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Feminist Scholarship Review: Women and Music

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Feminist Scholarship Review

Women and Music

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Cecilia, the Patron Saint of Music

The image on the cover is of the early Christian martyr Cecilia, who has been recognized since the late fifteenth century as the patron saint of music. Today, a closer scrutinization of Cecilian symbolism by feminist music scholars has revealed a less than inspirational source for the symbol, one steeped in the stereotypical and patriarchal notions of women's traditionally passive roles in music, and particularly in the musical creative process. The recent publication of a series of essays under the collective title of Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music (Trinity call number: ML82.C42 1994) champions the cause for a rethinking and review of the history of music--or the "reclaiming" of Cecilia. To quote from the book's Introduction, by the editors, Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou:

"Cecilia was in many ways the "patronized" saint of music, limited, by her sex, to a passive role of idealized, even swooning, muse or performer, but not as an active creator. Cecilia thus presented cultural notions of acceptable female practice; she played the organ, but she did not compose organ symphonies."

This issue of the Feminist Scholarship Review supports the re-visioning process and hopes to motivate readers, both to experience the music of women and to conduct their own explorations into the topic of women and music.

Feminist Scholarship Review



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Letter from the Editor:

Just when I entertain one of those random thoughts which suggests that this issue of FSR might simply be a rerun of our standard formats directed toward a different subject area, something new and tremendously exciting crops up. In fact, this issue, an extension of our Spring, 1996 issue on Women and Music is absolutely resplendent with innovative and original formats and points of view. In this issue, we have an primary source interview with the author of an extensive bibliography in the field. We also have a thorough examination of a piano trio. This study was written by a composer, performer and professor at Trinity who has studied the piece with an ear to performing it. We have book reviews by professors who have used these volumes to enhance their own knowledge as musicians as well as to instruct others, which gives those commentaries a unique texture and style. The Fall, 1996 issue of FSR is full of new ideas and proud of it.

FSR is able to offer you the novel and articulate essays collected in the following pages because of the commitment of the Trinity faculty. Members of the faculty and staff have generously contributed their time and expertise, their seasoned opinions and accumulated knowledge. Faculty contribution to this publication enhances the Trinity experience for everyone who reads this issue of FSR or who even knows of such an undertaking. It raises student awareness of and respect for the rich resources we have in our faculty at Trinity and reveals the personal interests and academic foci of professors and colleagues. Such sharing also integrates the faculty and staff with the larger life of this institution in a way that benefits us all.

As you read this issue, we know you will gain in specific knowledge of the field of Women and Music. We trust that, in addition, you will gain a greater appreciation for diverse points of view as well as for the authors who hold them.

---Deborah Rose O'Neal

Composing a Life: Thoughts after Studying Fanny Hensel's D-minor Piano Trio

Of the assignments for the Trinity Music Department's Chamber Ensemble Program in the Spring '96 semester, one fell out to be a piano trio, giving Catherine Argumedo, a very talented student pianist, the opportunity to study a major work with two seasoned chamber musicians, the 'cellist Kathy Schiano, and myself as violinist. I chose to coach this ensemble, and was delighted when, as we explored possible repertoire in our first reading sessions, Catherine took an immediate liking to Hensel's D-minor Trio. Time constraints being what they are in a Liberal Arts setting such as ours, she decided to concentrate her efforts on the first movement, an expansive sonata-allegro form. As the weeks went by, I became more and more familiar with the work, and more and more convinced of its integrity as a piece of music, completely representative of its time, and as a totally coherent art-work. I write this article not as a scholar, or necessarily a feminist, but as a committed musician -- composer and performer -- and thus bold to presume to be able to respond one-on-one to Fanny Cäcilia Mendelssohn Hensel's self-revelation as embodied in this composition.

When I was in the seventh grade, I was 'adopted' by a very musical family in the little northern California college town where I grew up. My musical 'mother' and 'father' were respectively a cellist and a pianist, and Thursday evenings would find us playing music at their house, often with other invited instrumentalists. They opened a world of wonder and profound grace to me as a youngster, and laid a foundation of musicianship which I have always sought to enrich through study and practice, and to it pass on to my students. For this family, music-making (there is a German word for it -- one word -- "musizieren") was as natural an activity as brushing your teeth, and they passed on to me this easy access to the treasures of the world of music as a part of the total experience of musizieren with them. There was an elegance and a democracy that prevailed at these chamber music evenings which gave me a deep feeling of self-worth, and stimulated much later study and achievement on my part. I can only imagine that the milieu that Fanny grew up in had much in common with my (admittedly more humble) musical roots.

