INTO THE LIGHT:
A STUDY OF WOMEN COMPOSERS

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose and focus of this paper is an exploration and discussion of specific women composers who composed music for the voice. I contend that women throughout history composed music of value, yet their contributions have been obscured by intentional social constructs intended to disguise or disavow the value of their work. Further, the men responsible for developing the canon of Western music purposefully undervalued the music composed by women. In tandem with an increased interest in women’s and gender studies in recent years, there has been an increase in research and discovery of women in music. Through the work of music scholars within the last thirty years, several women composers representing different historical periods, nationalities, and musical styles have been identified for this study. The women included have their own stories; their stories and music deserve to be heard. The goal of this paper is not to provide a musical analysis of works by women or to compare specific male and female composers. Rather, this paper challenges the scholars of the past who denied women’s abilities. Further, the paper supports a performance project that shared previously unheard or rarely heard music of women composers with interested scholars and students who may choose to include music of women composers in their own performance programs.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is one thing to decide to pursue further studies, it is another to spend twenty plus years in one professional career path and then choose to change directions and return to school. My family and close friends have been so important for their understanding, support, and encouragement.

When I first chose to return to school and study music I did not imagine it would take me to a path of questioning and challenging long held beliefs. I would like to thank Dr. William P. Flannagan of King University for encouraging me to challenge the absence of women in music history texts and to pursue a graduate degree to study the histories of women in music.

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Since one goal of this project and paper has been to bring the past efforts of talented women into the light it is only fitting that the final product of the lecture-recital and paper has been the result of the coordinated efforts of women. In addition to the women already mentioned, Mrs. Karen Smith, Mrs. Andrea Heys, and collaborative pianist Mrs. Ann Lavender provided invaluable aid in the preparations and presentation of the music featured in the recital. My heartfelt thanks to all, this has been an enlightening and amazing experience.
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INTRODUCTION

Composers face challenges to create and to be remembered for their work. First, composers need training or education and financial funding to support their endeavors in composition. Then the music must be heard by others and disseminated to establish demand. This difficult path to composition has been walked by many, both male and female. Yet, for many years, the contributions of women composers remained forgotten and obscured by patriarchal social constructs intended to disguise or disavow the value of their work. Simon During makes an alarming and illuminating statement regarding cultural studies; “What has no presence in the present has no history; it has simply been forgotten.”¹ Building on this statement, if the presence of women in the history texts of Western music is omitted or ignored, do those contributions disappear? How much of the past has been lost and how much can be recovered?

In a book of essays published in 1984, Nino Pirrotta inadvertently shares a significant truth regarding oral and written traditions of music - a truth that applies equally to the histories of women in music: “the music from which we make history, the written tradition of music, may be likened to the visible tip of an iceberg, most of which is submerged and invisible.”² Though this reference pertains to the aural tradition of music and the challenges of recovering history, it applies equally to the challenges of changing long-held misconceptions and reinserting women into the discourse of past musical events. I contend that many men and women accepted a patriarchal history of Western music without questioning the absence, or near absence, of women and consequently the contributions of women were disguised or ignored as a threat to specific

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²Nino Pirrotta, Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 72.
social constructs that denied the intelligence and talents of women. This history needs to be amended.

My study and search for the stories of women composers began as a desire to present a vocal recital of songs composed by women after I learned a song by a lesser known nineteenth-century woman composer and researched her story. This paper identifies and discusses a select group of women who overcame obstacles, such as restricted access to music education and social stigmas, to compose music. Most of the composers discussed in this paper were selected through the process of searching for other songs composed by women. The search initially focused on finding and selecting songs by women composers that fell within my vocal range and that I wanted to sing in recital. In most cases the songs were found first and a much broader search was required to learn the story of the composer. When I began this search I only knew the names of six of the women in this study. Many of the women in this study lived within a strong circle of men influential in music and art. With rare exception, music histories identified them first as women, second as daughters, wives, mothers, or sisters, and last as composers. Even today, respected music history reference sources such as Grove Music Online continue to identify most women composers primarily by their other musical activities as instrumentalists, teachers, vocalists, or their families. The stories and contributions of the women discussed challenge those scholars of the past who denied the women their agency and value. Some present-day scholars challenge the earlier perceptions created by the exclusion of women to recognize an accurate and complete music history. With the inclusion of works by women composers, future students and educators benefit from the compositions of both men and women who created the musical traditions of the past.
INTRODUCTION TO THE WESTERN CANON OF MUSIC

The exclusion of female composers from the canon of Western music is a principal concern of this study. If the canon represents the development of music as an academic discipline that intentionally excluded women from the narrative, it seems appropriate to include a discussion of when and how the canon developed. As scientific, political, and economic changes occurred throughout Europe, performance practices and the patronage system for music also changed. In the Medieval period, the Roman Catholic Church served as the primary employer of composers, but with time the patronage system shifted. With the emergence of nation states in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, patronage shifted from the church to the nobility; music served a court function to enhance the prestige of the nobility. Then, both the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution contributed to the rise of large middle classes that created a rapidly changing socioeconomic environment and a very different and important source of income to composers. Along with the gradual shift from court-sponsored performance to public performance, the audience for music grew substantially. Instead of being reserved for the nobility, elite, or church officials, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the increased concentration of populations in cities led to a larger audience that included the wealthy merchants and others, and increased demand for public artistic entertainments, such as concerts, in the major cities of England, France, and central Europe.³ In earlier composition and performance practices, composers wrote music for a specific event or commission without expectation of repeat performances beyond their lifetimes; that changed as music publishing and

music journalist increased the audience, market, and reach of compositions. Most Medieval composers wrote to the demands and expectations of the Roman Catholic church; a majority of seventeenth-century composers wrote to the dictates and tastes of their patrons, whether the church or nobility. In the nineteenth century, the combination of an expanded public concert life and a heightened awareness and interest in music of the past may have helped to stimulate the perceived need for musical standard and the creation of the canon.

In Grove Music Online, Jim Samson defines canon as “A term used to describe a list of composers or works assigned value and greatness by consensus.” He places the formation of the sense of a canon or identification of music worthy of preservation as a history of music that began to take shape in the late eighteenth-century. Yet, the definition as written by Samson leads to a question: “Whose “consensus” formed the canon?” Samson includes publishing houses and musical journals, all owned and operated by men, among critical arbiters in the formation of a core repertoire by the mid-nineteenth century. In practice, the canon formation served to establish cultural roots and tradition; it allowed the men who lived within the music centers of Europe and who held cultural power over music and fine arts to determine the significant music and to force the music and composers they perceived as insignificant into obscurity. These values, assigned by the more powerful male members of the music culture, excluded works of many composers determined to be unworthy, especially music composed by women.

In Gender and the Musical Canon, Marcia Citron offers reasons for the underrepresentation of women in the canon of Western music. Primarily, the canon repertoire

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6 Ibid.
formation began within the cultural conditions and expectations of the bourgeois class of early nineteenth-century Europe. When the formation of standards began, works that did not adhere to a prescribed musical ideal were deliberately ignored, excluded, and then forgotten. The chosen works represented certain sets of values or ideologies for music and composers as determined by a specific segment of a patriarchal society, the segment in power: men. Women had very little agency over the formation of ideals incorporated into the musical canon. Culture was a part of the power structure controlled by men who favored large works written for concert halls as opposed to music written for a more private setting. Their cultural ideals respected knowledge, education, and privilege. Elite men often viewed women as natural and innocent, representative of a pure but inferior state lacking in intellectual facilities such as reason. Men dominated the patriarchal society of nineteenth-century Europe, while women by and large functioned within guidelines and expectations established by men. The canonical values established in this environment became entrenched within an authority and ideology that formed the base of the core repertoire for music education without the inclusion of women composers.\(^7\)

Despite increased emphasis on the individual and liberties for men, most women of all classes still lived under the control of father, husbands, brothers, or other male relatives in nineteenth-century Europe.\(^8\) These social constructs restricting visible active involvement of women in the creative processes were not unique to this period of canon development; examples

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\(^7\) Gender and the Musical Canon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 45-50.

of cultural obstacles can be found prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A review of the historical cultural expectations applied to women, along with the identities and perceptions of various women composers serves to provide a better understanding of challenges faced by these exceptional women. No doubt, these challenges and cultural standards served to disguise or devalue the accomplishments and talents of even more women, both known and unknown.
WOMEN’S STUDIES AND MUSIC

Within the umbrella of women’s studies, scholars’ evaluation of histories may occur from a cultural and sociological context that includes women. Scholars often study cultures from the perspectives of differences in economic class, yet from the perspective of some scholars in women’s studies, the economic differences may prove less significant than the shared experience of being of the same gender. In *A History of Their Own*, Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zinsser stress that the first unique characteristic in women’s history studies is that simply being born female defines the woman’s experience and separates her from men. The second characteristic they identified stated that until recently and with few exceptions, most historic records defined women by family relationships or associations to men, as wives, mothers, or daughters beginning with some of the earliest written biblical records. Throughout all of Europe, regardless of social class, the identities of most women in history included their roles as members of a male-dominated family, with their functions and roles defined by their identification within their families. Even women in religious orders were identified by a male-dominated hierarchy as “brides of Christ.”9 Anderson and Zinsser wrote a history of women in Europe to counteract their personal educational experiences of studying traditional history without the inclusion of women and to discover how women lived, worked, and found agency despite cultural attitudes that defined women as both inferior and subordinate to men. They credit the earlier work of women, such as fifteenth-century writer Christine de Pizan and historians Joan Kelly and Gerda Lerner, for inspiring their search to uncover histories of women.10 The prevailing practices of subordinating or devaluing activities of women effectively hid the contributions of many women.

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10 Ibid., xiii-xiv.
The historical restrictions of most women from public positions in government or commerce further privatized the actions and lives of many women. To uncover the stories of women, scholars learned to look beyond public records and search private or domestic artifacts such as wills, letters, and diaries. Meg Lota Brown and Kari Boyd McBride refer to the discovery process of women’s history as learning to listen for the silences.\(^\text{11}\) The extant family collections of manuscripts, diaries, and letters allow current scholars to learn considerably more about the lives and work of several women composers previously omitted from music history texts.

As studies of music expanded and more women entered the field in the late twentieth-century, music studies followed the example of women’s studies and moved toward a cultural and sociological view of music. Previously, research ignored the context of music and instead focused on documents such as manuscripts and treatises written by men. Further, scholars emphasized developments of musical styles and genres of large works, areas in which social restrictions reduced the visible presence of women.\(^\text{12}\) During the 1970s, the new field of feminist musicology formed in the first institutional attempt to include women in music history studies. The inclusion of women in music studies has progressed steadily since the early 1970s. In the 2012 keynote address for the Twentieth Anniversary of the Feminist Theory and Music Conference, Dr. Susan McClary shared that in her early years of music study, she had been told there were no women composers. She acknowledged the progress made since the earliest efforts to introduce the contributions of women into music history and cited multiple studies conducted in the 1980s that detailed a history of women in music and created a groundwork for further


study. She also shared that the work of scholars such as Carol Neuls-Bates, Jane Bowers, Judith Tick, and Pierre Bourdieu laid the groundwork for further in-depth studies of women in music, the recognition of women composers, and a greater appreciation for how women patrons and teachers shaped cultural tastes and musical developments. I contend these earlier studies created a path and valuable sources of information for other scholars to follow in their own searches to learn the stories of some of the exceptional women who composed and performed music in the past.

