Published in 1927, this book was a collection of songs, ballads, and short pieces, chosen with the taste of the public in mind. Many of these songs had been discovered by Sandburg on his lecture tours throughout the United States (he often ended his lecture with a concert of American folk songs).

Sandburg's book (and the beginning of Ruth Crawford's involvement) came at a time when the American public was becoming interested in exploring and preserving its cultural heritage. A wave of collections appeared, aimed at popularizing the American folk tradition. Sandburg became, as Ruth later did, part of the network of people responsible for stimulating this trend.

Anglo-American folk song scholarship developed in the early 1900s under the leadership of Professor George Lyman Kittredge at Harvard University. Kittredge and other professors interested in collecting folklore sent students and informants into the field. Scholars studied the ballad texts and not the tunes; they emphasized the literary, anthropological, and sociological components of the ballad. This narrow academic focus on the text was soon altered by the work of

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Phillips Barry. He investigated all aspects of traditional songs: tune, text, performance, and transmission.

The 1920s witnessed a national folk revival. This interest in American folk heritage flowered during the next decade. The study of folk song was no longer simply a comparison of ballad texts but an examination of what people liked to sing in their everyday lives. Folk festivals and popular books (like *The American Songbag*) told the American story from all walks of life.

Ruth Crawford and Charles Seeger, her husband, found their budding interest in folk music stimulated by the economic and political conditions of the early 1930s. The Depression and the developing war in Europe augmented the urge to collect and preserve American tradition. Artists and musicians in New York City began to embrace the traditional arts. Radio and phonograph recordings helped to spread this interest across the nation.

The first few years of the Seegers' marriage were plagued by financial difficulties. Jobs were scarce for musicians during the Depression. Ruth was not working and Charles took various freelance jobs tutoring and lecturing around New York City. He wrote articles for the *Daily Worker* and taught some courses in musicology at the New School for Social Research.

Ruth and Charles were politically active. At the invitation of Henry Cowell, they joined the Composers Collective of the Pierre Degeyter Club, a left-wing political group. Some of the composers were members of the Communist Party, and intellectuals, like the Seegers, who were not party members, gravitated to the party's orbit due to the prevailing socioeconomic conditions.

The Composers Collective's search for an ideal proletarian music coincided with the rising urban interest in folk song. The rural-industrial conflicts of the late 1920s and early 1930s were in part responsible for the introduction of traditional singers such as Aunt Molly Jackson, Jim Garland, and others from rural areas, to the New York left-wing intellectual community. These singers had a mission—to inform city dwellers about deprivation and terrorism, especially in the coal industry.

One night Aunt Molly Jackson sang to the members of the Composers Collective and told of the hard life, of the strikes and injustices in the coal-mining communities of Harlan, Kentucky. She was a traditional folk singer—an

(continued on p. 44)

Ruth Crawford Seeger

Preserving American Folk Music

Karen M. Cardullo



After an illustration by Barbara Cooney to Ruth Crawford Seeger's *Animal Folk Songs for Children* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1950).

(continued from p. 38)

fruitful, and several of her student compositions were performed and favorably reviewed.⁴

Second, she attended regular musical "salons" held in the home of Djané Lavoie-Herz, a well-known piano teacher, with whom Crawford studied. These "salons" brought together people interested in new music. In this way, Crawford became acquainted with many of the outstanding composers and musicians of her time: Henry Cowell, Edgard Varese, Carlos Chavez, Dane Rudhyar and Adolf Weiss, a Chicago Symphony bassoonist who had studied the twelve-tone system with Arnold Schoenberg.

Rudhyar became an early influence and mentor; it was he who introduced Crawford to the works and philosophy of Alexander Scriabin. (Later, in 1929, he recommended Crawford for the Guggenheim grant.⁵) Gradually the young composer was also exposed to works as diverse as those of Stravinsky, Milhaud and Vaughan Williams. Through art critic Alfred Frankenstein, another Herz regular, Crawford met Carl Sandburg. Sandburg became a lifelong friend, and Crawford used his poems almost exclusively in her vocal works. She even contributed some of the piano accompaniments to Sandburg's *The American Songbag*. Thus, her initial interest in folk music dates from her conservatory years, and not simply to her later involvement, along with her husband, in the Composers Collective.

Of everyone in the tiny Chicago music circle, Henry Cowell was to have the greatest impact on Crawford's life. From about 1923 to 1950, Cowell was a pivotal figure in new music circles. He actively promoted performances of avant-garde music and assisted young composers; his book *New Music Resources* was a compendium of hypothetical new music techniques which later stimulated composers like Pulitzer Prize winner Elliott Carter to experiment with procedures like metrical modulation.⁶

Cowell was the first to publish Crawford's work, choosing the last four of her nine *Piano Preludes* for inclusion in the October 1928 edition of *New Music Quarterly*. He probably encouraged her to come to New York after completing her studies at the conservatory. Once she arrived in 1929, he arranged for her to spend the winter with Mrs. Blanche Walton, a wealthy widow and music patron. Soon Crawford became acquainted with the New York music circle; among others, she met Carl Ruggles, Arturo Toscanini and Martha Graham.

Most important, Cowell persuaded Charles Seeger, his former teacher and a regular visitor at the Walton home, to take Crawford as a pupil. At first, Seeger resisted the idea; he had a low opinion of women composers which he expressed frequently.⁷ When Cowell showed him several of Crawford's compositions, he was extremely critical, calling them "undisciplined" and "lacking in form," although he admitted that "she was a good craftswoman, she could put notes together in a way of her own."⁸ But Cowell persisted, and finally Seeger agreed to give Crawford six trial lessons, to be paid for by Mrs. Walton. Charles Seeger remembered the first lesson this way:

Ruth came with this attitude: "I'm going to show this guy here." You see, she'd been brought up in the sticks of Chicago and wanted to come to New York. She gave up a profitable class of piano students to live on nothing but \$10.00 a month—that was all she could look forward to in the way of income in New York. But all you had to do was to challenge her and she could make up her resolve....

At the end of the first lesson, Mrs. Walton tapped on the door and said that supper was ready. Nothing happened. She knocked a little louder. Still nothing happened. Finally she said plaintively, "Supper's spoiling." Well, that was about half an hour overtime, so we broke up.⁹

The lessons continued to the satisfaction of both parties. Charles Seeger and Ruth Crawford had opposite, but complementary, personalities: Seeger, son of a wealthy, "very correct" New England family, was once described as "five feet of ice and ten feet of books,"¹⁰ while Crawford radiated an extraordinary warmth and interest which put people immediately at ease. Despite their personality differences, teacher and student apparently had remarkably similar ideas about what was lacking in the music of their time. They felt that the music of the early serialists tended to be too diffuse and incomprehensible in its organization for the intelligent listener to understand without the use of elaborate theories and detailed program notes.¹¹ Schoenberg's twelve-tone system fascinated Crawford but, like Seeger, she found it too rigid in actual practice.

Charles Seeger had, however, developed a procedure called dissonant counterpoint, in which seven or eight pitches, or tones, are used before the original pitch is repeated. He also felt that the longer a composer could keep a melodic line from coming to a cadence—a feeling of pause or ending—the more skill was involved.¹² Seeger's initial work with Crawford focused on having her write single-line melodies "purified" of consonances. *Piano Study in Mixed Accents* (1929) is a fascinating example of this procedure; it also gives the performer the option of using three different dynamic patterns, and its second half is, with minor variants, a retrograde version of the first half.

Seeger's theoretical concepts, particularly his dissonant counterpoint, influenced Crawford considerably from 1929 to 1932, but she utilized these concepts in her own individual way. Seeger's skepticism about teaching her quickly disappeared. Several years later, in his chapter on Crawford for *American Composers on American Music*, he wrote: "One can find only a few men among American composers who are as uncompromising and successfully radical."¹³

Crawford's favorite instrumental medium was the chamber ensemble, and her two orchestral scores are for small orchestra. Her concern for musical organization is evident even in early compositions like the nine impressionistic, Scriabin-influenced *Piano Preludes* (1924–1928) or the *Suite for Small Orchestra* (1926). These works show important features of her mature music, despite their experimental and somewhat derivative nature. For example, in the first movement of the latter, three rhythmic ostinati (repeated patterns) in the piano, cellos and violins act as a form-building device over which the winds and then the strings play lyrical melodies. Later works similarly use some component of the music vocabulary—rhythm, texture, motive, pitch, interval (the distance between pitches) or dynamic plan (relative degrees of loudness or softness) as a form-building device, but in a more tightly controlled manner. And while the early works are written in a chromatic or atonal idiom characteristic of the Post-Romantics, from about 1930 on Crawford placed increasing emphasis on serial technique, though never in the rigid manner employed by Schoenberg or his followers.

One of Crawford's most unusual works is the set of three songs, "Rat Riddles," "In Tall Grass" and "Prayers of Steel," based on Sandburg poems. Pitch, rests, rhythm and vibrato are

Music from Ruth Crawford, *In Tall Grass* (poem by Carl Sandburg). © 1932 Ruth Crawford. © 1933 New Music Edition. By permission of Theodore Presser Co.

serialized, and retrograde motion is used. The composer directs the musicians to play "as high as possible," since the notated pitches are guides only, with the actual pitches of the sliding glissandi used relatively freely in the third song.¹⁴ The songs also call for a concertante of voice, oboe, percussion and piano, and two ostinato groups—one of strings, the other of winds—to be seated as far as possible from the soloists.

In a 1974 interview with Rita Mead, Charles Seeger claimed that "the idea for the ostinati in the orchestra" was his; Crawford recopied her scores on music paper ruled expressly for this purpose.¹⁵ Since Crawford's notes for the three songs specify that the concertante is complete in itself, and since many of the changes between the manuscript version of the score and that published by New Music Edition concern either the reduction or elaboration of the delicate, unobtrusive ostinato parts, the remark seems plausible enough. Still it is curious that Seeger waited until the age of 87 to mention his contribution. He never referred to it in the detailed discussion of these three songs that appears in his chapter on Crawford in *American Composers on American Music*. In any case, both the spatial separation of performing groups and the use of notated pitches only as guides are techniques which gained general currency only after the Second World War; Crawford completed the last of the songs in 1932.

Crawford's highly regarded *String Quartet* (1931), with its "prophetic fourth movement containing a remarkable adumbration of the compositional procedure known as 'total organization,' in which each parameter of music is systematically related to all others,"¹⁶ was written during the year of European travel made possible by the Guggenheim fellowship. During that year, Crawford visited Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Paris and Munich, and she had long conversations with Béla Bartók, Alban Berg and Maurice Ravel, among others. Crawford recognized the quartet as her best effort; the reason she cites gives an important insight into her personality and also sheds some light on her subsequent cessation of composing:

I am sure that the work I did during this time was by far the best I had done—a fact which I attribute not so much to Europe itself (though the experience abroad was invaluable to me in a general sort of way) as to the *financial freedom to work* [italics mine] and to the natural course of my growth.¹⁷

Even today, with more commissions and grants available to American composers than ever before, few are able to support themselves without supplementing their incomes via teaching, performing or other activities. The chances of any composer, particularly a woman composer of avant-garde music, succeeding in this regard during the Depression and war years were so minimal as to be ridiculous. In Crawford's case, as we will see, economic circumstances, increasing involvement in folk music and the advent of marriage and family combined to hinder her work.

She and Seeger were married shortly after her return from Europe to New York in 1931. They moved into what Martha Beck, a colleague and friend, remembers as a "modest apartment—all they could afford at the time."¹⁸ Beck recalls asking Crawford why she didn't move to Chicago, where she could get a good-paying teaching job at the American Conservatory.

"My God, I wouldn't think of it," replied Crawford. "I'd rather starve in New York than go back to Chicago."¹⁹

During this period Crawford (she continued to compose under her family name) kept writing music. She completed the third of the above-mentioned songs, and, in 1932, she wrote

Two Ricercari, songs for voice and piano set to poems by H.T. Tsiang. The first song, "Sacco, Vanzetti," dealt with the trial of these two Italian-Americans, widely believed to be innocent, who were executed for the murder of a guard during a robbery. The second, "Chinaman, Laundryman," dealt with the exploitation of Chinese immigrants. Crawford used the *Sprechstimme* style of vocal delivery, and directed that the clarity of the words was more important than exact pitch. These songs, though less successful musically than other mature works, reflect her concern for minorities and involvement in a group called the Composers Collective, which attempted (generally unsuccessfully) to connect music to the economic situation.

Composer Vivian Fine, who studied with Crawford in Chicago during the 1920s and subsequently kept in touch with her in New York, describes the changing climate in avant-garde music circles during the Depression:

Life became very tough economically, and you saw widespread misery. The idea was to communicate, to transform society with political and social ideas. In this, there was no room for the avant-garde. Ruth's *Two Ricercari*, which I heard performed, was an attempt to hold onto that, and then she stopped writing. It wasn't because of the kids, or anything like that.²⁰

About this time Crawford and Seeger, who were introduced to the Composers Collective by Cowell, were intrigued by folk songs of protest they heard sung at Collective meetings, and by recordings of folk songs and transcriptions of Southern, white spirituals which subsequently came to their attention. Years earlier, Seeger had attempted unsuccessfully to relate "concert" music to socioeconomic conditions. Folk songs suddenly seemed to offer a possible solution: here was music that focused on everyday joys, sorrows and struggles rather than on abstract mathematical concepts, and the simple melodies often shared certain characteristics of dissonant counterpoint. Together the Seegers decided to put aside their interest in what seemed like an increasingly elite "concert" music, to investigate folk music further.

In 1933, the first of the Seegers' four children was born; the remaining three followed in 1935, 1937 and 1943.²¹ In 1935, Charles Seeger became a technical advisor with the Resettlement Administration in Washington, D.C., so the family left New York—and new music circles—for Silver Spring, Maryland. With the exception of *Rissolty Rossolty* (1941), a short work for small orchestra based on three folk tunes, Crawford stopped composing in 1933 until about 1951. According to Charles Seeger, "Ruth stopped composing concert music in 1932 [sic] partly because of our joint 'discovery' of Anglo-American folk music and partly because she was entirely occupied with her four children."²²

Although raising four children undoubtedly took up a great deal of Crawford's time and energy, she was "entirely occupied" with her children for only a few short years. In 1936, when her oldest child was three, she began transcribing what ultimately amounted to over a thousand field recordings of folk songs from the Archives of American Folk Song in the Library of Congress, playing and replaying some of them a hundred times.²³ Michael Seeger, the eldest child, recalls that his mother spent "quite a bit of time with earphones on, transcribing songs from scratchy aluminum records behind a locked door where she was just *not to be interrupted*."²⁴

As the children grew older, they helped perform household tasks. "My mother did a great variety of things around the house," says Michael Seeger, "including cooking, and we did

42 too, and washing dishes, and we did too, and going through all the woolen clothes once a year to look for moths, and we did too. . . . There was a fair amount of spirit to do these things within the family, including singing together, but very informally."²⁵

Sometimes the children sang songs from Crawford's three books for children, which have since become classics (*American Folk Songs for Children*, *Animal Folk Songs* and *American Folk Songs for Christmas*). Crawford selected the songs to be published, writing piano arrangements and accompaniments for many of them. She also contributed to John and Alan Lomax's *Our Singing Country*.

Her accompaniments were widely admired. For example, composer and music critic Virgil Thomson, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, praised the accompaniments in *Animal Folk Songs* for their simplicity, calling them "ingeniously apt."²⁶ Sidney Robertson Cowell, ethnomusicologist and wife of Henry Cowell, pinpointed an important difference between Crawford's settings and those more commonly found in folk-song books: "They do not derive from a pianistic concept of accompaniment at all," she explains, "but from the nature of the instruments traditionally used in the U.S.: banjo, fiddle, guitar and the so-called dulcimer."²⁷

Also during this period, Crawford served as consultant or editor on folk music for several publishing houses and government agencies, and she co-edited another Lomax book with her husband. In addition, she was in charge of music at the Silver Spring Cooperative Nursery School and taught music at Foxhall Nursery School, Whitehall Country School and Potomac School. She had an incredible ability to communicate the joy of music to children, and soon developed a large class of private piano students. Thus, Crawford, besides raising four children, was extremely active professionally during this period.

Surely, then, she could have found the time to compose if she wished? The question itself presupposes that the collecting, transcribing and arranging of authentic folk songs are somehow less serious, less "important," than composing classical music. Crawford's "contagious delight in the vitality and variety of folk song"²⁸ was evident to those who knew her or read her books. Her growing interest and expertise in this aspect of American musical heritage may also be viewed as another stage in her development as a composer, as was Bartók's discovery of and work with genuine Hungarian folk music.

However, it seems less certain that the scope of Crawford's teaching and publishing activities was as much a matter of choice. According to family friends, such employment was in large part economically motivated.²⁹ Crawford, who supported herself from the time she left high school, felt a responsibility to contribute to her family's support along with her husband, who was Chief of the Division of Music and Visual Arts at the Pan American Union from 1941 to 1953. Michael Seeger agrees that there was "a certain amount of economic need" during this period but adds that "frankly, we didn't have to be supported to the extent that we were; it was a decision that was made to live in a certain way."³⁰

Whatever the degree of financial need, there is no doubt that composing classical music offered little in the way of financial remuneration during the 1930s and '40s. In this connection, it is interesting that *Rissolty Rossolty* (1941), a work for small orchestra based on folk materials and the only one writ-

ten in the period from 1933 to the early 1950s, was commissioned by CBS and played over their "School of the Air" program in 1941.³¹

Thus, just as the economic impact of the Depression played a part in Crawford's decision temporarily to abandon "concert" music in the early 1930s, economic pressures in subsequent years helped postpone her return to composition. Then, in 1952, with the U.S. on the road to prosperity and her children ranging in age from nine to 19, Crawford completed and submitted her *Suite for Wind Quintet* to a competition sponsored by the Washington, D.C. chapter of the National Association for American Composers and Conductors. The quintet, which combines the more abstract, linear and dissonant style of her earlier works with the easy informality and strong rhythmic pulse of folk songs, won first prize. According to Charles Seeger, "she would have done more composition then had she lived."³² Once again, the unexpected intervened, this time in the form of a particularly virulent cancer. Ruth Crawford died suddenly at home on November 20, 1953, at the age of 52.

Until recently, Crawford's music has suffered from the kind of neglect that plagues early 20th-century American music in general and women composers in particular. Most obituaries written at the time of her death dwelt more on the folk-music transcribing and arranging activities she shared with Seeger than on her composing, and several accounts failed to mention her as a composer at all.³³

Fortunately, interest in Crawford has increased considerably since 1973, when Dr. Mary Matilda Gaume wrote her dissertation on Crawford—the first comprehensive study of Crawford's relatively small output (a total of 31 works, if the preludes and songs are counted separately rather than as a single unit). In 1975, the Performer's Committee for Twentieth-Century Music presented a retrospective concert of Crawford's works at Columbia University. Later that year, Sarah Caldwell conducted the New York Philharmonic in a performance of the original orchestral version of the *Andante* from Crawford's *String Quartet* during an evening of music by women sponsored by *Ms.* magazine. Six of her works are now available on recordings. The growing field of women's studies has helped spawn several bibliographies and a research guide on women composers. These reference tools, as well as a number of recently revised music history texts, contain brief entries on Crawford. In addition, a chapter on the composer will be included in an anthology slated for publication in the fall of 1981, and a biography is currently in progress.³⁴

Ruth Crawford Seeger was a gifted composer whose life and works deserve continued attention from scholars and performers. She never lost sight of the magic in music, even while exploring techniques now identified with works that often seem inaccessible or overly academic to all but a small musical elite. Partly because of her varied interests and abilities, partly because of her circumstances, her life is a study in mixed accents, cut short at the moment when the beat seemed stronger than ever before.

1. Mary Matilda Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: Her Life and Works* (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973), p. 3. I am deeply indebted to Gaume's dissertation simply because there is so little else available on Crawford at present. Much of the biographical data in my article is taken from her study.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 3

3. *Ibid.*, p. 3

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 224–225. A piano and violin sonata, no longer extant, was apparently performed in May 1926, at a concert of Weidig's composition students. This work was later believed to have been performed in New York; an unidentified reviewer wrote the following review in the *New York Herald Tribune* (Feb. 14, 1927): "A bolder musical profile was discovered in the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* by Ruth Crawford, an Ohioan and pupil of Adolf Weidig. This music was the most masculine in quality that the evening put forth." Crawford burned this sonata years later.
5. Rita Mead, Interview with Dane Rudhyar (quoted in *Henry Cowell's New Music: The Society, the Quarterly and the Recordings*, unpublished dissertation, 1978, p. 409). I would like to thank Rita Mead for generously allowing me to read her dissertation.
6. *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 91.
7. Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger*, p. 14.
8. Rita Mead, Interview with Charles Seeger, Bridgewater, Conn., Nov. 15, 1974 (unpublished).
9. Rita Mead, Interview with Charles Seeger (quoted in Mead, *Henry Cowell*, p. 408).
10. Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger* (Ruth Crawford in a letter to "Alice," October 17, 1919), p. 17.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
13. Charles Seeger, "Ruth Crawford," in *American Composers of the American Music*, 2nd Ed., revised and edited by Henry Cowell (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1962), pp. 110–118.
14. Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs, Program Notes, Ruth Crawford Seeger Retrospective Concert, Feb. 19, 1975.
15. Mead, *Henry Cowell*, p. 424.
16. George Perle, "Atonality and the Twelve-Tone System in the U.S.," *The Score*, No. 27 (July, 1960), p. 60.
17. Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger* (Ruth Crawford, in a carbon copy of a undated letter to an unknown person), p. 18.
18. Rita Mead, Interview with Martha Beck Carragen, Troy, N.Y., 1975 (unpublished).
19. Mead, *Henry Cowell*, p. 186.
20. Ruth Julius, Interview with Vivian Fine, Vermont, May, 1977 (unpublished). Technically, Crawford wrote one more work after the *Two Ricercari*—a short, rather slight song for three unaccompanied voices in a similar, socially concerned vein.
21. Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger*, p. 22. Three of the Seeger children are professional folk singers: Pete Seeger (Crawford's stepson), Peggy Seeger and Michael Seeger.
22. Charles Seeger, in a letter to the present writer dated June 22, 1976.
23. Sidney Robertson Cowell, "Obituary—Ruth Crawford Seeger," *International Folk Music Journal*, No. 7 (1955), p. 55.
24. Michael Seeger, in a taped interview sent to me, Summer 1977.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Virgil Thomson, *New York Herald Tribune* (quoted in "Ruth Crawford Seeger's New Work Acclaimed," *Panpipes*, April, 1951, pp. 234–235).
27. Sidney Cowell, "Obituary," p. 56.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
29. The following information is based on telephone interviews recorded in my files with several sources who preferred to remain anonymous.
30. Michael Seeger, in a taped interview sent to me, Summer 1977.
31. Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger*, p. 297.
32. Charles Seeger, in a letter to me dated June 22, 1976.
33. The obituary in *Musical Courier* (Dec. 1953) describes Ruth Crawford Seeger only as the "editor of several collections of folksongs and wife of Charles Seeger, composer and former chief of the music division of the Pan American Union." Even more incredible is that a nine-paragraph obituary on Charles Seeger in *The New York Times* (Feb. 8, 1979) makes no mention of Crawford at all.
34. The forthcoming anthology, edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, is tentatively entitled *Women Making Music*. It is slated for publication by University of California Press in Fall 1981. Gaume is revising and expanding her dissertation for possible publication.

Glossary

Atonal: The absence of a basic tonality (key).

Chromaticism: The use of all twelve tones contained within the octave, rather than the use of the seven tones in the diatonic scale (do, re, mi, etc.). Nineteenth-century Romantic composers like Chopin used chromaticism extensively in their melodic lines.

Twelve-tone system (dodecaphony): A technique of composition in which the twelve tones of the chromatic scale are arranged in a definite order, or "row," and form the basis for an entire composition. Each tone is theoretically of equal importance and should not be repeated before the others are used. This "row" is then restated in any one of numerous ways: as originally used, in inversion, retrograde (backwards), etc. The twelve-tone system was first created by the Austrian composer, J.M. Hauer around 1912 but was fully developed in the early 1920s by Arnold Schoenberg, with whom it is usually identified.

Serial technique (serialism): A technique of composition in which the principle of the twelve-tone system is applied not only to pitch, but also to rhythm, tone color, dynamics and other elements of the music vocabulary. The result is a highly ordered music.

Tone clusters (secondal harmonies): On the piano, the effect obtained by striking a number of adjacent keys with the flat of the hand or forearm, or similar effects with other instruments.

Sprechstimme (or Sprechgesang—speech song): A style of vocal delivery in which the pitch is indicated rather than sung, with the voice swooping from one interval to the next.

Spatial separation of performing groups: This usually involves placement of separate orchestras, ensembles or even players in a string quartet on opposite sides of the stage, and sometimes requires two conductors for a single composition.

Dissonant counterpoint: A technique of composition developed by Charles Seeger in 1916 which treats dissonance (discordant or tension-filled intervals) as the desired "norm" and consonance (agreeable-sounding intervals, producing an effect of resolution or repose) as undesirable; consonance under this method is to be used as sparingly as possible and then only in accordance with certain rules. This is virtually the opposite of the traditional counterpoint exercises practiced by music students, in which dissonance must be used sparingly and in accordance with strict rules.

Metrical modulation: a polyrhythmic device in Elliott Carter's music in which contrasting rhythms exist simultaneously (i.e., both horizontally and vertically).

Bs
Cl
Cn
Bn
Trp
Hrn
Tib
Alt
Ob
Per
Pft
YI
YII
YIa
Yc
B

(continued from p. 39)

inheritor of the Anglo-American ballad tradition. But to make her message of the bleakness of coal camp life effective, Aunt Molly wrote new, polemical texts to traditional tunes. She shared the Collective's philosophy of "music as a weapon!"

Meeting Aunt Molly had a definite impact on the Seegers. Charles commented:

They [the Composers Collective] didn't know what she was doing. They admired her for what she was doing but it was not any relation to what they were doing. So I went up to her and said, "Aunt Molly, you can't understand what's going on here and what's going on here can't understand you. But you are right and I and my wife are going to follow your lead and not theirs."²

The Seegers felt a need to go "back to the whole of music." If they were going to be active in workers' movements, they had to understand the workers' music. So, by the mid-1930s, the Composers Collective began to incorporate American folk music into their songbooks.

The Seegers were also led to folk music by the Saturday night sing-alongs at Tom and Rita Benton's. In the early 1930s, Ruth and Charles, along with Henry Cowell, Carl Ruggles, Jackson Pollock, Edgar Varesi, and others, met at the Greenwich loft of Thomas Benton to listen to old commercial recordings of folk music and to sing the songs themselves, accompanied by fiddles, guitars, and harmonicas. Charles described the impact of these Saturday night sessions:

Ruth and I were completely flabbergasted by the situation—that here we were—people who called ourselves American composers and we didn't know anything about America or American music, so we simply decided that we would lay aside for a while our interest in dissonant counterpoint and try to find out something about America.³

The years 1935 to 1953 mark the height of Ruth Crawford's activity in the field of folk song, as well as the rounding out of her career as a composer, musician, and scholar. Jobs began to open up under Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration. A number of government agencies were created to preserve American folklore: folklore studies were undertaken by the Federal Writers Project; the Index of American Design grew out of the Federal Art Project; a music section was part of the Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Administration; and a folksong and folklore department was established under the National Service Bureau of the Federal Theater Project. The Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress was set up to house the field recordings made under the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

In 1935 the Seegers moved to Washington, D.C., where Charles assumed a post in the music section of the Special Skills Division. This division sponsored community activities in the fine and applied arts at rural homestead sites. Occasionally Ruth would accompany Charles on field trips to settlement communities in the Southeast.

At this time Ruth and Charles met John and Alan Lomax, who were also involved in federal folklore projects. Under the auspices of the Federal Writers Project and WPA, the Lomaxes had conducted large-scale recording expeditions throughout the United States and had published several songbooks based on these field recordings. They asked Ruth to serve as music editor for their new book, *Our Singing Country*.⁴ As she described it:

In 1935, as a professional musician, I became acquainted with folklore, partly through my husband's work in the Settlement. In 1937 a man named John Lomax, who has a son named Alan Lomax, asked me to act as music editor of a book of folk or traditional songs. We listened to thousands of songs, out of which two hundred were published. I was impressed, as a professional musician, with certain values in this music which seemed to both of us, and a lot more, should be gotten, somehow, to children. Here were things that weren't just beautiful melodies—a sort of unfinishedness in the music, it kept on going. Professional music isn't like that; it always tells you when it is going to end. Vigor is an overused word, but it certainly is there—non-stop, rhythmic quality, and chiefly, the thing I was talking about a while ago, improvisational qualities. If only you could play with this music, if you could bring it right home!⁵

Our Singing Country, published in 1941, embraced a wide geographical area and included varied types of songs. Aunt Molly Jackson supplied comments throughout the book on the tunes and their traditions. Ruth transcribed over 300 tunes from the Lomaxes' field recordings, from which 90 were finally chosen for the book. According to John Lomax: "Mrs. Seeger, in some instances, played a record hundreds of times in an effort to attain perfection in her translation of the tune."⁶ Ruth was also asked to write a preface describing her approach to transcription. The Lomaxes only wanted a few pages, but before she realized it Ruth had written about 80 pages. In this unpublished document, Ruth analyzed the folk songs, presented her theory of transcribing tunes, and discussed performance practices in traditional music. Musical examples illustrated her discussions.

Ruth later drew on her experience with folk music to compose *Rissolty Rossolty*, completed in 1941. The themes for this composition were based on transcriptions from field recordings housed in the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress. Pete Seeger recalled how Ruth was commissioned to write this piece:

The nearest thing of her getting back into composition was in 1941 when Alan was doing the "American School of the Air" and CBS commissioned some short pieces based on folk songs. They would have someone like Aunt Molly sing a song and then an orchestra would play an orchestral arrangement using that same melody.

The one she did was *Rissolty Rossolty*. It was a delightful piece and she worked hard on it. It was a small amount of money they paid—\$400.00 for months and months of hard work that was all over in three minutes. Father did one too.

I think she eventually wanted to go back to composing but when her children were grown up and off her hands. She might have based some of her compositions on folk songs.⁷



After an illustration by Barbara Cooney to Ruth Crawford Seeger's *Animal Folk Songs for Children* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1950).