Every chamber music player must learn to fulfill three very distinct and equally important roles: accompanying; playing the main part or melody; and when called for, 'contesting' the main part with a secondary line or counter melody. It is a common misconception that the accompanying role is of lesser importance. This is simply not the case, as the most beautiful melody can easily be botched by inept accompaniment. The whole effect depends on what in my teaching I have come to call the group pulse. Every element in a texture must be subject to this pulse, which is dictated by several aspects composed into the music: the metric subdivisions, the character of the main line, and the relative place in the formal structure of any event or idea. The group pulse is not a rigid, metronomic affair, but rather the very breath of life of the composition, to be discovered in rehearsal and even re-discovered in each performance situation. The pulse literally carries the music, and permits each player her own personal freedom of expression within the community that is a chamber ensemble.

A composer responds to -- and also re-creates -- her own era by making musical compositions. Fanny Mendelssohn grew up in one of the most cultured and aware households of Central Europe, at a time when a new German self-consciousness was bringing forth the fruits of seeds sown in the intellectual, social, and philosophical ferment of the close of the previous century. Her artistic and intellectual preparation groomed her for participation at the highest levels in her contemporary society. Her composition reveals all of this awareness and preparation.

In the Piano Trio, opus 11, we can trace the webs of influence and awareness of major currents in

European musical thought, as well as a very personal "Mendelssohnian" family musical stamp. A brief overview of the composition's four movements is offered here for the sake of orientation.

The first movement, a very broadly laid out and well-crafted sonata-allegro, dominates the expressive field of the piece. The second and third -- two slower movements -- are played without the usual pause. The second opens in the major mode with a sweet sighing motif, reaching upwards. A contrasting minor-mode middle section follows, whose descending melodic motion is supported by a more turbulent harmonic pattern. The compressed return of the movement's opening theme leads directly into the third movement, a "Song" (...without words, as in the series of beloved pieces by her brother, Felix). These two inner movements are designed to give the listener a rest from the turmoil of the opening movement, and to prepare the mercurial (to my ears quite Schumannesque) and technically demanding finale. Composed in sonata-rondo form, the movement opens with a rhapsodic piano cadenza, giving way to a stern minor mode theme. A second idea, infused with the rhythmic sprightliness easily associated with her brother's "fairy music" scherzos, later serves as the main material for the development section. The piece concludes with a burst of joy immediately after the (historically speaking, very progressive) cyclic recall of the second theme from the first movement, transfigured in a shimmering fortissimo.

The remainder of this little essay will concentrate on the first movement, the one we rehearsed and performed at Trinity College in spring 1996. For our performance we used the score and parts from the College Library's collection. A compact disc recording of the piece is to be found in the Sound Recording Collection, with the call number Cd M 309.D37 1989.

The Exposition begins out of nowhere with a turbulent wave-like scale figure in the bass of the piano part. The strings and piano right hand intone the first idea, a wide-ranging melody characterized by large melodic leaps, supported with harmonies that wrench the heart.

Out of a stern and precipitous descent to the first articulating cadence, the transition section comes sighing, like balm for the soul. There are several expressive shocks built into this bridge passage, which serve to remind us of the opening phrases.

The music moves to F-major, the key of the second theme, which arises over trembling piano chords. Even though it receives an expansive treatment, it too comes to a questioning end, and the mode shifts again to the minor as the closing idea, a wedge-shaped theme with falling melody and rising bass, wells up, then settles into a final mysterious passage, played pianissimo.

Another shock of dissonance dissolves into the beginning of the Development section, which begins in a shimmering F-major, with delicate arpeggios and a fragment of the first theme calling the listener into the heart of the piece. The harmonic palette of this section is dominated by the sound of the diminished seventh chord, one of the wrenching harmonies that were a feature of the first theme's accompaniment. The violin and the 'cello engage each other in canonic duels based on the first idea, over the filigree chords of the piano. An impasse reached, the character of the music changes to a broad, sad, slow music that plumbs the highest and the lowest notes of the instruments. The second theme emerges shimmering over its tremolo accompaniment, and forms the subject of the next part of the development's discourse. A fragment of this idea also receives canonic treatment, this time exploiting the tone colors of the piano. The first motif sternly interrupts, leading to a really virtuosic passage, both as regards the performers' requisite technical prowess, but almost more so as regards the craft of the composer herself: for here, at the close of the development, we hear both first and bridge themes combined, struggling to be united, over the thundering of the piano's bass octaves.