WOMEN COMPOSERS

14Ibid., 88-90.
The Medieval church held a strong position of authority as the site of significant musical innovation and performance, preserver of music, and the employer of many of the earliest composers. From this position of power, the church established many of the early restrictions regarding the roles of women within the church, including music, and exercised tremendous control in the selection of music for preservation and dissemination. Within the church, women participated in the composition and performance of music solely within the confines of a convent. The church also served as primary educator and employer for early musicians and composers in church-sponsored schools. Girls were forbidden to attend the church-sponsored schools; however, women who entered religious orders received a formal education within the convent and learned church music by attending liturgical functions.\(^\text{15}\)

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) represents the early women composers who functioned within the structure of the patriarchal church and earned respect from church officials. Unlike most composers of her time, she was well-known and her work disseminated during her own life; more musical works are credited to her than any other composer of that era. Yet, Julie Dunbar writes that as recently as the 1980s, her name did not appear in prominent music history texts and reference sources.\(^\text{16}\) When I took a course in early music, the text was a 2013 edition and Hildegard received a page for her morality play the *Ordo Virtutum* but little mention of her other music. Without actual knowledge of what formal music education she may have received, it is difficult to know whether she chose to ignore the standard practices for compositions of her time or simply did not have the training to know the musical standards. Hildegard herself professed that she composed or created from the inspiration of God. Regardless, her works


\(^{16}\) Ibid.
differed from those of her male contemporaries. She often wrote in free verse, employed text painting to reflect the meaning of the words in the movement of the music, as well as longer extended melismas and chants that often utilized a broader two and sometimes three-octave range rather than the more traditional one-octave. 17 All these differences could support the arguments of scholars who contend she lacked the training of her contemporaries. I suggest that another likely possibility is that rather than a lack of understanding or knowledge of standard compositional practice, she chose to write music that enhanced the meaning of the text. In her morality play, the sung roles belong to women representing the Virtues; the only voiced male part is spoken and represents the devil and his separation from God and therefore from music. 18

There may have been many other women within convents who composed and performed music that has been lost. By the sixteenth-century, in response to the Protestant Reformation in the northern regions of Europe, the male hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church reacted with a Counter Reformation intended to repair the schism between Protestants and Catholics, to clarify doctrine, and to reform abuses and corruption. 19 The Council met at Trent in northern Italy intermittently from 1545 to 1563 to formulate and sanction measures to purge the Catholic Church of abuses and laxities. The principal complaints addressed concerning music of the church related to the similarity of the new music to secular music, and complex polyphony with unintelligible text so that the music dominated the text. 20 In addition to changes in music, other monastic reforms centered on the conflicts between the ideology of a community of women

18 Ibid., 31.
dedicated to prayers and service to Christ and church and the practices of nobility who used convents as a convenient place to house their unwed daughters. The Council moved to create a stricter environment within the convents and wrest control back from the nobility; their edicts to preserve sanctity and to increase control required more restrictions toward the activities of women within the church than during the time of Hildegard. Karin Pendle shares evidence of musical acts of defiance in the face of the edicts of the sixteenth-century Council of Trent restricting the education and practices of women religious. The edicts included the strict clausura of the convents, which affected the cloistered women’s ability to hear music outside of their convent, to receive music education from anyone outside of the convent, or to permit anyone else from hearing their music. Beginning in the 1990s, studies of the convents, women religious, and their music, specifically in Italian convents from 1600-1725, revealed an additional sacred music culture of beautiful, and previously unpublished music. Nuns’ defiance of the strictest isolation demanded by the edicts reflects a continuity of education and music within the community of the convent, rather than blind obedience and acceptance of male-defined beliefs. Montford contends that the reformers failed to fully recognize and appreciate the intersections of family, community, and obligations of the religious formed from tradition and necessity and how the families and communities cooperated to preserve certain traditions. Further, within a community of clausura, women religious may have found increased opportunity for intellectual and musical pursuit. This willingness to quietly continue despite restrictions and obstacles

may be a character trait shared by other women who found ways to create music despite barriers to education or musical training.

Outside of the restrictions and protections of the church, women composers continued to face tremendous obstacles. Within the church women religious could continue religious literary pursuits and music, even if they could only do so within the constraints or guidelines of the church. Meg Lota Brown and Kari Boyd McBride contrast the Renaissance experiences of men and women in *Women’s Roles in the Renaissance*. Renaissance scholars emphasized a return to the classics; to justify the submission and domination of women, men referenced the example of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.). Aristotle believed women were incomplete and inferior to men in all ways; therefore, man was much better suited to rule than was woman. He argued that a man demonstrated courage and strength by commanding and that a woman must obey the man’s commands. Further, Catholic theologians chose to select the edict from Paul to the Corinthians, “Let your women keep silence in the churches.” (I Corinthians 14:34) to justify restrictions to deny women education and condemn self-assertion. According to Brown and McBride, the acceptable education for women and girls included instruction in the virtues of passivity and modesty, and the skills necessary to care for a home. Renaissance scholars and theologians characterized women’s bodies as sinful and dangerous temptations that must be controlled. Any digression from the acceptable passive behavior questioned a woman’s chastity and modesty.

Women also suffered legally. In most of Europe, women could not own or control property; instead women were the property of a father, husband, or brother. They did not have legal rights.

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concerning their own children and in most regions the law viewed a woman as a child, a person to be guided and controlled.\textsuperscript{26}

In late-sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Italy, noble women and elite bourgeois women steadily disappeared from public view into the private realm of their households. This suppressed public musical activities for these women and affected any activity considered a distraction from the approved occupation of managing the home. In addition to warning against women in music, Venetian humanist Giovanni Michele Bruto (ca. 1515-1594) stressed that elite young women should only be educated in subjects that best prepared them for the acceptable vocation of governance of household and family.\textsuperscript{27}

Both Francesca Caccini (1587-c.1637) and Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677) lived and composed within the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Italian culture; daughters of well-known fathers, they achieved acclaim first for their exceptional talent as singers, but not in public performance. Despite being known for their talents in their own time, their contributions might have been lost from record without their connections to famous fathers. Despite her years of service as a composer and vocalist within the Medici court, Caccini merits only a single line in the 1879 Edition of George Grove’s \textit{Dictionary of Music and Musicians} at the end of a longer entry praising her father Giulio Caccini (1546-1618) for his innovations as a composer and musician. The close of the entry simply reads “Caccini’s daughter Francesca was celebrated both as a singer and composer.”\textsuperscript{28} Even in the 1927 edition she still only warranted recognition in

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
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the closing statements of the entry dedicated to her father. Strozzi does not merit any mention until a brief entry in the 1927 edition and although her father’s fame was not in music, the entry identifies her familial relationship to Giulio Strozzi (1583-1652).

Although little of Caccini’s music was preserved through publication, among her surviving works is the first opera known to have been composed by a woman. As the oldest daughter of Giulio Caccini of the Florentine Camerata, Caccini trained in voice, instruments, and composition. She experienced advantages of a musical family and a coveted position within the Medici women’s court, a court recognized for a tradition of patronage and encouragement of all the arts. Opportunities existed within the Medici women’s court that might not have been possible otherwise. As an example, her opera *La liberazione di Ruggiero d’al Isola d’Alcino*, presents a different kind of hero-story from the typical opera composed and performed by men. *La liberazione* tells a story of good versus evil through a feminine context with female leads of a sexual, evil sorceress versus a virtuous, androgynous sorceress in their battle for control of the young knight. Dunbar describes the unusual depiction of strong female characters wielding power as a story designed to be performed by women and for women. Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Austria commissioned the opera for the visit to Florence by the Prince of Poland. Caccini’s opera was performed again in Warsaw in 1628 and may be the first Italian opera known to have been performed outside of Italy (some scholars dispute this claim). I contend

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34 In *Grove Music Online*, Suzanne Cusick concurs with the Warsaw performance of Caccini’s opera but disputes claims that *La liberazione* was the first Italian opera performed outside of Italy.
Caccini’s treatment of a feminist libretto with powerful women was not accepted by most men of her time and that rejection contributed to the extended omission of her work from music histories.35

In her lifetime, Caccini benefited from the protection of her father, the powerful Medici family, and a rise of social stature through her second marriage. Despite the unusual patronage and freedom offered by the Medici family, Caccini’s reputation was sullied by early music scholars. For more than a century, Alessandro Ademollo’s (1826-1891) *La bell’Adriana*, published in 1888 was accepted as an accurate account of Caccini’s career, life, and death. In his account, when her first husband died Caccini left her position with the Medicis, remarried, and soon thereafter died of cancer of the mouth.36 A 1993 article by Suzanne Cusick questions Ademollo’s account from her own perspective as a woman and musician. Her search of dowry taxes, wills, and related documents revealed significant errors of omission in musical activity beyond the dates of Caccini’s second marriage and supposed death of mouth cancer shortly after her remarriage.37 The long acceptance of Ademollo’s account without question reflects a history of disregard or lack of concern for accuracy in recording the life and work of Caccini and other women composers. The nature of Caccini’s death remains unknown. Cussick raises the point that Ademollo’s recorded nature of her death reflects the pervasive expectation among some men that Caccini’s miraculous singing was unnatural and should be the source of her demise.38

In 1637 Caccini refused to allow her daughter Margherita to sing in the wedding festivities of Ferdinand

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35 There are letters written by the Prince of Poland to suggest the Prince accepted and appreciated Caccini’s work. He commissioned two other stage works for performance at his court. For more information relating to the politics of the Medici court and Caccini’s opera see Suzanne G. Cusick’s *Francesco Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).
37 Ibid., 498-499.
38 Ibid., 500.
II. For me, her refusal indicates protectiveness toward her daughter and an awareness and understanding of the probable social consequences to her daughter once associated with public performance.

In contrast to Caccini’s court-based experience, Barbara Strozzi, the adopted daughter (believed by most scholars to be the natural daughter) of Venetian poet and librettist Giulio Strozzi (1583-1652), lived and composed within a more secluded and secretive setting in Venice. The private literary and music salons of Venice offered her alternative opportunities for music in a private setting. Beth Glixon, writing in the *Musical Quarterly*, notes that through Strozzi’s father’s friendships with writer Giovanni Francesco Loredano (1607-1661) of the Accademia degli Incogniti (Academy of the Unknown) and the musical Accademia degli Unisoni (Accademy of the Like-Minded) hosted by Giulio Strozzi, Barbara Strozzi frequently sang and participated in literary and political debate within the privacy of the salons. The records of the Unisoni testify to her active participation and the exceptional quality of her vocal performances of music. The Unisoni members praised her performance as a singer but failed to acknowledge her achievements as a composer. Despite incredible vocal talents, Strozzi did not perform in opera or any other public music performance. In her essay “Musical Women of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” Barbara Garvey Jackson offers the theory that Strozzi’s father prohibited her from public performance to protect her from slander and association with other Venetian women musicians and performers. Regardless of the reason, even after her father’s death she continued to work and perform away from the public view of Venice.