Ruth had, by 1941, become an expert in the field of folk song. She served as music editor for the following publications: George Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle*; John and Alan Lomax, *Folk Song U.S.A.*; Benjamin Botkin, *Treasury of Western Folklore*; and Edna Boggs, *Children's Folklore of Santo Domingo*.⁸ Between assignments as music editor, Ruth was active in music education for children on both a local and national level. She stressed the importance of preserving American folk music and making the material available in the schools. From 1948 to 1953, Ruth published a series of children's folk song books. A majority of the material for *American Folk Songs for Children*, *Animal Folk Songs for Children*, and *American Folk Songs for Christmas*⁹ was transcribed from field recordings located in the Archive of Folk Song. Her books were a logical outgrowth, and an attempt on her part to integrate a sense of the American melodic style into the education of children.

Ruth had evolved into an ideal folk song specialist. She had acquired a balance of understanding of the musicological, sociological, and literary background of folk songs. Her transcriptions and books illustrate her special interest in the purity of tradition and strength of traditional performance practices. She contributed to the perpetuation of the Ameri-

can heritage in music. It is time to acknowledge Ruth Crawford Seeger's career in folk music and thus complete the scope of her work as an American composer and musician.

1. Carl Sandburg, *The American Songbag* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1927).
2. Charles Seeger, Interview with author (June 3, 1978).
3. Mary Matilda Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: Her Life and Works* (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1973), p. 22.
4. John Avery Lomax and Alan Lomax, Eds., *Our Singing Country* (New York: Macmillan, 1941).
5. Stith Thompson, Ed., *Four Symposia on Folklore* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953), p. 192.
6. John Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* (New York: Hafner, 1947), p. 296.
7. Pete Seeger, Interview with author (June 8, 1978).
8. George Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry* (Hartboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1943); John Avery Lomax and Alan Lomax, Eds., *Folk Song U.S.A.* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1947); Benjamin A. Botkin, *Treasury of Western Folklore* (New York: Crown, 1951); Edna Garrido Boggs, *Children's Folklore of Santo Domingo* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispanica, 1955).
9. Ruth Crawford Seeger, *American Folk Songs for Children in Home, School, and Nursery School* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1948), *Animal Folk Songs for Children* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1950), *American Folk Songs for Christmas* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953).

Whistle Music: A Sonic Exorcism

by

Heidi Von Gunden

for

ten or more performers and optional narrator with drone

Preparation: Collect a group of interesting whistles such as water whistles, slide whistles, organ pipes, clay whistles, bird whistles...^{*} Examine the performing space for unusual entrances and exits which might be windows, side doors, orchestra pits, etc.

Performance: The following information may be spoken by a narrator at the time of the performance^{**} or else it must be included as a program note.

Whistle tones have been used by the Tibetan monks and American Indians as a means of protection against evil spirits. Tribes

in Australia and New Guinea tell their children that whistle tones produced by an instrument called a bull roarer are the voices of the gods. It is even possible that whistle tones might be a sonic protection for all of us. The score for Whistle Music: A Sonic Exorcism says: surround the performance space with whistle tones and gradually enter that space while making whistle sounds. Continually focus your attention on removing any demons that might haunt you or the space you are about to enter.

Conclusion: The performers exit after they have encircled the audience several times with whistle tones.

^{*}My collection of whistles may be borrowed by writing to me in care of the School of Music at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

^{**}If a narrator is used then s/he should be accompanied by either a live or electronic drone of long, low, and quiet sounds.

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Women in Folk Song

Holly Hendricks Cormier

No definite body of women's folk music as such has come down to us, in part because folk music is a communal product. Folk songs were continually reshaped as they were sung; thus different versions of the same song may portray a range of female behavior and attitudes—those of society toward women and of women toward themselves. In addition, a great deal of the collecting of folk music has been done by men, who generally sought out the men in the community. Often the published versions do not represent the specific female experience the lyrics grew out of. In some cases, events have been changed or morals tacked on that distort the original meaning of the lyrics, as well as the images of women.

Nevertheless, there are women with whom we can identify in all kinds of folk music—women who take what life offers, women who comment on or question their roles, and women who try to change their lives. We don't usually know the exact author of a song, but we know by the numerous variants of certain folk songs that individuals adapted songs and passed them on. Folk songs may not give us the same specific historical facts about women's lives that a diary would, but perhaps their very survival tells us that the songs were meaningful enough to have been taken by many women as their own. When we find songs about women's lives, about their hopes and fantasies, we can only speculate about the part that women had in their creation and re-creation. Some of the songs are highly consistent with other private records of women's lives; it is these songs, both lyric and narrative, that I shall discuss here.

Many of the lyric songs are laments telling us that love was painful, work was hard, and rewards were few. Some songs express the frustration of having no control over one's destiny, of simply being transferred from father to husband to become a childbearing house servant. Many tell us of disappointment in love relationships for various reasons. Others express longing for a lover who is unavailable or disinterested.

The narrative songs are less personal. They could be sung and enjoyed by women without their directly identifying with the characters and, more significantly, without others recognizing it if they did identify with the characters. The various images of women in the narratives may represent fantasies, repressed wishes, or even the desire to see women who deviated from traditional standards get their due for daring to be different. By examining the various images of women which have survived, we can begin to know what the heroines of our foremothers were like.¹

Feminist scholars have begun to explore the private

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records of lives—journals and unpublished manuscripts, as well as decorative objects. If we don't find much work by women in the museums or hear it performed in the concert hall, we need to ask what kind of record did they leave us of their creative endeavors? What kinds of skills did they have and use to express themselves? It is important to look at the expressions and creations for which there was no monetary reward and little prestige. Folk music gives us the opportunity to examine another record of women's experiences, filtered through the dominant attitudes of the community that produced them. One scholar puts it this way:

Folklore is part of culture, but is elusive, flowing along separately from the mainstream of the major intellectual achievements of humanity . . . the materials of folklore afford the unique opportunity of studying what exists and persists in culture largely without the support of established learning, religion, government, and other formal institutions.²

Folk song literature is full of passive women who neither questioned nor tried to change their lives. Some may have been happy, but others were definitely dissatisfied.

*There's too much of worriment goes to a bonnet
There's too much of ironing goes to a shirt
There's nothing that pays for the time you waste on it
There's nothing that lasts us but trouble and dirt.*

*Life is a toil and love is a trouble
Beauty will fade and riches will flee
Pleasures they dwindle and prices they double
And nothing is as I would wish it to be.³*

The narrator is very clear about her unhappiness. The song goes on to say that her only option is to die.

A similar, but different despair is found in the ballad "Lord Lovel." Lady Nancy Belle is obviously a member of the upper class; she does not have to worry about housework. When she asks her lover, Lord Lovel, where he is going and when he will be back, he replies that he is going away to see strange countries and will be gone "a year or two or three at the most."⁴ She misses him, but has no option other than to wait it out. After one year Lord Lovel returns to see her, only to find everyone mourning Lady Nancy, who has died of grief. He orders her grave opened and kisses her "cold lips." The next day he dies of sorrow. Lady Nancy has more power over Lord Lovel when she is dead than when she was alive.

Since the cultural institutions all reinforced the idea that women were submissive and the property of their husbands, it is no wonder that we find many examples of this. It is more amazing that so many of the songs about women who dared to question their situations have survived. Often such songs were rendered acceptable by the addition of a moralistic verse at the end of the song,

as in "Wicked Polly,"⁵ or because they were humorous, as in "Beware O Take Care."⁶

In the well-known lament "The Wagoner's Lad," the woman knows that marriage won't be the end of her troubles, but that doesn't keep her from using all kinds of excuses to keep her lover from going away.

*Oh hard is the fortune of all womankind
They're always controlled, they're always confined
Controlled by their parents until they are wives
Then slaves to their husbands the rest of their lives.⁷*

Some versions start "The heart is the fortune..."⁸ In any case, this song seems to be an example of the heart winning over the head as the woman tries to choose between two equally unacceptable alternatives.

From the Afro-American tradition comes a blues song which tells us that the man has the option of leaving when the going gets rough.

*When a woman blue, when a woman blue
She hang her little head and cry
When a man get blue, he grab a railroad train and ride.
I'm go'n lay my head, I'm go'n lay my head
Down on dat railroad line
Let de train roll by and dat'll pacify my min'.⁹*

Some women attempted unique solutions to their problems, but not all of them attained their goals. In the "Handsome Cabin Boy" a woman dresses in men's clothing because she wants to travel (and she can't do this as a woman). She becomes a sailor. The captain's wife is glad her husband has engaged such a "handsome" cabin boy, but the captain himself discovers her secret. "His" waist begins to swell, and one night the doctor delivers "him" of a baby. The sailors swear that none of them is the father of the child, and in one of the greatest lines in folklore the captain's wife says, "I wish you joy, for it's either you or I betrayed the handsome cabin boy."¹⁰ We aren't told what the woman thinks of all this, or whether she continues her travels.

Another woman defiantly tells her suitor:

*Papa's gonna shoe my pretty little foot
Mama's gonna glove my hand
Sister's gonna kiss my red ruby lips
I don't need no man.¹¹*

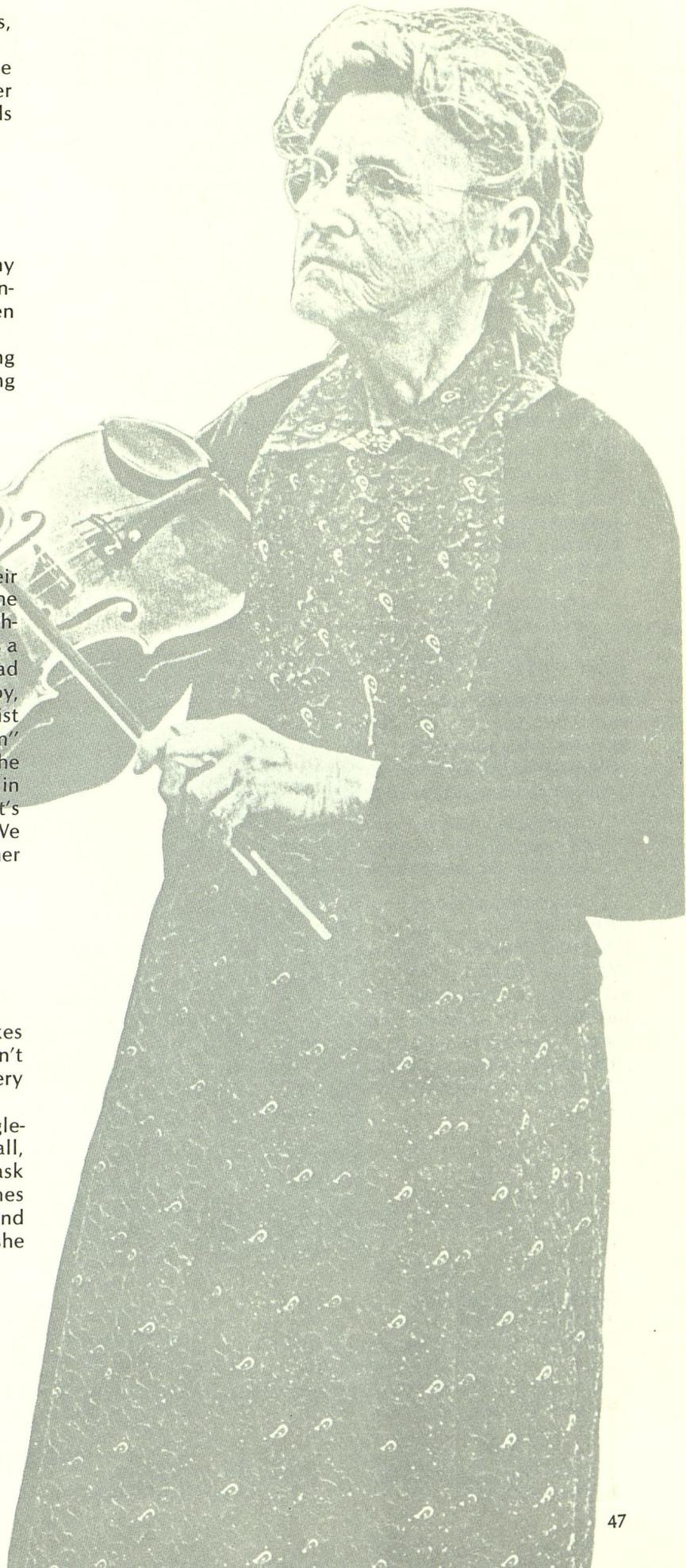
She may be putting this man off because she likes another one better, or she may just feel that she doesn't need a man to make her happy. Either way, she is very definite.

"Gypsy Laddie," "Black Jack Davy" and "Raggle-Taggle Gypsies" are variants of the same ballad. In all, one or more gypsies come to a woman's house and ask her to go with them. She does, and her husband comes after her and begs her to come back to her house and baby. In some versions, she goes back, but in others she says:

*I won't turn back, I shan't turn back
For all your words of honey
I wouldn't give a kiss from the gypsy's lips
For all your lands and money.¹²*

[or]

*What care I for house or land
What care I for money-o
What care I for my new wedded Lord
I'll follow the draggle tail gypsies-o.¹³*



Even the Devil can't break the spirit of the "Farmer's Curst Wife." In the various versions of this ballad, the Devil tells the farmer that he has come to take one member of his family. The farmer gladly gives his wife, who is described as a bitch and a shrew, a bad wife. She goes along with the Devil, but when she gets to Hell, none of the torments there bother her; instead she wreaks such havoc that all the little devils say, "Take her back!" Here the comments added to the end of the song give us insight into the varying interpretations. Some versions state:

*So it's true that the women are worse than the men
For they went down to Hell and were thrown out again.*¹⁴

Others state:

*There's one advantage women have over men
They can go to Hell and come back again.*¹⁵

There is a world of difference between these.

Some women have learned to get what they want by using their sexuality but not relinquishing anything. This means taking risks of course. In "A Crafty Maid's Policy," a woman meets three men riding in the woods. They tell her that they're afraid she'll catch cold. The story continues:

*Oh no kind sir, said the maid, You're mistaken
To think this cold morning would do me some harm
There's one thing I crave, it lies twixt your legs
If you give me that it will keep me warm.*¹⁶

The "gentleman" gets off his horse and suggests that they retire to a thicket. She mounts his horse and says, "You knew not my meaning, you wrong understood me" and gallops away. When the men come after her, she aims her pistol at them and says to the man's companions:

*If it is his loss, well it is my gain
And you were a witness that he gave it to me
And away she went galloping over the plain.*

I hope these few examples will spark interest in some of women's music that has been around for awhile. *The Liberated Woman's Songbook* and *All Our Lives: A Women's Songbook* are excellent sources of traditional material (see footnotes). Rounder Records and Folkways Records both publish catalogs in which the kinds of songs I have quoted are well represented. For women who are interested in doing further research on women in folk music a 14-page bibliography (which I compiled

while working as an intern) is available free of charge from the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress.

1. In my own personal experience, women tend to sing about men or women or both, while men tend to sing about men, women in relation to men, or unusually beautiful or bad women. When I did a unit on American work songs with elementary school children recently, I realized that changes are very slow in coming. Girls and boys sang happily of railroading, sailing and riding the ranges, but most boys were unable to sing of "women's" work without making a joke of it, as when I taught them the "Housewife's Lament."
2. Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 11.
3. Jerry Silverman cites this as an American folk song in his *The Liberated Woman's Songbook* (New York: Collier Books, 1971), p. 34. Most sources note that it was found in the diary of Mrs. Sara A. Price, who lived in Illinois in the 19th century and lost several of her sons in the Civil War. See *Songs of Work and Protest*, edited by Edith Fowke and Joe Glazier (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), p. 136; and *Folk Songs of North America*, edited by John and Alan Lomax (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), p. 133.
- Some scholars would not call this a folk song because we know who wrote it and have the original version. Other scholars feel that material which circulated orally, whether the writer was known or not, constitutes folk material. I include this song because it is one of the few songs of women's housework which has come down to us, and I think it probably is representative of other traditional songs which have been lost.
4. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, edited by Francis James Child (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), Vol. 2, p. 211. (Reprint edition of original work published by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882-1898.)
5. Lomax, p. 71.
6. This song was written by Alfred Reed and it is quite often performed by singers of traditional material. From *All Our Lives: A Woman's Songbook*, edited by Joyce Cheney, Marcia Deihl, and Deborah Silverstein (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1976), p. 142.
7. Silverman, p. 17.
8. *The Joan Baez Songbook*, edited by Maynard Solomon (New York: Ryerson Music Publications, 1964), p. 20.
9. I included this blues because of its relevance for all women who realized that while their men could escape and go do something else for awhile, they had to live out a difficult situation by virtue of being women. From the Afro-American tradition also come fiery statements of strength and determination as sung by blues singers like Bessie Smith (see the article by Rosetta Reitz in this issue).
10. Cheney, Deihl, and Silverstein, p. 168.
11. Lomax, p. 216.
12. *The Singing Tradition of Child's Popular Ballads*, edited by Bertrand Harris Bronson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 354.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 353.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 472.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 474.
16. Cheney, Deihl, and Silverstein, p. 166.

SILENT SOUND

*Seated comfortably with eyes closed,
become aware of an inner sound*

*— observe it,
changing—
moving—*

*— let it travel throughout your body
— or enter a particular thought area
— or expand to another person*

*— then let it end
and open your eyes.*

—Ruth Anderson © 1978

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Mrs. Cottrill



Phoebe Parsons

Banjo Women

These are country women from West Virginia. They play old time music in the kitchen in winter and on the back porch in summer. Slow time passes easier when they frail their banjos.

I met them when I went to folk festivals throughout Appalachia. Once I was ashamed of being born a farmer and came to the city to get away from where I grew up. There came the time when I went back to Appalachia to find out who I was and face the fact of that realization. I met people I grew to respect and

Evelyn Hayes

love like these women. Now, I'd say I'm proud of coming from the hills. Since then, I took up the banjo myself.

I once asked a country woman how she made music sound so true. She said, "You sing what you know. You sing what's in your life."

Evelyn Hayes, a photographer, filmmaker, and videotape recordist, lives in Cleveland, Ohio.

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Meet the Women Composers of Rags

Carolynn Anderson Lindemann

The Golden Age of American ragtime spanned a period of 25 years from the late 1890s to the early 1920s. The exact origin of the word "ragtime" is a mystery. Some claim that the word derives from the music's ragged, syncopated melody line,¹ while others believe it is a carry-over from a popular dance step known as ragging. A number of histories and textbooks describe the ragtime era in American music history, define its musical form, and identify the many composers of piano rags. Few sources, however, mention the female rag composers and those that do give them only minimal coverage.² This is unfortunate for at least 50 women wrote rags—and good ones at that.

In perusing ragtime discographies, record jackets, old sheet music collections, Library of Congress listings, and ragtime histories, I have found nearly 100 rags that were composed and published by women.³ And undoubtedly many, many more are awaiting discovery. This beginning research on female rag composers provides some interesting revelations about women and ragtime. First, the known female composers were white while ragtime, in general, was a black, male-dominated field. Second, the ragtime women were mainly middle-class, classically trained pianists.⁴ Third, most composed only in their younger years; they tended to terminate their careers once they married. As a result, few of these women earned lasting reputations as composers.

In the early years of ragtime, from approximately 1897 to 1905, several women were active. Little information about the women themselves is available—only their music offers clues. Sadie Koninsky, for example, was probably one of the earliest composers. Many ragtime historians consider cakewalk compositions to be forerunners of ragtime.⁵ Her "Eli Green's Cakewalk" (1897) was an early success.⁶ At least five recordings have been made of this composition dating from 1897 to the present. One conjecture is that Koninsky may have been from the New York area since at least two of her cakewalk pieces were published by Joseph W. Stern and Company, a New York firm.

Another early rag composer was Louise V. Gustin. Her "X-N-Tric Two-Step Characteristic" was copyrighted in 1899.⁷ Gustin apparently was quite prolific—compositions of hers were released in 1899, 1900, and 1901. She probably resided in the Detroit area for a Detroit company, Whitney-Warner, published many of her works and some of her compositions are listed in the Michigan Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.

It is difficult to place Irene M. Giblin O'Brien geographically. Six of her published rags have been identified, but different publishers in different cities confuse the location of her work. "Chicken Chowder: Characteristic Two-Step"

(1905) probably was her first popular hit.⁸ Two string groups recorded this rag in 1906 and 1907 (a sign of its popularity), and two piano rolls have been found.

In Kansas City, an important center of ragtime activity, Irene Cozad, Maude Gilmore, and Mamie Williams played active roles as composers. They all published works between 1897 and 1912 with Kansas City companies (Charles Johnson and Company, Carl Hoffman, and J.W. Jenkins' Sons). Their rags are typical of the Kansas City genre, with an emphasis on simple, folklike lyrical melodies.

Adaline Shepherd (1883–1950) is remembered as the composer of one of the biggest-selling rags, "Pickles and Peppers." Published in 1906 by Joseph Flanner of Milwaukee, "Pickles and Peppers" was supposedly used by William Jennings Bryan in his 1908 presidential campaign. It sold 200,000 copies in that year alone.⁹ Its popularity is further attested to by at least one surviving piano roll and four recordings. A "key to its success as a popular folk rag," it is said, lies in "its developmental C to C₁ idea which turns a straight cakewalk theme into a stomping syncopation."¹⁰

Shepherd was born in Algona, Iowa. She was active as a composer of folk rags and songs from 1906 to about 1914.



Adaline Shepherd. "Pickles and Peppers." Photo credit: Institute for Studies in American Music, University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music.

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Apparently she curtailed her career after she married Fred S. Olson, a prosperous insurance broker. She died in Milwaukee on March 12, 1950.¹¹

Probably one of the best-known women ragtime composers was May Frances Aufderheide (born in 1888 in Indianapolis). Aufderheide not only played an active part in the development of ragtime in Indianapolis, but she was also a well-trained popular classical pianist.

Her compositions, with the exception of one, were published by her father, John H. Aufderheide. This publishing venture started as a mere sideline to his pawnbroking business, after his daughter's very successful first hit, "Dusty Rag." "Dusty Rag" (1908) is considered the first major rag of Indianapolis-Ohio Valley area.¹² Both this rag and her ragtime composition "The Thriller" (1909) were very popular with New Orleans jazz groups. In fact, the great New Orleans trumpet player Bunk Johnson could play these two rags from memory 35 years after their publication, so popular had they been with the early New Orleans jazz bands.¹³ Both have been recorded a number of times through the years.

Aufderheide's father also published the rags of her friends: Julia Lee Niebergall, Gladys Yelvington, Cecil Duane Cobb, Will Morrison, and Paul Pratt. Pratt, the manager of the publishing firm, collaborated with May Aufderheide on a number of songs and waltzes.

Aufderheide's marriage to Thomas M. Kaufman, an associate of her father in his loan company, however, appears to have ended her composing-performing career. She died in Pasadena, California, on September 1, 1972.

Unlike many of the other ragtime women, Julia Lee Niebergall (1886–1968) maintained a career in music throughout her life. For years she was a pianist at the Colonial Theater in Indianapolis. She, like her colleague May Aufderheide, contributed a number of important pieces to the Indianapolis ragtime scene. Three of her rags—"Hoosier Rag" (1907), "Horseshoe Rag" (1911), and "Red Rambler Rag" (1912)—were choice rags of the period. (The latter two were published by J.H. Aufderheide.)

Niebergall seems to have been quite a liberated woman for her time. After her early marriage and subsequent divorce, she resumed her maiden name. In addition, she owned her own home, where she lived until her death. According to Max Morath, she was one of the first women in Indianapolis to own an automobile.¹⁴

Gladys Yelvington (1891–1957) was also active in Indianapolis ragtime, although she was not as prolific a composer as her friends May Aufderheide and Julia Lee Niebergall. Only one published composition is known—"Piffle Rag" (1911). Her professional career as a composer and a silent-movie pianist ended one year later with her marriage.

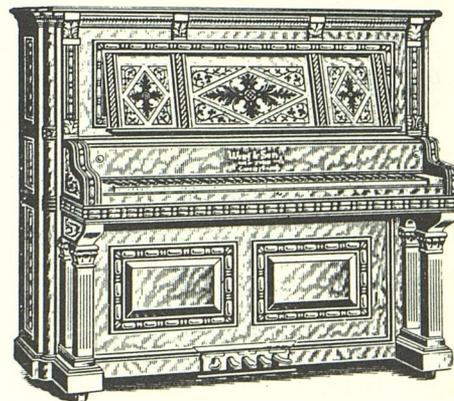
One female musician-composer with a long-lasting professional career and reputation in New York and Hollywood was Muriel Pollock (1900–1971), although "Rooster Rag" (1917) appears to be the only rag she ever published. She did however, perform and record numerous rags, often with Constance Mering or Vee Lawnhurst. She also composed songs, theatrical scores, and music for children's "talking books."

Nellie M. Stokes, Charlotte Blake, Mabel Tilton, Ella Hudson Day, and Geraldine Dobyns are just a few of the other women who contributed to the ragtime repertory. Many, many women have been identified in sheet music collections, ragtime discographies, and histories.¹⁵ Some

appear to have published just one rag while others produced quite a few.

This quick look at the women of ragtime may provoke more questions than it answers. Why, for instance, have historians not reported the importance of women in ragtime? How can we uncover more biographical information about these women when they are not listed in any of the standard histories, trade directories, etc? How extensively were women discriminated against in the publishing business? Did the ragtime women use pseudonyms in order to get their works published or use initials to hide their sex? If so, we may find many more works by women composers. Certainly more research is needed to bring into focus the forgotten ragtime women. A few recordings are already available of quality rags by female composers and, one hopes, in the near future more recordings will be forthcoming. The women of ragtime must be accorded their proper place in music history and be given the recognition they properly deserve.

1. Piano ragtime is unique in opposing a syncopated melody against an even, accented bass. Rags are typically divided into three or four sections (each usually consisting of 32 beats) and based largely on the tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords of the major mode.
2. One notable exception is *Rags and Ragtime* by David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor (New York: Seabury Press, 1978).
3. Here I gratefully acknowledge the help of Jack L. Ralston, Music Librarian at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music.
4. Undoubtedly the advent of the upright piano was significant; with the growing popularity of this affordable instrument, women with leisure time could not only study classical piano music, but they could also experiment with printed rags available from five-and-ten-cent stores.
5. Cakewalk compositions, often called two-step pieces, were similar to ragtime compositions in that they were essentially instrumental, in duple meter with some syncopation, and they followed a march format.
6. Jasen and Tichenor, p. 16.
7. Max Morath, in his jacket notes for *The Ragtime Women* (Vanguard 79402), notes that Gustin's published works often list her as L.V. rather than Louise V. and wonders if she or the publisher preferred the initials only.
8. Jasen and Tichenor, p. 66.
9. Max Morath, jacket notes for *The Ragtime Women*. The score is available in Morath's *Mississippi Valley Rags Collection* (New York: Schirmer, 1975).
10. Jasen and Tichenor, p. 72.
11. Susan Wirth of Milwaukee has researched the life and works of Adaline Shepherd.
12. Jasen and Tichenor, p. 148.
13. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime* (New York: Oak Publications, 1971), p. 221.
14. Morath, jacket notes for the *The Ragtime Women*.
15. The Institute for Studies in American Music, University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music, has a substantial collection of ragtime compositions by female composers.



Michele Russell

Slave Codes

... it was either live with music or die with noise, and we chose rather desperately to live.

—Ralph Ellison

What are we studying when we look at black women's experience, once inside the U.S.?

Documents, for sure. Bills of Sale for cargo received. Agricultural production figures for tobacco, cotton, cane sugar, and rice in ten million pound units. The diaries of white women on the subjects of concubinage and household management. The plantation ledgers of their husbands, calculating the dollar discrepancy paid for mulatto vs. full-blooded African children, both bred for comparative advantage on the domestic market.

This range of material yields important insights, primarily having to do with the peculiarly barbaric variable of slavery U.S. settler-culture fostered. Sometimes, in genteel circles, it goes by the name of "breeding." It meant wholesale rape for profit.

There are other dimensions to the story. Other documents: the vivid descriptions black men have left of us escaping bondage, inciting rebellion among field workers, killing overseers, wrecking property, and protecting family. These are legion. Their perspectives are those of husbands, brothers, sons, co-workers, poets, and the collectors of lore. They demonstrate that we did not take rape lying down.

There are the ways others reacted to our being and doing. The stereotypes of the dominant culture which created Aunt Jemima, Saffire, Topsy, Pinky, Farina, and Sweet Thing. The biological metaphors which told us, in no uncertain terms, what kind of animal Anglo-Americans thought us to be. The consequences of those ideas in action: the spits and crossties where we were roasted after the hunt. Our mutilated body parts smoked and sold as trophies.

And again, in rebuttal, there are the works of art, skill, and craft created by us in bondage that give the lie to myths of our primitive savagery and sloth.

But above everything else tower black women's own voices, raised in resistance to death and slavery—of the body and spirit. They cut a record, in continuous performance, expressing the restless movement of a captive people, for whom home is far away and heaven is out of sight. It is an old song with many verses, but just one refrain: freedom.

It starts with the humming which kept alive African rhythms in spite of the lock-step ankle-chains demanded, and the rocking of the slave-ship's hold. It continues in

the work shouts which coded our pain. It rose on Sundays and in the nighttime wilderness from which Harriet Tubman signaled us to steal away cause we were so tired o' this mess. And, closer to our own time, it is carried in the music of five women over the last fifty years: Bessie Smith, Bessie Jackson, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, and Esther Phillips.

In helping black women own their past, present, and future, these figures are primary. The content of their message, combined with the form of their delivery, make them so.

Blues, first and last, are a familiar, available idiom for black women, even a staple of life. In the poorest city homes, records or a radio are the second purchase, after a hot plate. Sometimes before. For the rural and the homeless, songs are always present.

We all know something about blues. Being about us, life is the only training we need to measure their truth. They talk to us, in our own language. They are the expression of a particular social process by which poor black women have commented on all the major theoretical, practical, and political questions facing us and have created a mass audience who listens to what we say, in that form.

Bessie Smith, Bessie Jackson (Lucille Bogan), Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, and Esther Phillips recall the worst aspects of our collective situation and teach how to wring from that the best transformation consciousness can achieve at precise moments in history. They are the bearers of the self-determination tradition in black women's blues. Unsentimental. Historical. Materialist. They are not afraid to name a job a slave, a marriage a meal ticket, and loving a grind. They all re-create our past differently. But each, in her own way and for her own day, travels the road from rape to revolution. Their rendering of that process is high art. The beat they step to goes like this.

Bessie Smith

Bessie Smith grasped daily survival rhythms when times were really hard. She comes to us, dressed as a Liberty Belle, uncracked after World War I. Her note was a clear peal, sounding the simple reminder that we were still alive, despite all. While Ma Rainey established that black women were on the loose traveling, Bessie Smith said we were here to stay.

She began by recognizing the constant chaos of our lives as an uprooted people, at the mercy of forces we couldn't control. And she made a stand.