The tour de force of that combination of themes ushers in the radiant Recapitulation of the first theme, the melody in the piano now accompanied by the strings, who take over the rushing scales of the opening texture. The bridge passage no longer brings any relief, as it did in the exposition, but sustains the dissonance tension until the harping on the first motif is finally resolved by the return of the second theme, in the major mode of the home key (as expected), but fortissimo, in apotheosis. (It is in this character which it will be recalled at the end of the last movement.) As a quieter repetition of the second idea brings us back to earth, the music returns to the predominant minor mode, and the wedge-shaped closing theme, also in the home key, ushers in the coda. Mysterious and languishing at first, the closing section nevertheless ends in a blaze of fiery D-minor glory, with the rushing scales of the opening texture supporting an unfolding of the tonic chord.

Week after week, as we rehearsed the first movement and came to know it inside out, we all had strong aesthetic and emotional reactions to what we were discovering, and often shared images that arose in our minds as we worked. For me the heady language that Hensel composed in required that I keep on guard not to succumb to the waves of emotion that continually swept over me. In fact, all three musicians found that we had to restrain the urge to give our "all" at any point in the piece, and keep searching for the balance possible between all three instruments -- and their players' temperaments.

Every note is so well placed, every gesture so well crafted, that we never tired of the most minute re-hearings of individual passages, in the search for that expressive balance that would allow the piece to speak. The strictness of the sense of time that Hensel structured into the opening of the movement seemed almost at odds with the breadth of the gestural aspect, and meant that we often had to report to the metronome to temper our raging spirits! In runthroughs of the opening, every time the first big cadence arrived, I realized that I had been controlling my own sense of the group pulse so much, holding back from this music that seems to mirror the sobs of a grieving person, almost holding my own breath, that the relief I experienced in that moment of release went through my whole being, a huge gasp of letting go. I imagined the human being, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, and all the inner struggle that her life must have contained, and every time felt I had made contact.

The second theme literally glows. Its warmth comes from the fact that the melody doesn't want to move on, doesn't have the eternal restlessness of the first theme, as much as from the beautiful effect of the shimmering tremolo of the piano accompaniment. It is expansive, embracing the ear. The closing theme has about it a marvelous sense of striving after the good, the right. To the Romantic sensibility, Music is a moral art, as much an exploration of the ethics of being human as it is about displays of passions and delights for the senses.

That passage at the end of the development where the strings combine both themes as the piano rages underneath was one of the most difficult parts to get to work. We found that we couldn't abandon ourselves to the three disparate ideas, each one begging for the maximum from one's instrument, because when we did that, we invariably fell apart, the music crashing about us in a heap. The secret was in an image that Catherine came up with one day -- "like a pot of oatmeal bubbling, but not boiling over". She said that thought helped her not to overdo any one thing, but to sustain a balance through the whole passage. We all tried that image on for size and were delighted with the result: every part of the texture was clear, with no sacrifice of the passage's tremendous forward thrust.

Two more moments stick in my mind when I replay the piece in my memory, layered as it is with reactions formed both as a performer and a composer. The moment of the recapitulation is really a feat, when the violin and the 'cello get to play the rushing accompaniment figure, freeing both hands of the piano to send

the notes of the first theme like arrows of light right through your soul. The attentive listener has been made to wait for some time for this moment, and the passage just before it has strained both the attention and the emotions practically to the breaking point. I couldn't help thinking of the woman Fanny Hensel, herself locked in a life situation which the music here seems to embody so well -- her talent, her training, her life's commitment to the Art of Music, which every Romantic poet had exalted to the highest level of human accomplishment, as against her aspirations for a career and the impossibility of her ever realizing them publicly -- all these elements seem to struggle in this masterfully composed crucial moment in the process which is the sonata form, itself the crowning achievement of European musical thought!