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39 Cusick, “Thinking,” 499.
In her introduction to *Cantatas by Barbara Strozzi*, Ellen Rosand lists advantages Strozzi benefited from as the adopted daughter of Giulio Strozzi. Strozzi’s father encouraged her music education. He commissioned the composer Nicolo Fontei to write music for her voice and arranged for her to study composition with Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676). Strozzi’s first published works appeared in 1644, a volume of madrigals for two to five voices set on texts written by her father. During her life, she published eight volumes of arias and secular cantatas for solo voice and continuo. She composed more printed secular vocal music in Venice between 1644 and 1664 than any other composer, man or woman. Yet when one reads a history of Venice, the famous seventeenth composer named probably will be Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), not Strozzi. This omission occurs despite her status as the most published composer and the possibility that Strozzi originated the cantata form in Italy. A *General History of Music* written in 1789 by music historian Charles Burney and based on his travels and research throughout Europe includes a narrative on the subject of cantatas and chamber music; despite a statement that some writers credit the invention of the cantata form to “Barbara Strozzi, a Venetian lady,” he reports to have found the term cantata in the title of a short narrative lyric poem written prior to the publication of Strozzi’s music.

The survival of more than 100 compositions provides tribute to Strozzi's talent. From notary records, twentieth century scholars such as Glixon determined she associated with influential business leaders of Florence and Venice, and possessed excellent financial

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understanding. Because the notaries came to her home she may have enjoyed an elevated status.46 In Venice, women exercised greater freedoms than elsewhere in Italy and Europe, and could own property and conduct financial business.47 The extant publications of her music include dedications to other influential personages and suggest Strozzi was very aware of the uniqueness of her acceptance into the city's musical culture when any variation from approved domestic activities and association with music or theater brought a woman's morals into question. In the dedication written in Opus I to the Duchess of Tuscany, as Rosand reveals, she wrote, “I most reverently consecrate this first work, which as a woman I publish all too boldly to the Most August Name of Your Highness so that, under an oak of gold it may rest secure against the lightning bolts of slander prepared for it.”48

She did face lightning bolts, because her vocal talents, intellect, and association with the academies linked her to the courtesan culture of Venice. Anonymous writers published satires slandering her character, satires that her father responded to with publications in defense of her virtue.49 Further, a portrait of an unnamed female musician by Venetian artist Bernardo Strozzi (1581-1644) long has been believed to be a portrait of Barbara Strozzi and offered as evidence to label her as courtesan in the absence of definitive proof.50 Whether or not Strozzi was actually a courtesan is less concerning than the cultural perception that a woman in music must also be a woman without virtue. This idea may find basis in the Venetian culture in which courtesans were among the most educated women and skilled in rhetoric and arts.51 Fortunately, she lived in

46 Beer, Sweet Airs, 314.
47 Brown, Women’s Roles, 14.
49 Dunbar, Women, Women, Culture, 99.
50 Ibid., 98.
Venice and published her work so that her music can be judged today separately of any discussion of her morals or possible lifestyle.

In the eighteenth century, Isabella Colbran (1785-1845) was a renowned singer encouraged by her family and educated for a career in music from a very young age.\(^\text{52}\) The 1927 edition of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* identifies her as “one of the best singers in Europe.”\(^\text{53}\) Based upon descriptions of her life and loves, Colbran more closely matches the image of the musical courtesan than did Caccini or Strozzi a century before. The brief descriptions of her life as written by Sophia Lambton in a *Musical Opinion* article depict a woman who found immense acclaim for her talents at a very young age, and became caught in the firestorm of a celebrity that ended much too soon. She found it necessary to retire from the stage at the age of 42 after an embarrassing performance followed by a string of reviews focused on her vocal decline.\(^\text{54}\) It is revealing that the brief entry of her life in *Grove Music Online* lists roles she sang, her affairs, marriage to Rossini, and other details of her life but fails to include any mention of her compositions until the last line of the entry.\(^\text{55}\)

If Lambton’s assessments are accurate, Colbran found fame for her voice, her affairs, and lastly her roles as muse, lover, and wife to opera composer Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). Colbran’s marriage to Rossini formed a musical team; she performed in the female leads of operas that he wrote specifically for her voice. It is difficult to determine whether their marriage involved love, infatuation, or simply convenience, but it ended soon after she left the stage. In *Rossini and Some Forgotten Nightingales*, Baron George Derwent in 1934, referred to Colbran

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\(^{54}\)Lambton, “Colbran,” 30.

and Rossini’s separation and divorce as a liberation for Rossini. He concluded that Rossini found it necessary to work constantly to support Colbran and that “she always played in his life a role approximating more to that of expensive and handsome mistress than of a wife held to him by ties of affection.”\textsuperscript{56} Interestingly, Derwent portrays Colbran’s life and personality in negative terms but, in keeping with the 1930s male bias and perspective, accepts Rossini’s affairs and his replacement of Colbran with a mistress. In her retirement and following her separation from Rossini, Colbran lived in the Rossini family home with Rossini’s father and taught singing lessons and composed four volumes of songs.\textsuperscript{57}

Derwent’s book includes part of a letter written by Giuseppe Rossini to his son in July 1833. The letter presents a negative image of Colbran, complains of her expenses, and blames her for his wife’s illness and death. He wrote, “How can a man love and live in agreement with an arrogant and disgraceful woman, a spendthrift whose one idea is to be spiteful, because a man won’t consent to all her grandeurs and madnesses … Long live the Venetians for having hissed her to death, it would have been better if they’d done her in as they meant to, and then my poor wife wouldn’t have died of passion, and what’s more, if things go on like this, I shall either die myself or go mad.”\textsuperscript{58} Colbran must have found it very difficult to make the transition from celebrated star to retirement, and even more challenging to live in Rossini’s family home while he lived elsewhere with his mistress. The article by Lambton, the entry in \textit{Grove Online}, and the descriptions found in the Rossini biography all suggest that by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the lifestyle and loose morals condemned and (falsely) attributed to Caccini

\textsuperscript{56} (London: Duckworth, 1934), 275.  
\textsuperscript{57} Kimball, \textit{A Heritage of Song}, 47.  
\textsuperscript{58} Derwent, \textit{Rossini}, 278.
and Strozzi both of whom worked within the court and private salons were expected in the life of an opera diva such as Colbran with a public performance career.

The life of Liza Lehmann (1862-1918), a later British female composer also known first as a singer, provides a very different and happier story than Colbran’s. Three of the composers already discussed had identities and support from men in their family. Caccini and Strozzi had fathers who supported their music education and careers; although Colbran’s father was a professional musician, she is more readily identified by her husband. In Lehman’s case, the musical parent to encourage her was her mother, who was known as a teacher, composer, and arranger, under the initials A.L.\(^{59}\) After reading Lehmann’s memoir, I suspect Lehmann’s mother used her initials to protect her privacy from a cultural gender bias and censure by middle- and upper-class society. In her memoir, Lehmann shares stories of her mother’s musical talents and a lack of confidence that Lehmann attributes to her mother’s absence of formal training.\(^{60}\)

Possibly her parents encouraged her own education in arts as a response to the education her mother desired but lacked. Her parents did not want her to become self-conscious or fearful to share her talents, so Lehmann received education in piano, singing, and composition, including a personal invitation to study lieder with Clara Schumann (1819-1896).\(^{61}\)

Although Lehmann began her career as a singer, her memoir indicates a preference for composition, “I often wish I had given to the study of composition the years I devoted to the assiduous study of singing . . . but in those days women-composers were not thought of at all seriously. . . . I simply worshipped at the shrine of any woman who wrote music.”\(^ {62}\)


\(^{61}\) Ibid., 57-58.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 22-23.
statement illustrates her admission of the cultural expectations and suggests a resigned acceptance that it was unnatural for a woman to compose. She did not concentrate her talents on teaching and composition until after she married and retired from the stage in 1894. Her song cycles, children’s music, and musical scores became very popular in both England and America during her lifetime.63

Lehmann and her contemporaries formed the Society of Women Musicians for which she served as the first president.64 They recognized the advantage and necessity of forming a community of support for women to flourish as professional composers. In her essay, Sophie Fuller discusses Lehmann and several of her fellow lesser known or forgotten female composers of Victorian and Edwardian Great Britain and why their music is overlooked despite critical acclaim and popularity during their lives. One of the composers, Maude Valerie White (1855-1937), was the first woman to win the prestigious Mendelssohn scholarship. Another, Adela Maddison (1866-1929, composed a German opera lauded by The Times.65 Fuller recognizes the challenges women faced to get their music published if it did not conform to specific expectations for compositions by women.66 Women often found themselves pushed to compose “lighter” music to get published; this created a vicious cycle since they could be published and popular if they composed songs in a genre not considered serious music.67

So far, I have discussed women composers who were also singers, but other women composers worthy of note and absent from many music histories first gained attention as instrumentalists. If history follows a progressive story of human development, then a logical

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63 Grove, “Lehmann.”
64 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 21.
67 Grove, “Lehmann.”
assumption could be the expectation that opportunities for women in music progressed through time. Yet, the stories of women in music indicate an almost circular pattern of periods or cultures of opportunity followed by periods of repression whenever women of all classes lived under the control of fathers, husbands, brothers, or other male relatives. For example, the Baroque period included women in artisan classes as professional artists and musicians accepted in paid public performance, publishing, or court-employed, while men of the Classical era and Enlightenment denied women’s intellect and abilities to create resulting in a reduction of the presence of women in public musical activities. 68 I suspect the changes in patronage may have worked alongside the cultural dictates of acceptable roles for women in this pattern. During the Renaissance and Baroque periods women could compose and perform professionally within the protection of their family or the courts of their patrons. As the patronage system shifted and music performance became more public, a social structure that denied women agency outside of their roles within the family judged a woman harshly for deviating from acceptable behaviors.

By the nineteenth century, social dictates successfully moved most women away from public competition with men and firmly into the private sphere toward roles of inspiration rather than creation. 69 Clara Schumann (1819-1896) and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847) represent women composers of the period. Schumann performed in the public sphere and played the role of muse and inspiration to her husband Robert Schumann (1810-1856) and friend Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), whereas Hensel worked within the private sphere, so that when she received her own listing in the 1954 edition of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*,

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68 Dunbar, *Women, Music, Culture*, 89.
it designated her as an amateur. In truth, Hensel did not compose or perform to support herself financially but her contributions to the music culture of Berlin earned her acceptance into the *Grove Dictionary* alongside professional composers and performers. Both women were recognized primarily as skilled pianists, not composers, and gained recognition from other composers, musicians, writers, and critics for their talents during their lifetimes. Coincidentally, they knew and respected each other’s work.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel shared an important similarity to Maria Anne Mozart (1751-1829) of an earlier generation: a talented and famous younger brother. Unlike Mozart, Hensel found opportunities and support to continue her creative development even though she lived and worked in the shadow of her brother. The intellectual, economic, and musical lineage of the Mendelssohn and Salomon families are well documented; the family emphasized education for all their children. Music was obviously highly appreciated by the family; at Hensel’s birth her father Abraham Mendelssohn (1776-1835) wrote to Leah’s mother that, “Leah says that the child has Bach-fugue fingers,” - a prophetic declaration. Even though her family’s wealth and social status forced her to function out of public view, she benefitted from certain traditions and customs of the Jewish bourgeois class of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Berlin. The family position and social dictates may have moved Hensel from public performance but the family’s salons offered a performance space and a circle of influence. Within her mother’s

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71 Hensel’s mother Leah Solomon Mendelssohn was a member of the powerful Solomon family and granddaughter of Daniel Itzig who was the Prussian court banker and one of the few Jews to receive full citizenship privileges. See Steven M. Lowenstein’s “Jewish Upper Crust and Berlin Jewish Enlightenment: The Family of Daniel Itzig,” in *Profiles in Diversity of Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750-1870* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998).
family, the tradition of salons provided exposure to other professional composers, performers, artists, and literati.\textsuperscript{73} The Mendelssohn family continued the tradition and provided opportunities for both Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) and Hensel to premier compositions before a select audience. In his own book of letters and notes of his family, Sebastian Hensel places the date of the first of many Sunday performances as occurring in 1822.\textsuperscript{74} Once Hensel took over the programming for these events, she had an available venue for her compositions and the ability to establish the musical tastes for Berlin and her numerous illustrious guests.