*Backwater blues done tole me to pack my things and go
Cause my house fell down, can't live there no more.
Umm-mm, but I can't move no more.
There ain't no place for a poor old girl to go.*

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and Liner Notes

Floods, famine, natural and unnatural disasters are chronicled in songs like "Backwater Blues." Since coming to the Black Belt, we have been through them all. But, yet and still (as a later Simple said) we had not died before our time. We were refusing to be swept away. We were staying put.

Bessie went further. Since the Apocalypse was a condition of everyday life, our resurrection had to be, too. She took our revival rituals out of the church and into the street, enlarged their performance from one day to seven and all night, too. She preached a spiritual lesson, but she took it from the Blues Book, Chapter Nine: "Women must learn how to take their time."



Bessie Smith

Bessie Smith redefined our time. In a deliberate inversion of the Puritanism of the Protestant ethic, she articulated, as clearly as anyone before or since, how fundamental sexuality was to survival. Where work was often the death of us, sex brought us back to life. It was better than food, and sometimes a necessary substitute.

With her, black women in American culture could no longer just be regarded as sexual objects. She made us sexual subjects, the first step in taking control. She transformed our collective shame at being rape victims, treated like dogs or worse, the meat dogs eat, by emphasizing the value of our allure. In so doing, she humanized sexuality for black women. The importance of this is often lost. During a period when *The Birth of a Nation* was projecting all of us as animalistic and White "Citizens' Councils" gathered strength all over the country, Bessie

Smith's ability to communicate human emotion in public and make whites and blacks hear the humanity was a victory.

Beyond this, Bessie Smith gives us the first post-Emancipation musical portrayals of black women working. In "Washwoman's Blues" (1928), for example, she delineates the difference between washwomen and scullions. This song is a classical lament, in the rhythm of the work being done. She sings:

*All day long I'm slavin, all day long I'm bustin suds.
Gee, my hands are tired, washin out these dirty duds.*

Proceeding to describe the volume of the workload she is expected to handle and its effects, she says:

*Lord, I do more work than forty-eleven Gold Dust twins
Got myself a-achin from my head down to my shins*

Most striking, however, is her image of deliverance:

*Rather be a scullion, cookin in some white folks' yard.
I could eat up plenty, wouldn't have to work so hard.*

With these words, she reminds us that the old plantation division of labor between domestic workers and house servants persists and that being a house servant is still a privilege.

Most of her comments on domestic economy, however, center on the struggle to construct a relationship of equality in her own house with black men. The battle between the sexes is waged in no uncertain terms in "Yes, Indeed He Do" and "I Used to Be Your Sweet Mama." And, in a whole group of songs, including "The Devil's Gonna Get You" and "Pinchbacks, Take Em Away," dating from the early twenties, her advice to women is: "Get a working man when you marry. Cause it takes money to run a business." The most extended treatment of her attitude is to be found in "Get It, Bring It, and Put It Right Here." It speaks for itself:

*I've had a man for fifteen years
Give him his room and his board.
Once he was like a Cadillac
Now he's like an old worn-out Ford.*

*He never brought me a lousy dime
And put it in my hand.
Oh, there'll be some changes from now on
According to my plan.*

*He's got to get it, bring it, and put it right here
Or else he's gonna keep it out there.
If he must steal it, beg it, or borrow it somewhere
Long as he gets it, I don't care.*

*I'm tired of buying porkchops to grease his fat lips
And he'll have to find another place to park his ole hips
He's got to get it, bring it, and put it right here
Or else he's gonna keep it out there.*

*The bee gets the honey and brings it to the comb
Else he's kicked out of his home-sweet-home
To show you that they brings it watch the dog and the cat
Everything even brings it, from a mule to a gnat.*

*The rooster gets the worm and brings it to the hen
That ought to be a tip to all you no-good men.
The groundhog even brings it, and puts it in his hole
So my man has got to bring it, doggone his soul.*

*He's got to get it, bring it, and put it right here
Or else he's gonna keep it out there.
He can steal it, beg it, or borrow it somewhere
Long as he gets it, chile, I don't care.*

*I'm gonna tell him like the chinaman when you don't
bring-um check
You don't get-um laundry if you wring-um damn neck.
You got to get it, bring it, and put it right here
Or else you're gonna keep it out there.*

Our ability to maintain that level of control was short-lived. Crop failures in the South and the stock market crash in the North drove us and our men out of house and home. Dispersed in cities, becoming marginal in both mechanized agriculture and manufacturing, barred from the skilled trades, once again our bodies and souls were all we could sell to live. In blues idiom, the reality was expressed like this:

*Merchant got half the cotton
Boll Weevil got the rest.
Didn't leave the poor farmer's wife
But one old cotton dress
And it's full of holes; yes, it's full of holes.*

The service jobs city living brought were humiliating beyond imagination. A familiar figure from this period is Richard Wright's friend who, as an elevator operator, let himself be kicked by white patrons for tips. With Bessie Jackson, however, the bottom line on black women's self-esteem is drawn.

Bessie Jackson

Bessie Jackson goes with us into the marketplace of the Depression and says "no more auction block for me." In her songs, we are shown refusing to prostitute ourselves, no matter how we were forced to work. Negotiating turf and hours. Sitting down. Battling over the conditions of our labor. In "Tricks Ain't Walkin No More," she makes her position clear.

*Sometimes, I'm up, sometimes I'm down
I cain't make my living around this town
Cause Tricks ain't walkin, Tricks ain't walkin no more.
I got to make my livin, don't care where I go.*

*I need some shoes on my feet, clothes on my back
Got tired of walkin these streets all dressed in black
But Tricks ain't walkin, Tricks ain't walkin no more.
And I see four or five good tricks standin in front of my
door.*

*I got a store on the corner, sellin stuff cheap
I got a market cross the street where I sell my meat
But Tricks ain't walkin, Tricks ain't walkin no more.
And if you think I'm lyin, follow me to my door.*

Understanding as she did the market relations of capitalism, Bessie Jackson pictures how we bought as well as sold. Her songs dramatize the situations in which we became traders in the black market, watching the

stock in the skin trade rise and fall (as in "Baking Powder Blues"), letting our chances for raising dough ride on a steady roll. She records how, even when powerless, one can transform physically debilitating circumstances into a means of material sustenance, like food. She follows us, as with much effort we worked ourselves up to the position of Bar-B-Que Bess, who takes pride in saying:

*When you come to my house, come down behind the jail
I got a sign on my door, Bar-B-Que for Sale
I'm talkin bout my Bar-B-Que
The only thing I sell
And if you want my meat, you can come to my house at
twelve.*

With total candor, she voices what Prof. Howard Stretch Johnson has characterized as "the pursuit of alternative entrepreneurial modalities by folk barred from mainstream society."

Billie Holiday

Billie Holiday broke this pattern. With her, we began to consciously appropriate the best in white popular culture as a means of elaborating our style. She then went on to mainline the blend.

First, she made urban blues urbane. All-wise. In Cole Porter's "Love for Sale," she let us know she was Bessie Jackson's sister, subject to the same reality; but distinctions between them were developing. We had become fruit instead of meat. A delicacy, to sample. A black woman, yes; and a lady.

From back alley stairs to (Small's) Paradise, we had made the climb. Appetizing, young, fresh and still unspoiled, only slightly soiled, she was prepared to sing about it all. And did. She said: "Let the poets pipe of love, in their childish way./I know every type of love, better far than they." Now, the dehumanizing context of our wisdom could be embellished, riffed, cultivated, and perfumed. It could be sung to strings. In so doing, she represented a black woman who could conquer white men and their music, "Tenderly."

In her most sardonic mood, Billie Holiday enlarged on white fantasies of being a "kept woman" and the self-mutilation that arrangement required, all the while telling us "I was only dreaming." When awake, she knew as well as the rest of us that "God Blessed the Child That's Got His Own."

She coded our pain by lacing it with sweetness, mixing "Fine and Mellow" with "Strange Fruit." On balance, however, she stirred a bitter brew. The silk and satin were only a covering. For her, as for her black audience, depression and war blended together. She sang "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues" and enlarged her personal misery to embrace our collective situation.

By 1941, with the war in Europe in full swing and black soldiers dying to make the world safe for democracy, she let everyone know that Georgia was on her mind. In the stranglings of the period at home, the bulging eyes and twisted mouths, the victim's blood was ours. Unafraid, she voiced the genocidal results: "Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze;/strange fruit, hanging from the poplar trees." Even the scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh, couldn't hide the smell of burning flesh.

The smoke and the stink thickened over the next



Billie Holiday

twenty years. Billie Holiday was one of the many American casualties. Korea, Vietnam, Sharpeville, rape, lynchings, and Jim Crow law all added fuel to the fire. In spite of the official freeze on information (called the Cold War), we heard of how other border skirmishes multiplied, saw the cracks in the walls, and attributed the disturbances, correctly, to volcanic eruptions in the Third World. The conscious musical voice making the bridge for us was Nina Simone.

Nina Simone

In the 1960s, Nina Simone used her music to revive our roots, to internationalize the terms of our self-determination, and to develop the cultural dimension of armed struggle. More than any of her predecessors, she was able to fuse ideology and art. Her perspective was that the whole world was being Africanized and for us to take our place on the stage of history, our awareness has to encompass the world. So, she opened old trade routes and plotted new explorers' maps, whose only boundaries were determined by the "geography of our shed blood."

In "Four Women," she told the tale of violations marking our lives in the U.S. With just that one song, she took us all the way back to "Washwoman's Blues," through "Tricks," and watered the bitter crop Billie Holiday knew had been sown. In songs like "Seeline Woman," "Sinnerman," "Zungo," "I Put a Spell on You," and "One More Sunday in Savannah," she cultivated our folk memory. She invoked all the weapons we had used in the past to protect ourselves when organization failed: incantation, congregation, conjure, slave religion, dissembling, the appropriation of European and Anglo-American culture. But she put them to use in a situation and at a time when organization was developing and we were contending for power. The historical moment was such that, through her voice, even songs like "I Shall Be

Released" took on a meaning relevant to our political struggle. Her most personal melodies (e.g., "When I Was in My Prime" and "Wild Is the Wind") always contained undertones of suppressed rebellion. When she began her crescendo, no one could ignore the dominant theme.

Nina Simone was not the first to be so direct. In the 1930s Bessie Smith could say to the rich:

*While you're living in your mansion
You don't know what hard times mean
A workingman's wife is starvin'
Your wife is livin' like a queen.*

The difference was that Bessie Smith concluded this song by pleading with the rich to have mercy on her plight and appealing to their conscience by asking: "If it wasn't for the poor man, / Mr. Rich Man, what would you do?" By the 1960s, Nina Simone was taking the offensive. She performed "Old Jim Crow" and "Backlash Blues" to white audiences who knew they were under attack and to black audiences who were seizing the time. She wrote "show tunes" like "Mississippi, Goddam" and introduced them by saying "the show hadn't been written for them yet." Her voice rang with social judgment, and there were no rebuttals when she told white America:

*Don't tell me, I'll tell you
Me and my people just about due
I've been there, so I know
Keep on sayin', "Go slow."*

*Yes, you lied to me all these years
You told me to wash and clean my ears
And talk real fine just like a lady
And you'd stop callin' me Sister Sadie.*

*Oh, this whole country's full of lies
Y'all gonna die and die like flies
I don't trust you anymore
When you keep saying "Go slow."*

*But that's just the trouble—too slow
Desegregation, mass participation, unification—too slow
Do things gradually and bring more tragedy.*

*You don't have to live next to me
Just leave me my equality.
Cause everybody knows about Mississippi, Goddam.*

When that message was taken up by the poorest among us, and all the major cities in the U.S. were being shaken by black rebellion, most white folk were either striking back or asking "Why?" Nina Simone was answering by performing "Pirate Jenny." She had chosen carefully. She took a song originating in English light opera, adapted by German socialists Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill to comment on life in pre-fascist Germany, and transformed it to apply to the anti-colonial revolutionary spirit growing in the American South, the Caribbean, South Africa, and situations south of every border. This was the coming storm that her prevailing Southerly blew. And, in the midst of it, still smiling, "looking nice with a ribbon in her hair, / but counting the heads as she's making the beds," was Aunt Sarah, Sister Sadie, Pirate Jenny—giving no quarter at the revolutionary moment. The cleaning woman's final task was stripping down the house and everything in it: to fumigate. All the covers were off now. The last had arisen and was demanding to be first. In 1969, the song that Nina Simone wrote to say it was "Revolution." The last verse went as follows:

Singin about a Revolution, because we're talkin about a change.

It's more than just air pollution

Well, you know, you got to clean your brain.

The only way that we can stand in fact

Is when you get your foot off our back.

Get. Off. Our. Back.

The only issue was, how to do it. For that, we needed more than prophetic vision and exhortation.

If that last among us were truly to take command, all the weaknesses that our condition enforced had to be rooted out. The revolutionary process necessitated that people transform themselves as well as the social, economic, and political structures that governed our development. To reach the "new world" toward which Nina Simone directed our gaze, protracted struggles and long marches began. And there was nothing mystical about the trip. One such earthly pilgrim was Esther Phillips.

Esther Phillips

After the high tide of black rebellion, we all suffered in some measure from the system's retaliation. At a personal level, Esther Phillips experienced all the adulteration, dissipated direction, enforced isolation, and confusion that had been injected into the black liberation movement in general. By the 1970s, she, and we, were trying to regroup. Her journey toward independence, though particularly lonely, had mass dimensions. Her fight was to overcome all the forms of personal decadence this society markets to prolong our slavery. Taking Nina Simone's advice to "Break Down and Let It All Out," her route led through penetration, not transcendence. And she did it alone. As her own deep-sea diver, she plumbed the depths of our degradation before surfacing with a synthesis. When on land, she said, "If it takes me all night long, I gotta keep walkin til my back ain't got no bone."

Nothing was inevitable about the destination. She was always aware that one road would lead her home, and the other would lead far into the night. In songs like "That's All Right With Me," "Home Is Where the Hatred Is," and "Scarred Knees," she records all the ways we have voluntarily made slaves of ourselves. She deals directly with the three worst addictions capitalist social

relations have encouraged in us: surrender to men, religion, and hard drugs. And she tells of their effects with the authority her own life provides.

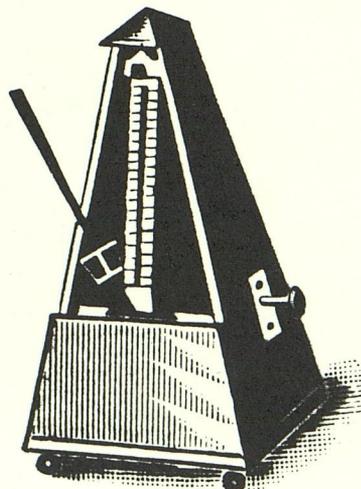
In her middle passage, she rediscovers something of value in herself. "I'm Getting Long Alright," "CC Rider," "Cherry Red," "In the Evenin'," and "Bye-Bye Blackbird" are from this period. She begins to favor traveling music and straightens up off her knees. Musically, her choice of songs reasserts Bessie Smith's demand for domestic equality and Bessie Jackson's fight to establish market value with everyone she meets on the road toward home. In the '70s, the strenuous nature of those battles burned many people out. In political circles, varieties of separatism flourished. Esther Phillips' expression of this mood was "Too Many Roads Between Us" and "Hurtin' House."

Esther Phillips' triumph, however, is contained in "I've Only Known a Stranger," "Justified," "You Could Have Had Me," "Black-Eyed Blues," and "Turn Around, Look at Me." In this group of songs, she reviews her experiences with men and announces she is fed up with the terms of those relationships as they exist in this society. Speaking directly in "You Could Have Me," she says: "You could have had me, baby, in 1973. Now I'm older and wiser and you don't look so good to me. . . /It's too late, cause I've lost my appetite." Not a bit apologetic, in "Justified" she says: "My stock of patience done wore too thin/and I don't think I could go through another funny scene again." She's leaving cause she got "less than she wanted and more than she should." She concludes: "Now, I'm just gonna be me. I've got no ill feelings, cause I know I'm justified."

She can face being alone and will only do what's functional. The only community she seeks is the roots of the "Black-Eyed Blues." In this return, the voice that shines through, loud and clear, blends feminism with nationalism in a strong statement of independence. She has gotten all the loads off her back, as Nina Simone counseled, and has taken a stand, where she can.

The only remaining task, for her and us, is to accomplish collectively what Bessie Smith, Bessie Jackson, Billie Holiday, and Nina Simone achieved personally. Maybe the music will help. Listen to it.

There is no conclusion to this paper. Only the reminder that the beat goes on.



Mean Mothers

Independent Women's Blues

Rosetta Reitz

Independent women are mean. They will not accept unjust or unkind treatment without doing something about it. That is contrary to the way women, especially mothers, have been socialized to behave. A lady is nice; she doesn't talk back or shout.

A mean mother is the best kind there is, for she insists on her own dignity and on the dignity of the people around her. There is no ambiguity in her behavior; she therefore makes the people in her orbit feel safe and secure. They can count on her. But this seems to make some people, on the outside, uncomfortable. That is why uncomplimentary epithets have been used to describe her.

When Virginia Woolf instructed us to learn from our mothers, she was speaking particularly of our spiritual ones. As American women, we have an independent women's heritage which has been hidden from us as though by conspiracy. The women who sang the blues were, through their songs, confronting their lives with unblinking candor. We are trying to learn what these women knew over 50 years ago: how to live life without deceiving ourselves or anyone else. Existential confrontation? These women invented it. We must try to retrieve this legacy and write these women back into history, for we gain sustenance from the knowledge of our past and see our own struggle more vividly.

Large numbers of independent women in our history expressed themselves in the Golden Age of the Blues in the 1920s. It is the only time in the history of music that women reigned. Their sovereignty was circumscribed by the "race" market. (The "race" labels were intended for black consumers and were distributed in record stores in the black communities of major cities and to mail-order buyers, who responded to ads in black newspapers.) However, the "race" records were a significant source for all popular American songs in the 1920s. Other musicians learned from the classic blues singers.

These women shaped a new music by taking certain elements from the African musical system and placing them in consort with the European one. Fusing music from disparate cultures successfully is the work of giants.

The songs these women sang and wrote speak for themselves. Here's a random list of titles:

- Ethel Waters, *There'll Be Some Changes Made* (1921)
- Daisy Martin, *I Won't Be Back Til You Change Your Ways* (1921)
- Lucille Hegamin, *You Can Have Him I Don't Want Him Blues* (1922)
- Mamie Smith, *Ain't Gonna Give Nobody None O' This Jelly Roll* (1922)
- Sara Martin, *If You Don't Like It, Leave* (1923)
- Sister Harris, *Don't Mess with Me* (1923)
- Rosa Henderson, *I Ain't No Man's Slave* (1923)
- Ada Brown, *Evil Mama Blues* (1923)

Rosetta Reitz is writing a book on blues women. She became a producer of records of women singing the blues by default. This year she produced the program "The Blues Is a Woman" for the Newport Jazz Festival.

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- Hannah Sylvester, *Papa, Better Watch Your Step* (1923)
- Lena Wilson, *I Don't Let No One Man Worry Me* (1923)
- Eva Taylor, *If You Don't, I Know Who Will* (1923)
- Lottie Beaman, *Mama Can't Lose* (1924)
- Sippie Wallace, *Baby I Can't Use You No More* (1924)
- Ida Cox, *Wild Women Don't Get the Blues* (1924)
- Lena Henry, *Family Skeleton Blues* (1924)
- Virginia Liston, *You've Got the Right Key But the Wrong Keyhole* (1924)
- Monette Moore, *Get It Fixed* (1925)
- Bessie Brown, *Ain't Much Good in the Best of Men Nowadays* (1926)
- Ma Rainey, *Trust No Man* (1926)
- Leola B. Wilson, *Dishrag Blues* (1926)
- Lucille Bogan, *Women Won't Need No Men* (1927)
- Maggie Jones, *You Ain't Gonna Feed in My Pasture Now* (1927)
- Gladys Bentley, *How Much Can I Stand?* (1928)
- Fannie May Goosby, *Can't Use You Blues* (1928)
- Christina Gray, *Just Like You Walked In, You Can Walk Out* (1929)
- Mae Glover, *I Ain't Givin Nobody None* (1929)
- Lillian Glinn, *I'm Through Shedding Tears over You* (1929)
- Sister Cally Fancy, *Everybody Get Your Business Right* (1929)
- Martha Copeland, *I Ain't Your Hen, Mister Fly Rooster* (1929)
- Bertha Idaho, *Move It on Out of Here* (1929)
- Mary Dixon, *You Can't Sleep in My Bed* (1929)

"But wait a minute," I hear you say, "I thought the women were singing about *My Man Left Me*. I thought they were sad and lonely and that's why they sang the blues." That's what I used to think too, but it is only partly true. That they sang of sadness no one will deny, but they sang about many other things.

The blues covers a wide spectrum of experience. It is a form of expression, a highly developed, sophisticated form for communicating many kinds of feeling. To reduce the women who sang the blues to only one aspect of their expression is to do them an injustice. Their lives were multifaceted and rich in spite of the historic stereotyping imposed on them.

The blues expressed real concerns of the women who sang them and those who regularly listened to them. When Bessie Smith sang "Backwater Blues" in 1927, it was a statement of deep sorrow about floods, especially the worst flood in the history of the Mississippi River, which made over half a million people homeless. She also sang "Mean Old Bedbug Blues," a very real problem when you can't sleep for scratching. Helen Humes, also in 1927, sang "Garlic Blues" because her boyfriend reeked of the remedy for his cold. Victoria Spivey's "T.B. Blues" sold well because tuberculosis was common in the twenties and thirties. Georgia White sang "Toothache Blues." Sippie Wallace's "Trouble Everywhere I Roam" was about her grief over her mother's death. There was a kind of blues for every kind of life experience. There were blues about trains and sex and food and natural disasters and death and prisons, blues about love and hate and sad times and happy times, and there were arrogant blues and submissive blues and blues



Sippie Wallace. Photo credit: Barbara Weinberg.

about the absurdities of life—and there were independent women's blues. I am focusing on the last because they have been neglected in favor of the victim variety of blues.

When the classic blues singers sang and recorded in the 1920s, it became big business. Some record companies decided to offer some of these blues to a wider public. Which songs do you think they chose? You guessed it. They chose the sad, suffering "Daddy Won't You Please Come Home?" rather than "Trust No Man" and "I Can't Use You No More." Was this editing, which stressed victimization, unconscious? I doubt it.

The blues women had a commanding presence and a refreshing robustness. When they sang, combining the old country blues with their African influence and the new sounds of the blues instrumentalists with their European influence, it created goose pimples in the listener. Sometimes they combined these different systems in the same phrase. Their rich use of the vernacular, sometimes with bravura, sometimes with fastidious precision, sometimes with baroque embellishments, sometimes as incantation, affirms their aliveness.

These women were royalty in the truest sense, and they knew it. Their titles were earned in American democratic fashion. When Bessie Smith was called the Empress, an acknowledgment of her ultimate supremacy, no one questioned it. It was accepted as gospel truth because of the quality of her singing style, which was professional and urban.

The blues women were not innocents. They used all the charisma they had and enhanced it still further by bedecking themselves with glitter and glamour, in silks and satins, sequins and jewels, fringes and feathers, beads and bangles and bows and buckles. High priestesses must, after

all, stand out. The first requirement of a super-woman is that she herself *know* that she *is* one.

Bessie Smith was an archetype. For every archetype there must be hundreds of other women, some of them even coming close to her effectiveness. And there were many women who expressed themselves in the blues individually, where the sound and the story blend the meaning together, making it all seem as natural as talking to a friend. But we have not heard about more than a handful.

Imagine Bessie Smith, in her majestic manner, standing on the stage of a black tent show or theater, full of poor working women, sitting motionless in awe, and there she is, one of them who has made it, looking like the biggest success in the universe, belting out in her full, rich voice with the intensity of high drama, "Dirty No-Gooder's Blues":

*Did you ever fall in love
with a man that was no good?*

It was like being in church, only better, because the preacher was a beautiful black woman singing about their lives in the here and now, not after death. Every woman who heard her identified with her. Bessie would give out the call and they would respond: *Say it sister. You know it. Amen.*

*Lawd, I really don't think no man's love can last.
They'll love you to death then treat you like a thing of the past.*

*There's nineteen men livin in my neighborhood,
Eighteen of them are fools and the one ain't no doggone good.*

It's no wonder that people said she hypnotized audiences and that, when Bessie was singing, you could hear a pin drop. The sales of her records were so great that they virtually pulled the ailing Columbia record company away from the edge of bankruptcy onto solid ground.

It must be understood that most areas of these women's lives were not under their control. That is why when they *did* assert themselves in their private lives, when they decided where to give affection, when they refused to accept a violation of their dignity, we place those times in bold relief and admire their courage. These singers, remember, represent many women, and we must not lose sight of the fact that when a woman was working a job, especially when she had children to support, she couldn't be very independent. So that, in her personal life, when she was independent, that action becomes heroic.

It is this assertiveness we hear in Bessie Smith's "Young Woman's Blues":

*No time to marry, no time to settle down
I'm a young woman and ain't done runnin' round. . .*

*I ain't no high yella, I'm a deep killer brown.
I ain't gonna marry, ain't gonna settle down.*

Or in Ida Cox's "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues":

*I've got a disposition
And a way of my own,
When my man starts kicking
I let him find another home.
I get full of good liquor
Walk the street all night,
Go home and put my man out
If he don't act right.
Wild women don't worry,
Wild women don't have the blues.*

*You never get nothing
By being an angel child,*

*You better change your ways
And get real wild.
I want to tell you something
I wouldn't tell you no lie,
Wild women are the only kind
That ever get by,
Wild women don't worry,
Wild women don't have the blues.*

It is the directness of this expression that makes these legendary blues so compelling. They were fashioned from women's everyday lives and turned into art, and they become our ancestral wisdom. When we listen to them, our own experience becomes reinforced, clarified, intensified. They awaken in us more dimensions, giving us a fuller, richer, and more intimate sense of our own lives.

Although the structure of the twelve-bar blues is formal, there is plenty of room for improvisation, so that the same idea can be expressed in many different ways. The following classic example by Ma Rainey is a strikingly poetic one:

*If you don't like my ocean,
Don't fish in my sea,
Stay out of my valley,
And let my mountain be.*

It was restated by Bessie Smith:

*If you don't like my peaches,
Don't shake my tree.*

Many years later Billie Holiday used these lines too, as did many of the classic blues singers.

These incisive metaphors are the words of proud women. Nowhere in American literature do we find poetry more eloquent than these oral expressions from black American culture. Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Marianne Moore would have agreed, I am sure, that matching this richness would be difficult.*

Yet these women aren't recognized enough as artists. They are not given the credit they deserve for having contributed so much to America's indigenous art, jazz. The blues is to jazz what yeast is to bread; without it, it's flat. The classic blues singers make up a substantial segment of the bedrock of American music.

Ma Rainey took country blues, a folk expression, and put it on the stage around the turn of the century, when she was only fourteen, shaping it and starting it on its way to becoming a distinct musical form. Before that, what was to become the blues covered a huge range of unrelated musical folk material such as mother's lullabies, spirituals, gospel, ring-shouts (a highly rhythmic circle dance), field hollers, street cries, work songs, prison gang songs, as well as songs sung on the docks and levees and particularly the songs of itinerant guitarists and banjo players. They all had a strong melodic line, which is central to the blues. They used freely pitched notes, which derive from African music and have come to be called blue notes. They are crucial to the blues sound.

Looking back at the song titles listed above, we can see the roots of a vital tradition, one certainly worthy of celebration as part of our musical legacy. Women's concerns and their expressions of them, which these songs are, unite all women. When Lucille Bogan sings "Sweet Petunia," she is using the same botanical metaphor for the vulva, musically, as Georgia O'Keefe used in painting in that decade.

How did an independent woman feel about her sexuality when she sang: "I got the sweetest cabbage in town," or "Nobody can bake a jelly roll like mine"? These women



Ida Cox.

were't talking about their culinary achievements. They were not burdened with Freud's sexual mistake of half a century. They knew the clitoris was important, for they sang: "Press my button, ring my bell." And they gave instructions, mingled with humor but nonetheless specific.

Here's another example by Ida Cox, who was a powerhouse. She frequently acted as her own manager, hiring the musicians (mostly Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders), the chorus of dancers, and the comedians, and taking care of business herself.

One Hour Mama

*I've always heard that haste makes waste,
so I believe in takin my time.
The highest mountain can't be raced,
It's something you must slowly climb.*

*I want a slow and easy man;
He needn't ever take the lead,
Cause I work on that long time plan
And I ain't alookin for no speed.*

*I'm a one hour mama, so no one minute papa
Ain't the kind of man for me.
Set your alarm clock papa, one hour that's proper,
Then love me like I like to be.*

*I don't want no lame excuses,
Bout my lovin bein so good,
That you couldn't wait no longer
Now I hope I'm understood.*

She continues in this vein for many choruses, then finally pushes it as far as it can go and never retreats:

*I may want love for one hour,
then decide to make it two.
Takes an hour before I get started,
maybe three before I'm through.*

There was no faking orgasms by these women as there was in the white world. Most white women didn't get to hear these independent women's blues, since they were on "race" records and not readily accessible. Some black church-going women forbade their children to listen to them. The blues records were called vulgar and low-class, *devil's music*. But the way they sold, they must have been bought by many people who pretended not to listen.

It is easy to understand why white male record producers would not release some of these songs to the broader market. They were embarrassed by them; these songs were counter to the behavior they expected of women, especially white women. The blues women were singing their feelings in a plain, unadulterated fashion. They were the lowest of the low on the economic totem pole, yet there they were—bold, brash, and forthright.

*If you can't do it daddy,
I got another sweet pappa who can.*

This statement dismisses monogamy, one of the significant social codes that keeps this culture "together."

*Pappa, you're standing in a good man's way.
You gotta haul your freight.*

[or]

*If you can't do better,
I'll let a better pappa move in.*

[or]

*If you don't give me what I want,
I'm gonna get it somewhere else.*

These women weren't about to be tied down:

Men are like streetcars

[or]

*You should worry if I have a thrill or two
Just as long as I keep enough for you.*

These are our true foremothers speaking, giving us courage to articulate our feelings when we want. They didn't ignore reality; they specified it. Sadness, comedy,



Mamie Smith.

irony, satire, mockery, sarcasm, all are elemental to this music. The intention is also fun, fooling around, outrageousness, and hilarity.

These women were not ashamed of their sexual hunger:

I want a little sugar in my bowl.