Every time I hear it or think of it, the very end of the movement reminds me forcefully of another great piece in D-minor, one which every musician of Hensel's training and exposure would have known and held in a quasi-religious awe, the first movement of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. It is not a matter of a quote, but rather a family resemblance -- the stern dotted rhythms unfolding the notes of the chord.

Those dotted rhythms are the diminution of the broad rhythm of the movement's opening, organically developed out of the first theme's main rhythmic motif. But they come at the end of a movement as expansive as that of the composer all Romantic musicians looked to as prophet and ancestor. And Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel was proud to trace her musical lineage beyond Beethoven, all the way back to Bach.

--Douglas Johnson

Each time I prepare to teach Music 224, "The Music of Black American Women," I immediately pull out the two books that have become staples in the course: Daphne Harrison's *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* and Sandra Lieb's *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey*. Both books are firsts in their documentation of the lives and times of the most noteworthy--and notorious--blues women of this century's first three decades.

Harrison's book is more useful than brilliant or, even, interesting. It provides a straightforward, "just-the-facts-ma'am" account of the lives and music of an impressive roster of the black blues queens active, despite the title, between 1900 and 1940. As such, Harrison's book is a laundry list of virtually everyone: Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Trixie Smith, Mamie Smith, Laura Smith, Clara Smith, Ida Cox, Eva Taylor, Chippie Hill, Sippie Wallace, Bertha Idaho, Cleo Gibson, Sara Martin, Lucille Hegamin, Rosa Henderson, Victoria Spivey, Edith Wilson, Ethel Waters, Alberta Hunter. The lives of only six women--Rainey, Bessie Smith, Wallace, Spivey, Wilson, and Hunter--are discussed in any detail, and even these are sketchy and oddly lopsided. Harrison's discussion of Ma Rainey, for example, extends but 6 pages, while that of Sippie Wallace goes on for 33 pages. Granted, Rainey has been amply documented in other books. Nevertheless, it strikes me as being at once musicologically and culturally unwise to relegate discussion of Rainey, as Harrison admits, to that of providing a reference point to discussion of other blues women. Equally disturbing is the general absence of discussion of music itself--not the texts, not the social contexts for the texts, but the actual music. Each time I use the book, I find myself saying, "OK, this is great. But what about the music? Why does this book center on the extramusicality of these women's lives and not on what they actually sang--and how they sang what they sang?"

The strength of Harrison's book is its focus on the social history of the black blues queens of the early 1900s. In documenting "the dynamics of work, personal relationships, and religion in black culture," as well as "the impact of the migration of blacks at the turn of the century and the resultant effects of black women's lives" and "the general nature of black cultural expression and the movement of black women toward self-determination and independence," Harrison provides her readers with a wonderful look at the times in which the women lived. This history is crucial to any study of the music of black Americans, for we absolutely must know who the musicians were and how they fit in the larger society. I know that this statement is obvious; that most of us who teach or would teach the music of black Americans wouldn't dream of discussing it outside its social and cultural contexts. Obvious or not, I am struck by the number of books which make no attempt to place the music or its performers in any world save the musical world. (But then, which musical world? This, of course, should logically lead one to a discussion of social contexts, but...) Harrison's discussion of the phonograph industry, for example, is helpful in understanding the role technology played in the women's careers. Similarly, her lengthy discussion of the women's lyrics helps us understand the issues that were, as she says, "of particular concern to black women in the urban setting."

Whatever its shortcomings, Harrison's book is indispensable. And it is indispensable largely because it is one of a kind: one of the first (if not the first) to discuss a whole slew of blues women under one cover. If the information is spotty here and there, it only points to the need, as I tell my students time and time again, for some real digging--the kind that will yield in-depth studies of the lives of the blues women whose lives are currently profiled in fewer than three sentences.

