

New Standards: Women in Orchestras in the 21st Century

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Quotations and resources cited in the lecture

“I do not like, and never will, the association of men and women in orchestras and other instrumental combinations... As a member of the orchestra once said to me, ‘If she is attractive I can’t play with her, and if she is not then I won’t.’” *Sir Thomas Beecham, “The Position of Women in Music,” Vogue’s First Reader, 1942, p. 416*

“...indeed it can hardly be recommended or expected that the professors of fair faces and soft swelling lips should consent to puff out the one and conceal the other by use of the flute, while such a display of all the charms of grace and beauty wait upon the use of the harp.” *N. M. James, “A Word or Two on the Flute,” Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review 8, 1826, p. 54*

“Nature never intended the fair sex to become cornetists, trombonists, and players of wind instruments. In the first place they are not strong enough to play them as well as men; they lack the lip and lung power to hold notes which deficiency makes them always play out of tune...Another point against them is that women cannot possibly play brass instruments and look pretty, and why should they spoil their good looks?...” *Gustave Kerker, “Opinions of Some New York Leaders on Women as Orchestral Players,” Musical Standard 21 (Apr. 2 1904)*

“When I think of women as I see them in the musical world, what they are capable of doing, their fine spirit, excellent technique, I realize what a splendid power we are letting go to waste in this country, and in other countries, too. What poor economy it is to take it for granted that women are not ready to enter the world of art, are not capable of becoming fluent channels for the expression of genius...We are sacrificing accomplishment to tradition.” *Leopold Stokowski, “Women in the Orchestra,” The Literary Digest 52 (Feb. 26, 1916), p. 504*

“If you want to be happy, be a wife first and a musician second, not a sad musician first and a poor wife second.” *1960 Woodwind World article sidebar called “Advice to Girls”*

“Both the harp and cello are decorative instruments whose curves and grace lend themselves to the same attributes of the women who play them... You get to the trumpets and trombones and tubas, however, and the image of femininity declines in direct proportion to the stridency and volume of sound produced...In other words, it just isn’t a romantic sight to see a girl blowing through the mouthpiece of a trumpet or trombone and making a blasting sound...You wonder, in wool-gathering moments, whether female lips accustomed to compressing and making sounds through wind instruments aren’t a little tougher, less pliant, than those of non-wind players...” *John Sherman, American String Teacher, March-April 1962*

“I just don’t think women should be in an orchestra. They become men.” *Zubin Mehta, quoted in an October 18, 1970 New York Times article by Judy Klemesrud called “Mehta's Mystique: Baton In Hand, Foot in Mouth?”*

Douglas Myers and Clair Etaugh, “Women Brass Musicians in Major Symphony Orchestras: How Level is the ‘Playing’ Field?” *International Alliance for Women in Music Journal* 7/3, 2001, p. 29. Lists the number of women in the wind and brass sections of the top twenty-two American orchestras in the 1999-2000 season.

Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse, “Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of ‘Blind’ Auditions on Female Musicians,” *The American Economic Review*, Sept. 2000.

Jutta Allmendinger and Richard Hackman, “The More the Better? A Four-Nation Study of the Inclusion of Women in Symphony Orchestras,” *Social Forces* 74/2 (Dec. 1995). This study suggests that when women’s participation reaches a more than 40% “tipping point,” the organization begins to run more smoothly.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra quotations

“Many musicians, even if they won’t admit it, secretly believe there’s a difference in the sound produced by a man and a woman. I know three conductors who say this...I know a lot of men that sound like women. But not with us, mind you...This is something that we label our personal style. And it is, if you want to characterize it, masculine.”
Wolfgang Schuster, Press Secretary of the VPO (1997)

“Three women are already too many. By the time we have twenty percent, the orchestra will be ruined. We have made a big mistake, and will bitterly regret it.” *VPO member in the Austrian profil magazine, February 24, 2003*

both the quotations listed above and many more may be found at:

<http://www.osborne-conant.org/articles.htm>

(This website also includes a couple of other great articles by William Osborne: “Art is Just an Excuse” and “You Sound Like A Ladies’ Orchestra” and an article by Regina Himmelbauer: “The Representation of Women in European and American Orchestras”)

Other Articles, Books, and Dissertations of Interest (for brass musicians in particular)

Bruenger, David. "Women Trombonists in North American Orchestras and Universities," *International Trombone Association Journal* 20, 1992.

Dyer, Richard. "Of gender, bravado and brass; A trumpet star's blare at female students stirs debate over stereotyping." *Boston Globe*, April 21, 1991.

Foulk, Lin. "Works for Horn and Piano by Female Composers: An Annotated Guide," 2003 dissertation, available at www.linfoulk.org.

Jenkins, Ellie. "Women As Professional Horn Players in the United States, 1900-2005," 2005 dissertation.

Hersey, Joanna Ross. "Such Unfeminine Instruments," Women Brass Musicians in American Before 1940," 2006 dissertation.

Ammer, Christine. *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music*, 2nd ed. Portland: Amadeus Press, 2001.

Neuls-Bates, Carol, ed. *Women in Music*, rev. ed. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996

Bowers, Jane, and Judith Tick, ed. *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Macleod, Beth Abelson. *Women Performing Music: The Emergence of American Women as Instrumentalists and Conductors*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2001.

Groh, Jan Bell. *Evening the Score: Women in Music and the Legacy of Frédérique Petrides*. Fayetteville, AK: The University of Arkansas Press, 1991.