Lucille Bogan sang "Shave 'Em Dry" and so did other women, laughing all the way:

*I got nipples on my titties
As big as the end of my thumb,
Got something tween my legs
Could make a dead man come!*

The verse is an affirmation of life; a celebration of the power of the female life-force. If that is understood, embarrassment falls away. These women touch the spirit of comedy in the tradition of folk responses to life with its fantastic beliefs and its beliefs in fantasy.

Mary Dixon, one of the hundreds of women singers of the 1920s who are never mentioned in any of the books, confronts sexual reality face to face in "You Can't Sleep in My Bed":

*You're too big to be cute
and I don't think you are clean.
You're the darndest lookin' thing,
that I have ever seen.*

She doesn't want to antagonize her regular man, and she doesn't want to risk any infection or disease:

*You'd better be gone when my man comes in.
Stop shakin' your tail cause I don't know where you've been.*

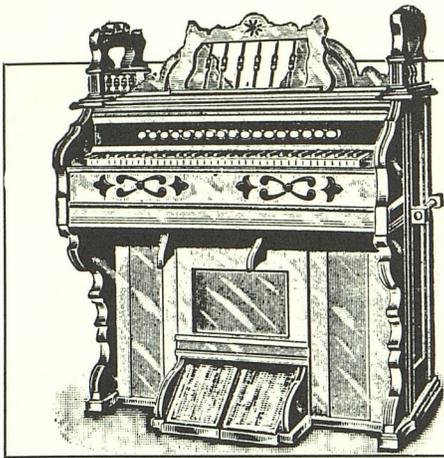
I have emphasized the independent lyrics of the blues women with the hope that you will be moved to go to the music and listen to them express their feelings in their own complex sound. It is difficult to try to explain the blues by analyzing the twelve-bar structure, the call and response pattern, and the meter framework because these specific elements were not always employed in the same way. Besides, that would be limiting it to a verbal explanation, which, at best, is inadequate. Words cannot describe the provocative timbres of a voice! We cannot ignore the fact that the essence of the blues is expressed in its sound.

To close, in the spirit of independence, a last mean verse by another super-artist foremother, Billie Holiday—who has been tragically maligned instead of celebrated for her huge contribution to American music. She recorded this song, "Baby, Get Lost," in 1949. Billie is figuratively sitting on top of the heap of decades of Big Blues Mamas when she belts out her fantasy:

*Don't want no trouble,
I've got to be the boss,
And if you can't play it my way,
Well now, baby, get lost.*

*See Louise Bernikow's anthology *The World Split Open* (New York: Random House, 1974) for a recognition of blues as a rich part of our poetic heritage.

Note: When I was asked for my sources for this article, I had a difficult time trying to list them because of the 1,000 some books and articles I've read on this subject, all written by men (not one of whom had had a minute's consciousness-raising). I learned more from talking to the women themselves and their friends—and from the music. When the music has been written about or re-recorded, it's the side men who have been featured—Louis Armstrong is given credit instead of Bessie Smith or Sippie Wallace, to take one example. The best source remains the blues women themselves, those who are still alive.



Singing Praises Women in Gospel Music

Alberta Thomas

*If you can go on loving in a world that's full of hate
If you can shape the future not just accept your fate
If you go one step further and keep the goal in sight
Then that's the kind of soldier we need to win the fight.*

*If you can raise the banner when it's falling to the ground
If you can be a worker and not just hanging around
If you can stop complaining and take the bitter with the sweet
You can be in this army that will never know defeat.*

*Chorus:
You can be a soldier fighting in the Army of the Lord
You can be a soldier fighting in the Army
Salvation is your helmet
the spirit is your sword
and you can be a soldier for the Lord*

*If you can still go onward while others call retreat
If in the highest places you can take the lowest seat
When those around are falling when you decide to stand
Then that's the kind of soldier who serves his fellowman.*

*If you can hold tears back to ease a heart that mourns
If you can share a problem when you have to hide your own
If you can give soft answers when others around you shout
Then you are blessed. . . and that's what it's all about.*

Lyrics by Beatrice Utterbach

Gospel music made an indelible mark on my life. I can remember so well as a child in East St. Louis, Illinois, listening to gospel music on the radio, at church, and in concert. Gospel music was very popular, and many songs that were recorded then, during the Golden Era of Gospel (1945–1960), went on to become classics. Any weekday for at least four hours during the day and four hours in the evening, gospel music was broadcast on one of the radio stations. The station was usually one that catered to the musical ears of the Black community. On Saturday gospel music was played for ten to twelve hours, and on Sunday at least eighteen hours of radio time were set aside for gospel music. But the highlight of listening to gospel music for me was Sunday morning at the New Hope Baptist Church.

The church was on one of the main streets of the city. It was a medium-sized church with modest decor. The pews were wooden, and when they became filled, metal

folding chairs were put in the aisle. The choir loft accommodated approximately thirty people. The pulpit was furnished with three upholstered chairs—one with a very high back for the minister and two others with lower backs, one on each side, for two of the assistants. Other assistants sat in metal folding chairs. There were three sections of pews separated by aisles. I always tried to get a seat in the middle section or the aisle of pews on the left side of the church so I could see the choir processional from close range.

The atmosphere Sunday morning at the New Hope Baptist Church was always one of excitement. It was the climax of Saturday's preparation. . . getting clothes ready to wear, having your hair "done up," cooking the Sunday meal. Women wore their best—nice suits; beautiful dresses; hats trimmed with flowers and ribbons; well-polished, often too-tight shoes; oversized purses; white dress gloves.

The New Hope Baptist Church was a neighborhood church; only a handful of people outside the neighborhood attended. There was much scurrying around before the service, greeting people you might not have seen during the week. I always rushed to get my seat to witness the processional. That was the signal that the service had begun. It was exciting to watch the choir members march down the aisle to the choir loft to the beat of the processional hymn. The women clasped their hands together and held them in front at their waists. The men clasped their hands and held them at their backside. They stood erect and took slow strides forward until they reached the choir loft; then they would glide sideways until they reached their seats.

There were several singing groups in the church: the Gospel Chorus, Male Chorus, Senior Choir, and Young People's Choir. They always wore color-coordinated outfits—maroon robes, black dresses with white colors, dark skirts and white blouses, grey robes. The groups took turns, singing on different Sundays. On special occasions, they all sang together.

Musical selections were interspersed between the prayers, offerings, announcements (there were many), and just before the sermon. As a child, I always found some reason to leave church before the sermon began. I would leave and go to the candy store, where I would meet up with others who had escaped the eyes of their parents. As I recall, there was always a candy store strategically placed near churches and schools, selling ice cream, chewing gum, and candy (especially peppermints). I

Alberta Thomas has lived in New York for the past 13 years and is currently researching a book on the role of the Black woman in the church.
© 1980 Alberta Thomas

remember the sisters in the church rambling through their purses, feeling for peppermints, and discreetly (somewhat) putting them in their mouths.

Music entertained us children, and we participated in that part of the service, singing along with the music group. The sermon lectured and scolded, and somehow we tried to escape.

In gospel music rhythm is the primary ingredient... the message is secondary. I remember it was difficult, in most cases, to understand the words that were said, but it didn't matter as long as you captured the rhythm and the repetitious chorus. It was not what was said so much as how it was said. Gospel music plays to the emotions. The object is to get an emotional response through the repetitious drive—repetition of both rhythmic patterns and lyrics.

The music, religion, and culture of Black America are basically African in origin, and this is reflected in their form and substance. The tunes and rhythms of gospel are rooted in the earlier music of the Black Church. The link between Africa—the ancestral home of Black Americans—and the survival in the Western experience—through slavery, segregation, political oppression, etc.—can be identified in that oral tradition. Elements from European hymns are combined with the moans, groans, and chants of Mother Africa, creating a distinctly new sound—spirituals.

Some gospel music is composed, while some is improvised or an embellished rendition of traditional songs. Some pieces are even take-offs on other songs that may or may not have a religious origin. Lyrics can be tailored to the situation and arrangements made to fit the needs of the particular singing group. Sometimes standard European hymns are “up-tempoed” to provide a rhythmical foot-stomping song—Afro-American style. But even though the words are not the number one element in a gospel song, they make a great impression just the same on those who tune into them.

The stories told through gospel music cover a broad range of subjects. Some are Biblical, with the verses made up of Bible stories and psalms. Some tell of life experiences, joyous celebration, and tragedy. Many are teaching songs; others songs of praise. Some are prophetic, telling of future events; others are invitations. Some are complacent, some political. There are songs filled with rage, or with anger and frustration.

To some, gospel is entertainment. To most, gospel music saves souls and lives, lightens burdens, and mends broken hearts. More than this, however, as Wyatt Tee Walker has said, “What Black people are singing religiously will provide a clue as to what is happening to them sociologically.” In his book *Somebody's Calling My Name*, he traces the use of music in worship with a view toward demonstrating that Black people's singing is in a specific context of social circumstances. His survey of the musical content of the Black religious tradition serves as an accurate commentary on what was happening to the Black community and its response to those conditions.

Female singing groups dominated the gospel music field, and gospel audiences were at least 75% women. Women have always played a leading role and have, in some cases, been the controlling influence in gospel music—it's probably a stronger role than women have



Marion Williams

played in any other kind of music in America. Women have always organized, conducted, composed, arranged, supervised, and sung—from the beginning, even before gospel music's phenomenal commercial success. I can remember in particular a woman directing the “Male Chorus” of the church I attended as a child.

In Black Baptist churches, women preachers were nonexistent and singing gospel music afforded some women the opportunity to “preach.” In the middle of a song, while the pianist played a chord, the soloist would “expound” on the word, witnessing and testifying of personal experiences. The “message” got across. The very same preachers who did not condone women preaching were the ones who got the greatest enjoyment from these women's “solos.”

Once women began expressing themselves through gospel music in the church, they were encouraged and strengthened to further assert themselves in all spheres of life, just as many brave Black women had done in the past. Sometimes this was related to the church but it was also outside of the church—in the community, in politics. We see evidence of this especially in the Civil Rights movement, where women were in the forefront of Civil Rights organizations and in administrative and teaching positions at Black colleges in the South. These women's expression through music and in other areas of life was backed up by other women who maybe weren't as vocal but who were supportive just the same—“with them” all the way.

From the time of the first gospel hit in the mid-1940s, gospel music also provided some women with a degree of financial independence, and therefore freedom in their art and their life styles. They received an income

that allowed them to wear stylish clothes, ride in fine automobiles, and enjoy the luxuries of women of financial means.

The new female gospel solo artists and gospel singing groups grew out of the original choirs. They carried on and expanded the tradition as they made their own original contributions. Yet, although women made up the majority of the performers and the audience at gospel concerts, it is ironic that there are so few known women gospel composers. Women did compose, but they did not receive the recognition. They were unaware, in some cases, of how to protect their rights to their original music. Only a pittance of the people—men *and* women—who wrote gospel tunes ever actually benefited from the sales.

But now I'd like to mention a few who sang during the Golden Era of Gospel. The Caravans from Chicago produced gospel soloists Inez Andrews, Albertina Walker, Cassiata George, and Shirley Ceasar. Shirley Ceasar is from Durham, North Carolina, and won a Grammy Award in 1972 as the best Soul Gospel Performer for her rendition of "Put Your Hand in the Hand" written by Gene McClellan. The Clara Ward Singers of Philadelphia were the first gospel group to sell a million copies of a recording. Soloist Marion Williams, from this group, is still recording. She has composed such songs as "Crown Him Lord of All," "Heaven Belongs to You," and "Lord I've Had My Way." The Roberta Martin Singers of Chicago birthed Gloria Griffin. Roberta Martin composed many of the songs that her group sang, individually and in collaboration with Thomas Dorsey. The Gospel Harmonetts of Birmingham, Alabama, gave rise to Dorothy Love Coates. She, too, is still recording and has composed such songs as "Every Day Will Be Sunday," "Hide Me Jesus," "Dark Day in Jerusalem," and "I'm Trying." There were other songwriters during the Golden Era of Gospel—Mahalia Jackson, Lucie Campbell, Beatrice Brown, and Virginia Davis, to name a few more.

I can remember so well listening to Clara Ward and the Ward Singers as they sang these words written by James Brewster for them:

Surely. . . Surely. . . Surely. . . Surely
He's able. . . to carry. . . you through.

This song carried a message of hope. Every Black gospel chorus had "Surely God Is Able" in its repertoire. Marion Williams was the soloist on this number. I remember hearing Marion Williams on the radio as she blasted through with:

Don't you know God is able,
He's able, He's able, God is able

I was easily convinced, from listening to that strong female voice, that He was able.

Mahalia Jackson, truly one of the giants of gospel, was known world-wide for her singing. She combined powerful vitality with great dignity and strong religious conviction. Miss Jackson was introduced to the gospel music world by Thomas Dorsey (a household name in gospel music for composing and arranging). When I heard her recording "In the Upper Room," one of her many hits, I would picture myself sitting around "the table" in the "upper room"—the only female there, mind you. My imagination ran wild when I listened to her



Mahalia Jackson

recording "Move On Up a Little Higher." I saw myself climbing a tremendous ladder to the sky, moving on up a little higher, to where "There'll be always howdy, howdy and never good-by."

Nor can I forget the Davis Sisters from Philadelphia and their popular recording "Twelve Gates to the City." I remember going through my "act," pointing in each direction:

Three gates in the East
Three gates in the West
Three gates in the North
Three gates in the South
Twelve gates to the City, Hallelu.

When I was a child, listening to the Male Chorus at church sing "The Old Ship of Zion" (written by Roberta Martin) literally frightened the wits out of me.

Tis the Old Ship of Zion
Tis the Old Ship of Zion
Tis the Old Ship of Zion
Get on board. . . Get on board

I pictured myself standing on the steps of the church, looking up the street, focusing on an old ship (on wheels, mind you) coming in my direction. The "captain" was perched on the bow, extending his hands, inviting me to "Get on board." Getting on board meant Death to me. My fright was relieved (somewhat) when they sang the next verse:

It has landed many of thousands
It has landed many of thousands
It has landed many of thousands
Get on board. . . Get on board



Naomi Thomas

Gospel had a profound effect on my life. My imagination soared and would at times dive to unbelievable depths as I dreamed about the experiences that the singers proclaimed in song.

It is interesting to note that during the development of gospel, this "new music" was often met with some hostility in the Methodist and other Protestant churches. Many considered it "sin music." In fact, there was lukewarm reception to gospel in the more conservative Baptist churches.

But gospel began to move out of the church. There was an abundance of gospel concerts during the 1950s in the East St. Louis area. They were produced by local producers—usually disc jockeys. It was a special treat when I was able to attend a concert at a concert hall, the high school gymnasium or auditorium or a church. I can remember hearing the Staple Singers, who are now popular pop singers, many local gospel artists like Brother Hugh Dent and Brother Joe Mays, plus many others, including the O'Neal Twins of St. Louis and the Five Blind Boys of Memphis. These concerts usually consisted of several groups, and they generated the most fantastic rhythmic excitement.

Later gospel was incorporated into show business. In the early 1960s, Marion Williams starred in the Broadway production of *Black Nativity*, a gospel musical with script by Langston Hughes. Her rocking arrangement of Christmas carols and spirituals became the show's trademark. Another Langston Hughes musical, *Tambourines to Glory*, was based on the storefront churches of Harlem, where gospel singing was a feature. Clara Ward was a member of that cast. In the mid-1970s the Broadway musical, *Bubbling Brown Sugar* included a rollicking gos-

pel number "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." There were others—Vnette Carroll's musical adaptation of James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombone: Your Arms Too Short to Box with God* which is again playing on Broadway, and *Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope*.

The 1960s also produced the Utterbach Ensemble, founded by Clinton Utterbach. Beatrice Utterbach, his mother, penned some of their songs. The Ensemble brought together a group of singers (mostly women) who were exceptionally trained and sensitive to the dramatic quality of gospel. It introduced to the gospel arena the use of classical techniques, weaving European-style music with the vitality and spirit of gospel. The result was phenomenal. In a form of music that is very free Clinton Utterbach imposed a discipline and style designed to maximize the effect of the music. That style was unique, and the quality of the singers added tremendously to the superiority of the group. There is something about a live performance that cannot be matched and Utterbach knew how to use the theatrics of performance. He tugged at the hearts of folks. There was no way you could experience this without being taken in.

The thrilling musicianship of Naomi Thomas of Hackensack, New Jersey, and Mildred Brown of New Rochelle, New York, former members of the Utterbach Ensemble, is evident as they now sing gospel and minister in prisons in the New York area. The alto and soprano voices of these two women offer an incomparable blend and quality. Naomi Thomas has written the lyrics and music for many of the songs sung by this duo, including "Praise Belongs to Our God," "We've Been Brought from Sin to Righteousness," and "He'll Supply Your Needs."

Gospel continues. And it will continue to continue. Some have said that the great gospel witnesses will not come again. I contend they are here. Audiences are no longer only interested in the "beat"; they are hungry for and responding to the "message." And I might add, some remain in church after the choir has sung to hear the "message" given by the minister.

On any given Sunday you can hear the likes of past and contemporary composers rendered by gospel choirs in predominately Black Baptist and Black Pentacostal churches throughout the country. One Black Pentacostal church that stands out is the Tabernacle of Prayer for All People in Jamaica, New York. The superb soloists and sensational back-up choir emit fire and zeal as their spirit-filled voices sing the praises of God. Their repertoire covers the gamut of gospel singing—with one exception: their messages are positive. I can relate to the testimony of Frances Capers, whose mellow, soothing, triumphant voice so eloquently belts out "God Is Not Dead." The highly repetitious drive of the choir behind the split-second precision of Bonnie Blake singing "Hold to the Master's Hand" produces clapping and joyous stomping as the audience responds to the invitation of the soloist. An extra treat at Tabernacle of Prayer is when the musical director reaches back to the Golden Era of Gospel and satisfies our hungry hearts with those songs. When Barbara Richardson belts out the old Ward Singers' million-copy seller,

*Surely... Surely... Surely... Surely...
He's able... to carry... you through*

I again relate and attest to the fact that He is able.

jazzwomen

they're mostly singers and piano players
only a horn player or two
hardly any drummers

hattie gossett with carolyn johnson

women and jazz? what? women's jazz festival? tv specials and films about jazzwomen? why? who cares? they've been overlooked by history? they should have been — what have they done that's worthwhile? everybody knows can't no woman blow no saxophone or beat no drums. somebody just gave them a gig knowing there's always a sucker ready to give up some money to see some broads, no matter what they doing. hell! i never heard of a men's jazz festival. hmmpmph! ain't that reverse discrimination? why don't they sponsor a men's festival? hmmpmph! what about that? huh?

★★★★★

women. jazz.

most jazz lovers hearing those 2 words if asked to put a name to the first image that comes to mind would probably say singer—bessie, billie, sarah, dinah, betty, carmen, ella. or singer/pianist—nina simone, hazel scott, amina meyers. pressed for instrumentalists, most will come up with keyboard players like shirley scott, lil armstrong, marylou williams, alice coltrane. a few might mention trombonist/arranger melba liston, alto saxophonist/vocalist vi redd or trombonist janice robinson. a middle-aged hipster or a jazz scholar would mention the all girl (so-called) orchestras and bands of the '40s. like the international sweethearts of rhythm. mostly though it's singers and piano players. only a horn player or two. hardly any drummers.

this is not about the singers and piano players and their magnificent contributions. not because these women don't deserve more attention, honor, gigs and money. anyone who has attempted the simplest research about women jazz performers will attest to the embarrassing shortage of material — no booklength biographies except for billie and bessie; few magazine articles, no films or tv shows, little radio. there is much work to be done.

but i want to shine my light on *this* question: why are there so few female names in the great roll call of jazz saxophonists, drummers, trumpeters, arrangers, composers, orchestra leaders? did god make women physically unfit to play certain instruments? are women mentally incapable of dealing with the ups and downs of jazz life? is all this stuff about women and jazz another media hype? a subversive plot to take over jazz being put out here by some mad feminists? are women musicians trying to get over by using their

hattie gossett. black woman. founding member of the johnson girls (so sic!). likes to read, listen to jazz and act out against big daddy. has worked as babysitter, maid, cook, barmaid, waitress, clerk, secy, wife. is working on first book. © 1980 hattie gossett

sex to cover up for their lack of musical ability? how come there's mostly singers and piano players, only a horn player or two, hardly any drummers?

herstory: how it was

actually it goes back as far and as deep as the music's roots, this practice of women playing hardly any of the major solo instruments. power instruments.

as an afroamerican art form, jazz is rooted in west african culture, with certain ties to euro-american culture as well. the african connection began with the drum on the mother continent and made its way across the atlantic along with the kidnapped africans whose fate it was to lay the foundations for the new world. not only was the drum a major power symbol in music, drama, literature, medicine and religion but also in communications; talking drums broadcast news over vast areas in an amazingly brief time. in the new world, the euro-american contribution consisted of additional instruments and a system of harmony based on a 7-tone scale. blues and jazz musicians soon subverted 3 of these 7 tones to blue tones or blue notes. the european power instruments were orchestra, piano and violin. in west africa women did not play drums. the idea was so highly taboo that the suggestion could elicit bales of laughter or fierce anger. some cultures even forbade women touching drums. women sang, chanted, danced. men were master drummers. this tradition was continued in the new world as was the european tradition of women not being major piano or violin soloists or orchestra leaders. both these age old traditions combined in the new world to lay a firm basis for excluding women from power instruments in any form of music, including jazz.

by the dawn of the 20th century secular afroamerican musical expression increasingly had an economic motive—the music had become a valuable commercial entity. musical creations had to be marketable or the creators couldn't eat. show business. entertainment. due to some queer notions equating black musical creativity with low life animal impulses and promiscuous sex, this highly inventive musical energy was confined to the red light districts of the newly industrialized cities. the term "hot" when applied to the music by its creators had one meaning, which was soon distorted. only the most "daring" whites and middle class blacks would venture to the red light districts to hear this

carolyn johnson. born in Texas, bred in New Mexico, jaded in California, revitalized in New York—uptown, downtown, El Barrio (the neighborhood, you dig!). like grandma used to say—the blues ain't nuthin' but a sistuh tryin' to come into her own.

“hot music.” it’s a good thing the recording process was invented and perfected around the same time the music was getting itself together. furthermore at the time when the music was developing there was a severe social prohibition against women being involved in any kind of commercial endeavor. women performers were thought to be harlots by most decent people. even high class opera singers and big-time actresses (white) were often regarded as somewhat less than ladylike. so you know what was said about jazzwomen.

with all this, it’s not surprising that most parents didn’t (and still don’t) want their sons to be jazz musicians or any other kind of artist, let alone their daughters. it’s a rough life, a dangerous life. even for men. wild. fast. uncontrollable. alcohol. drugs. loose women. loose men. seediness. unsteady income. all that traveling. cooking beans on a hot-plate in a tiny hotel room. all these images have been perpetrated by a hostile and racist media system. so lots of parents think it’s better for their kid to have something steady. lots of parents didn’t (don’t) want their daughters to even date a musician. musicians are full of stories about being told—sometimes at gunpoint or knifepoint—by parents to stay away from their houses cuz they are raising their daughter to be decent and don’t want to see her with any wild man.

so it’s understandable that few people encouraged their daughters to learn to play drums or saxophone. besides, everybody knows that girls take dance or piano or voice—maybe flute or harp. right? and most parents have no plans for their daughters to ever earn a living as a result of their dance, piano, voice lessons. the lessons are just something to help round out a girl’s development, make her more cultured and refined so she can get a husband with higher income potential. or, if the girl has a career as a nurse, teacher or secretary, then music is something to put at the bottom of her resume as a hobby or special interest.

today the women who are not afraid to be honest have told us enough of what it is like to survive the rigorous gauntlet to which even the most liberal of liberated men will subject any woman entering their previously unviolated male sanctuary, be it a muddy ditch, a plush executive suite or a bandstand. so you know what it must have been like in the days when men didn’t have to put up any pretenses about their prejudices about women. can you imagine being the girl singer in an all male 18 or 21 piece big band in say the ‘20s or ‘30s or ‘40s or ‘50s? traveling all over the country for weeks at the time in a bus? if a woman had gotten past her parents’ balking and if she had resisted getting pregnant, engaged or married, if she had dealt with local bandleaders and club owners and worked her way up to going on the road with a name band, she had already had some introduction. but in case she hadn’t, life on the bus on the road would sure do the job.

in polite conversation, the girl singer was called names like sparrow, wren, warbler, chirp. regardless of her talent she first had to fill the bill as a beautiful, charming, gracious, delicate, softspoken ornament. in fact, if you wanted to be a singer or instrumentalist, you had better be beautiful, charming, gracious, delicate, softspoken and ornamental. and then you had better be ready for the outright propositions, sly pinches, fast feels, leering eyes and mouths, direct hits, attempted rapes from bandleaders, sidemen, club owners, promoters, record company execs, customers, waiters. many times you had to wear some kind of weird gaudy costume which showed more than it covered. you often had

to be nice to the customers—get them to spend more money. and sometimes if the customer or the boss wanted to take you home with him you had to go if you wanted to keep your gig. and if you weren’t thin with long flowing hair, you had to be ready for the names like can-o-lard, hamhocks hips, greasy gertie, big butt berth. and if you had a big loud voice and not a sexy sweet voice it was even worse. your talent was somehow secondary. no wonder there was a steady stream of minimally or nontalented women who got over on their looks while less attractive gifted women often languished in the shadows.



Melba Liston. Photo credit: Deborah Feingold.

the road has taken the weight for the breakup of miles of love affairs and marriages. but when we think of this situation most of think of the husband as traveling musician and the wife as keeper of the homefront. no one expected a jazzman to rearrange his schedule so that he could be with his wife at the time when a child was born for instance or at the other critical times in a family’s life. some did, of course, but mostly they didn’t. this is even more peculiar when you remember that one of the attractions of the artistic life is freedom of schedule. and what is it like when the woman travels and the man stays home? traditionally this has not happened. in the past most women traveled with their husbands or some family member because this was a good way to avoid leering mouths and creeping hands and also because the road can be lonely. then too the husbands or family members often weren’t too thrilled about their wives, sisters, daughters being out on the road alone seeing, being seen, free. so then we have the phenomenon of the husband as manager or bandleader, often incompetent, jealous and possessive, sometimes better at squandering his wife’s money and ruining her career than anything

else. in contrast, jazzwomen often took leave from their careers to have babies and to raise families. in fact, many jazzwomen worked less frequently than they might have in order to spend more time with their families. after all, it's expected for a woman to do this. right? as for jazzwomen who decided to go on the road alone, to hang out, get high, have a succession of lovers and husbands? well, we know what was said about them—right?

and then there's the question of physical fitness. are women physically capable of maintaining the rigorous condition needed to perform the physical act of playing a set of drums or blowing into a saxophone all night long night after night year after year? doesn't it take a big strong muscular body? and won't your lips and mouth get deformed from all that blowing? or your chest? and what about the muscles in your arms and legs if you're a drummer? won't they be too big? and if you're not a drummer or a piano player, who at least get to sit down, will your legs and back be strong enough to stand up all night? and what about when you have your time of the month or when you're pregnant? doesn't all this add up to another big deterrent? well, if any of that's true, it sure doesn't show up in the women instrumentalists' photographs or in their living selves. if you saw a woman saxophone player or drummer without her instrument, you would see no standout or hidden physical features or distortions that would set her apart from any other woman. besides, if women have stood on their feet as waitresses, factory workers and household workers, etc., throughout history, isn't standing on a bandstand for 40 minutes out of every 60 for 4 or 5 hours a night kinda lightweight?

how it is now/how's it gonna be?

a lot is happening now. women's concerts and festivals and forums. a national directory of women musicians. calendars. business companies catering specifically to the needs of women musicians. women bands again, even women drummers and saxophone players, playing for all women audiences, playing for anybody anywhere. a blossom is opening, a butterfly emerging from a cocoon.

and of course there are problems. like any other emerging group, women jazz musicians are put on the spot as soon as they get their moment in the spotlight. what are your goals? everyone wants to know. where is this upsurge of energy headed? some see the goals as integrating women into the existing jazz structure so that eventually there is no need for women's jazz. these women often say they are just playing whatever music is out here and that their femaleness is only a happy accident. others feel that their femaleness has a lot indeed to do with their musical output and are making a conscious effort to create music that reflects the female experience. Some are anxious to prove they can do whatever men do; others want to show that women have something special to offer that is different and at least just as good.

there's another question which at first almost nobody wants to deal with. though if pressed, most honest observers will admit they too have noticed few black women in this flowering of jazzwomen. not that there aren't any black women at all. no. but it is clear that the descendants of the blonde goddess have an overwhelmingly higher level of visibility than the descendants of the african queen. this is certainly worth considering when we remember that jazz is an afroamerican cultural expression. is this black invisibility

simply a matter of numbers? are there fewer black jazzwomen? or is it a matter of talent—are black jazzwomen less talented? none of the above actually. like the roots of the music itself, the reasons go back very far and deep.

we have seen that traditionally jazzwomen had to be acceptable first as ornament/objects. as if this is not already bad enough, if we take a careful look at official jazzhistory (or american history or the history of western civilization), we will see that the most desirable ornament/objects have been those with flowing hair, blue eyes and white skin.