Despite the acceptance and acclaim of the Sunday musicales with notables such as Paganini, Weber, Liszt, Schuman, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Goethe, and Humboldt among her guests, and encouragement from her mother and husband, Hensel proved reluctant to defy the social conventions of her economic class or her father’s early instructions and publish music in her own name. She eventually consented to publication of music in her own name.\textsuperscript{75} Her compositional output of lieder was immense; she set to music the words of many poets from her era and the late eighteenth-century.\textsuperscript{76} Letters reveal a continued close relationship to her brother and encouragement to continue the Sunday musicales and to compose, but not the encouragement to publish that she received from her mother and husband. In a letter to Felix written July 9, 1846, Hensel seems to apologize for the decision to publish: “I’m afraid of my brothers at age 40, as I was of Father at age 14 – or, more aptly expressed, desirous of pleasing you and everyone I’ve loved throughout my life. And when I now know in advance that it won’t be the case, . . . . In a

\textsuperscript{74} Hensel, Mendelssohn Family, vol.1, 118.
word, I’m beginning to publish.”" After years of limiting exposure of her creative output to family and friends within the relative safety of the Sunday musicales, she conceded to publish under her own name in 1846, but died from a stroke only one year later.78

Until recently, the deeply ingrained idea that women did not or could not compose music of value hindered music scholars in search of lost facts. As an example, in addition to preserving the compositions of Hensel, letters of family members and friends were treasured and preserved so that various researchers should have been able to study Fanny Hensel’s education, musical output, and life. Yet one descendent of Hensel, writer Sheila Hayman, contends that studying Hensel’s unpublished compositions only recently has become possible; as recently as 2010 the curator then responsible for the family archives in Berlin refused access to certain files in his belief that she was “just a housewife,” unworthy of consideration or study.79 There are letters from Hensel’s father to attest to her accomplishments and oft-quoted passages written to Hensel by her father have been used by Mendelssohn scholars to illustrate the expectations and restrictions enforced by her family and social class. It seems that despite evidence of Hensel’s talents, these nineteenth-century beliefs change very slowly.

Rather than continuing to study Hensel from the standpoint of arguments about whether her abilities were suppressed by her family or by social constraints, whether her father and brother sought to protect her from public criticism, or how she responded, I prefer to consider her influence on music. Innovation and influence are among the criteria given in the previously reference Grove Music Online article for inclusion of a composer or work into the musical

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76 Dunbar, Women, Music, Culture, 118.
canon. The family letters and memoirs of other composers testify to her influence on music in Berlin through the Sunday Musicales; Dunbar has included discussion of letters written by Charles Gounoud (1818-1893) as evidence of Hensel’s influence on other composers. Family letters and journal entries give evidence to her influence on her brother’s work: early in Felix Mendelssohn’s education and career Hensel wrote in her journal, “I have always been his only musical adviser, and he never writes down a thought before submitting it to my judgment.” The greater portion of her work was lieder, a genre often considered feminine, frivolous, and relegated to the parlor so that it ranked well below works written for orchestra or a large chorus. Some of Hensel’s lieder were included in Felix Mendelssohn’s Opus 8 and Opus 9. Angela Mace Christian compared the songs to reveal compositional differences between the siblings. She found that the songs known to be Hensel’s lieder showed greater chromatic experimentation and emotional charge. From the perspective of nineteenth-century music, chromatic and emotional music was often associated with instability and femininity and it could be argued that Hensel’s compositional style merely reflected the idea of feminine music. Once Hensel published in her own name, music critics and musical publications quickly acknowledged her creativity and distinct voice.

Even though the lied dominated her output, Hensel composed other forms including concerto and sonata. Closer reading of the 1879 Dictionary of Music and Musicians includes a

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80 Dunbar, Women, Music, Culture, 114.
81 Hensel, Mendelssohn Family, vol. 1, 117.
brief description of Felix Mendelssohn playing the first movement of his sister’s *Easter Sonata* he had received by post. As recently as 2010, a piano sonata manuscript supposedly composed by F. Mendelssohn and found in a Paris bookshop in 1970 was recognized and performed on March 8, 2017 at the Royal College of Music in London as the same *Easter Sonata* composed by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel in 1829 at the age of 22 and referenced in both her journal and the Felix Mendelssohn dictionary entry. Despite overwhelming evidence, the collector who found the manuscript in 1970 denied that it could have been written by anyone other than Felix Mendelssohn, because the piece is “a masterpiece … very masculine. Very violent.” The collector’s arguments against the possibility of Hensel as the composer illustrates the pervasive presence of a gendered discourse in music even into the late twentieth-century. Although difficult to justify suppression of such talent, I propose that possibly the freedom to compose without concern for reviews and acclaim provided Hensel greater ability to experiment with various progressions and harmonies, to break through the gendered stereotypes of music, and to find her voice in her music, compared to her brother and other male contemporaries. Her private career protected her from the vicious criticisms of the type Richard Wagner (1813-1883) directed toward her brother and other composers.

Discussions of Fanny Hensel and the ways in which family and social expectations determined her career almost always include a comparison to her peer Clara Schumann (1819-1896). In discussions of the influences of women in music, Clara Schumann’s name appears as one of the better-known concert pianists and women composers of the nineteenth-century lied.

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86 Hayman, “Masterpiece.”
She may be the only woman with an individual entry in the 1879 edition of the *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* where the listing describes her as “the greatest pianoforte player that the world has ever heard.” Her name links her to husband Robert Schumann (1810-1856) but her professional musical career started before they met: educated and trained by her father Friedrich Wieck (1785-1873), she made her concert debut at the piano when age 9 and toured extensively in her teens. Her own compositions may have been well-known during her lifetime but her virtuosity as a concert pianist receives the greater attention. Schumann’s father was a respected and sought after piano instructor but not a performer. In contrast, her mother Marianne Tromlitz (1797-1872), a very gifted performer, may be the greater influence for Schumann’s talent despite their physical separation after her parents’ divorce.

From my perspective, Friedrich Wieck easily identifies as the opposite of Fanny Hensel’s father, even though both men sought control of their daughters’ lives. Abraham Mendelssohn never intended for his daughter to seek a profession as either a performer or composer of music but Wieck invested substantial time and energy into developing his daughter as a child prodigy and piano virtuoso. Dunbar points to the evidence that in showcasing the talents of his young daughter, Wieck’s reputation as a teacher grew and brought him more students and significant income. She also writes that Robert Schumann came to study with Friedrich Wieck only after hearing a performance by nine-year-old Clara Wieck. The friendship that developed into love between Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck marked the beginning of the legends of the

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91 Ibid., 121.
Schumanns. Their desire to marry resulted in an intense and lengthy court battle with Clara’s father before they could marry in 1840.92

Wieck taught his daughter composition and expected her to become a renowned composer. As the daughter of a professional musician who could educate and chaperone his daughter, Clara Schumann could perform in public concerts without censure, but composing required moving from a technician or interpreter to creator. An absence of other women composers as examples may have affected her confidence in her skills of composition; certainly, the demands of a husband, children, and household affected her freedom to compose. Because the children of Clara and Robert Schumann preserved letters and diaries, there are notes of Schumann’s life and thoughts during her early marriage and throughout her professional career. Diary entries place the composition of some of her lieder during their first year of marriage. A gift of songs she dedicated to her husband inspired Robert Schumann to create a collaborative collection of songs from poetry he selected: “The thought of publishing a volume of songs with Clara has inspired me to fresh efforts.”93 This enthusiasm may have been one-sided; Clara Schumann’s own entry in early January 1841 adds, “I have made several attempts to set the poems of Rückert which Robert picked out for me, but it is no use – I have no talent at all for composing.”94 That same year she proved herself wrong by composing four songs within the first week of June and presenting the songs to her husband on his birthday, which he then added to his own songs in a publication as a joint volume of songs. She attributed Robert’s joy in her songs as a primary incentive to continue composing songs.95 Rather than the lack of talent or skill,

92 Jezic, Women Composers, 92.
94 Ibid., 319.
95 Ibid., 319-320.
possibly the initial lack of choice inhibited her ability; after all, it was Robert Schumann’s decision, without consideration for her wishes, that she compose to the text of that specific poetry. As his birthday approached, she may have found meaning for the text.

Whereas other women retired from public performance following marriage or the birth of children, Clara Schumann defied tradition and continued her public performance career even during pregnancies. The couple’s plans for their marriage included concert tours as a natural expression of her abilities and a source of income. In response to the necessary cancellation of her Russian tour planned for 1841 she wrote a diary entry directed toward her husband, “I also owe it to my reputation not to retire completely. It is a feeling of duty towards you and towards myself, which speaks in me.”96 In consideration of the directions her life followed, her continued professional performance proved fortuitous. Robert Schumann’s talent as a composer assured him a place in the musical canon, though his creative years ended abruptly because of mental and physical illness. On the day of his death on July 29th of 1856 Clara Schumann wrote the words “All my feelings were absorbed in thankfulness to God that he was at last set free, . . . my love, he has taken with him.”97 Robert Schumann’s failing health and subsequent death placed the responsibility for a large family, seven children, solely in the hands of Clara Schumann. Her subsequent letters and diary entries are filled with performances, plans, and concerns for her children and her friends. The strict training from her father may have provided the skills to negotiate the schedules and finance of touring, and the example of her mother could have been the inspiration for her independence. Clara Schumann’s compositions range from lieder, choral works, concertos for piano and orchestra, and chamber music with piano to short piano pieces;

96 Litamann, *Clara Schumann*, vol.1, 331.
97 Ibid., vol. 2, 139-140.
her songs are powerful and expressive with amazing piano passages, yet composing essentially ceased after the death of her husband.\textsuperscript{98} Perhaps she felt the loss of her inspiration, a lack of belief in herself as a composer, or simply felt more deeply the need to provide for her family by performing and teaching. Throughout her concert career, she performed music of Robert Schumann and kept his music alive in the memories of her audiences. Her diary and letters reference music by other composers at well, such as Liszt, Chopin, and Mendelssohn and, despite a diary entry echoing the sentiments of men by denouncing the abilities of women to compose,\textsuperscript{99} at least one reference to the inclusion of two compositions by Fanny Hensel in one of her concert programs.\textsuperscript{100} I find it a sad commentary that the opinions of men were so pervasive that incredibly talented women accepted statements of men with no scientific evidence as fact. I contend that Schumann’s possible acceptance of the inferiority of women as composers is just one example of how so many women accepted and internalized the consistent discourse of women’s inabilitys to achieve the higher intellectual functions of creativity fed to them since childhood. She dedicated much of her life to the promotion and preservation of her husband’s music, but no one remained to champion the works of Clara Schumann.