If Harrison's book is to be criticized for not giving enough information, Lieb's might be censured for giving

more than is needed. In her painstakingly-documented dissertation-turned-text, Lieb chronicles the life, times, and music of Ma Rainey. The first chapter is a wonderful biography of Rainey, which draws on interviews with musicians who knew and played with Rainey. Here, Lieb discusses black minstrelsy and its prescriptions in the early 1900s, which saw Rainey lighten her face with "heavy greasepaint, powder, and rouge, so that she looked almost gold-colored under the amber stage lights." Chapter 1 also contains important and interesting discussions of the race record industry and T.O.B.A., the Theatre Owners' Booking Agency (referred to as "tough on black asses" by black performers), which represented scores of black entertainers in the early 20th century. Chapters 2-4 discuss Rainey's songs. In Chapter 2, "Blame it on the Blues," Lieb gives an overview of all of Rainey's music, focusing in particular on the intersection between black professional entertainment in the early 1900s and folk blues. Lieb takes us into the tent shows at the turn of the century, describing the costumes and minstrelsy-derived variety acts Rainey used on the road. She describes Rainey's singing style in great detail, making us feel and hear every raspy grunt, every moan, every slur and glissando. And, much to her credit, Lieb discusses and analyzes the music--the notes themselves as well as the lyrics--that Rainey sang: the chord progressions in the eight- and twelve-bar blues, stanza structure and rhyme schemes, instrumental accompaniments. Chapters 3 and 4 analyze the themes of Rainey's songs. Not surprisingly, most of these center in one way or another on love, particularly, as Lieb correctly writes, "the intense sexual love between men and women." Lieb dissects each of Rainey's songs, placing each of the "blues about a man" songs in social and historical contexts. She also discusses the impact of Rainey's physical appearance (she was a heavy and homely woman) on her routines, and the way she often infused her songs with self-mockery. Lieb's analyses of Rainey's other songs, which often contain vaudeville comedy and center on a variety of themes, including drunkenness, are equally detailed. In reviewing "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," for example, Lieb discusses every pun in the song and gives a brief history of the dance called the black bottom. Lieb's discussion of "Hear Me Talking To You," one of my favorites, is similarly rich, with its analysis of the song's sexual jokes and puns. Lieb leaves no stone unturned: she analyzes virtually every song Rainey ever recorded or performed; she includes the texts (a blessing, given Rainey's diction) of most; she catalogues the recordings according to genre (12- or 8-bar blues, ballad, comedy, non-blues, hybrids of blues and popular song forms); and she includes a pithy bibliography of the most useful sources. Best of all, Lieb has not buried the best stuff in endnotes; her prose is so chock full of all the important details that additional information is superfluous.

Different as they are, Harrison's and Lieb's books are invaluable resources. Students tend to like Harrison's book more than Lieb's because it is a smorgasbord of information rather than a single, calorie-laden course. I, on the other hand, prefer the density of Lieb's book and wildly applaud all the digging she did to bring the music and times of one blues singer to life. In any event, I will continue to rely on both books because they complement each other so well. And I will continue to implore my students to conduct their own post-Trinity investigations into the lives of these women, so that we may one day know more about Ida Cox, Mamie Smith, and Victoria Spivey.

--Gail Woldu

R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Still Waiting?

Review of *Girls! Girls! Girls! Essays on Women and Music*

Sarah Cooper has edited an unusual and comprehensive volume of twelve short essays about women and music. The book, published in 1996 by New York University Press, is a slim 170 pages, including biographical material and index. The text presents a sound-bite approach to contemporary issues on women and music as well as a few compelling references to the apparent dearth of women in classical music history. The essays are written by twelve women who began their relationships to music as adolescent pop fans and who later became part of the music business as artists, writers, journalists, DJ's and broadcasters. The reader is catapulted from topic to topic, titillated by such titles as "Where are the Mothers in Opera?" to "The Joy of Hacking: Women Rock Critics". The essays are generally focused, sometimes succinct, and occasionally amusing and insightful. The medley of ideas examine issues of gender through, but not limited to, issues of race, class and sexual preference. Though Sarah Cooper claims to have had no schematic plan, there are certain "truths" that emerge about all women and all music. In fact, the whole of this book may be more than the sum of its parts.

As the reader goes through the essays with what feels like pulsating movement worthy of contemporary musical frenzy, certain motifs emerge. First and most obvious is that the book's geographic center is not the United States, but England. This perspective is important because it provides American readers with a framework for comparison between the two countries which have so vitally contributed to today's musical culture. Although the music groups named in British contemporary rock may be different (and some cases unknown to most American audiences), many of the problems associated with women and their place in today's music business are comparable.