Paula Hampton. Photo credit: Raymond Ross.

oldtimers knew that ma rainey and bessie, clara and mamie smith were the baddest new orleans shouters, but sophie tucker got the shot in the movies and in the standard history books. and she assuredly got more money and better contracts and working conditions, too. she was the acceptable version. and then there was that whole generation of white women singers who got over by copying note for note the recordings made originally by black women singers. these copies or covers as they were known were then boosted to the top of the top 40, while the original black product was restricted to the chittlin circuit. actually, all women end up losing in this game. the white woman lost and still loses because she is forced to squash whatever creative ability she has in the slavish effort to imitate someone else. though her white skin can give her an illusion of having more creative ability and power than darker women, she pays for this shallow, hollow privilege by having to sacrifice her ability to develop along her own line.

the black woman's situation is even worse. not only can she never hope to successfully compete for the empty title of ornament/object; in order to even be in the game at all she is pressured to become ultimately a poor and sad imitation—several times removed—of herself.

but there is an even deeper irony to the situation. the playing of jazz has been not only a black prerogative but a black male prerogative. jazz has been one of the few pieces of turf held almost unquestionably by black males. like boxing. every now and then a new great white hope emerges, but it ain't no sweat cuz the hometeam knows that a joe louis or a charlie parker will emerge from the corner and reclaim the crown.

conversely, it seems that once jazz (like boxing) became a profitable and big business, white men have not brooked any serious challengers to their hold on the various commercial enterprises that reap profits from jazz.

black culture is a natural resource over which its creators have a diminishing amount of control. the african and other oppressed third world kinspeople of black americans are still connected to their land in varying degrees and therefore have some access to and control over their natural resources (oil, gold, labor power) and various cultural resources. although they too have suffered the ripoff of their cultural resources as part of the process of colonialism and imperialism. how else do you think the european and ameri-



Janice Robinson. Photo credit: Yasuhisa Yoneda.

can museums got to be full of african and other third world art and artifacts? in fact, it is only through the process of political struggle for liberation and nationalization that third world peoples have regained meaningful control over any of their resources.

the process of black american cultural disenfranchisement is often as subtle as it is unscrupulous. the current attack on sexism in jazz appears to be a liberating force because women's abilities as instrumentalists are now being recognized. but a deeper look at this "feminizing" process shows us that the trickbag of cultural ripoff is deeper yet because white women are still being promoted over black women. the first trick out of the bag was the promotion of

white men over black men for racist reasons. the next trick has been white women's promotion over black women for sexist *and* racist reasons. no matter how many tricks come out of the bag though, it is clear they are all designed to keep afroamericans from controlling our cultural resources, the same way we are not allowed to control another, even more important resource—our labor power.

although white jazz entrepreneurs deny making any real money and swear their only motive is love of a great art form, nobody has ever reported seeing any of them on the unemployment line or at the welfare office. it's an interesting breakdown, isn't it? black women and men creating a product that is imitated by white women and men and controlled by white men.

so how much of a challenge is today's wave of jazz-women to the established order of things if these points about black women and white male control are overlooked, uncomfortable as they make some people?

in addition to this pressure exerted on her from external sources, the black jazzwoman also faces internal pressures that often prohibit her creative expansion. because her physical features don't conform to the popular mold she must prove her femininity—must in fact first prove her humanity. there is more pressure on her to conform to the usual feminine standard—pressure from her family, from her man, from her peers and community. so it is harder for her to rebel. those who do rebel are often made to feel guilty, as though their rebellion is directly responsible for the demasculization of black men. this sexist internal pressure is often more difficult to overcome than the racist and sexist external pressure.

so the black woman is caught in crossfire—between a rock and a hard place. if it was hard for any woman to play saxophone and drums, it was even harder for black women. it is easier to rebel if you already have some kind of approval that gives you a leg to stand on. and the black woman knows that even if she does have the courage to rebel against the traditional ways and choose an untraditional life for herself in the arts—in jazz—she will find that certain realities seem to form the bottom line no matter where she goes. she is still the low person on the totem pole. not only is she a woman, she is black. not only is she black, she is a woman.

conclusion

what are the black women who are in jazz today doing to make sure they are seen, heard and appreciated? at this time we see many of them becoming dynamic and vocal members of organizations—organizations they've helped to form for the purpose of assisting young musicians with promotion, publicity, education and work. an example of this can be found in the recent *salute to women in jazz* produced by the universal jazz coalition. active during this week-long series of concerts, panels, etc., were sharon free-man, french horn player and pianist, carline ray, bassist, and trombonists melba liston and janice robinson, among others.

many black women in other creative disciplines—painting and writing, for example—have built collectives and support groups geared to their specific needs. an example of this is "where we at," a collective of black women who are visual artists. we have not heard much about similar groups

formed by black jazzwomen, though some agree that the need indeed exists. perhaps the fact that jazz has been a black male preserve for so many years makes it difficult for black women to emerge as a distinct group changing and shaping its creative possibilities. perhaps we will see in the near future an organization of black jazzwomen that will speak up for the needs and abilities of the black jazzwoman.

the answers to these and other questions are part of the buried treasure that this new wave of music will wash onto the fertile shores of black culture, women's culture, our culture.

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BEBOP WOMANTONES

Betty Carter and Akua Lezli Hope

An excerpt from an interview with Betty Carter (roman) by Akua Lezli Hope (italics):

Is jazz singer an accurate description of you, for you?

That's as close as anything you can get . . . I can't describe the style, it's a feeling that I get . . . Describing your style? That would pin it down, pin it down to a certain way that you do things all the time. That's not what happens. That's what jazz is all about. It changes all the time. My music is always . . . every time I do it it's something different. Something different happens all the time. And that is what jazz is. It's not programmed, in other words. *Improvisation.*

Well, it's not *programmed*. I'd say a lot of people are improv. A lot of people do a lot of things with improvisation. But it's a feeling that you get, too. Just because you improvise doesn't mean you are capable of doing jazz. A lot of horn players can improvise but they don't have a jazz feeling. That is what is the unique thing about it. It's a certain Feeling that you've got to have when you're interpreting it.

Does that Feeling come from creativity, approach, or a certain musical style?

It's all of that combined—creativity, the approach, the attitude. . . . [And] it's a Black attitude. It's Black music.

How did you come to singing?

I didn't really know that I was going to be a singer because I didn't have no beautiful voice. I had a good ear for hearing music; I listened to a lot of music, a lot of instruments; I didn't listen to any singers, though. I listened to singers by accident on the radio, or at a club, or things like that, but I didn't go out and buy a stack of, say, Bessie Smith records or Billie Holiday records or Sarah Vaughan records and play them all the time. I listened to more music, more horns, than I did singers.

You seem to approach your voice like an instrument.

Time helped me develop that. I didn't know that's what I was starting out to do. It wasn't a plan where I said to myself, "I'm going to sound like a horn, or I'm gonna bend my notes like a horn." No, that just started to happen as I grew, as I matured, as I listened to more music. Whatever you hear is strictly development. . . . Now, maybe what I don't do is that I don't have those most beautiful dulcet tones of a Sarah Vaughan, which pre-

vents me from sounding like a singer singer. I don't sound like a "singa." I like more of a Sound.

You've described those sounds as "woman sounds."

Yeah, well, they are. Most of the sounds that I make are for women. It just works out that way. I know women like these sounds . . . you look out in the audience and you see nothing but women, most of the time. I've worked in that scene. Women repeat themselves to come and hear me sing. Men come and hear me sing. They like my sound too, cause it makes them loving, too. And it makes them think about women, I think, when they hear it. So it works, whatever, whatever it is. If it's a woman's note, men will like the note because a woman's got to feel that note which will make her relate to her man.

Now that you have your own successful record company — isn't that a good feeling? All these people want that style.

(Laughs) But I never knew that, I didn't know that because I hadn't really worked the kinds of rooms that I wanted to work. Mind you now, I haven't done anything else but sing. It maintained me, being a singer; it kept me alive. I've never been on welfare, I raised two sons, I built a house in Jersey. So it's not that I starved . . . although there's a writeup in *Downbeat* where Lee Morgan, the late Lee Morgan, said (he's using me as an example): "Look at Betty Carter, she's starving." (Laughter) That isn't really true, I never starved, or anything like that . . . Look, I'm doing my thing the way nobody else has ever done it. I own all of me. . . . To make it like this, on your own, on your own, by not conforming, like I do . . . I'm free, I can do anything I want on stage.

Do you have a regimen? Do you wake up and say, "I'm gonna sing"?

No, when I get ready to sing, I'm in the mood to sing—no rehearsals every day. I have a family too; there are other things to do.

Yes, family too. How do you manage to do that?

You see, you can do all that *too*, you know, cause I wanted to do what I was doing. And I'd say anything you want to do . . .

You do.

But you gotta really want to do it and sincerely.

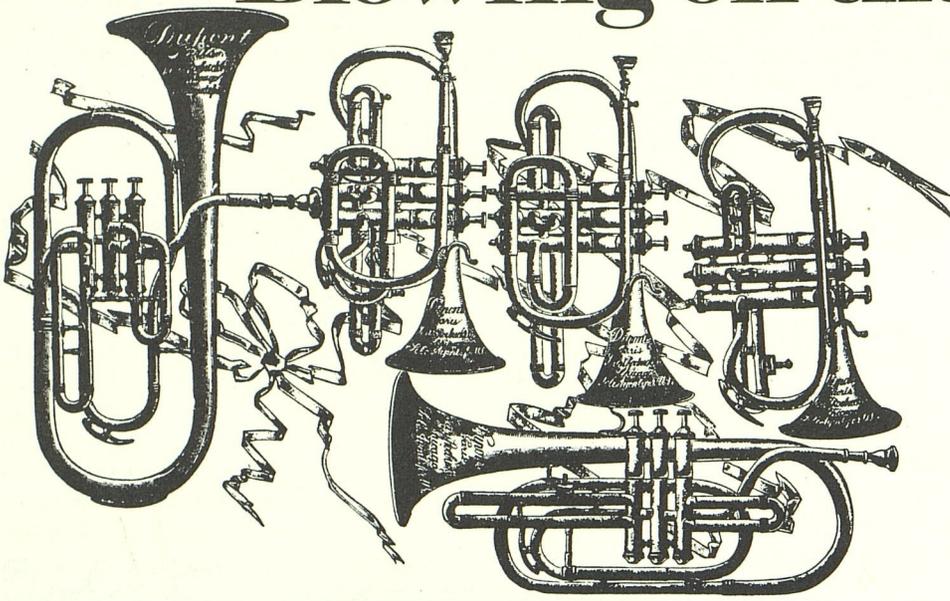
Akua Lezli Hope is a poet, writer, and aspiring saxophonist.

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Blowing on the Changes

Reflections of a Jazz Woman

Janet Lawson



I'm not sure which came first—the feminism or the jazz—but what exists now is the spirit of a 38-year-old feminist jazz musician.

My mother was a singer, a lyricist, and a composer—a woman who struggled with the ambivalence of wifing, mothering, and speaking through her own voice. She was deemed “emotional” for living in touch with her art and her feelings. Dad played the drums, guitar, piano, composing and painting portraits of movie idols from the marquees downtown. He didn't know how to express his feelings directly so he put it all into work. This was the atmosphere in which I grew up, and in this environment my self-expression as a musician took form.

When I was three years old, I sang on the radio from a stage show presentation Saturday mornings at the Hippodrome Theatre in Baltimore. At five I studied piano. My earliest awareness of a feminine consciousness was when I was 10 years old, lying in bed one night, struggling with the tugs of wanting to be a singer and wanting to be married and wondering why I had to choose.

At my first dance, instead of mellow-eyeing my date on the dance floor, my 14-year-old self was drawn to the magnetism of the band sounds, and, thanks to my mother's encouragement, I took the initiative and started gigging at 15. When I asked her how I could get to sing with the band, she said, “Ask to sit in and some will say ‘yes’ and some will say ‘no.’” Since that time I have traveled halfway around the world with my music—Bangkok the farthest—and some of the deepest experiences of my life (like singing with the Duke at the Maryland State Penn) have come from the music.

The women's movement has brought to the surface vital questions regarding women's individual expressions. In understanding our expressions, we need to examine a unique connection with the musical expression of women in jazz. The struggle for a woman to be in the jazz world is the same struggle for equal pay for equal work, clitoral

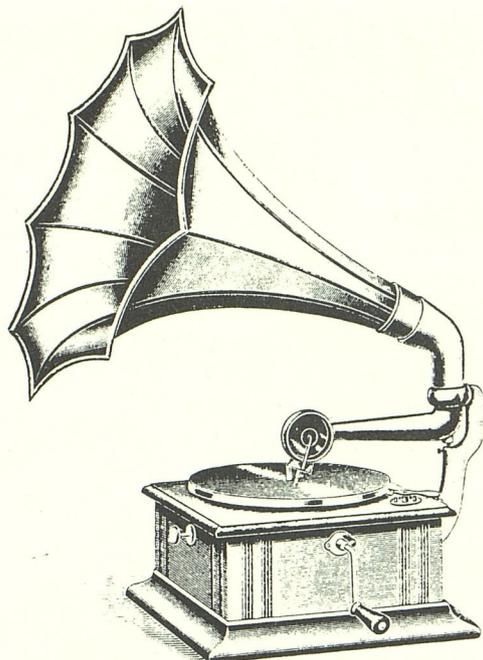
Janet Lawson, a NYC-based musician, improvisational singer, and composer, is currently composing and writing the book of a musical play in collaboration with lyricist Diane Snow. © 1980 Janet Lawson

orgasms, equal relationships, the sharing of child-rearing, and the shattering of role-playing.

Yet I find myself somewhat overwhelmed by the ambiguity and contradictions I encounter in questioning and exploring “accepted behavior” in a field in which I've spent most of my life. This Pandora's box with all its glitter can't be ransacked in one article. What I hope to do is stimulate some thinking on the subject so that women in jazz can rid themselves of the weight of judgment, self-fulfilling prophecies, male emulation, and all that we've bought and carted around too long as “proof” of our Karma, our destiny.

Every woman's biography and autobiography I've read has put me more closely in touch with the mystery of evolving. From Bette Davis's refusal to play simpy roles and taking that conviction to the courts, to Jane Fonda's Barbarella transformation—their process was a map I referred to and a model for my own metamorphosis. But just as we women have had to mentally substitute the pronoun *she* for *he*, I've bemoaned the extra work of translating the chronicled experiences of just about everybody else into those of my ancestor sisters in jazz. Where is our history (herstory)? Why did Lucille Dixon choose the bass to play in 1943 with Earl Hines? How did Vi Redd tapp her affinity with Bird's music? Why hasn't the influence of vocalists like Mamie Smith, Betty Carter, and Annie Ross been examined? How does this not knowing our history affect us? It's been said that those who don't examine the past are doomed to repeat it. If we can't observe who we are and how we have existed, we may continue to be invisible, to ourselves as well as the rest of the world.

There are several ways to approach this “lack of presence.” In Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Mino-taur*, I found a searing view of why women's access to the public domain is still so restricted and our formally recognized creative contributions still so much slimmer than men's. Dinnerstein states that “our species' painful misgivings about enterprise—about free rein for the spirit of mastery and inventiveness that led us to create ourselves in the first place—have not yet been felt through.” And that the prevailing male-female sexual arrangement creates indi-



vidualized expressions of the omnipresent condition of being mother-reared. The child's bodily tie to the mother is the vehicle through which the most fundamental feelings of a highly complex creature are formed and expressed. In this symbiosis, men are free to be more expressive of their resentment of that tie; society sanctions some rebellious behavior in men, and they *confront* the "struggle"—freeing them to be active and sometimes creative. The mother-reared boy senses that the original, most primitive source of life will always lie outside himself; to be sure of reliable access to it, he demands exclusive access to a woman.

Women's expression of the symbiosis reinforces men's power indirectly; women become the purveyors of male possessiveness and "ownership" of that power. In our collective unconscious, we have not expressed the rage associated with that primal tie. Nor have we worked out well-defined ways to balance identification with and feelings for the opposite sex with a sense of our own human identity. With rare exceptions, women have been less free than men to set our own terms in love or in any arena of creative expression. We have accepted traditional forms of behavior.

Both women and men cling to the "forms" of our sexuality—we seldom question our behavior. At best, women and men imitate each other in an attempt at real integration. Consequently, we must re-examine the *forms* in directing our attention to women's "ability" to contribute in the jazz idiom. Virginia Woolf articulated the idea of a female sensibility in literature; she thought that the initial step in forging such a sensibility would be "the remaking of the sentence."

Are jazz forms traditionally male, in that they were worked out by men to give themselves access to a line of creativity growing out of their rage and struggle for freedom? For example, within a tune, to create tension, climax, and release, the horn section "riffs" during a solo, contrasting the staidness of solo after solo. This riff concept—working with the rhythm section's weaving together to support the soloist—carries the pulse to another level and then lets go. The trust and strength of that ability come from a particular development and ego sense.

The question is not: Can we successfully imitate that form? There's no doubt that we can and have, given the experiential development that results from playing together with male musicians. But is this the only way we want to speak? By playing with more women musicians and therefore creating more trust among women musicians, we'll create a form for what we need to say in the music. But then, will these new forms be acknowledged as viable, as potent in the fabric of the music?

Before the sexual revolution, women were dependent on the magical power in the traditional male forms to "make us come." We were not responsible for our own climax and used the male form to find our own tension and release. The climax we tried to produce started out as "penis envy" if we wanted it, and "nymphomania" if we got it and wanted more, and "frigidity" if we wanted it any other way.

The liberation of discovering our multi-orgasmic nature engendered space for women to express ourselves authentically and, consequently, more powerfully. Our strength in knowing our own bodies and acknowledging what feels good created new forms of sexual expression. We've started to change the world; you know we're going to change the music. Judy Chicago writes: "To be heard and heard as women without denying what that means to us may mean changing the culture to include that space." And in the process, we can have an effect on traditional modes of male behavior within the music.

Never before has the time been so propitious for the creation of what may be a new art form intimately *concerned* with content rather than a form opposing content—for a real integration of the anima and animus in jazz. What essentially and in the forefront has been male is *the music* and we as females, with our own unique experiences, connecting with that form, can transform the idiom and advance its evolution. If the "known feminine qualities" of etherealness and romanticism and acknowledged "abilities" of endurance and cohesiveness mesh with the "male" characteristics of fire and inventiveness and discipline, there could truly be a richness to the music as yet unheard, and more people might relate to that fullness and the music might have a greater impact on its audience. It is not that women and men don't both have these qualities, interchangeably, but by following the clichés or stereotypes, we have reinforced them. We still have the opportunity to make ourselves and the music whole. (Some male musicians have already integrated these "feminine" aspects of themselves and their music reflects that. Miles, Coltrane and Keith Jarrett are known for the construction of their solos, taking turns and producing peaks and valleys—multi-orgasmic climaxes. One wonders if their sex life reflects this same heightened state. During a conversation with my father on this subject of vulnerability to the feminine experience, he told me of his ability to experience multi-orgasms and therefore transcend the traditional conduct expected in "male" sexuality.)

The way women first broke the codes in music was by marrying into the secret society of musicians or by being blessed with a teacher who knew the power of bringing new, unique energy into the fold. But, for the most part, men remained out in front—intimating that *their* music was *the* music. Jazz has been no exception. Lil Hardin (who various historians now admit was an important contributor to Louis Armstrong's development and to the life of jazz) and Leora Meoux Henderson (described mostly as Fletcher Hender-

son's wife) are not thought of as major forces in their own right. Leora Meoux played trumpet and was a member of Lil Armstrong's band. Lil was a pianist, composer, and band leader in the early '20s and '30s. She is probably one of the top five women in jazz history.

Yet, generally, women jazz artists were isolated—they lacked contact with other female musicians and were on the fringes of men's music. The absence of a network or support system of women musicians perpetuated the myth of special dispensation when it came to women playing jazz. Compounded with the notion that stamina was a requirement women couldn't meet and that the sexual freedom, and thus magnetism, emanated from a male player on the stand, woman's role was clearly defined—she was to be a nourisher of and voyeur to the main events.

For women who would not or could not "marry into jazz," the scene was pretty dismal. Women were allowed into the important scenes of productivity only as sex objects. Restricted to that realm, the female vocalists, be they "virginal" and "unattainable" or "sexual animals," were meant to hold women's more general entry at bay. Standing still while men fantasized their sexual pursuits, we posed no threat. But moving around—improvising or fingering an instrument in our hands—we were too threatening to the male stronghold. So we acquired the images of virgin queen and drug-addicted victim, and these were paraded through the band and bop era as our models. An understanding of the great *art* and complexity of Billie Holiday is intertwined with a recognition of the limited options available to her in society. I often wonder if the tragedies in conflict with her genius could have been overcome if our models and images for such potency had been acknowledged and known. And yet, even with the exploitation, she and other artists, like Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Anita O'Day, Betty Carter, and Annie Ross, transcended those negative images and carved a niche in the male bastion through their improvisation of compositions and their use of the voice as an instrument.

The voice is primary in the development of jazz, beginning in West Africa with the drum and voice in call-and-response, down to the instrumentation in bands that reflects vocal timbres and sonorities. The sounds of jazz can be directly related to earliest African singing. The improvisational flavor of using the voice in rituals, announcements, delights of nature, and imitating those joys in a wide range of tones and textures extended to African instruments, like ivory horns, marimbas, thumb pianos, flutes, and multi-voiced drum ensembles. Women committing themselves to that vocal tradition, carrying the cross of improvisation and warding off the vampires of commercialism, sometimes were able to break through the mold of woman's image. By creating their own compositions improvisationally, these women first took on the responsibility of doing their own thinking, creating their own structure, presenting their full musicianship instead of being tools to the imaginations of the male hierarchy.

Paradoxically, in the past, women, especially singers, were given special approval from male musicians for "playing by ear"—intuitive as opposed to learned, "professional" skill. As long as we accepted that "specialness," we were denied various methods of study and we remained outside the arena of healthy competition within the mainstream of music, keeping us from reaching a real sense of ourselves and our jazz. It became a self-fulfilling prophecy. We could

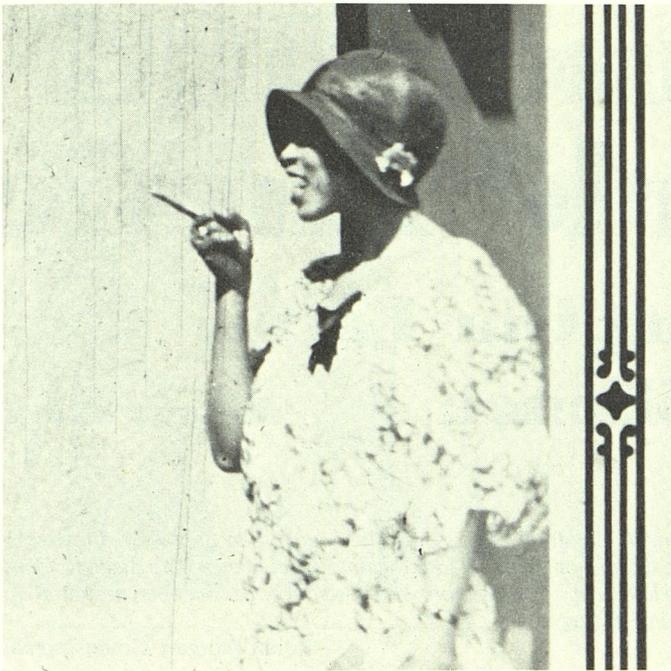


Woman Playing the *Lekope* (New York Public Library Picture Collection).

not be "real" jazz musicians since our music was only intuitive and we had not learned how to speak the language. Every movement and minority has its own language. Yet, by accepting enslavement without using our own words to free ourselves, we allowed the dependency of "specialness" to keep us from experiencing a real sense of ourselves and our jazz. There is a power intrinsic to the claiming of a language and its instrument.

Women's strength as jazz musicians will come when we allow ourselves to play as women. Ashley Montague calls us the superior sex—scientific findings assure us we are stronger than men when it comes to endurance. I wonder if that would apply to how many choruses we could take on a solo. Playing "hard time," "swinging" in a rhythm section, might feel to some women like inescapable bondage with male energy. But being "locked in the time" and "smoking" have less to do with physical strength and more to do with the lack of fear. Our associating these concepts with being locked into roles may scare us away from the soaring aspects of being specific, and floating in time. It's a powerful experience—making music with other musicians, feeling the energy created by each person's sense of the time and combining it in a way that makes it one pulse. Musicians have got to trust each other to make that happen, and maybe that's one of the reasons why women playing together haven't created that sensation of orbiting into another dimension by the energy of swinging. We've relied on the men to supply that force and our trust in each other hasn't developed to create it among ourselves. As we play together more often and in varied situations, what will emerge is the discovery of how to make that happen. Then, if there is such a thing as women's jazz, it will emerge free from any stereotyped suppositions of what it should sound like.

Playing music together, like any relationship, requires a lot of risk-taking—chancing that what we'll play may not be what the bass players before us played, chancing that we may not get the "male" sound many of us have been taught to feel comfortable with. But that step has to be taken if we



Lil Hardin Armstrong

are to know all there is to know about each other and what we really sound like. Right now all we have is what we sound like with Big Strong Daddy at the helm of the rhythm section or what we sound like in the shadow of our husbands. If we're not as "serious," our mistakes shouldn't be taken as seriously either. But, then, what about our successes? We have to risk that failure in order to grow as musicians.

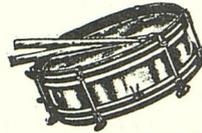
Women have only recently engaged in consciousness-raising dialogue with each other. That same experience in music is what can allow more of us to create in that medium; we'll have each other to talk with, to draw out our uniqueness. Until now, our conversations have usually been in competition for the attention of the male ear. Why don't we explore what *harmonious* rapping contributes? Playing together means everyone finding a spot for herself—in the time especially—not playing anybody else's time, your own time but compatible with the others. As we discover more facets of our selves as women, we'll be able to connect with *various combinations*. The person, woman, musician, as individual entities, need to be there, each individually, before the whole makes a statement. . . unless we want to imitate "male" behavior.

Feminism in jazz means consciousness of ourselves as women, focusing the lens to clarify or magnify *our* presence. Some women who made it before there was a support system, or a women's network, feel women musicians today are accepted as musicians just because they are women—compensatorily. But the lens of awareness focused on women means not letting the level of excellence slide. The whole idea of differential treatment—special because we're women—is inimical to the women's movement. Ever since we decried the "respect" of having a door opened for us or having our cigarette lit, our trajectory has been toward real equality in not being singled out. It's one of the paradoxes of life, this focus on our presence so we can be viewed more naturally as part of the whole.

The range of musicianship in the community of jazz is broad enough to sustain healthy competition. Developments in the last three years, starting with the Woman's Jazz

Festival in Kansas to the Universal Jazz Festival in New York, have revealed our presence as pervasive. Sometimes we play with each other, sometimes with male musicians, and sometimes that's better and sometimes it's not. But the mere fact of our participation changes the color and tone of the experience both of the people making the music and of the ones who are listening. We're here playing jazz, freely expressing our journey from elitist exclusion to stereotyped "bit parts" to making our own entrance.

What is happening in jazz is what's been happening in our society. Women have more options to explore—more combinations to participate in and discover our potential through. And ultimately we will give back a statement of our collective experience and individual contribution to that whole. The women's movement is giving all of us the opportunity to sensitize ourselves to the experience of birth. Whether we're in it or witnessing it, there is emerging a new presence in the jazz world. And even though our unknown history is replete with women musicians who broke the ground and made the music we've yet to hear—it's today's music that is truly energized by the awakening of women's power. That awakening is the renaissance in jazz; without women there is no renaissance.



UNIVERSAL JAZZ COALITION, INC.

Now in its fifth year, the Universal Jazz Coalition, Inc., under the executive directorship of Cobi Narita, is a not-for-profit service organization which supports the creative efforts of jazz musicians, both established and emerging, with low-cost professional public relations, promotion and advertising, concert production, and career guidance. UJC also produces seminars and conferences, workshops, concerts, and other special events. It publishes a national 24-page magazine (*UJC Jazz Catalyst*), a musicians' newsletter, a jazz calendar, and a women in jazz directory. UJC has now produced three Annual New York Women's Jazz Festivals. Most recently it completed a five-day women in jazz series at the Chase Manhattan Plaza (in August) and a six-day one at Citicorp (in September). For further information, contact: Universal Jazz Coalition, Inc., 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 817, NY, NY 10010 (phone: 212-924-5026).

WOMEN IN JAZZ THEATRE, NYC

Women in Jazz Theatre encompasses a wide range of purposes and fulfills a dream in the spirit of jazz. For too long women's contributions to the music have been overlooked, noveltied, stereotyped, or exceptionalized. Based on rap sessions with women jazz musicians (relating experiences as we've come up, our history, models, etc.), Women in Jazz Theatre will include our story, played by us musically and spoken by us on the stage. The words and music come from our truth. The medium is the play. This concept of utilizing improvisations in the theatre and musicians acting themselves can bring together worlds of musicians, performers, and audiences who have felt separated by either the images of a seedy club or the pomp of a theatre. The oneness of Women in Jazz Theatre will create more work for women jazz musicians and greater audiences for the music. For more informaton, contact: Janet Lawson, 230 Riverside Drive 17E, NY, NY 10025 (phone: 212-749-0181).



Women and World Music

Straining Our Ears to the Silence

Joanne Riley

There have been . . . women, singing their genius onto the page (when they were allowed to learn how to read and write, that is) or singing it into the empty air, in every language humans are capable of. What of the lost ones—the creators who died never having been permitted to solidify their art in something lasting at all?

—Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far*

Ethnocentrism: n., 1) The belief in the inherent superiority of one's own group or culture. 2) a tendency to view alien groups or cultures in terms of one's own—[*Random House College Dictionary*].

Social scientists have come to recognize ethnocentrism as a dangerous threat to so-called objectivity, as a tendency that should be conscientiously rooted out of individual and institutional perspectives, whatever the cost. It is now generally conceded that an ethnocentric orientation can distort cross-cultural observations to the point of rendering them useless, except as an exposition of the observer's worldview. So practitioners of such disciplines as anthropology and ethnomusicology are constantly on the alert for the slightest suggestion of ethnocentrism and the misrepresentation it implies. Commendable as this vigilance may be, it by no means guarantees "objectivity." Moreover, there are other, equally insidious blindspots, the chief of which is androcentrism.

Androcentrism: n., 1) The belief in the inherent superiority of the male sex. 2) a tendency to view the world in terms of the male perspective.