Most of the composers already discussed have a family bond to another musician or composer. Arguments can be made that certain women composers, such as Colbran and Hensel, are known only because of their family connections to men in music. There are two women composers who share a musical family. The Boulanger sisters, Nadia (1887-1979) and Lili (1893-1918) grew up in a musical home. Their father Ernest Boulanger (1815-1900) won the

\textsuperscript{98} Pendle, \textit{Women}, 155.
\textsuperscript{99} Litzmann, \textit{Clara Schumann}, vol. 1, 429.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., vol 2, 119.
prestigious Prix de Rome\textsuperscript{101} in 1836 and taught at the Paris Conservatoire where his own father had been a teacher. Their mother, Raïssa Mischetzky, had been a student at the Conservatoire and a vocalist although she did not continue a professional career.\textsuperscript{102} Both parents encouraged their daughters to pursue careers in music and their home became a center for musical notables in Paris. In an interesting twist, as a small child Nadia Boulanger could not bear to hear music; in her own words, “It was a monster that terrified me. And then, one day, suddenly, I discovered it with passion; . . . from that day on it was music all day long!”\textsuperscript{103} Nadia Boulanger entered the Conservatoire by age ten; after her father’s death she continued in her studies, following the examples and dedication to music established by her parents, and won every award the Conservatoire offered before she turned seventeen.\textsuperscript{104} At the same time, she also focused efforts on caring for her younger sister Lili. When Lili Boulanger was born, their father took the young Nadia into the room and asked her to vow to always care for her sister - a request she took very seriously.\textsuperscript{105}

Nadia Boulanger first entered the Prix de Rome in 1907 but it was her entry in 1908 that came to public attention in a competition recently opened to women composers. Her forceful personality and independence created a scandal when in the preliminary round, she composed an instrumental fugue, rather than the required vocal fugue. She still advanced to the final round and

\textsuperscript{101} The Prix de Rome, a competition organized by the Academy of Fine Arts of the Institute of France, began in 1803. The awards were scholarships entitling the winners to live in Rome for four years at the Villa Medici and to work for four years without interruption or financial concern for room and board. See Annegret Fauser’s “‘La Guerre en dentialles’: Women and the ‘Prix de Rome’ in French Cultural Politics,” \textit{Journal of the American Musicological Society} 51, no.1 (Spring 1998).


\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
received second prize with her cantata *La sirène*. Annegret Fauser contends that Boulanger’s display of independence and confidence probably worked against her among a panel of judges not ready to accept a dominant woman. The next year, 1909, her entry did not receive any prize and because she never entered the competition again, she would not be the first woman awarded the Prix de Rome. In fact, Fauser shares that in 1909 no candidate received the first prize because no other candidate was judged to be better than her, yet the jury did not award her composition a single vote.\textsuperscript{106} I find that arguments on whether she lost because her decision to compose an instrumental fugue created the impression she believed herself above the rules and guidelines, lost because the committee refused to accept a woman as the best competitor, or lost because of the politics of the judges’ favorites, may always be a subject for debate and speculation. The truth may lie in a combination of factors with her gender as the final and decisive obstacle. Regardless, she never entered again.

Teaching offered a more socially acceptable occupation for a woman and Nadia Boulanger already had begun a teaching career at the Conservatoire by 1907. She went on to teach the intricacies of music theory and composition to many students privately (including her younger sister) from the age of 16 until just before her death in 1979.\textsuperscript{107} She abandoned composition in favor of guiding other musicians before her own voice had an opportunity to mature fully. The struggle to gain acceptance and earn recognition at the Prix de Rome, the early death of her younger sister, and the death of her mentor and collaborator Raoul Pugno in 1914 all may have contributed to her decision to cease composing. In one memoir of her life, Boulanger tells her interviewer about a conversation with Gabriel Fauré held long after he had been her

\textsuperscript{106} Fauser, “La Guerre en dentelles,” 113-122.

\textsuperscript{107} Grove, “Boulanger, Nadia.”
teacher at the Conservatoire: “suddenly in the midst of our conversation he said: ‘I’m not sure you did the right thing in giving up composition.’ ‘Oh,’ I replied, ‘Cher Maître, if there’s one thing I’m sure of, it is just that. I wrote useless music. I am tough enough with others, so I should be tough with myself.’”\(^{108}\) Whatever led to her decision, she essentially stopped composing in 1920; yet her contributions to music continued well beyond. Her dedication to teaching, developing other composers, and promoting the works of her younger sister influenced numerous composers including a number of American composers, such as Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Roy Harris, Leonard Bernstein, and Elliott Carter.\(^{109}\) Dunbar credits Boulanger with the ability to help each student discover his or her own distinctive sound and not only to imitate her sound or style. The list of students numbers over 130 and their works range from opera to jazz.\(^{110}\)

Besides turning away from composition to an influential role developing other composers, Nadia Boulanger also broke barriers as a conductor. She was the first woman to conduct performances of London’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic and professional orchestras in Boston and Philadelphia.\(^{111}\) Any text or listing of influential figures in music during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries should include Nadia Boulanger and most do, just not for her early talents in compositions. American composer Ned Rorem stated, “So far as musical pedagogy is concerned – and by extension of musical creation – Nadia Boulanger is the most influential person who ever lived.”\(^{112}\) She may have retired from composing because she truly did not accept the quality of her own work, but in doubting herself

\(^{108}\) Monsaingeon, Mademoiselle, 24.  
\(^{110}\) Dunbar, Women, Music, Culture, 219.  
\(^{111}\) Grove, “Boulanger, Nadia.”  
\(^{112}\) Kimball, A Heritage of Song, 12.
she denied the validity of all the composition awards she received and allowed a committee of men to move her back to a more acceptable position, to them, as an educator.

Known primarily as a composer, Lili Boulanger’s composition career ended too early as a result of her ill-health and death at age 24. Nadia Boulanger described her sister in conversations with Bruno Monsaingeon as a child roaming about the world of music, singing, learning instruments but not choosing her own course until age 16. At that point composition became her passion and the Prix de Rome her goal.\textsuperscript{113}

At the age of two, Lili Boulanger became critically ill with bronchial pneumonia and the illness as a small child left her frail and often sick; in contrast to her strong older sister, Lili Bolanger presented as a frail, child-like figure, not a confident professional woman threatening a male domain.\textsuperscript{114} Her precarious health dictated her musical education, so her older sister Nadia became her first teacher and she relied on private instruction rather than full enrollment at the Conservatoire.\textsuperscript{115} She worked and studied to enter the Prix de Rome competition in 1912 and became the first woman to enter in composition since her older sister’s last attempt in 1909. Success eluded her in the first attempt but she became the first woman to succeed and capture the prize for musical composition in 1913. Caroline Potter attributes her success and acceptance to a careful study of how her older sister may have presented a threat to the men on the jury and raises the possibility that because Lili Boulanger’s contemporaries knew about her health she was not perceived as a long-term rival.\textsuperscript{116} Her talent earned the award, but her ability to present herself in a culturally acceptable view assured her the recognition. Her success in the

\textsuperscript{113} Monsaingeon, \textit{Mademoiselle}, 80.
\textsuperscript{114} Fauser, “La Guerre en dentelles,” 123-124.
competition assured her a place in music history but not necessarily recognition for her work. The rapid decline of her health and war in Europe kept her from fully realizing the opportunities of the award; she dictated her last song, note-by-note to her sister prior to her death. In addition to some 50 compositions, her legacy includes an unfinished opera and questions of how her talents might have continued to develop.\textsuperscript{117} It remained her sister’s mission to promote her work and to judge Lili Boulanger as the “first important woman composer in history,”\textsuperscript{118} a bold statement from a loving sister. Still, her achievement and the beauty and quality of her work composed in a brief time and before her maturity, certainly merits Lili Boulanger consideration as a significant composer and a place in music history beyond mention of the one award and her relationship to a famous sister.

For certain other women composers from musical families, societal pressures and expectations resulted in a different legacy with a notoriety that overshadows their musical contributions. Alma Schindler Mahler (1879-1964) and Pauline Viardot-Garcia (1821-1910) are two women whose life stories have been so sensationalized in print that their talents as composers remain silently ignored. In fact, the 2010 book \textit{Women, Music, Culture: An Introduction} written by Julie Dunbar to increase the awareness of a history of contributions to music and culture by numerous women fails to include either Viardot or Mahler. I am left to consider whether Dunbar felt their lives were too controversial or did not consider their musical activities important to a history of women in music.

Included in the 1890 edition of Grove’s \textit{Dictionary of Music and Musicians}, Viardot is identified as a great lyric actress and singer, along with the musical and stage talents of her sister,

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\textsuperscript{117} Carol Kimball, \textit{Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature} (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005), 223.
\textsuperscript{118} Monsaingeon, \textit{Mademoiselle}, 80.
\end{flushright}
father, and mother.\textsuperscript{119} As part of a performing family, even before age twenty, Pauline Garcia was widely traveled, educated, conversant and literate in multiple languages, and known to composers such as Litzt and Rossini as an accomplished and talented soprano. As the daughter of famous opera singers and a member within a family of highly skilled and acclaimed pedagogues, vocalists, and musicians, she had ready access to musical training and opportunity.\textsuperscript{120} Evidence of her love and appreciation for her father’s music and all he taught her in her childhood can be found in Viardot’s correspondence to a friend. The cellist and conductor Julius Rietz (1812-1877) received many letters from Viardot over their careers; a letter to Rietz written June 15, 1859 includes, “It is incredible, what my father wrote . . . It was my father who taught me music – when, I have no idea, because I do not remember the time when I did not know it.”\textsuperscript{121} The family literally traveled the world with music. When her father died, Viardot’s mother assumed primary responsibility for her training, although she also studied with Franz Liszt (1813-1886), and Anton Reicha (1770-1836), concentrating on piano and composition. She began the serious study of singing only after the early death of her talented and famous sister, Maria Malibran (1808-1836).\textsuperscript{122}

In a role-reversal of sorts, when Pauline Garcia married Louis Viardot (1800-1883), a financially secure French writer and director of the Paris Théâtre Italien in 1840, he gave up his career at the theatre to support and manage her immensely successful stage career.\textsuperscript{123} When she


\textsuperscript{120} Jezic, \textit{Women Composers}, 103-104.


chose to retire from the stage, she did not choose to retire from music. Instead, she continued to move within a circle of composers and writers, to teach voice students, and to compose. Her circle of influence and friends included numerous composers such as Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), Charles Gounod (1818-1893) and Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). In addition to German lieder and French chansons, Viardot composed opera and operettas, songs for piano, and arrangements for voice and piano. Her friend Clara Schumann wrote “I found fresh confirmation of what I have always said, that she is the most gifted woman whom I have ever known” in a letter to Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) on October 3, 1867, after visiting Viardot in Baden-Baden and watching her direct and accompany performances of three operettas Viardot had composed to libretti by Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883).