The premise that sexual asymmetry is a true cultural universal is based in part on the observation that every known society on earth appears to use the physiological differences between the sexes as the foundation for other social constructs. According to Margaret Mead:

We know of no culture that has said, articulately, that there is no difference between men and women except in the way they contribute to the creation of the next generation; that otherwise in all respects they are simply human beings with varying gifts, no one of which can be exclusively assigned to either sex. We find no culture in which it has been thought that all identified traits—stupidity and brilliance, beauty and ugliness, friendliness and hostility, initiative and responsiveness, courage and patience and industry [and, I might add, musical creativity]—are merely human traits. However differently the traits have been assigned, however arbitrary the assignment must be seen to be, it has always been there in every society of which we have any knowledge.¹

In fact, in most societies, sexual asymmetry is marked enough to imply that "male and female are really two cul-

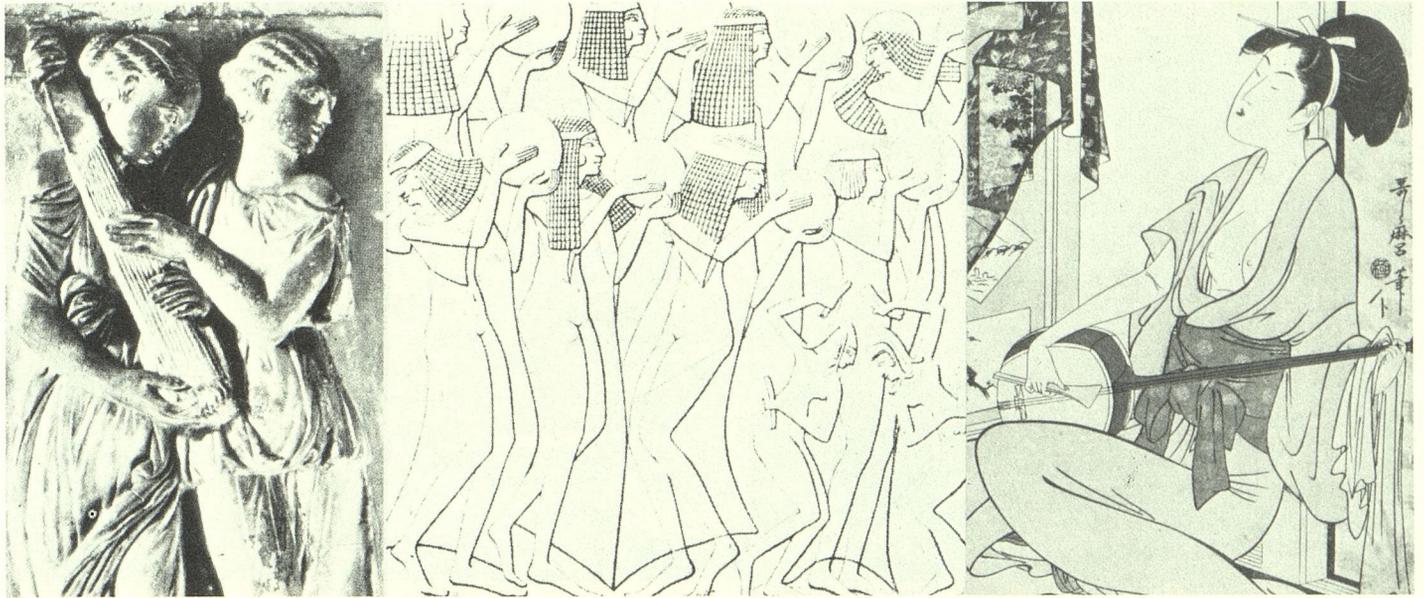
tures and their life experiences are utterly different"²—even within a single community—since men and women follow different sets of rules, which to a great degree determine their social experiences. The fact of universal, but arbitrary, assignment of sex roles means that no culture or cultural activity can ever be accurately described without gender clarification.³ Ethnomusicological research should specify which sex participates in a particular activity or belief system, or that both do, but the pervasiveness of androcentrism too often prevents this from happening.

Examples of androcentrism abound in the ethnomusicology literature. For instance in "The Influence of Pueblo Worldview on the Construction of Its Vocal Music," Janice Weinman offers the following observations:

Man's existential perspective stems on the one hand from his relationship to nature, and on the other hand from his relationship to other men. . . . [T]he imploring tones of the chant [of the Corn Dance Song], which are sung by a performer or religious observer, never assume the form of a detached melodic line, but rather sound like the natural wailing of the common man trying to influence the deified form of these forces from whom he seeks to gain gratification.⁴

There is a serious confusion here with regard to referents of nouns. "Man," "he," and "performer" could mean the entire Pueblo population, as we are taught that generic terminology does, or it could just as easily refer to only 50% of the group, the male half, since another source informs us that religious ceremonies in Southwestern Native American culture always "tends to be in the hands of the men."⁵ Weinman never specifies the role of the other 50% during the Corn Dance, a specification that becomes essential, given the ambiguity of the language.

Another example, drawn from *Maori Music* by J. Anderson, concerns the Polynesian *koauau* (a generic term for flute). Anderson begins by describing the manufacture of and playing technique for the instrument and mentions that "the nose flute appears to have been chiefly an instrument for lovers."⁶ It is not until countless anecdotes later that the reader begins to sense that only one of the lovers, the man, ever actually *plays* the flute—the role of the woman is to listen. "When a man manufactured a [flute] it was for the



purpose of attracting some woman he desired. If he played that [flute] well, the woman could not resist him."⁷

Anderson also quotes a description from 1790 of Maori singing by a member of Captain Cook's crew:

They "... have an adroitness, and manual dexterity in an uncommon degree, which are discovered in whatever they do ... in their song they keep time with such exactness, that I have often heard above a hundred paddles struck against the sides of their boats at once, so as to produce a single sound, at the division of their music. A song not altogether unlike the war-dance song they sometimes sing without the dance, and as a peaceable amusement: they have also other songs which are sung by the women, whose voices are remarkably mellow and soft, and have a pleasing and tender effect."⁸

The information that there are "*also other songs which are sung by the women*" immediately raises the question of who the "*Maoris*" of the preceding description were—probably only male Maoris, although this is never clarified by either the 18th-century chronicler or the 20th-century author. And so the confusion persists.

Even if all ethnographers were to agree that every cultural activity would henceforth be described in nonambiguous, gender-specific terms, the problem would not disappear. The selective perception that determines which aspects of cultural life will receive attention and which will be judged peripheral by ethnographers is unmistakably colored by androcentrism. *Ethnomusicology and Folk Music: An International Bibliography of Dissertations and Theses*, compiled in 1966 by Gillis and Merriam, gives a good indication of the topics chosen for research in the preceding 40 years.⁹ Of a total of 873 entries, more than 80 papers deal with religious music, a sphere dominated by males in most cultures; there are eight papers on sea chanties, ten on war music, one on hunting music—and two each on laments and lullabies, the only forms of music which have traditionally been within women's province. This glaring bias in favor of men's activities cannot be explained away with the rationalization that until very recently most anthropologists were men, and thus naturally more inclined to study men's activities, for the majority of

anthropologists are also white and university-educated, while their subjects of study, for the most part, are not. The real reasons for these statistics are to be found in the very complex interweaving of threads that ultimately form the fabric of the human psyche, and of human culture.

Unraveling these threads is the goal of feminist theory, which regards the dynamics of society as inextricably related to the dynamics between the sexes. A critical eye must therefore be turned on a variety of gender-related phenomena—sexual asymmetry, widespread devaluation of women, the biological realities of sexuality, the dichotomies between public and private spheres, "culture" and "nature"—in the hopes of illuminating the relationship between women and "culture," including the musical arts.

Unilateral Culture: A Male Invention

The prevalent idea that "in every known culture women are considered in some way inferior to men"¹⁰ is a conclusion also drawn by Sherry Ortner from three types of data:

- 1) elements of cultural ideology and informants' statements that explicitly devalue women, according them, their roles, their tasks, their products, and their social milieux less prestige than are accorded men and the male correlates;
- 2) symbolic devices, such as the attribution of defilement, which may be interpreted as *implicitly* making a statement of inferior valuation; and
- 3) social-structural arrangements that exclude women from participation in or contact with some realm in which the highest powers of the society are felt to reside.¹¹

Based on these types of data, women can be said to be subordinated to men in every known society. Although heroic attempts have been made to find evidence of truly egalitarian societies, whether in the present or the past, these attempts have failed. Louise Lamphere carefully examines a number of supposed egalitarian societies described by hopeful anthropologists, only to conclude that "the category of 'complementary but equal society' is no more than a label for societies where anthropologists find that on closer

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Eskimo woman. Stonecut (NY Public Library Picture Collection).

examination women do and say more than we naively would have expected."¹² Mitigating evidence has been found to disprove every claim of an apparently egalitarian or "matriarchal" society, which leaves us with the conclusion that women do in fact occupy a status secondary to that of men in every known society.¹³

The question to be dealt with now is why this is so, and the answer is *NOT* "Because Nature intended it ever thus." As Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo explains:

Anything so general as the universal asymmetry of the sex roles is likely to be the result of a constellation of different factors, factors that are deeply involved in the foundation of human societies. Biology may be one of these, but biology becomes significant only as it is interpreted by human actors and associated with characteristic modes of action.¹⁴

There are three biological realities in human life which, through the interpretation of human actors, have become significant with respect to the cross-cultural status of women—and which foster the maintenance of a unilateral, male-dominated culture.

The first of these realities is that the typical female life cycle is far more noticeable and dramatic than that of the male. Menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth are impressive events which have no correlates in the male life cycle, and which consequently seem mysterious to the male, who has long sought plausible explanations for them. For instance, menstruation is often described as the result of a gashlike wound inflicted on women for various reasons, and the blood flow—which strangely does not kill or weaken her—is invariably labeled a very powerful and generally evil contaminant. "The notion that women's sexual processes are impure is worldwide and persistent; the magical fear of menstrual blood is particularly intense."¹⁵ Childbirth and pregnancy are also sources of *mana* or supernatural power, but the cross-cultural male reaction in this case is principally one of envy, as evidenced by such customs as *couvade* (the ritual practice in which the father pretends to give birth to his child while the mother actually does so somewhere out of sight, after which everyone tenders congratulations to the *father* for a successful delivery!).¹⁶

The second reality that contributes to the status of women is the fact that virtually every human being receives her or his earliest socialization primarily from a woman. This is due to the need for breast-feeding and also to the cus-

tom in most cultures of leaving children of both sexes in women's hands until age seven or so (when boys may be removed in order to "make them into men"). Thus, the initial role identification for every child is female, which is fine for girls, who are expected to assume that role as adults, but which causes great conflict for boys, who are forbidden the female role but cannot see a clearly defined male role. This conflict is at the root of brutal male initiation rites, which force boys to reject the female world of their childhood, where women wielded so much power, in order to take up the roles and values of men, whatever the society conceives them to be. As Margaret Mead states, "the recurrent problem of civilization is to define the male role satisfactorily enough."¹⁷ The various less-than-satisfactory solutions have included the simple appropriation by males of female roles, as in *couvade*; identification of masculinity in confused but emphatic terms as everything that is *not* feminine; or elevating the significance of male rituals, roles, and activities and surrounding them with exaggerated secrecy.

Evidence of the conflicts generated by the socialization process can be discovered in cultural stories or myths. Although myths are generally considered symbolic answers to the "collective" questions of a society, they in fact answer only the questions that arise from the *male's* subjective view of the world, and they deal with the fears triggered by *his* confrontation with the mysteries of life, often seen by him to reside in the female. "The testimony of history indicates that women themselves did not originate the myths that have surrounded them; they have been victims of the ambivalent magic with which dawn cultures were riddled."¹⁸ A composite account of the Jurupari myth, "The Invention of the Sacred Trumpets," which is part of a complex ritual cycle common to a number of peoples in the northern Amazon region, illustrates this point.

It seems that the ownership of the sacred musical instruments was originally in the hands of the women, who kept them hidden in the forest, where they would secretly convene to play them. But they devoted so much time to playing the instruments that they eventually abandoned their household duties, forcing the men to carry firewood and fetch water. Finally the hero Kuwai forcibly took the trumpets away from the women and gave them to the men, warning them never to allow the women to get them back. And so it is that women and children are forbidden to look upon or touch the sacred trumpets, on pain of death.¹⁹

It is very unlikely that this myth describes a historical matriarchy;²⁰ instead, it could be viewed as a symbolic account of the passage of men from mother-dominated childhood to male-dominated adulthood. It is equally unlikely that any woman had a hand in creating the myth—any more than women contributed anything to the character portrait of Eve. A fundamental principle of myth-creating is that one makes oneself the *protagonist* in the drama. It would make no sense at all to attempt to rationalize one's place in the world by concluding, "I am evil, worthless and the source of untold havoc and grief." Every human being naturally sees herself or himself at the center of the universe, and the overwhelmingly disproportionate number of myths and legends that devalue women in some way can only mean that they were created by men.

The third reality is interpreted in a way that contributes heavily to sexual asymmetry—that "woman's body and its functions, more involved more of the time with 'specific life,' seem to place her closer to nature, in contrast to man's



Carr

physiology, which frees him more completely to take up the projects of culture."²¹ The ways in which men responded to menstruation, pregnancy, and childhood domination by females (with fear, envy, and insecurity or resentment, respectively) were bound to become part of their attempts to rationalize the world around them in symbolic terms, in myths, songs, and the like. Men's tendency to perceive women as aligned with nature (another powerful and feared force to subjugated), coupled with men's greater muscle strength, ability to rape, and freedom from the temporary immobilization of pregnancy and childbirth, undermined the innate human equality of the sexes. Men's rationalization of the world was then imposed on women. To paraphrase Juliet Mitchell,²² the condition of women in society is a specific structure, a complex unity of elements revolving around the key issues of reproduction, sexuality, the socialization of children, and production. These separate elements can progress at different speeds resulting in variations of the structure in different cultures and throughout history. But the outcome in all societies and in all historical periods has been the domination of the female by the male, both on concrete and symbolic levels.

The opposition between "domestic" and "public" spheres is a universal dichotomy that provides a useful framework for conceptualizing the activities of the sexes. Women, because of the social limitations imposed on their productive roles, have long been associated with the domestic realm, defined as "the minimal institutions and modes of activity that are immediately organized around one or more mothers and their children."²³ Men, on the other hand, have always been freer to devote their attention to the extrafamilial realm, to everything, in other words, that is *not* domestic.

Because men do not have a "natural" base for familial organization (nursing, generalized to childcare), they are assumed to be the "natural" proprietors of religion, ritual, politics and other realms of cultural thought and action in which universalistic statements of spiritual and social synthesis are made. Thus, men are identified not only with culture, in the sense of all human creativity as opposed to nature; they are identified with culture in the old-fashioned sense of the finer and higher aspects of human thought—art, religion, law, etc.²⁴

Thus, the values emanating from and perpetuated in these

public categories are bound to be male-defined.

Implications for Music

"Music," according to Alan Lomax, "even when performed in private, is public in nature."²⁵ By this he means that music, like any other human behavior, must conform to societal standards in order to be intelligible to other members of society. It also means that music is generally a communal activity, performed with or for the benefit of one's family, friends, and neighbors.

Since we have just determined that the public sphere is normally reserved for the exercise of male creativity, it would follow that most societies place limitations on women's music-making, and this does seem to be the case. Especially in religious settings, where the goal is for men to gain some measure of control over the mysteries of life (one of which, to them, is women), the musical creativity of females is severely circumscribed in many cultures. Navajo women are not allowed to sing at all in religious ceremonies until after menopause.²⁶ Women in ancient Japan—no matter how highly educated—were permitted to use only the "lowest style" of music.²⁷ Women of the Caraja tribe of Brazil do not sing at all, since only men fit the cultural definition of "singer."²⁸ And these are but a few examples.

In many cultures certain instruments are restricted to performance by one sex or the other, but the punishment for violation of the taboos by males is nowhere near as severe as that suffered by women. To cite but one example:

The musical instruments [played by men of the South American Indian Takuna tribe] were used to frighten women and children, who were forbidden to even view them. A Takuna text tells how a girl broke the rules and spied upon the flutes. In revenge she was killed and quartered. Her flesh was afterward smoked and made into mush for a village feast, to which both her mother and sister were summoned.²⁹

The forbidden instruments invariably have sexual connotations, but the symbolism varies with different groups: drums, for instance, are sometimes considered "feminine" (round and hollow), and sometimes "phallic" (round and hollow).³⁰

Alan Lomax has found musical evidence of the tensions inherent in these repressive attitudes toward women, and he refers to this evidence in his several presentations of his



cantometrics system. Cantometrics assumes relationships between song styles and social structures, and "the assumption that gives significance to these relationships is that every cultural system has an internal congruence reflected in its expressive and communications systems."³¹ Some of the relationships Lomax proposes are: vocal tension and nasality (which increase as sexual mores become stricter), polyphony (which appears where there is "recognition of the importance of the feminine role in culture"), and tonal blend of the vocal group (which becomes more cohesive as women's role in food production increases).³²

Although Lomax claims that all of the correlations he makes are just between "co-occurrences" in a society, it is clear that the basic "occurrence" for him is the way a society chooses to deal with the division of labor and the means of production. His analysis is androcentric to the core. The "basic aspects of social interactions" that Lomax chooses as correlates to elements of folk song style are: size and kind of community, productivity of the subsistence system, government and stratification, sex roles and child-rearing.³³ However, "sex roles" refers only to woman's participation in production and the degree to which her premarital sex life is curtailed; "child-rearing" refers only to indulgence or rigidity in discipline. Lomax says nothing about other human universals besides work—such as the universal male dread and insecurity regarding female physiology or the universal primary socialization of young children by females—both of which undoubtedly have much deeper implications for human behavior than community size. In fact, to admit that these universals do indicate a profoundly influential cultural force would be to realize the need for a whole new series of cantometric correlations. For instance, one would want to know which elements of folk song style are related to the presence and severity of initiation rites of both sexes, the gender of deities, the character of origin myths, the extent of the mother's primary control over her children, the severity of menstrual taboos, etc. These "aspects of social interaction" leave their mark on every behavior, and no doubt folk song style is no exception. However, the illumination that such correlations could provide will never be ours if we continue to fail to ask the right questions.

Lomax is actually much more sensitive to the oppression of women than most ethnomusicologists, but he unfortunately fails to realize that women do not achieve equality simply by contributing "50 percent or more" of the community food supply.³⁴ Furthermore, women often do not have any voice at all in the creation of myths, songs, or "culture" in general—this being essentially the domain of male creativity. Lomax claims that relaxed vocal styles are to be expected in complementary societies where women feel "less tension, less repressed anger and more ease in everyday interactions."³⁵ Later on, he mentions that "in the high wail of the muezzin, appealing for mercy from Allah, and in the piercing silver tones of the cafe singers [in societies where men brutally repress women] we hear a restatement of the pain, fear, and erotic hysteria of women."³⁶ However, I would maintain that this is an illogical deduction, and that these song styles (developed and performed by men) probably do not reflect women's feelings at all. Instead, they express men's insecurities and tensions in relation to the threatening realities mentioned above, which provoke them to exert rigid control over women's lives. As Hays comments in *The Dangerous Sex*, which documents the age-old dread of women by men that has manifested itself in all societies: "Socially organized attitudes towards women arise from basic tensions experienced by the male sex, and so it is necessary to sketch how the male handles his psychic problems."³⁷

Too often, unfortunately, man handles his psychic problems at the expense of woman's human creativity, autonomy, or life itself. Although Lomax claims that music is a "universal human behavior," there are societies where women are never allowed to exercise that capability, as in the Caraja tribe. Or, to cite some more examples, here are two passages from R.A. Waterman's "Music in Australian Aboriginal Culture—Some Sociological and Psychological Implications":

Throughout his life, the Aboriginal is surrounded by musical events that instruct him about his natural environment and its utilization by man, that teach him his world-view and shape his system of values. . . . [Songs] provide a method of controlling, by supernatural means, sequences of natural events otherwise uncontrollable. Further, some types of songs provide an outlet for individual creativity while many may be used simply to conquer personal dysphoria.³⁸

A year or two before first menstruation, even the girls leave the [play] group in favor of other pursuits and, to all intents and purposes, leave behind them their musical careers as well, for the only singing permitted a female after this time is the stylized wailing [for the dead]. . . . [The proficiency with which a woman performs] the ritual wailing thus becomes a status symbol for Yirkalla womanhood with roughly the same meaning as tidy housewifery in our own society.³⁹

Women's Culture

Centuries of sociological and historical evidence to the contrary, women have the same creative potential as men. However, since their range of activity has for so long been severely restricted by men, women have traditionally channeled their energies into art forms that are devalued because of their association with the domestic sphere (e.g., quilts, rugs, pottery). In the ephemeral art of music this devaluation has meant that little of women's creative expression has been recorded or preserved, either by ethnomusicologists or by the members of the culture in which these

women live. An anthropological treatise called "Work and Sex in a Guatemalan Village" states:

For the most part the women face the endless round of daily duties with an air of purposeful good spirits. It is not uncommon to hear women humming or singing as they grind or weave.⁴⁰

But it is probably true that no one has ever paid careful attention to *what* those women hum and sing, the sources and functions of their songs, whether their singing does indeed reflect "an air of purposeful good spirits," and all of the other questions that such a brief allusion should raise for the ethnomusicologist. Since women have always been forced to focus their energy within limited, often domestic parameters, they have rarely left permanent traces of their creative expressions behind them. The great loss is that even when women do overcome great odds to give vent to their human need for creative self-expression, those efforts are rarely recorded or given serious attention by men.

Thus, I am suggesting that the findings of ethnomusicology, and the discipline itself, reveal the influence of a universal androcentric culture. The creativity of one half of the human species has been systematically ignored and repressed cross-culturally. Of course, women manage to function as creative beings nonetheless, and their creativity has found sublime expression in quilts, lullabies, and the like. But the fact remains that we are largely ignorant of women's accomplishments and of their true potential as creative artists. Ethnomusicology, primarily a recording discipline, cannot be expected to speculate on woman's potential were she freed from cultural limitations. On the other hand, ethnomusicologists can, and must, be held responsible for recording the musical activities of a culture as accurately as possible. This means investigating *all* of the music created in a particular culture; searching out the subtle and elusive styles developed by women; notating lullabies, funeral laments, "humming," and the rhythmic pounding of pestles; and recognizing that these are as representative of "Maori" or "Pueblo" music as the music made by men at religious festivals. It means thinking carefully about the function of music in a society, its position with respect to the "public" and "private" spheres, its relation to the male insecurities that contribute to the foundation of virtually every known culture. In short, it means looking beyond the distortions imposed by androcentric perception to give women's lives and activities the respectful attention which they deserve, and which must be accorded if we are ever to understand ourselves, the world, or the world's music.

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2. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon, 1971), p. 53.
3. In this paper I have adopted Sherry Ortner's definition of culture as "human consciousness and its products." See her "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 73.
4. Janice Weinman, "The Influence of Pueblo Worldview on the Construction of Its Vocal Music," *Journal of the Society of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 14, p. 313.
5. David McAllester, "Indian Music in the Southwest," in *Readings in Ethnomusicology*, ed. D. McAllester (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1971), p. 216.
6. Johannes C. Andersen, *Maori Music with Its Polynesian Background* (New York: AMS Press, 1978 [1934]), p. 228.
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8. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
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10. Louise Lamphere, "Review Essay: Anthropology," *Signs*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1977), p. 613.
11. Ortner, p. 70.
12. Lamphere, p. 616.
13. Ortner, p. 70.
14. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Theoretical Overview," in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 22-23.
15. H.R. Hays, *The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil* (New York: Putnam's, 1964), p. 39.
16. Nancy Chodorow, "Being and Doing: A Cross-cultural Examination of the Socialization of Males and Females," in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. V. Gornick and B.K. Moran (New York: New American Library, 1972), p. 279.
17. Mead, p. 167.
18. Hays, p. 33.
19. Joan Bamberger, "The Myth of Matriarchy," in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 273.
20. See *Ibid.*
21. Ortner, p. 73.
22. Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 100.
23. Rosaldo, p. 23.
24. Ortner, p. 79.
25. Alan Lomax, *Cantometrics: An Approach to the Anthropology of Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 15.
26. David McAllester, lecture, Music 256, Wesleyan University, Jan. 23, 1979.
27. Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel* (New York: Norton, 1949), p. 27.
28. Sophie Drinker, *Music and Women* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1948), p. 57.
29. Bamberger, p. 273.
30. Gradenwitz, p. 60.
31. Alan Lomax, *Folk Song Style and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1968), p. 120.
32. *Ibid.* p. 168.
33. Lomax, *Cantometrics*, p. 22.
34. Lomax, *Folk Song Style*, p. 169.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
37. Hays, p. 30.
38. Richard A. Waterman, "Music in Australian Aboriginal Culture—Some Sociological and Psychological Implications," in *Readings in Ethnomusicology*, ed. D. McAllester (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1971), p. 168.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
40. Lois Paul, "Work and Sex in a Guatemalan Village," in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 285.



Annie Long Tom. From *Nootka and Quileute Music* by Frances Densmore (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1939).

On the Trail of Red Sky Lady and Other Scholars

Elsa Peterson

In the year 1911, Chief Red Fox of the Teton Sioux adopted a woman from outside the tribe as his daughter, giving her the name *Psetan'non'pawin* (Two White Buffalo Woman). The adoption was celebrated the following summer at a large gathering of the Sioux tribes, and Two White Buffalo Woman was honored with songs and dances.¹

For a chief to adopt a daughter in this fashion was not unusual, particularly in a case such as that of Red Fox, whose own daughter had died some years earlier. The aspect of this event that was remarkable pertains to Two White Buffalo Woman herself. Born Frances Densmore in 1867, this white woman had spent the previous eighteen years traveling and living among Indian tribes, keeping a detailed diary and recording the traditions, religious beliefs, and songs of her hosts.

Before beginning her study of Indian culture and music, Densmore trained as a pianist at Oberlin Conservatory and with private teachers in New York. Returning to her hometown, Red Wing, Minnesota, she worked as a piano teacher and church organist. There she became acquainted with John Comfort Fillmore of the Milwaukee Music School, an enthusiastic advocate of Indian music. With Fillmore's encouragement, the young woman began to make her visits to nearby Indian encampments; eventually this field work and the writings it generated became a full-time occupation for her.

Densmore's seriousness, her genuine interest in Indian culture, and her musical instincts were adequate compensation for her lack of specific training in ethnomusicology—training that, in any case, was not to be had in the years she attended college. Another significant factor in Densmore's success was the able assistance of her sister Margaret, who accompanied her on many of her field expeditions, remembering names and faces and supervising Frances's song-recording sessions.

The results of Densmore's more than half a century of ethnomusicological study are formidable: over 120 articles, books, and monographs on the songs, poetry, and lore of tribes from Minnesota to Panama. In the years before her death in 1957, Densmore acted as curator for the historical museum in Red Wing, where neighbors rather grudgingly acknowledged her vast achievement.²

Although unique in her systematic and prolific studies of Native American cultures and their music, Francis Densmore was not the only white woman of her day to pursue such research. The present article focuses on her and the other women who studied and collected the music of the American Indians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But in these same decades women were

active in collecting the music of Black Americans, Hispanic groups, European immigrants, and others.

There are many questions that need to be asked about these women. How were these women products of the prejudices of their time? To what extent was their work among minorities seen as a "beneficent," "do-gooder" gesture, fitting in with the Victorian-Christian view of woman as merciful, self-sacrificing friend of the needy?³ Was their selection of the music to be preserved dictated by certain biased perceptions of the people they studied? And how were these women received by the people themselves? Margaret, Frances Densmore's sister, has been described as a "super-secret-service-man"⁴—hardly indicative of a completely friendly reception.

Yet undoubtedly these women did make a contribution—if only in bringing the music to the attention of a wider audience. The first documented incidence of a woman's involvement with Native American music, for instance, antedates the advent of ethnomusicology as a discipline by nearly a century. In 1794, the opera *Tammany: or, The Indian Chief* was premiered in New York; its librettist was Mrs. Anne Julia Hatton, author of several other stage works. Dealing with Indian culture, the opera included a song entitled "Alknomook," which was purported to be an authentic Indian melody. The musical score, composed by James Hewitt (1770-1827), has unfortunately been lost.⁵

But the history of "Alknomook" can be traced further, for the song was published in London in 1784 with the subtitle "The Death Song of the Cherokee Indians, An Original Air, brought from America by a gentleman long conversant with the Indian tribes, and particularly with the Nation of the Cherokees. The words adapted to the Air by a Lady."⁶ The gentleman in question remains a mystery, but the lady who adapted the words has been identified as Anne Home Hunter (1742-1821), an English composer and poet best remembered for her lyrics to Haydn's "My Mother Bids Me Bind My Hair." After its use in *Tammany*—which received performances in Boston and Philadelphia as well as New York—"Alknomook" was published in America, its aboriginal elements bowdlerized as in the English version. It enjoyed great popularity in the drawing-rooms of early-19th-century America.⁷

The women behind *Tammany* and "Alknomook," interested though they may have been in Indian culture, were a far cry from the reputable ethnomusicological scholars of our own day. It was not until the 1880s that serious study of Native American music began. One of the first to engage in this endeavor was Alice Cunningham Fletcher (1838-1923), a New York-raised teacher and lecturer with philanthropic, ethnological, and feminist inclinations.

In 1879 Fletcher met the Omaha Indian princess

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Susette LaFlesche Tibbles (Bright Eyes), who was touring the East, speaking on behalf of Indian rights. This face-to-face encounter provided the needed impetus for Fletcher to leave the comforts of New York and meet other members of this tribe. Two years later, she began living among the Omahas, recording their customs and folklore. Her Eastern connections remained useful to her, allowing her to act as a lobbyist to the federal government for Indian rights and to publish the results of her ethnological studies.

In 1884 Fletcher suffered an attack of inflammatory rheumatism which left her permanently lame. Her young assistant, Bright Eyes' brother Francis LaFlesche, nursed her back to health and became from that time forward her adopted son.⁸ It was in collaboration with LaFlesche that Fletcher published her first collection of Indian songs, *Omaha Music* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum, 1893). This work was a great inspiration to the young Frances Densmore, who read it when she was beginning to pursue her own ethnological studies.⁹ Numerous other books and articles on Indian music followed, often prepared with the help of John Comfort Fillmore, the Milwaukee professor who later befriended Densmore.

with Fillmore, Frances Densmore later wrote:

It is to be regretted that Miss Fletcher, by endorsing the work of Professor Fillmore, placed herself in a position where she could not speak independently on a subject which she, more than any other observer of that time, had an opportunity to study in the field.¹¹

Despite these biases, Alice Cunningham Fletcher did help to advance the study of Indian culture and music, as well as accomplishing much in the field of women's rights. She received many professional honors, notably the life fellowship endowed for her by Mary Copley Thaw through the Peabody Museum, and she was influential in many ethnological and scientific organizations.

During the years when Fletcher and Densmore were living and working among the Plains Indians, another young woman was conducting studies of the tribes of the Southwest. Natalie Curtis (1875-1921), like Densmore, was a highly trained conservatory musician. Preparing for a career as a concert pianist, Curtis studied with Arthur Friedheim in New York, Ferruccio Busoni in Berlin, and several other noted European pianists. Returning to America, however, the young musician went to visit her



a-d Positions during whale songs; e, f representation of geese; g, h representation of deer.
From *Nootka and Quileute Music* by Frances Densmore (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939)

The musical material Fletcher collected gave the American public its first glimpses of traditions and ceremonies never before witnessed by a white; *The Hako: A Pawnee Ceremony* (1904) was particularly significant in this regard. The authenticity of the musical transcriptions, however, was diminished due to Fletcher's reliance on Professor Fillmore's aesthetic judgment. Fillmore, like many other conservatory-trained musicians of the day, could not conceive of a musical vocabulary outside the confines of the diatonic scale and functional harmony. He went to great lengths to support his theory that Indian music was essentially tonal and that its apparent microtones were due more to poor intonation than to intentional sophistication.¹⁰ Of Fletcher's association

brother in Arizona and became so interested in the Indians of the area that she gave up the pursuit of her keyboard career, and, equipped with a portable phonograph, began to record the customs and songs of the tribes.

Like Fletcher, Curtis had certain political connections in the East—particularly with then-President Theodore Roosevelt, a family friend—which she utilized to improve the circumstances under which the Indians lived. After seven years of study in the Southwest she published *The Indians' Book* (1907), an annotated collection of some 200 songs, with considerable information about the accompanying customs, ceremonies, and religious beliefs. It was during the course of her work on this collection that her former teacher Busoni, now concertizing

in the United States, learned of and began to share her interest in Native American music. Thus Curtis was responsible not only for her own publications and the pieces of pro-Indian legislation for which she lobbied, but also for Busoni's *Indian Fantasy* and other Indian-inspired compositions.¹²

After completing *The Indians' Book*, Curtis spent several more years studying tribes in various parts of the country, lecturing and writing on the results of her research. Beginning in 1911, however, her interest shifted to the music of Black Americans; much of the remainder of her career was devoted to this work.

In 1917, Curtis married Paul Burlin, an artist who, unlike many men of the time, encouraged his wife to continue her career and was supportive of her endeavors. After Curtis's tragic death in a 1921 automobile accident, Burlin carried through many of the professional plans she had made, and assumed full responsibility for the upbringing of their young son.¹³

The influence of Curtis on Busoni was, of course, one of many examples of ethnomusicology's effect on Western classical music. Among the other composers of the early 20th century who reflected this interest was Charles Wakefield Cadman, whose reputation was largely built on his adaptations of Indian melodies. Cadman's librettist and lyricist, Nellie Richmond Eberhart, is credited with encouraging him in this vein.¹⁴ Of the five operas, four cantatas, and over 100 other vocal pieces on which the two collaborated, the most successful was the opera *Shanewis*, which contained Indian melodies originally transcribed by Fletcher and by Curtis. *Shanewis* was premièred in 1918 at the Metropolitan Opera House, making Eberhart the first American woman to have her libretto produced by this auspicious organization.¹⁵ Although it has now faded into obscurity, the piece was a great success at the time of its first presentation.

Another composer, whose work is more deeply, and perhaps less deservedly, obscure than Cadman's is Stella Prince Stocker. Born in 1858 in Jacksonville, Illinois, the young Miss Prince was educated at Jacksonville Conservatory, the University of Michigan, Wellesley College, the Sorbonne, and by private instructors in Europe and New York. Although she was doubtless a reasonably well-known musician and composer in her day, Stocker appears in only one modern biographical dictionary, where we read that she composed several operettas and numerous piano and vocal pieces. In addition:

She was much interested in the music of the Indians and lived among them, becoming a member of one of the Ojibway tribes with the name "O-mes-qua-wi-gi-shi-go-que" ("Red Sky Lady"). . . . She lectured in the United States and abroad on Indian music and legends.¹⁶

Reflecting this Indian interest, Stocker wrote two plays—*Sieur du Lhut* and *The Marvels of Manabush*—with incidental music drawn from Indian melodies she had collected. The chronology of this ethnologist-composer's career is not documented in any readily available source, and we are left to speculate as to the date and place of her death.

Frances Densmore, in *The American Indians and Their Music* (1926), referred to Bessie M. Whitely, a composer who, like Stocker, used Indian themes and melodies in

her music.¹⁷ Essentially no information about Whitely is to be found in published sources available today. Another woman whose compositions reflect Indian influence is, of course, Ruth Crawford Seeger, who is treated individually elsewhere in this issue.

The work of Alice Cunningham Fletcher, Natalie Curtis, Stella Prince Stocker, and Frances Densmore was closely allied with that of at least two remarkable nonmusicological women ethnologists of the time. Erminnie Smith (1836-1886) and Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) both overcame many personal and social difficulties in their study of Indian culture.¹⁸ Among the many ethnomusicologists who felt the influence of the four "pioneers" discussed here, Gertrude Prokosch Kurath and Helen Heffron Roberts deserve mention as fine scholars who began their work in the early 20th century when their discipline was still quite new.

There are still many unanswered questions about the nature of these women's contribution (see the article by Jacque Rosebrook in this issue). Yet what is amazing is their courage in leaving the comforts of their homes and their perseverance in pursuing a study largely unrecognized at the time.

1. Charles Hoffman, Ed., *Frances Densmore and American Indian Music* (New York: Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, 1968), p. iv.
2. Personal interview with Dr. Winston Kaehler, a Red Wing native who now teaches music at Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota. Other biographical and bibliographical sources for Densmore are given in Nicolas Slonimsky, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Sixth Ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1978). Principal locations of her works include the American Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution; Huntington Free Library and Reading Room, American Indian Heye Foundation Museum; Macalester College Library; and Goodhue County Historical Museum, Red Wing, Minnesota.
3. This socioreligious connection is discussed in Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), *passim*.
4. Hoffman, p. 62.
5. Oscar Sonneck, *Early Opera in America* (New York: Schirmer, 1915), p. 97; Edward Ellsworth Hipsher, *American Opera and Its Composers* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1934), p. 24.
6. John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music*, 4th Ed. (New York: Crowell, 1931), pp. 672-673.
7. *Ibid.* See also Otto Ebel, *Women Composers* (Brooklyn: Chandler-Ebel Music Company, 1902 & 1913), s.v. Hunter, Anne Home.
8. Edward T. James, Ed., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1971), s.v. Fletcher, Alice Cunningham. Principal locations for Fletcher's works include Peabody Museum and Huntington Free Library and Reading Room, American Indian Heye Foundation Museum.
9. Frances Densmore, *American Indians and Their Music* (New York: Woman's Press, 1926 [repr. 1970 Johnson Reprint]) p. 120.
10. Howard, p. 673.
11. Densmore p. 125.
12. i.e., *Indian Diary* (a 2-volume collection) by Busoni. Curtis's influence on Busoni was corroborated by a personal interview with Dr. Otto Luening, a student of Busoni and friend of Paul Burlin.
13. James, s.v. Curtis, Natalie.
14. David Ewen, *Composers of Today*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Wilson, 1936, p. 38; Hipsher, p. 95.
15. Hipsher, p. 95.
16. Oscar Thompson, *The International Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, 9th Ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1964), p. 2111.
17. Densmore, p. 142.
18. See biographical sketches and bibliography in James, s.v. Benedict, Ruth, and Smith, Erminnie.

Many thanks are due to the librarians of the Newark Public Library Music Department and the New York Public Library, Lincoln Center Branch, Music Research Department, for their assistance and cooperation.

Look What You've Done to My Song

Jacqueline Higgins Rosebrook

COPYRIGHT
WHEN I WAS BORN
MY GRANDFATHER
DREAMED MY SONG
MY SONG
MY ANCESTRY
 MY FUTURE
 MY PEOPLE
MY SONG
ME

SUNG FOR THE FIRST TIME
WHEN THE WINKTE NAMED ME
MY SONG
TO BE SUNG
AT EVERY OCCASION
WHEN I HAD EARNED
RECOGNITION
AND FINALLY
 AT MY DEATH
MY SONG
 MY SELF

YOU
MASTER'S CANDIDATE
CAME TO THAT GIVEAWAY
WHEN I GRADUATED
THE FIRST WOMAN
IN MY CLAN
TO EARN A UNIVERSITY DEGREE
MY COUSINS INVITED YOU
YOU
HEARD
MY SONG
SUNG BY MY UNCLE
YOU
MASTER'S CANDIDATE
PUBLISHED IT
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
JACQUE ROSEBROOK 6-4-80



This poem reflects a not untypical situation—ask the Lummi about the Master's candidate who published the stories she learned from the elders with whom she spent time. Now, legally, when the Lummi want to teach their own stories in their own language to their children in their own schools they are bound by the U.S. copyright laws which require them to obtain the permission of the "author" to reproduce them as course materials. There are other reasons too of course, but these days the Lummi are reluctant to encourage non-Indian visitors.

Despite such incidents, contemporary Indians can be approached by researchers, and if the individual researcher can earn the respect and gain the confidence of a family or powerful individual Indian, they will be allowed to work on their project. As long as the researcher maintains a respectful and accepting attitude, the Indian subject will cooperate in whatever way possible. Still, there are some facets of Indian life, mainly religious, that are never shared with non-Indians. We have been forced to become protective of our most powerful rituals, holy places, and sacred objects. We don't yet understand why the Smithsonian and the New York Museum of Natural History are better guardians of our power bundles, or why they need our winter counts more than we do.

We are aware that there are good reasons why we should write down and record and in that way preserve the ways of our ancestors. But as yet there aren't enough of us trained as ethnologists to accomplish this task ourselves. So we will consider cooperating when someone comes from a university or research institute to study our cultures.

There is a litany about being Indian that gets passed around first-year Indian Studies classes that includes the line, "Being Indian is meeting 24 anthropologists before you're grown." We grin about the truth of this litany and this line in particular, but the fact is that many Indian children quickly become professional interviewees and at a fairly young age are skillful at picking up on the researchers' personal biases. Many of my friends can go to the American Indian Ethnology section of a university library and pick up "the book" on their tribe and point to a story told by their aunt or uncle that was told because it seemed to be what the researcher wanted to hear. Why do we do that? Well, I think sometimes we just get tired of carrying on the role of "noble savage" and succumb to the temptation of creating a little mischief—there's a little coyote in all of us.

You see, the Indian doesn't really care particularly about being understood. Acceptance is all we're looking for, nothing more, nothing less, just accept us as Indians. It's entirely possible, you see, that non-Indians are not equipped to understand us anyway.

Jacque Rosebrook, single, mother of three, is a freelance photographer and writer currently working on a children's book and a novel based on the life of Theresa Two Two Means, Oglalla Lakota Elder, and a screen adaptation of the life of Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz.

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We all have our own information-filtering systems, and the filters of non-Indians seem to present real obstacles to understanding. The Judeo-Christian tradition, Calvinist ethic, Aristotelian logic, and all the other influences that shape their thought patterns prevent nearly all non-Indians from even grasping that there are separate realities. Their linear logic can't accept that ours is cyclical, much less understand how it works.

There is a concept of wholeness underlying the cosmology of the Indian that is absent from that of the non-Indian ethnologist. Where the ethnologist is inclined to see opposite sexes, the traditional Indian view is of complimentary genders. Things that get their power from the sun are masculine, and the things that get their power from the moon are feminine. All life in order to maintain the sacred balance must have both day and night, sun and moon.

The university-trained, non-Indian ethnologist who has failed to grasp that essentially Indian truth sees a woman separated during her menses because she is "unclean." What is in fact there, is a woman whose grandmother the moon is communicating with her in a special way. Her body, because of the moon's influence, is being cleansed and her strength renewed. What is there to be seen, but nearly always missed, is that that woman, every month, gets a week off. She gets time alone to meditate quietly while her needs are seen to by a companion who is an older, more experienced woman relative.

The non-Indian ethnologist, operating from the point of view of today's liberated woman, will pass a negative judgment on the practice of polygamy and/or sororate among the Lakota, and just as quickly condemn the urban Indian "welfare mother" who becomes an alcoholic and abandons her children when the pressures of capitalist society become more than she can cope with.

Many of us feel there are valid reasons for us to encourage people who would like to work with us in recording and thereby preserving the different external manifestations of our cultures. The one facet of our cultural expression that can be most exciting to us and the most useful one, I think, is our music. The musical traditions of most Indian nations include, of course, personal and/or family songs that are the sole property of one individual or family and are to be used only by them. Very often the individual's song is to be sung, finally, at that individual's death and never again. Most people can understand why these particular songs are never to be recorded, but they will have a hard time accepting that most Indians feel that certain songs of ceremonial significance will lose their power if recorded or written down. Still, there are those songs that can be recorded and transcribed, and which ethnomusicologists can analyze to their hearts' content.

This recording and transcribing is being done more and more often currently, not only by ethnomusicologists, but

by Indians themselves. Nearly everywhere you look at powwows and other public celebrations, Indians are there with their Sonys and Sanyos recording the music and songs that are an integral part of every Indian social function. Right alongside the Indians, you will see tourists and an occasional ethnomusicologist who is there gathering more information on the music of the people.

The decision today to allow a researcher to record and analyze a tribe's or an individual's songs can be said to be a conscious decision based on an assessment of past experience. There is a description of just such a decision-making process in the book *Kinaaldá'* by Charlotte Johnson Frisbie. This book, which does a commendable job of recording a Navajo girl's puberty rites (*kinaaldá'*) in the Blessing Way, gives us an almost unbiased moment-by-moment account of every song and ritual during the entire *kinaaldá'* of one girl and portions of others. One faction of the family strongly objects to the "Hollywood" cameras and the white woman asking so many questions, while the other faction sees it as a good thing for the tribe and the medicine man to have the ceremonies recorded.

These contemporary decisions are one thing, but how about the decisions made by the tribes who, at the turn of the century, allowed women like Frances Densmore access to their homes and ceremonies and permitted them to record their songs on their wax cylinders? How, besides the fact that the ways of whites piqued the curiosity of the Indians, and a chance to watch one at close quarters was a chance too good to miss? What did the Indians think of these strange women who were allowed to travel among and work with the various tribes apparently without the benefit of the protection of their own families?

Here again, we come to the idea of the "wholeness" of things. Where individual people were concerned, any non-destructive behavior that deviated from the norm was not only accepted, but very often had a place made for it within the social structure. For example, the homosexual, or *winkte*, in Sioux society was looked upon as someone with a special sensitivity and was the one to name newborn children. Nearly all Indian cultures had characters whose visions required life as a "contrary," that is, a life in reverse. A contrary would say "no" for "yes," wear clothing backwards, enter homes backwards, ride horses backwards. From nation to nation the occasion for this behavior varied from constant to ceremonial, but whenever it occurred, it was accepted. What many people today would call deviant group behavior even had its ritual outlet. Nearly everywhere there were set occasions for such behavior as ritualized ridicule and many of the other activities that modern-day Indians and non-Indians are forced to suppress or keep secret.

Viewed from this perspective, it seems no wonder that these polite, apparently harmless women with their strange

paraphernalia were not only allowed to carry on their curious activities, but that very often a place was made for them in the societies with which they lived and worked. In the long run, this acceptance has turned out for the benefit of the tribes involved; for, no matter how one may disagree with the cultural analyses of these ethnomusicologists, the fact remains that those precious wax cylinders are still in existence and are today being catalogued and re-recorded on cassette. These songs now on cassette are being returned to the tribes from which they came.

Nowadays, the music of Indian America is being recorded on an ever-increasing number of cassettes. Because these cassettes can become a fairly permanent record of a tribe's songs and music, we generally welcome this activity. What we regret is that very often these cassettes are sold under copyright to commercial music interests and the Indians whose songs they are never reap any of the benefits. Of the more recent written works by female ethnomusicologists, I found only one that was not under copyright. Linda Goodman, who did her Ph.D. research among the Makah of Washington State, has produced a monograph *Music and Dance in Northwest Coast Indian Life* that is not only open to use by anyone, but includes, as well, an insightfully prepared lesson plan at the back of the pamphlet.

There are other women doing careful research today, and writing rather prolifically on music from many tribes all across the country. Regrettably, it's all being published under copyright. Somehow, to most Indians, that just doesn't balance out.

Ida Halpern, for instance, is to be applauded for her diligent investigation into the meaning of what were heretofore considered meaningless chanted syllables of the songs of Northwest Coast Indians.

Norma McCleod's work with semantic referent produced an admirable paper on the Blanket Rite of the Lower Kutenai. This article is well constructed, carefully documented, and consciously objective.

The work of Claire Farrer among the Mescalero is also evidence of careful research and diligence that is characteristic of all the women whose work I researched.

The most prolific of female ethnomusicologists writing today is, without doubt, Gertrude Kurath. Her work spans thirty years and is widely respected among ethnomusicologists. Her work is also the most often cited in all the research I read.

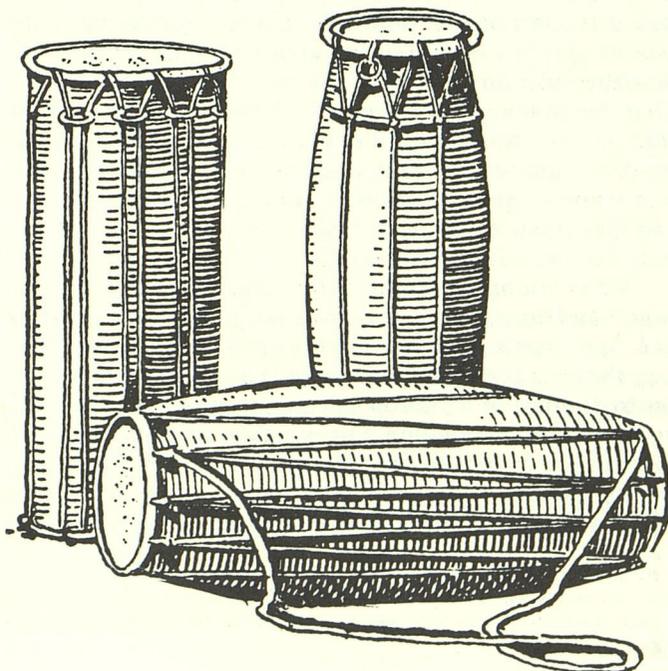
Still, all the work is printed under copyright and contains transcriptions of songs and descriptions of ceremonies sacred to the people from whom they were taken. It is an inescapable conclusion that something is a bit out of joint in that. While there is a valid argument for the protection of the hard work of the researcher, it is time that the people whose sacred songs we are concerned with here have consideration given to their rights.

I SING A SONG
 MY SPIRIT SONG
 MY PROTECTOR SONG
 MY LIFE IS THIS SONG
 WITH MY DEATH
 MY SONG MUST REST
 MY SPIRIT MUST BE FREED
 OR I WILL NEVER AGAIN
 SEE THE MORNING



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Open Notes But No Closing Chord On Malvina Reynolds

Kristin Lems

Malvina Reynolds, born in San Francisco on August 23, 1900, wrote songs based on labor and folk traditions—songs with a social content and a witty twist, which always brought home the message. She died in March 1978.

Much of her music was recorded and sung by other artists, although she did tour throughout the U.S., Japan, and Europe, singing her compositions.

*Reynolds organized her own publishing and recording companies: Schroder Music and Cassandra Records. Her most recent albums on the Cassandra label are *Magical Songs* (1978) and *Mama Lion* (released posthumously). She also recorded several children's albums with Joan Lowe Productions, *Another Country Heard From with Folkways Records*, and *Malvina Reynolds Sings the Truth with Columbia Records*. Two songbooks, *Little Boxes and Other Handmade Songs* and *The Muse of Parker Street*, were published by Oak Publications.*

She told me her name meant "Queen" in Polish, and I privately dubbed her so from that day on. She reigned over all of us, in an embroidered workshirt with a tiara of wispy hair, her sceptre a tiny nylon string guitar. I remember distinctly the feeling that overtook me the first time I saw Malvina—already she was a living legend to me, having authored some dozen songs I considered among my most cherished repertoire. But as chance had it, I was the one on stage the first time, playing in a small coffeehouse in her home turf, Berkeley. My playing partner had arranged to meet Malvina at the gig. Both of us were so preoccupied with her imminent arrival that we kept our heads trained on the door all evening, wondering if she would defy all expectations about famous people and actually show up as she said she would. She finally materialized in the open doorway and I beheld a mane of shimmering hair from which a crackling aura of energy radiated. I experienced that intense field of energy upon every encounter with Malvina (and I am not inclined to see mystic auras!). I feel it still when I gaze at a photograph of her penetrating face.

Many young artists made the pilgrimage to Malvina's home and enjoyed her generous hospitality. We selfishly indulged ourselves in our early stirrings of creative feeling, thinking she, who had "done it all," had nothing better to do than be a matron to young songwriters! Her presence was so compelling it took a time for her most loyal and patient friends to perceive and respond to her needs. Many, I suspect, never did. Malvina was often too shy to ask for the resounding support she so richly deserved.

Kristin Lems is a musician, essayist, and songwriter who worked on several occasions with Malvina Reynolds. She founded the National Women's Music Festival in 1974, and has one album *Oh Mama!* on her own label.

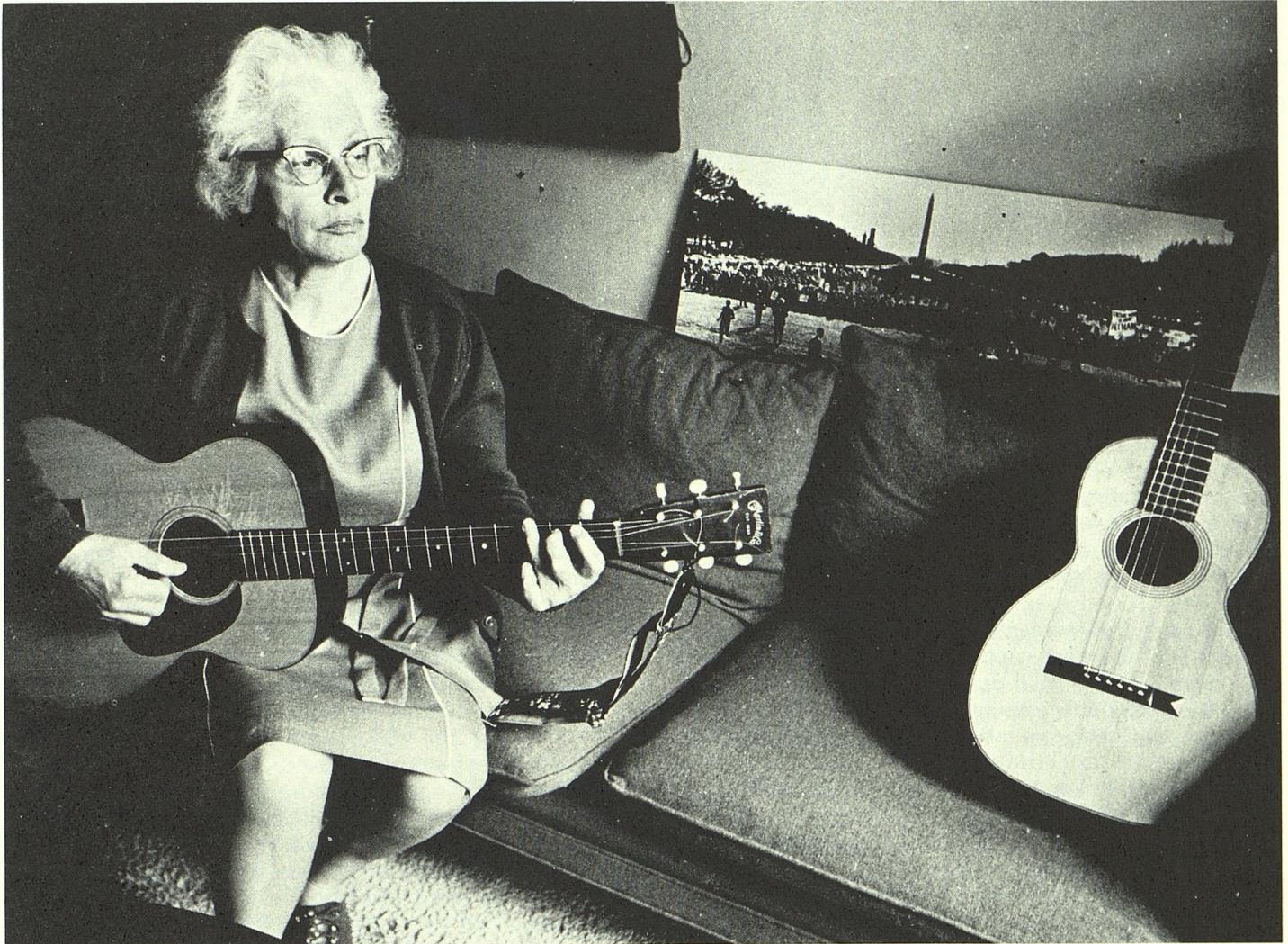
© 1980 Kristin Lems

Yet she came of age as an artist during the post-war era, which lent no support to music oriented toward social change—by an older woman, no less. That was well before the "folk revival." She developed a tough exterior, determined to speak and sing her mind even in an inhospitable environment, and carried that determination for the rest of her days. One of her mainstays was a deep and abiding delight in the abundance of her own mind, and the satisfaction she found in her own songs, irrespective of their public acclaim. As with many great artists, this deeply satisfying creative process sustained her, but brought with it the terrible frustration of being ostracized by the music industry and thus not being able to reach the listenership she sought.

There are many dimensions to Malvina Reynolds that we will never know, but like a good working-class woman, she would want most that we know her by her work. A close and loving reading of her vast and varied songs and essays can give even a stranger a deep sense of her essence. Like any great writer, her work reveals her values, her tastes, her temperament, her humor, and even her very human inconsistencies. This I can say with confidence: Malvina was carrying on a torrid love affair with the earth, whose beauty, brutality, and fragility she elegied at every opportunity. She cajoled it, raged at it, mothered it, and scrutinized it, finding hidden mystery along with hidden answers. "This old world is mean and cruel," she laments, then rejoins, "but still I love it like a fool," and she did, she did, she did. "They've got the world in their pocket," she warns of the ruling class which controls the resources, then adds mischievously, "but their pocket's got a hole."

Malvina extolled the small thing, taking and making of it a powerful symbol. The story of a little boy's adopted duck makes a children's story a deep statement of outrage at the Chilean junta (Malvina greatly admired the Chilean singer Victor Jara, who, during Allende's era, recorded a far-reaching Spanish version of Malvina's "Little Boxes"). A gnawing little mouse disables a national stock exchange ("If one little mouse could set them all awry, why not you and I?"). "A little rain" and "little breeze with some smoke in its eye" herald the poisonous A-bomb testing of the '50s; and the wild grass, like the truth long suppressed "breaks through cement."

Small also is her own heroic record label, which undertook and continues to tackle the Herculean task of making a national presence beside the monster entertainment conglomerates. The supportive network of women's label distributors organized too late for Malvina to witness much benefit, but her music is alive and selling well despite her absence from the scene.



Malvina Reynolds. Photo Credit: Diana Davies.

Malvina, the writer, loved language, and slang in particular. Her Ph.D. in English literature was largely a formality, since her mind was sharp and active long before her credentials attested to it, and her socialist family background kept her blacklisted from the teaching field. But she loved language, delighted in word play, and, unfettered by academic ties, she used every opening to "tell it like it is." When she delivered a driving ballad blasting Madison Judge Archie Simonson's infamous statement about rape and "normal young men," she ended the song with the ominous—and accurate—forecast: "We've got out this petition and we're gonna screw the judge." They did. She reduced nuclear power's intricacies with the damning comment, "Making steam in a nuclear plant is like killing a fly with a gun." To transmit her sophisticated theories on the social nature of human behavior, she used the powerful summary phrase, "We are gang made." She cut through affectation even to the point of chastising her own earlier writing. When a little book she crafted in 1967 was found a decade later to contain male generic terminology, she had each copy stamped with an apology for "the 1967 language."

Her contemporary views kept pace not only with changes of language, but with social issues. In the two years preceding her death in March 1978, she created songs about Senate Bill One, the Nestlé's boycott, the cutoff on Medicaid-sponsored abortions, Anita Bryant, the J.P. Stevens boycott, and the Seabrook occupation. Many Americans are only now becoming aware of these issues. Malvina couldn't help but be ahead of the tide: her mind was ravenous, and devoured everything it could get a hold of. Even her musical tastes kept current. She wrote an anti-nuclear song called "Power Plant Reggae," in Jamaican rhythm, and was brainstorming up a disco in her last months.

"Malvina refuses to give up on the human race," said Pete Seeger, in awe.* And if Malvina continued to sing out until her 78th year, no stranger to repression, poverty, and tragedy on the grand scale, we must ask ourselves, how can we do any less?

*Pete Seeger recorded many of her songs. Other artists who have recorded her songs are: Harry Belafonte, Joan Baez, The Seekers, and Judy Collins.

Woman-Identified Music: Moving On

Jane E. Pipik

The notion of using artistic means of expression to convey a political message is not a new one. Revolutions have been fueled in part by music for centuries. The feminist revolution of the last 15 years is no exception to this. Changes in American women's accepted societal roles have both helped to create and in turn have been encouraged by the development of what has come to be called "woman-identified music." Characterized by lyrics which celebrate women's strength, independence, and struggle in the face of patriarchal oppression, as well as their love and support for each other, woman-identified music presents a needed alternative to sexist images of women which are consistently portrayed in today's popular music.

Although the women's movement has created an environment for songs such as "I Am Woman," "Enough Is Enough," and "I Will Survive" to receive broad air play, standard depictions of women in the media continue to represent stereotypically sexist assumptions: woman as cute, sexy little girl, as willing victim, as perennial masochist, as emotionally dependent on male affections. Woman-identified music offers women the opportunity to create and enjoy music that is woman-oriented and free from these stereotyped images.

The existence of woman-identified songs is nothing really new. During the past century alone, songs by Bessie Smith, the suffragettes, union women, and Malvina Reynolds have given us strong, positive images of ourselves. What is new is the business aspect that has been developing in woman-identified music over the past decade. Feminist recording, production, and distribution companies have formed, making a business network which tries to provide an economic base for woman-identified music. Combining aesthetically pleasing music with a political content is problematic in itself—some maintain true music cannot be political; others counter with, "Whatever is personal is political." Maintaining a business to support this combination has its unique set of problems and rewards.

During the re-emergence of the feminist movement in the late sixties and early seventies, feminists began to sing about their lives and beliefs in coffee houses, consciousness-raising groups, and women's conferences. All-women bands, singing groups, and soloists began to spring up and travel around areas of strong feminist activity, such as New York City, Boston, and Chicago. The New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band, the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band, Family of Women, and the New Harmony Sisterhood Band were some of the acoustic folk bands that started performing in 1972 and '73. Early popular soloists, also folk-oriented in style,

were Malvina Reynolds, Maxine Feldman, Alix Dobkin, and Kay Gardner—all of whom have produced albums. Women's choruses, singing feminist song arrangements in classical style, developed, with groups such as Miss Saffman's Ladies Sewing Circle, the Anna Crusis Choir, and Women Like Me! (which went on to record Roberta Kosse and Jenny Malmquist's oratorio, "The Return of the Great Mother").

Many of these songs were centered around consciousness-raising, speaking about, as singer Alix Dobkin says, "the real grit of women's lives that has been devalued for so long." Some of the performers played songs by men that could be adapted well with a few pronoun changes. Their audience was largely women only, lesbian separatists. According to Kanda Mason from Roadwork, a feminist production company, this was necessary in order "for women to create their energy and then to take it out in the world."

Although the words were often radical and revolutionary, the musical forms of woman-identified music have by and large been those of the mainstream male-dominated music world, with little innovation or "revolutionary" sound. Still, the message sung by these women was so needed, so new, and so in demand that it made up for the often uninteresting musical content for a time.