I suspect the stories of romantic relationships to various composers find origin in the forcefulness and magnetism of her voice and personality, as well as the number of roles various composers continued to write specifically for her even after she stopped public performances. Yet it is the relationship to Turgenev that overshadows her music. During their marriage, her husband introduced her to leading literary figures including his friend, the Russian poet Turgenev. The friendship developed into a complicated romantic arrangement in which Turgenev became a part of the family and their home. The lives of the three created much public speculation, anger, and accusations of kidnapping from the Russian press, and an unusual triangle. In 1883, during Louis Viardot’s and Turgnev’s final illnesses, she cared for each man in his final days and saw the two fade away within weeks of one another. After more than 40

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125 Litzmann, *Clara Schumann*, vol. 2, 255.
126 Kimball, *Song*, 165.
years of Louis Viardot’s support, she found herself alone to deal with personal grief and the numerous writers and journalists seeking to capitalize on her memories and stories.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 463.}

Even today, I find it easy to be distracted by the details of her personal life, yet she composed more than 100 vocal works, and at least ninety were published during her lifetime. Her songs reflect her strength and vibrant personality, as well as extensive training in voice and piano. Her international life provided opportunities for her to learn and be comfortable with songs in multiple languages, but she did not just use the languages; she respected the cultures in her compositions. Specifically, her travels to Russia and her embrace of the Russian language and contributions to songs in the Russian Romance genre made her an ambassador of sorts for the music of Russia.\footnote{Kadja Grönke, “Pauline Viardot-Garcia’s ‘Ne poj, krasavica pri mne’ and the Genre of Russian Romance,” in \textit{Women and the Nineteenth-Century Lied}, ed. Aisling Kenny and Susan Wollenberg (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 160-161.} Despite her appreciation and respect for Russian literature and music, her relationship with Turgenev and the resentment from those who accused her of preventing his return to Russia may have overshadowed the larger story of her talents and contributions.

There are several details of Alma Mahler’s life and choices in music that fascinate me. She was born after Schumann, Hensel, Josephine Lang (1815-1880), and Viardot but knew several of the same composers and grew up within a circle of artists and musicians. These other four women either knew personally or heard of each other from other male musicians in their acquaintance. Their letters and diaries include mention of the other women, their personal lives, and their music, yet their absence from Mahler’s diaries, letters, and memoir suggest Alma Mahler either did not know their music or did not regard their works as important enough to mention. Further, unlike Viardot who did not actively seek public attention outside of music,
Alma Mahler contributed to her own notoriety through the 1958 publication of her book *And the Bridge is Love*, written with E. B. Ashton. Her book provides confirmation to those who choose to label her as vain, self-absorbed, and anti-Semitic; readings from her diaries reveal a vulnerable young woman mourning the loss of her father and susceptible to the expectations of society. Her diary entry on Wednesday May 27, 1899, contains a lament to her father, “immediately after the death of my dearly beloved father, I was almost mad with pain. … And now my thoughts are with him almost daily, hourly I wish him near me. I love him more than when he was alive and mourn him perhaps more than ever.”\(^{130}\) Other entries provide evidence she was aware of her perceived limitations; in one entry she wrote, “Yesterday I talked to Labor about modern education. Why are boys taught to use their brains, but not girls? …women’s emancipation will never be possible, unless their minds are systematically trained, *drilled.*”\(^{131}\) Even as she questioned the standards that provided for greater education of young men, she did not expend her energies to fight the social dictates and perceptions of women.

Like many other women composers, Mahler grew up in an artistic family that supported her music education. As a young child Mahler’s father, artist Emil Schindler (1842-1892), allowed her into his studio while he worked, singing as he painted.\(^{132}\) Those memories of her father singing may have proved inspirational to Mahler’s own musical studies. Her family regularly hosted members of the Vienna arts community but the music attracted her most and she began composing at the age of nine.\(^{133}\) In 1892, when her father died suddenly, it was a loss that never healed; in her words, “He had been my cynosure – and no one had known. All I did had

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\(^{131}\) Ibid., 202.


been to please him. All my ambition and vanity had been satisfied by a twinkle of his understanding eyes.\textsuperscript{134} After her father’s death, her intensity and attention to music studies increased; music provided escape and solace from changes, emotional turmoil, and unhappiness.\textsuperscript{135}

At approximately the same time Venice society noticed Mahler’s beauty and poise (leading to her active social life), she began lessons in composition with organist Josef Labor (1842-1924).\textsuperscript{136} Personal diary entries reflect a desire to excel in music but also foretell the probability she would abandon her goals. On Wednesday, February 9, 1898 after attending the opera \textit{Fidelio}, she wrote, “I want to do something really remarkable. Would like to compose a really good opera – something no woman has ever achieved. In a word, I want to be somebody. But it’s impossible - & why? I don’t lack talent, but my attitude is too frivolous for my objectives, for artistic achievement. – Please God, give me some great mission, give me something great to do! Make me happy!”\textsuperscript{137} Nearly a year later, January 6, 1899, she expresses the same goal again: “O Lord God, give me the strength to achieve what my heart longs for – an opera. . . . I pray to you that I may suffer no defeat in the battle against my weakness, against my femininity.”\textsuperscript{138} Already she believed what society told her; that women lacked the facility for sustained creative thought, focus, and stamina to create large-scale forms of music. Many of her diary entries mention music, either her own or performances she attended. In one entry, she reveals that her compositions reflect her feelings and moods.\textsuperscript{139} Although she did not publish the music she composed, the diary includes encouraging responses from Labor and other musicians

\textsuperscript{136} Monson, \textit{Muse to Genius}, 13.
\textsuperscript{137} Mahler-Werfel, \textit{Diaries}, 5.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
who heard her compositions when they visited in her home.\textsuperscript{140} The short song that appealed to me, “Ich Wandle Unter Blumen” begins with twelve measures of a chromatic run full of building intensity and excitement before returning to a quiet, calm close. Her treatment of the text reflects the edicts of her society through the build-up of excitement in the music followed by the hushed whisper of what is proper. Besides her feelings for her father, music, and social events, the published diary includes entries of her early romantic infatuations and closes with a very personal description of her courtship with composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), their shared passions, and even glimpses of her uncertainties but it does not include his letters.

Alma Mahler lived during a time when women retired from professional pursuits once they married. Accounts of the marriage of Gustav and Alma Mahler usually begin with a statement regarding his insistence and expectation that she stop composing as a condition of their marriage. In her book, Alma Mahler wrote that he had required her to give up her own music for him.\textsuperscript{141} In a book of Gustav Mahler’s letters, the complete translated letter of his proposal does appear. In the letter, it can be inferred that he sees her music composition very differently, as a hobby, and he does require that she make a choice. The choice he offers is to cease composing and support him in his work as wife or to remain separate as a creative competitor.\textsuperscript{142} In closing he wrote, “This letter will come as a dreadful shock to you – I know it, . . . For this is a moment of great importance, these are decisions that will weld two people together for eternity. I bless you, my dearest, my love, no matter how you react.”\textsuperscript{143} Aware she studied music and composition, it is possible that Gustav Mahler had not looked at any of her compositions or

\textsuperscript{140} Mahler-Werfel, \textit{Diaries}, 93.
\textsuperscript{141} Werfel, \textit{Bridge}, 19.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 84.
comprehended her talent. Several years later, perhaps in a desperate attempt to repair their troubled relationship, he encouraged her to return to composing and helped her to get *Fünf Lieder* (Five Lieder) published in 1910.\textsuperscript{144} Although she did compose more lieder after the death of Gustav Mahler, her personal life resembled a search for love and attention; she never returned to her own music with the passion expressed in her diary. It appears that she absorbed the misspoken beliefs of Gustav Mahler and the widely-held beliefs of society at large in Austria and Central Europe regarding the role of wife as the supportive partner, not creator. At the close of his edition of Gustav Mahler’s letters, Antony Beaumont analyzes Alma Mahler and her personal battles, he essentially perceives Alma Mahler as her own enemy.\textsuperscript{145} He may be correct; her published lieder, diary, and memoir testify to her creativity and passions but also her unhappy life. When she married Mahler, her talent still required a nurturing mentor; she abandoned one of her strongest creative outlets and never found the path back. Alma Mahler failed to realize her full potential as a mature and developed composer.

The designation of art song as less significant than larger instrumental works has been used to justify the exclusion of women from discussions of serious composition. Because my project included a recital of songs by women composers, it is logical that much of this paper and research focuses on women composers of art song. A number of women composed songs and achieved recognition during their own lifetime for composition of large works: orchestral or operatic. A few examples of women who composed both songs and orchestral works are French composer Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983), and Americans Amy Cheney Beach (1867-1944)

\textsuperscript{144} Citron, “European Composers,” 186.
\textsuperscript{145} Mahler, *Letters*, 394.
and Margaret Ruthven Lang (1867-1971). Of these composers, Tailleferre overcame both cultural bias and family objections to become a professional composer.

Although female composers with famous male relatives frequently remain overshadowed by that relationship, they also received support and musical education within a home where music had value. Tailleferre’s experience differed in that her mother recognized the musical gift in her daughter but her father disapproved of any musical education. Against her husband’s wishes and his belief that women should not be musicians, her mother took Tailleferre to the Conservatoire de Paris when she was twelve and the girl was readily accepted as a student. Her father considered a vocation in music equal to the profession of a common prostitute so women religious would carefully escort her to the Conservatoire each day after her father left home. When she won her first medal at the Conservatoire, her father proudly shared the news, yet continued to refuse any financial support for her studies; she tutored other students to pay her fees.\(^{146}\) Her music came to the attention of Erik Satie (1866-1925) in 1917 when he heard one of her piano compositions; Satie dubbed her his “musical daughter.”\(^ {147}\) Through Satie’s encouragement and support, she became part of a group of young French composers known as Les Six. The group of composers only worked jointly for about a year, but gained at least short-term notice and fame for their concerts, joint publications, and the ballet Les mariés de la tour Eiffel in 1921.\(^ {148}\)

Association with Les Six assisted Tailleferre to become known to the public and musical circles of Paris and Europe, but that attention did not guarantee success. Her early career also


\(^{147}\) Ibid., 5.

received assistance from the Princesse Edmond de Polignac (1865-1943), who commissioned a highly successful piano concerto, the *Concerto pour piano et orchestra* in D major, completed in 1923.\textsuperscript{149}

Her own lack of confidence, unhappy marriages, and financial needs forced her to compose mostly by commission.\textsuperscript{150} Under these conditions, it may have proved difficult to express her personal creativity even though she composed music for ballet, film, and even opera over her career. In a 1982 *New York Times* interview, Tailleffere quietly shared her personal purpose for music, “I have had a very difficult life, you know. Only I do not like to talk about it. I write happy music as a release.”\textsuperscript{151} During her life, the Boston Symphony and Opera-Comique in Paris, among other orchestras and venues, premiered her works. The *Concerto pour deux pianos, choeurs, et orchestra*, premiered in 1934 to tremendous acclaim; its departure from the lightness of some of her other works broadened her opportunities for larger commissions.\textsuperscript{152}

Her fame and talents as a composer failed to protect her from physical and emotional abusive experiences shared by other women. Despite her reticence to promote herself or talk about her private life, a very personal and traumatic experience led to her creation of the song cycle *Six chansons françaises* in 1929. It occurred during her marriage to New York caricaturist Ralph Barton (1891-1931). Their marriage lasted two and a half years and included frequent trips between the United States and France, a period where he exhibited jealousy of her talent and prevented her from composing at her previous level. When she became pregnant, he reacted in a way unimaginable to most people: “One spring evening, having learned that I was pregnant, 

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} Shapiro, *Germaine Tailleferre*, 16.
he took suddenly to a fit of madness and asked me abruptly to agree to him firing a gunshot at my stomach in order to kill the child.”¹⁵³ She escaped to the sounds of gunfire and hid in the shrubs, but he succeeded in causing the loss of her child to miscarriage. Her own prescription for healing became a return to music. In her studies, Kiri Heel interprets the theme and composition of the chansons as a form of personal therapy and healing.¹⁵⁴ Considering the text of the songs and their less than flattering views of marriage and relationships, I have to agree. Tailleferre’s music itself is not angry and she survived numerous adversities to compose other beautiful music throughout her life. At age 90, she continued to compose and exhibited the humor and wisdom gained through life experiences. In the New York Times she explained her usual response to interviewers who asked why she composed: “For money!”¹⁵⁵ The statement given in jest may accurately describe many of her compositional choices; without the luxury of family position or support, she always worked to support herself. Dunbar has suggested that Tailleferre’s success with large-scale works contributed to her absence or near-absence from music history texts.¹⁵⁶ She dared to work outside of the acceptable realm of chamber music and parlor songs.