With the growth of record albums, concert tours, and women's music festivals, the business of woman-identified music took hold, with the production of high-quality music as one of its main objectives. The earliest feminist albums include *Mountain Moving Day* (1972), *Virgo Rising* (1973), and *Lavender Jane Loves Women* (1973). Except for the albums produced by Rounder Records, most of the albums were made by women producers. The Deadly Nightshade, one of the first woman-identified music bands to be recorded under a major label (RCA), was "a bit ahead of its time" in terms of its non-sexist, feminist lyrics—which is why this group was eventually dumped, according to Betsy Rogers of Wise Woman Enterprises/Urana Records. Many performers came to feel that forming their own company was easier than having to deal with the policies and promotion images of above-ground companies.

Olivia Records, the largest woman-identified recording company to date, was formed in 1973 by a group of women living in Washington, D.C., who had previously worked on *The Furies*—a radical feminist paper. Ginny Berson, a collective member of Olivia, explained the collective's intentions: "We thought the way for women to get power was through economics, by controlling our economic situation. We wanted to set up some sort of alternative economic institution which would both produce a product that women wanted to buy and also employ women in a non-oppressive situa-

Jane E. Pipik lives, works, and goes to school in NYC.
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Mary Watkins. Photo credit: Clythia Fuller.

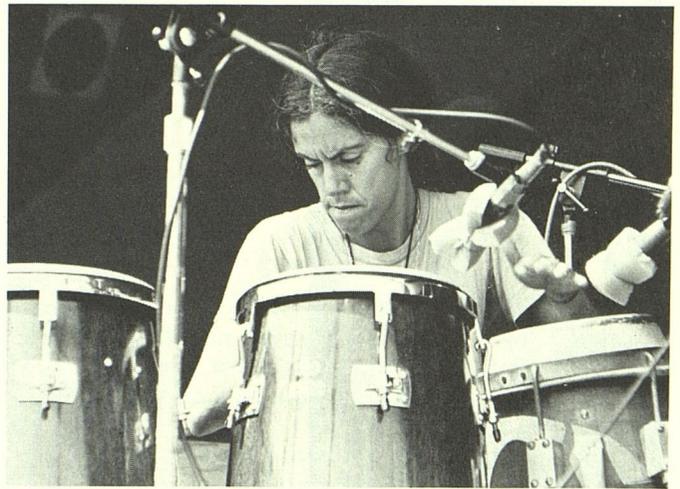
tion—get them out of regular jobs. Second, we wanted to be in a position to affect large numbers of women and that had to be through the media. The medium that was most accessible to us to get something out to large numbers of women was music. So we put the two together and got a women's recording company."

Their first product was a 45 featuring Meg Christian and Cris Williamson back to back. This was followed by their first LP, Meg Christian's *I Know You Know* in 1975, and their largest-selling woman-identified album yet, *The Changer and the Changed* by Cris Williamson.

Urana Records (Wise Woman Enterprises) formed in 1975, produced Kay Gardner's *Moonscircles* that year, and began to distribute smaller independent women's labels. Redwood Records, an independent, family-owned company, became woman-owned and run in 1976, producing Holly Near's albums and an album by Sweet Honey in the Rock. Redwood Records now produces only Holly Near's albums, just as singer/songwriter Margie Adam has Pleiades Records as her own label. There are many other women's independent record companies, although they are smaller than Olivia, Redwood, Urana, and Pleiades.

Distribution of these early records was usually done by the women who made them and Women in Distribution, a group formed in the early '70s. Around the same time that Women in Distribution folded, Ginny Berson and Meg Christian were touring the country to promote Olivia's first 45. After each performance Berson says she would stand up and ask for women interested in distributing the record. From this action a new country-wide women's distribution network began to form.

At first, the women were urged to promote this music in their spare time, letting friends hear the albums in their homes. Gradually a business began to form, with women distributors holding territories in every state. Their job was to get women's music out—primarily through music stores and radio stations. In March 1979, these distributors met in Kansas City in order to form the Women's Independent Label Distribution Network (WILD). Their purpose was to act as a unified collective



Carolyn Brandy. Photo credit: Clythia Fuller.

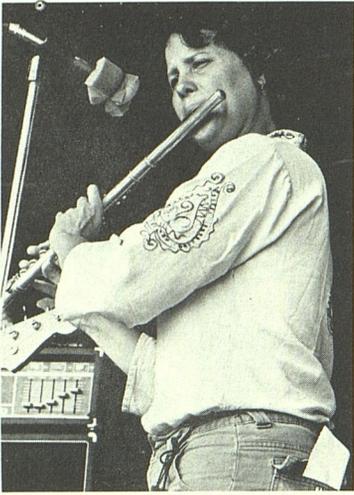
group, letting their wishes be known to labels making woman-identified music, and to work cooperatively with each other in order to keep woman-identified music alive. Since WILD's formation, the group has begun to cooperatively advertise and promote each other, supporting distributors—which range from 20 to 30 in number—all over the country. The group puts out a newsletter that reports information from the record industry and tries to have more of a say about what gets recorded—the goal being to produce both technically and artistically good albums.

Production companies have also formed in many cities to promote artist tours. One of the largest of these companies is Roadwork, which is devoted to spreading women's work and developing women's culture. Roadwork arranges bookings and tours for fall and spring concerts throughout the country.

All of the earliest business ventures had a great deal of volunteerism attached to their formation, limiting the women involved in this work to those who could afford to volunteer—which usually meant middle- or upper-class white women. In order to help woman-identified music and businesses reach the needs and talents of many diverse women, feminist companies such as Roadwork and Olivia have made one of their main goals that of reaching Third World women—women of color, Hispanic and Asian women. There has been a concentrated effort to dispel the "white middle-class women's music" image by including more Third World women in concerts and recordings.

Another major area of concentration in this outreach program is reaching those women who have not yet heard of women's music. Surprisingly many women involved in organizations such as NOW, Women's Studies programs, political feminist groups, health care, and battered women's shelters have not heard this music. For example, a recent concert Meg Christian gave at the National Women's Studies Conference evoked a huge response—many of the women had no knowledge beforehand that music like this existed. The effort to get more people to hear this music has included renting larger spaces, advertising in "above-ground" publications, and producing fewer "women-only" concerts.

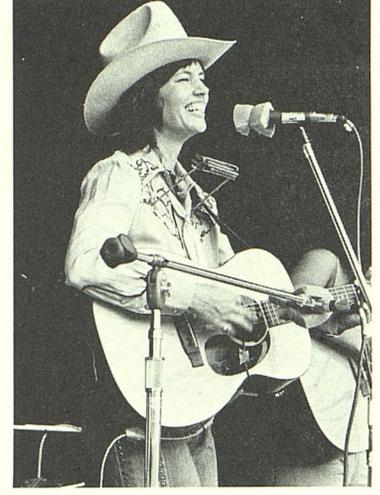
A major way of spreading women's music has been through two annual woman-identified music festivals:



Kay Gardner. Photo: Clythia Fuller.



Robin Flower. Photo: Clythia Fuller.



Casse Culver. Photo: Clythia Fuller.

the National Women's Music Festival, run by a women's collective at the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), and the Michigan Women's Music Festival. Started in 1974, the National Women's Music Festival brings women musicians together to share their work and learn new musical techniques and skills from each other. There are music concerts day and night, with music workshops and an open mike for the many women who wish to perform. One can hear a variety of music—from anti-nuke and other politically oriented women, Third World women, radical lesbian-feminists, and classically trained musicians.

In contrast to the academic setting of the National Women's Music Festival, the Michigan gathering is held out in the woods, where tents are set up for stages and living necessities (kitchen, health care, child care, etc.). According to Lisa Vogel, one of the collective founders of this event, a goal is to provide a chance for women "to see what it would be like to live without men." The space is thus limited to women-only, and the entire four-day weekend is run and operated by women. Many of the women who come are lesbians. The music is aimed primarily at entertaining the audience, with an emphasis on popular woman-identified singers and bands, especially those who do not receive a lot of above-ground exposure because of their political beliefs. Workshops focus on a variety of women's issues—from healing and health care to women's music production and distribution to congo drum playing to just plain fun. Women are required to help out with the work, thus keeping the admission price down (which is fixed by income).

Both festivals, as well as many other woman-identified concerts, try to provide wheel-chair access, signing for the deaf-impaired, and some sort of more-if-you-can, less-if-you-can't admission policy. In this way, they let women who are usually left out participate, and in turn give others the opportunity to learn from these women. The extra planning and expense involved is something above-ground concert producers rarely bother with.

The problems involved in trying to expand the audience and at the same time keep the music decidedly feminist-oriented remain tough. An economic backup is needed to sustain this music and make it last while maintaining its strong woman-identified orientation. This orientation is often not a "sellable" one. As efforts are

made to reach more politically diverse groups, expand audiences, and create financial successes, the message behind the music may be co-opted. The danger seems to be that as producers try to "sell" women's music to a larger audience, the message is bound to become less radical, less challenging, more palatable to the masses. One woman interviewed cited the many radical music waves, such as rock and roll, which started out on a grass-roots level, with certain ideals and goals, and which have had to compromise these priorities in order to meet budgets, cover costs, and prosper.

Star tripping (which is how the above-ground industry sells music to the public) has caused great discussion among feminist promoters, performers, and the women's community. Performers resent being treated as idols or sex objects; they want to be listened to on the basis of their art. These women express hopes that, if anything, women will see their work as an inspiration or perhaps model for women to be the best they can be. Despite this ideal, there are recognizable star names in the community who draw large crowds and who also receive larger salaries for what they do. The question of performers' earnings is not so much one that some performers are becoming millionaires while others are starving (though this has been asserted). Woman-identified performers usually make nothing, compared with industry performers' salaries, and certainly they deserve to do more than barely survive off their art. What is questionable is how performers promote and support each other—for instance, by touring with lesser-known "names" and recording their works. If women's music does not expand and help create new blood in the woman-identified music field, audiences will no doubt tire of the same women who have been performing since the '70s.

The questions for woman-identified music in the '80s are about survival—how and in what way will this idealistic and strongly woman-centered music maintain itself economically? How will it grow to promote a women's revolution throughout the world? And how will women musicians contribute to a growing women's cultural network? Answers and predictions are not easy, but if the dedicated and extremely hard-working women who have created and molded this music have their way, woman-identified music will be around and growing for a long time.

Women Musicians Collective

Mimi Stern-Wolfe

In the winter of 1970, I lived on the Lower East Side with my three-year-old daughter. I became involved in the Liberation Nursery, a sixties style cooperative school experiment, and in community anti-war projects. Change was in the air. Most of the people I knew were politically active; life styles were being continuously questioned. Although our activities against the war were not, as in the case of the Vietnamese, a life and death struggle, our constant consciousness of the ongoing horror of the war and inability to end it led to strong feelings of frustration with and disaffection from the "system."

At this time I heard of newly formed women's consciousness-raising groups in the Lower East Side area. They were raising various other questions—about the nuclear family, communes, monogamy, children, sexuality. They came up with answers that seemed to shake the foundations of past assumptions. All these issues were continually on my mind. I was trying to change old patterns of living.

As a musician, I had always felt out of step with movement activists. I am a classical musician, a pianist with a background in opera coaching and direction, chamber music, vocal and instrumental accompaniment and conducting. Few people knew I was a pianist and it seemed to me at the time that fewer cared. I worked at the nursery once a week; I brought my guitar and made up songs, dances, and games with the two- and three-year-olds. A friend of mine invited me to play keyboard in his rock band and out of that experience I began writing my own songs, trying to open myself to styles in music making that seemed more in tune with the times. I also worked on opera productions like *La Bohème* and *Così fan Tutti* or performed chamber works like Mozart's Piano Quartet and taught piano to make a basic living.

During this time I got together with a few women musicians I knew and we talked about setting up a concert for the benefit of radical daycare. I was excited about this idea because I saw in it a way to bridge the gap between the different worlds I found myself in—a way to bring my knowledge of chamber music, my political involvement, and my activities with children into focus, through a single concert, with other women. To some this simple step may have appeared obvious, but at the time it seemed a significant change to me personally.

After some discussion we decided to call ourselves the Women Musicians' Collective. The word "collective" was much used and much abused during that period. But I think it was appropriate to our spirit. An artist friend designed the logo, a brilliant synthesis of woman's liberation, children, music, and militancy. We gave the concert, a traditional program of Bach, Mozart, and Brahms. This attracted a mixed

audience—some who were involved in political activities, some involved with daycare; and others who simply liked classical concerts. It was successful. Afterwards we decided to expand our small group and invite other women to join us.

Our group continued to grow. In our most active periods about fifteen women came to our meetings. During the two years of our activities, about twenty to thirty women passed through our group or were involved in concerts with us. Some of us were active freelance players, others belonged to small chamber groups, still others taught at colleges and music schools or privately.

Since most of our members were orchestral players, a key issue for us was discrimination against women in orchestras. In the *New York Times* of October 18, 1970, an article on Zubin Mehta quoted some of his disparaging comments about women as orchestral performers. This set off a frenzy of activity in our group. We researched the number of women who graduated from leading United States conservatories and discovered that 43% of the graduates were female. We then averaged the percentage of women employed in the five major U.S. orchestras and came up with the dismal figure of 6.4%. We made up a lively leaflet and drew posters. (I can still remember my favorite one, with all the statistics lined up and the comment in bold letters: WHERE HAVE ALL THE WOMEN GONE?) When Mehta's Los Angeles Philharmonic came to town, we demonstrated in front of Carnegie Hall. We raised the issues of hiring practices, first chair positions (the few women who were in orchestras always seemed to sit on inside chairs or second desks), and the pervasive sexist attitudes of conductors, contractors, and managers—the people in power. Our leaflet encouraged women musicians to "go to concerts that feature women artists, talk to the few women you find in orchestras, question your board of directors about its hiring policies. Wake up and make demands!"

The reaction of the music audience outside Carnegie Hall was disbelief. "You go to a classical concert and are greeted by more of these dissidents! And women? What do they want now? Don't they have a good-enough life?"

My own feelings about our actions were ambivalent. By 1970, anti-war demonstrations had become rougher—tear gas and clubbings frequently accompanied chants and speeches. Compared with this situation, as well as the door-to-door organizing in which we tried to make political connections between poor housing, garbage on the block, and the war in Vietnam, our music-oriented demands and actions didn't seem so significant. On the other hand, it was my first political action connected with music. I really began to understand the phrase "politics is your life."

When I read through statements we wrote as we tried to define ourselves, what I find most interesting is our general optimism about the possibilities for change and our roles in effecting these changes. Almost everyone's statement of

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© 1980 Mimi Stern-Wolfe

purpose described us as musicians "who wish to use their talents for the creation of a 'new society' or a 'revolutionary society.' We are, within our diversity, part of the counterculture." Our visions were varied. Some of us wrote: "We perform concerts on a contribute-what-you-can basis and no one is turned away for lack of money." Or: "We seek an alternative to a culture in which music making is a business and all art becomes a commodity."

We saw our functions as:

- performing chamber music concerts which are open to all people
- fighting discrimination against women in music
- researching and performing music of women composers
- encouraging other women to act against their sexual and economic exploitation
- establishing benefit performances for political causes
- helping to establish daycare for children of musicians
- playing and sharing our music with children
- reaching new people

These were ambitious goals. We began to explore the compositions of women composers and discovered the wonderful string quartet of Ruth Crawford Seeger. We read through the then unpublished trios of Clara Schumann and Cecile Chaminade, discovered the songs of Alma Mahler and a wealth of unperformed music by women composers. We did some benefit concerts for Angela Davis Defense Fund, for Joan Bird (one of the Panther 21), as well as other concerts of women's music.

We had our differences concerning the goals we should pursue. Some felt that we should play *only* women's music.

Others felt that the very image of a women's musical ensemble was in itself radical. Some thought we should vary the repertoire. The issue was never fully resolved.

Another problem we faced was how to expand the Women Musicians' Collective. We wanted to organize new musicians, to be open and democratic, and to include anyone who was interested in joining us; yet we wanted to be a quality performance group of "professionals." We also had "unresolved" discussions on grants. What fun to solicit funds to undermine the Donor! I strongly believed that to apply for money from the establishment that you were trying to get rid of was a contradiction. There were obviously big differences of opinion on that subject!

Despite the diversity in our thinking, we functioned positively. Our meetings were always lively and the energy level was high. To my recollection, we were never rhetorical in our arguments. The experience of being in the group provided me with a working synthesis of my commitment to both politics and music. I look back to those years as a time of growth and the opening up of many new perspectives.

In the eight years since our last meeting, the women's movement has reached out to countless numbers of women in ways I could not have imagined at the time. The growth of independent record companies, publishers, magazines, women's jazz and rock bands, classical ensembles, festivals of women's music all demonstrate that a new consciousness has come to women musicians about the possibilities of creating their own musical space. The women's movement has produced a new type of woman musician—more certain of her worth, more inclined to speak up for her point of view in a mixed group, and more innovative and outreaching in her music making.

score for tape accompaniment

Staff	0"	45"	1'32"	2'35"	4'
A	[Diamond-shaped patterns]				
B	19"	45" 52"	1'25" 1'36"	1'55"	2'55" 3'31"
C	24" 30"	1'12" 1'17"	1'35" 1'46" 1'56"	2'26" 2'30" 2'40"	3'17" 3'45" 3'51"
D	39" 45"	1'24" 1'29"	2'20" 2'27" 2'37" 2'40"	3'40" 3'46"	

Doris Hays. From *Uni*, dance suite, for string quartet, tape, flute, and chorus. © 1979 A. Broude, Inc.
Doris Hays is a pianist and composer living in NYC.

REPORTS FROM EUROPE

Cologne, West Germany

On November 3, 1978, the International Working Group on Woman and Music was started in Cologne. The initiative came from an article on "Forgotten Women Composers," which Elke Mascha Blankenburg had published in various German magazines. This article contained a call to professional women musicians to gather in a working group on an international level. There are now over 100 members from West Germany, Holland, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, France, England, Israel, Poland, Rumania, South Africa, Japan, and the USA.

The aims of the group are: (1) to make publications on women composers, as well as compositions, available to the public; (2) to perform and record works of women composers, past and present; and (3) to discuss, both in public and in the media, the discrimination women composers have faced and continue to face.

For more information, contact: Frau und Musik: Internationaler Arbeitskreis e.V., Schlagbaumsweg 150, 5000 Köln 80, West Germany.

Paris, France

A number of women composers stand out in Paris. Tona Scherchen (who has recently moved to New York) has had her music played regularly at festivals around Europe and on the French radio (one of the main channels of Cultural Ministry commissions). Adrienne Clôstre's chamber opera *Nietzsche* has been filmed for television. Other prominent women composers include: Gisèle Barreau; Betsy Jolas; Kimi Sato, a young Japanese woman; the Argentinian-born American Julia Stilman; and Sharon Kanach. All these women are beginning to have their work publicly performed.



Collective Farm Workers, USSR, 1930s.

Another major aspect of Parisian musical life is the "one-woman show." The dominant figure here is Jôelle Léandre, double bassist/mezzo soprano/actress, who wrote and performed all the music for the all-woman theatre production of *La Maison d'Anna*, based on the writings of Anâis Nin. Other women active on the music scene are Eugenie Kuffler, a young American composer, singer, flutist, and reed player; Tamia, a singer, composer, and improviser; Anne-Marie Fijal, a pianist and composer; and Alina Piechenowski, also a pianist and composer. Recently, in an issue of *Le Monde de la Musique*, Claude Manlay, one of the extremely rare female conductors, asked for women musicians interested in forming an all-women orchestra to be centered in Toulouse—a novel venture for France.

In the administrative domain, women in Paris are also making their voices heard. Marianne Lyon, for instance, directs the Documentation Center for New Music, which serves as a listening lab, score library, research center, and meeting place for all members of the public and professional communities. Irene Jarsky, director of the conservatory at Pantin (a close suburb of Paris), has gained national certification for a school considered experimental in its approach to teaching music.

All in all, it is a time of growth for women in music in Paris.

— compiled from a report by Sharon Kanach

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

As a result of the First National Conference on Women and Music in February 1979, a number of women and a few men in Holland organized to research the problems women musicians encounter and to stimulate current activities of women in music. A library work group is contacting all libraries and asking each one to set up a separate card catalogue, listing its available books on, as well as records and sheet music by, women composers. (A central catalogue will list all of this material.) Another work group is setting up a portable information booth to be used at concerts, at exhibitions, in classrooms, etc. It will contain photos and other materials on women conductors, composers, and musicians; display magazines and books dealing with women in music; and possibly also offer records and music by women for sale.

Several other projects are in the works. A teaching group will publish handbooks and teaching aids for elementary and high school music teachers. The material will include discussion of the historical analyses of male/female principles in music, the choice of instruments by children, etc. Also in preparation is a song book by women composers for use in elementary schools. Another group is working on a list of scores and recordings, as a preliminary step to contacting orchestras and chamber groups about performance possibilities. Still another group plans to study the role of women in pop and rock music.

One specific research project warrants special mention. Dutch music between 1600 and 1900 has a rather dismal reputation, both nationally and internationally. Some 30 years ago, Willem Noske began the enormous task of gathering material to correct what he believes to be an erroneous evaluation of Dutch music. He has now found over 600 women composers, writing between 1690 and 1979. The significance of this statistic is clear when compared with the small number of Dutch women composers mentioned in current reference books.

— compiled from a 1979 report by Helen Metzelaar

SOME RESOURCES

FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS ON WOMEN IN MUSIC

The First National Congress on Women in Music is being planned for March 12-15, 1981. It is being organized by the National Planning Committee for the Congress and sponsored by the Barnard College Women's Center, with the cooperation of the Barnard College Music Department. It will be the first conference devoted to women in music which combines performance with the presentation of scholarly papers, panel discussions, and workshops. The four-day Congress will emphasize both historical and contemporary accomplishments and explore directions for future activities. Scholars, performers, composers, educators, and the general public are invited. For further information, contact: The First National Congress on Women in Music, c/o Barnard College Women's Center, 606 West 120th Street, NY, NY 10027 (phone: 212-222-1471).

LEAGUE OF WOMEN COMPOSERS

The International League of Women Composers, a nonprofit group, was organized in 1975 by Nancy Van de Vate. It is devoted to expanding opportunities for women composers in areas insufficiently accessible to them, and it promotes members' music through a quarterly newsletter, concerts, a radio series, advocacy activities, and public information projects.

To encourage young women composers (ages 18-28), the League has begun a Search for New Music. For information on this, write: Wilhelmine Bennett, Box 512, West Branch, Iowa 52358.

The League is also initiating an outreach educational program of speaking visits by composers to schools and colleges. For more information write: Joelle Crane, 782 West End Avenue, Apt. 91, NY, NY 10025.

Tapes of radio programs produced by the League are also available. Write: Doris Hays, 697 West End Avenue, NY, NY 10025.

For information on membership, open to professional composers, with affiliate membership for performers, musicologists, conductors, and related professionals, write: Nancy Van de Vate, PO Box 23152, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

AMERICAN WOMEN COMPOSERS, INC.

American Women Composers, Inc., was founded in April 1976 to help women get their musical works published, performed, and recorded. Another goal is to collect scores, tapes, and discs for a permanent archives for the works of women. A newsletter is mailed out to all women composers to keep them informed of what is taking place in the musical world, as well as to help them contact performing groups. For further information, contact: American Women Composers, Inc., 6192 Oxon Hill Road, Suite 406, Washington, D.C. 20021 (phone: 301-567-4490).



Diana Davies. *Singer, New York Subway System.*

NATIONAL WOMEN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL

Annually the National Women's Music Festival in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, brings together women musicians and lovers of music from all over the country for a time filled with sharing, playing, learning, and celebrating. Concerts, workshops, films, and jam sessions highlight the Festival. A wide variety of music is presented: everything from jazz to folk to classical. The performers and the audience comprise differing philosophical and political perspectives, and yet there is room for this diversity. The uniting factor lies in the Festival's original purpose: the presentation of music performed, produced, and engineered by women and the provision of a forum for the exchange of the skills necessary for this presentation.

The National Women's Music Festival has facilitated the growth and maturing of women's music. Before the first Festival, no feminist had recorded an album with substantial sales. Today, over three quarters of a million feminist albums have been sold. There are women's production companies in 30 to 40 cities. Women who weren't accepted by the "establishment" recording industry were given a chance at the Festival and later achieved popular success on a national scale (e.g., The Roches, Ellen McIlwaine, Melissa Manchester).

Write: National Women's Music Festival, PO Box 2721, Station A, Champaign, Ill. 61820



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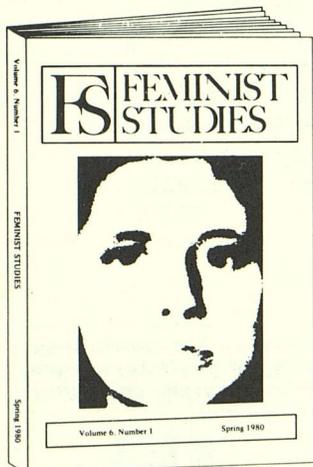
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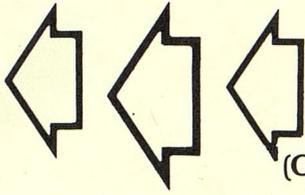
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HERESIES wishes to thank all the many people who made our benefit on May 27-28 at the Frank Marino Gallery a big success. Special thanks go to the artists who donated work: Cecile Abish, Pat Adams, Eleanor Antin, Ida Applebroog, Dotty Attie, Alice Aycock, Helene Aylon, Nancy Azara, Frances Barth, Rachel bas-Cohain, Judith Bernstein, Shirley Bernstein, Camille Billops, Lula Mae Blocton, Louise Bourgeois, Martha Boydon; Vivian E. Browne, Donna Byars, Cynthia Carlson, Louisa Chase, Judy Chicago, Elaine Lustig Cohen, Susan Crile, Janet Culbertson, Betsy Damon, Agnes Denes, Donna Dennis, Sandy De Sando, Sari Dienes, Daria Dorosh, Sarah Drainey, Loretta Dunkelman, Martha Edelheit, Mary Beth Edelson, Jean Feinberg, Jackie Ferrara, Janet Fish, Louise Fishman, Mary Frank, Jane Freilicher, Janet Froelich, Emily Fuller, Sandy Gellis, Nancy Graves, Denise Green, Mary Grigoriadis, Julie Gross, Nancy Grossman, Carol Haerer, Marcia Hafif, Susan Hall, Harmony Hammond, Sue Heinemann, Phoebe Helman, Margo Herr, Elizabeth Hess, Ellen K. Jaffe, Virginia Jaramillo, Buffie Johnson, Jane Kaufman, Darra Keeton, Susan Kleckner, Harriet Korman, Joyce Kozloff, Louise Kramer, Lee Krasner, Diane Kurz, Ellen Lanyon, Pat Lasch, Stephanie Brody Lederman, Ellen K. Levy, Jane Logemann, Sylvia Mangold, Rosemary Mayer, Melissa Meyer, Sue Miller, Kate Millett, Mary Miss, Elizabeth Murray, Donna Nelson, Patsy Norvell, Betty Parsons, Howardena Pindell, Barbara Quinn, Virginia Reath, Faith Ringgold, Abby Robinson, Ann Marie Rousseau, Miriam Schapiro, Carolee Schneeman, Barbara Schwartz, Joan Semmel, Ann Shapiro, Dee Shapiro, Amy Sillman, Arlene Slavin, Elisabeth Munro Smith, Mimi Smith, Jenny Snider, Joan Snyder, Judith Solodkin, Elke Solomon, Nancy Spero, Pat

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CONTENTS

Centipede Kathleen St. John	1	Women in Folk Song Holly Hendricks Cormier	46
A Critical Approach to the History of Women in Music Jeannie G. Pool	2	Silent Sound Ruth Anderson	48
The Unquestioned Answer Laurie Spiegel	5	Banjo Women Evelyn Hayes	49
An Interview with the Sybil of the Rhine: Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) Barbara L. Grant	6	Meet the Women Composers of Rags Carolynn Anderson Lindemann	50
Music and Healing Ann Cain McGinnis	11	Slave Codes and Liner Notes Michele Russell	52
Untitled Valery Taylor	13	Mean Mothers: Independent Women's Blues Rosetta Reitz	57
PARTBE La Donna Smith	14	Singing Praises: Women in Gospel Music Alverta Thomas	61
A Woman Remembers Her Music Jeriann Hilderley	16	jazzwomen: they're mostly singers and piano players only a horn player or two hardly any drummers hattie gossett with carolyn johnson	65
Everything Changes and Grows Julie J. Weber	18	Bebop Womantones Betty Carter and Akua Lezli Hope	69
Is There a Feminist Aesthetic in Music? Teresa Giordano, Jeannie Pool, Anna Rubin, Elizabeth Sacre, Valerie Samson, Carol Sudhalter, Judith Tick	20	Blowing on the Changes: Reflections of a Jazz Woman Janet Lawson	70
Campeinas Diana Davies	21	Universal Jazz Coalition	73
Biafran War Refugees . . . Diana Davies	23	Women in Jazz Theatre	73
Atlantis Rising Kay Gardner	25	Women and World Music: Straining Our Ears to the Silence Joanne Riley	74
Critics/Performers/Composers Beth Anderson, Holly Cara, Cathy Lee, Kristin Lems, Nancy Fierro, Victoria Bond, Lucille Field Goodman, Katherine Hoover, Virginia Eskin	26	On the Trail of Red Sky Lady and Other Scholars Elsa Peterson	80
Grazyna Bacewicz (1909-1969) Judith Rosen	28	Look What You've Done to My Song Jacqueline Higgins Rosebrook	83
Florence B. Price J. K. Thompson	31	Open Notes But No Closing Chord: On Malvina Reynolds Kristin Lems	86
Once More, With Feeling Daria Semegen	32	Woman-Identified Music: Moving On Jane E. Pipik	88
Letters from a Composer Lynn Wilson	34	Women Musicians Collective Mimi Stern-Wolfe	91
My Personal Approach to Music Beth Anderson	36	Uni Doris Hays	92
Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Study in Mixed Accents Barbara Jepson	38	Reports from Europe Frau und Musik: Internationaler Arbeitskreis, Sharon Kanach, Helen Metzelaar	93
Ruth Crawford Seeger: Preserving American Folk Music Karen M. Cardullo	39	Some Resources First National Congress on Women in Music; League of Women Composers; American Women Composers; National Women's Music Festival	94
Whistle Music: A Sonic Exorcism Heidi Von Gunden	45	Singer, New York Subway System Diana Davies	94

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