The two American women composers recognized for large-scale works lived and worked in Boston. They each enjoyed the advantage of living in Boston at a time when the cultural elite determined that moral education of the public could occur in the concert halls through exposure to good music and created a supportive environment for composers and musical organizations.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 41.
¹⁵⁵ Mitgang, “One.”
¹⁵⁶ Dunbar, Women, Music, Culture, 225.
This created an environment in which the lower, middle, and upper classes were to be educated in moral and spiritual values through music and the patrons felt a sense of responsibility to develop composers and musical organizations. At first glance, because Amy Cheney Beach and Margaret Ruthven Lang developed as composers within the same period and geographical location it might be assumed they would have access to similar opportunities. That assumption is far from the truth. Their parents held very different ideas of the appropriate musical education and training for their daughters.

Amy Cheney Beach holds the distinction of being identified as one of the best-known turn-of-the-century women composers and the first American woman to gain international acclaim for her compositions of orchestral and chamber music.158 This accomplishment becomes even more significant because she succeeded as a composer of large orchestral works with minimal formal compositional training. At a time when serious American students of composition traveled to Europe to study with acclaimed composers and pedagogues, Beach’s mother recognized her daughter’s talent but strictly controller her education, either to prevent her from becoming overly proud of her talents or to protect her from those who would seek to capitalize on her abilities.159 Clara Cheney realized her daughter could match pitches and harmonies by the age of two. At four she could play piano by ear and compose her own songs, but she did not begin piano studies until the age of six.160 When her mother did accept Beach’s talent and likely vocation, she sought advice from Wilhelm Gericke (1845-1925); he recommended that instead of traveling to Germany to enroll in a conservatory, the young student

159 Block, *Passionate Victorian*, 9-12.
should teach herself composition by studying the great masters. Perhaps Gericke believed the influx of European musicians and composers from Europe could create a comparable opportunity in Boston, or perhaps Clara Cheney posed the question to receive the answer she desired. So after only a single course in harmony at Whittemore’s, she undertook the challenge to educate herself. When she first sought publication in 1885, the publisher Arthur P. Schmidt (1846-1921) welcomed her. He began his company after moving to America from Europe and felt compelled to support new American composers. It was the beginning of a thirty year mutually beneficial relationship.

In 1885, soon after musical circles in Boston recognized her talents on piano through concerts and recitals, Amy Cheney married Dr. Henry Beach (1843-1910), a man 24 years her senior. In an article about music in Boston, Joseph Horowitz describes Amy Beach as a trophy wife; Dr. Beach fully supported her desire to compose, specifically the large forms such as sonata, concerto, or other orchestral works, but not songs. In addition to the marriage vows, Amy Beach agreed not to teach piano and that any fees earned for performing would be donated to charity. He may not have asked her to reduce her public performances but she did reduce her recitals to one benefit recital a year.

By removing herself from public performance, she gave herself the time and attention to study composition and develop her own style and works. She did successfully compose large works. She began composing the *Gaelic Symphony* in November of 1894 and the Boston

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163 Ibid., 41.
164 Horowitz, “Reclaiming the Past,” 27.
165 Block, *Passionate Victorian*, 47.
Symphony premiered the symphony in 1896;\textsuperscript{166} it must have been a daunting but immensely satisfying project. In a published interview, Beach confessed her own surprise that women had not composed great music, then continued to identify ways that women were inferior to men in physical and mental strength and lacked the life experiences necessary to develop emotional maturity.\textsuperscript{167} Evidence that she too accepted the prevailing attitudes regarding the status and traits of the ideal woman even as she rejected a domestic role for herself.

Her personal life changed drastically in 1910 when Henry Beach died, followed by her mother in 1911. With her husband’s death, she not only lost his personal support, she also learned the truth of their finances and the necessity for change.\textsuperscript{168} Even though public performances became necessary to support herself financially, she also found herself in a position of freedom to travel and to discover life and music beyond Boston.\textsuperscript{169} During her career she composed 117 art songs, projects she considered recreation and a gift to herself as a break from composing the larger instrumental works.\textsuperscript{170} When she is remembered in music history texts the comments most often focus on her accomplishments despite obstacles and the achievement of international acclaim for her work, or even her encouragement of other women composers. Still, I hear the unspoken and sometimes spoken “amazing for a woman.” Her accomplishments as a self-taught composer during a time when other American composers traveled to Europe for training are amazing feats for anyone, male or female. Further, her love of nature appears in her writings and her songs; she used birdsong in her works before Olivier

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\textsuperscript{166} Block, \textit{Passionate Victorian}, 88-91.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 73.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 177-179.
\textsuperscript{169} Horowitz, “Reclaiming the Past,” 28.
\textsuperscript{170} Kimball, \textit{Song}, 252.
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Messiaen (1908-1992), yet Messiaen is credited for this musical innovation instead of Amy Beach.\footnote{Dunbar, \textit{Women, Music, Culture}, 221.}

The education and parental support provided to Margaret Ruthven Lang illustrates a sharp contrast to Amy Beach. Amy Beach and Margaret Lang were of the same age and Beach’s mother Clara Cheney sang in choral societies either directed or accompanied by Benjamin Johnson Lang. Otherwise the parents moved in very different musical circles so that the two young women may not have met. Further, as fellow musicians, Lang’s parents undoubtedly had very different ideas of the best training for their daughter and provided the financial support necessary for her musical training. She began her training with her father but also studied with other highly respected musicians both in Boston and Europe.\footnote{Adrienne Fried Block, “Why Amy Beach Succeeded as a Composer: The Early Years,” \textit{Current Musicology} 36 (January 1983): 43.} During her career she relied on her father as a mentor and personal critic, submitting works for publication only after first gaining his approval. B. J. Lang frequently used her choral music in programs with the Cecillia and Apollo Clubs.\footnote{Adrienne Fried Block, \textit{Grove Music Online}, s.v. Lang, Margaret Ruthven, accessed February 3, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/46126.}

Her father’s support may have extended beyond mere parental encouragement. As a respected and well-known musician in Boston, his name and influence extended to promote his daughter and gain her entrance into the music circles of Boston. During the years she actively composed, she composed more than 200 songs; leading singers performed her songs in recital, even offering a program of only songs by Lang.\footnote{\textit{Grove}, “Lang.”} One of her songs was selected for performance at a concert of select American works during the Paris Expositions of 1889 and the
inauguration of the Lincoln Concert Hall in Washington, DC, in 1890.\textsuperscript{175} The memoirs of the Irish born musician Thomas Ryan (1827-1903) includes a brief section on Lang because he felt compelled to write about the daughter of his good friend. Regarding her accomplishments, he added, “She has attained a position which places her among the four foremost female composers of the world, the other three being Chaminade and Holmes of Paris, and Mrs. Beach of Boston.”\textsuperscript{176} However, it was in April of 1893 that Lang made history as the first American woman to have a work played by a major orchestra. This was the debut by the Boston Symphony Orchestra of the \textit{Dramatic Oversutre}, Opus 12. Her \textit{Witchis Overture} was performed by the Exposition Orchestra at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It might be fair to mention the possibility Lang’s father contributed to her success in having her music awarded a place at the exposition as he served on the selection committee.\textsuperscript{177}

As her own strongest critic, she destroyed any compositions deemed inferior, a trait shared with her father. Throughout her life, it was her habit to periodically clean out her files and dispose of compositions.\textsuperscript{178} Luckily, despite the loss of extant copies of Lang’s large works, during the research for her dissertation, Judith Cline found manuscripts for most of Lang’s published works in the A. P. Schmidt Collection at the Library of Congress.\textsuperscript{179} The only surviving example of an instrumental work is a chamber setting of her full orchestration for the choral work \textit{The Heavenly Noel}, Opus. 57.\textsuperscript{180} Cline discovered reviews of Lang’s orchestral

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Lang} Grove, “Lang.”
\bibitem{Ryan} Thomas Ryan, \textit{Recollections of an Old Musician} (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1899), 86.
\bibitem{Ibid1} Ibid., 14.
\bibitem{Ibid2} Ibid., 15.
\end{thebibliography}
works to be much harsher than the acclaim earned for her songs. One of the kinder reviews of the *Dramatic Overture*, ended with the words, “it was not the friendliest act in the world to allow entrance to the symphony programmes to a young composer (who has done good work and will do more) before she was equipped for the task.” Unfortunately Lang destroyed any manuscripts for the *Dramatic Overture* so current scholars cannot hear the music and make an unbiased evaluation. Undeterred, she composed other instrumental works including *Ballade*, Opus 36, premiered in 1901 at the Women in Music concert by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and *Wind*, Opus 53 commissioned and regularly performed by the St. Cecilia Club of New York.

If reviews can be used as a measure of success, her choral works were more successful than the instrumental compositions and enjoyed a substantial number of repeat performances. So many soloists favored her music in their own recitals, it is certainly possibly that Lang’s compositional skills were strongest in her treatments of the interplay of voices. Cline documented seventeen choral works and a performance of *The Jumblies*, Opus 5 by the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston in 1975. This is a setting for baritone solo, male chorus, and two pianos of five limericks by Edward Lear, *The Jumblies* premiered in 1890.

Without confirmation from Lang herself, reasons for her early retirement can only be speculation. A.P. Schmidt published her last known composition in 1919, ten years after the death of her father in 1909. Cline offers possible reasons for Lang’s retirement including management of her father’s estate, care of her elderly mother, and missions work. Further, Cline

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182 Grove, “Lang.”
includes the idea that after twenty-five years as the caregiver for her mother, musical tastes had changed so that Lang chose to remain retired.\textsuperscript{184} She turned a substantial portion of her creative energies toward missions; between 1927 and 1939 Lang published a series of devotional pamphlets titled “Messages from God.” Using her initials to remain somewhat anonymous, she printed and distributed copies around the world, a common practice among women writers of the Victorian period.\textsuperscript{185} Her works in missions exemplify the era’s acceptance of the moral duty for a privileged woman to be benevolent and to aid those less fortunate than herself. In this way women practiced morality in society as well as in the home.\textsuperscript{186} Lang’s early years as a composer placed her at a time of tremendous change for women. She and Beach were both daughters of a society that accepted certain ideals for women of their class so that being independent or relying on self rather than a man classified a woman as unfeminine. In the social environment of the Industrial Revolution, Anderson and Zinsser assert that the only models of independence available to women in the aristocratic and upper middle classes were men so that “Freedom was possible only if one acted as if one were a man: by doing, by writing, by relying on one’s own moral authority, by breaking the conventions of femininity.”\textsuperscript{187} Middle-class Progressives led the demand for better education and employment for women and steps toward the inclusion of women as professionals, voting rights, and equality before the law.\textsuperscript{188} Had Lang continued to compose professionally beyond 1919, she would have found herself an active participant in social changes created by World War I and the numerous advances of respectable professions and increased freedoms for unmarried educated women.

\textsuperscript{184} Cline, “Lang,” 19.  
\textsuperscript{186} Anderson and Zinsser, A History vol.2, 176.  
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 168-169.  
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 196.
For Lang personally, the sudden change of circumstance from the position of dependent to the responsibilities of a sizeable estate alone may have been daunting; add the loss of musical mentor and advisor and perhaps the circumstances did nudge her toward a withdrawal from musical composition as a profession. Whereas life changes added financial necessity for Beach, who already felt such passion to compose, Lang found financial security encumbered with financial and family responsibilities. I suspect she may have continued to compose for her own enjoyment, but subsequently destroyed those works, because without her mentor she no longer felt compelled to share her music. She had the example of her father; he was known to compose songs, duets, and even an oratorio but refused to publish any of his compositions. 189 In 1955, in a letter written to her friend Marian MacDowell, regarding current music and following a brief critique of Honegger’s Je suis Compositeur, Lang included a commentary on herself, “I am glad, very glad not to be active in any musical way, but only a thankful listener.” 190

Whatever the reason for her withdrawal from publication of new music, she remained involved in music in another way; Lang attended nearly every concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from its founding in 1881 until her death in 1971. 191 On November 24, 1967 she was honored by the Boston Symphony in celebration of her 100th birthday when conductor Erich Leinsdorf paid tribute and appreciation to her patronage and compositions. My introduction to Lang and her music came from a brief comment made by another student; in view of the scarcity of information available for many women composers it is not surprising that he incorrectly believed she had married and destroyed her music at the instruction of her husband. Lang’s

191 Alan Levy, American National Biography Online, s.v. “Lang, Margaret Ruthven.
name, accomplishments, and descriptions of her compositional style can be found in early editions of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* but she was not included in the 1954 edition; apparently because she had disappeared from musical circles the editor did not consider her relevant. By 1980, she once again appeared in the new editions of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, which has continued to include her for the distinction of being the first woman composer to have music performed by a major American orchestra.

In contrast to both Beach and Lang, Idabelle Firestone (1874-1954) personifies a move toward commercial music and a new avenue of musical influence. The name Firestone cannot be found in music encyclopedia listings such as *Grove's Music Online*, but her name and song contributions can be found in the directory of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.\(^{192}\) As the daughter and wife of rising industrialists, she followed a lifestyle of social activities and benefits expected of the wife of a dominant industrial figure. But before she married Harvey Firestone, she attended Alma College at St. Thomas, Ontario, and studied music.\(^{193}\)

The expectations of her social standing may have hindered her musical career, but it did not prevent her from having significant influence in American music. The first commercially sponsored music radio program *The Voice of Firestone* began in 1928. In a sense, Idabelle Firestone was the voice; two of her compositions became theme songs for the program and the family actively worked with the program, not just as a sponsor.\(^{194}\) Her obituary offers public verification of her personal connections to musical circles; the second heading reads, “She


Composed Two Theme Songs for the Company’s Musical Radio Show." A 1963 article paid homage to the beginnings of the radio broadcast and the shows move to television. In the article her son, Harvey S. Firestone, Jr. repeats the long-standing goal of the program - “the aim in presenting it is still the same – to bring into the households of America the finest of music and the greatest of artists.” The family and company’s sponsorship with Firestone’s songs on the weekly broadcasts expanded the audience for classical music and performers from concert halls into family homes throughout America and internationally. The program provided live performances and a forty-six-piece orchestra and at its peak broadcasts reached an audience of over three million people per broadcast.

Most of the papers relating to her music and to the radio and television programs are held within the New England Conservatory Archives. There is also a smaller more personal archive of family papers within the archives at The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, MI.

Moving forward to present-day composers, the landscape seems very different. Musical tastes and opportunities vary drastically from those experienced by the composers who bridged the transition from the Victorian sensibilities of the nineteenth-century into the increased freedom and opportunities begun in the early twentieth-century. Even if they are not taught and versed in the accomplishments of women composers of the past, present-day composers may be

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197 Firestone lived the life expected of a woman within her social standing, and her use of that position provided her a power women never experienced before. I contend that through the radio program, Firestone had the ability to have her music heard by millions of people at one time.
199 Kathy Makas, curator, “Invitation and Program,” 70th Birthday Celebration, Idabelle Smith Firestone, November 10, 1949, Box 1, Accession 89.492 Firestone Family papers, Benson Ford Research Center, The Henry Ford. (Document copies provided by Kathy Makas.)
less deterred by tradition or cultural expectations. Some might even feel compelled to build from their historical culture.

“To begin with I have two handicaps – those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins . . . I should like to be judged on merit alone.” these words come from Florence Price (1888-1953).\(^\text{200}\) Identified by Dr. Rosephanye Powell (b.1962) as one of three women composers she learned of while a student at Alabama State University, Price impressed her for her success as a composer and arranger.\(^\text{201}\) Price was one of two African American composers born in Little Rock, Arkansas in the late nineteenth-century. Her parents were respected middle-class professionals, her father was a dentist and her mother a music teacher. The family had moved to Arkansas and lived a prosperous life before increasing racial tensions and violence changed the political climate and safety for a mixed-race family. When she graduated from high school the life for African Americans in Little Rock had changed dramatically and her mother felt it was necessary to have her “pass” as Mexican to continue her musical training, so when she applied and enrolled in the New England Conservatory in Boston, she listed her home town as Pueblo, Mexico. Once at the conservatory Price found other African-American students and learned that the influence of Antonin Dvorák (1841-1901) and the popularity of his Symphony “From the New World” had generated considerable interest in African American musical heritage.\(^\text{202}\) She first returned to Little Rock after finishing studies at the conservatory but then moved to Chicago to escape increased racial tensions of Arkansas for the relative safety of the Midwest. As a composer, her big break came with her winning the

Wanamaker Prize in 1932 for a symphonic work. The award brought her music to the attention of the director of the Chicago Symphony, Frederick Stock (1872-1942); he conducted her Symphony in E Minor in 1933, and Price became the first African American woman composer to have a work performed by a major American orchestra.203

I contend that Price helped to establish a new path for Powell. As a present-day composer, Powell represents the women composers of the past and American women of color; the earlier work and struggles of women such as Price allow her opportunities to be judged by merit. Although she still faces obstacles, she has benefited from cultural changes that offer significantly more freedoms and acceptance than previous generations of both women of European descent and women of color.

Musical education was often restricted for women composers of the past. Powell’s path to composition included educational opportunities beginning at Alabama State University to Westminster Choir College in New Jersey and Florida State University and studies of music education, vocal performance, and pedagogy. Now a member of the music faculty at Auburn University, she serves as the Charles W. Barkley Endowed Professor and Professor of Voice and her academic focus and research center on African-American spirituals, the art songs of William Grant Still, and voice-care concerns for choral singers and director.204 Her reputation as a choral clinician, composer, and arranger of choral works results in numerous yearly commissions to composer for university choruses, professional choirs, and other choruses. Recognition for her

204 “Rosephanye Dunn-Powell, Auburn University Department of Music Faculty & Staff, accessed March 25, 2017, www.cla.auburn.edu/music/faculty-staff/rosephanye-powell/.
work includes the “Living Legend Award,” presented by California State University African Diaspora Sacred Music Festival in 2009.205

Within the frequently asked questions of her personal web site, are some defining memories and personal experiences. In response to questions about influences from the lives, music, or history of black women composers she shares, “I was not influenced so much by their styles of composition at that time; rather I was impressed by the fact that they were black women composers and arrangers of concert Music.”206 When asked about her compositional style and why she composes, she expressed her goal to be honest to the message of the text and her respect for the power of a historical and cultural connection. But one statement - “my main endeavor is to write music that touches the heart,” repeats as a theme for her purpose in composing.207

Powell’s art songs are a departure from her choral works and spirituals; the song cycle Miss Wheatley’s Garden pays tribute to America’s first black poet Phillis Wheatley (c. 1753-1784), whose popularity as a poet earned her freedom from slavery in October 1773. The collection bears her name for her accomplishments as the first African American to publish a book and the first African American woman to earn a living from writing, accomplishments symbolized by Powell as a garden where later generations of African American writers and poets could grow and blossom. The voices of other African American women writers find expression in the music of Powell’s romantic art song.208 It will be fascinating to see whether Powell continues to express herself in art song or chooses to remain centered in choral music. As a living and active composer, she can choose to create a legacy for other women to follow.

206 Powell, “Questions.”
207 Powell, “Questions.”
CONCLUSION

The study and stories of this small group of women composers cannot be considered complete. These women are only a small representative sample of lesser known talented women. They share some characteristics and experiences but have distinct differences as well. Based on the most accessible stories, it would be easy to attempt to generalize that talented women only existed in families of musicians. I contend that a more accurate story may be that other women, also talented and creative, failed to grow and develop in environments unable to accept or recognize their abilities. These women faced obstacles of education, financial needs, and social restrictions: all obstacles that effectively stopped many women before they could even begin a career. Women in families of musicians had the advantages of musical education and support in their homes; their families recognized and appreciated their talents so they were encouraged to develop. Further, the records of women with famous musical (male) family members are more easily identified and located than are the records of women without such connections.

The exclusion, or near exclusion, of women from the canon of Western music and studies of music history created an illusion that women did not contribute to or participate in the development of music. Centuries of musical experiences or education without reference to women composers quietly implies that women do not or cannot compose. Yet, much like an onion, in peeling back the layers and interactions of western composers and musicians the life stories and obstacles faced by multiple women composers who participated in and influenced the music of their own time can come to light.

During this study, I found evidence that few music students take the time to search available sources for the stories of various women composers. Among the memoirs studied, two books printed in the nineteenth century still had uncut pages. The thought that both books and their stories had sat in collections for so long without ever having been read was astounding! It was necessary for me to have the pages cut to discover what treasure remained unknown. This process and study of the memoirs and songs led to a personal comparison of how recitalists select music and why the memoirs and music of the English-speaking composers seemed less valued or relevant than other European composers. The poetry of the nineteenth century art song in French, Italian, or German is no more current than the poem in an English composition; is there such a strong Euro-centric bias that American students are simply more willing to accept the antiquated lyrics written in a language other than English?

In *Gender and the Musical Canon* Marcia Citron stresses the importance of a female tradition in composing. She identifies the value of relating to a “tradition of the past, on which one can build and to which one can look for models and validation.” The women composers of the present and future will benefit from an increased knowledge of women composers of the past. A glaring recurring theme for many of the women composers studied was their ignorance of the contributions of other women composers and a perception of struggling as pioneers. In the diaries and memoirs written by women such as Schumann and Mahler in the nineteenth-century, each denied her own talent as a composer and wrote how no woman had ever succeeded as a composer and wrote in such a disparaging manner as to give evidence to the internalization of social lessons learned that women lacked the mental facility and strength to create music of quality. Others such as Lehmann and Beach wrote of the scarcity of capable women composers

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and the lack of strong examples. The absence of other known women composers reinforced the message of men than women could not compose. Further, without the knowledge of other women who composed music of quality, their examples of musical innovation and theory could only be found in studying the works and styles of men. Men have long benefited from a tradition of creation; much of the rich and varied tradition for women may still be awaiting discovery.
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