The American reader may be slowed by some cultural differences, many of which have to do more with vocabulary than the intrinsic nature of the contemporary English music scene. One such example is the use of the term "indie". "Indie" appears in several essays with a variety of meanings. As described in the introduction, indie originally depicted small, risk-taking independent producers and record companies. The reader must utilize some measure of intuition to comprehend its contemporary meaning (s). For example, "Velocity Girls" by Laura Lee Davies, begins, "When I was making my first explorations into music, the decision to be an indie girl (as opposed to a metal head, a soul girl or a hippy) was guided by a few simple factors. Firstly, the tunes seemed mostly, far more listenable than other music"(124). Davies goes on to suggest that her musical choice was in part determined by being able to fit the clothing mores of indie music (what she calls "Altered Images chic") to her meager clothes budget (124). While the reader might surmise that "indie" music tends to be more liberal, several essays toil to destroy that myth. To the semi-baffled American reader, a glossary would have been tremendously helpful.

The theme of *Girls! Girls! Girls!* should come as no surprise: women in music have a rough time. They are not taken seriously as critics. They have unappealing roles in opera (either they die or they allow their children to die). Virtually all women representing ethnic groups in the book have concerns about being outside mainstream action. The over-arching message is that women in music are exceptional, albeit isolated, and perceived as contradictions in a male-dominated world. Black women feel second-citizen status to white women; their relationship to white men is even more demeaning. Asian women feel ignored, peripheral to today's principal racial tension of blacks vs. whites. Female journalists complain that they are not taken as seriously as their male counterparts. They are most likely to find success in the field of public relations. To quote Liz Naylor, "There are loads of women in PR everywhere, not just in the music industry, the assumption being that pretty girls will get you or your product somewhere. The person delivering that record to the radio station has got to have thirty-six inch legs" (152).

The women rock stars have their own complaints too. They feel that they can't be as openly boisterous or as sexually explicit as their male counterparts. If a female artist, e.g. Madonna, dares to reveal that type of persona, she is called a "bitch". Women rock stars are applauded for their emotional range; when they show intellectual or business acumen, they are mistrusted and labelled "aggressive." The contributors to this volume perceive the control by men in today's music business to be as pervasive as in the 1920's when Ma Rainey struggled to communicate her need for artistic (and financial) integrity with the executives at Paramount Records.

The books' contributors are at their most poignant when they acknowledge that they and their sisters in the industry expect to be treated better than in the traditional business world, where bottom line mentality is the only philosophy, and where the glass ceiling is securely adjusted just above the heads of competent females. To quote Liz Naylor: "Yes, the music industry is like any other industry...it's ultimately a cynical machine. But most of the people involved in it are totally besotted by music and you get very emotionally involved in the job, so the last thing you want to know is how shitty and sexist it is" (151). And her final judgement: "I think music is probably more hypocritical than other industries, because music is meant to be about being cool, it's not about calling women birds, and black people...well, you know. But it won't tackle any of those issues head on, in fact it feels above it. And that's my ultimate criticism, it's really smug and fails to address anything" (155).

The role of music as a means of addressing key issues in society is raised in several essays. While music is assumed to have a general impact on society in all kinds of social, economic and educational ways, there is no consistent measure of its effect on individuals. Nor is it clear what elements and motivations play into the creation of contemporary music. Critics of popular music have long asked whether contemporary music reflects the society from which it emerges, or whether it serves to articulate vision, ideals and values in the hopes that society might respond. Rosa Ainley, in her humorous confessional essay "I was a Teenage Country Fan", makes broad generalizations about music and politics. "Until I firmed up my confidence that politics isn't the point, and is never one of music's strong points" (118). Other essayists look at the music, the lyrics and the performers as political statements of clear ideology.

Helen Kolawole's essay, "Sisters Take the Rap...but Talk Back" describes the dilemma in contemporary black music. She notes that historically one could count on black music to exemplify the struggle for equality. The intertwining of music and politics created a powerful and masterful voice both for blacks and for the mainstream white community. Then along came gangsta rap, creating a musical genre infused with insults to women, to whites, to society, to all established institutions of urban contemporary life. Despite its obvious misogyny, it has a large female following. Puzzled and bothered by the contradictions, Kolawole reports on the current discussion through a series of interviews, creating a rich fabric of disparate opinions. Ben Chavis, former head of the NAACP said, "I think [rap is] retardant to the African-American struggle for freedom when sisters and brothers battle against each other. Our problem is not gender. Our problem is racism" (9). Chavis is the only male quoted in the essay. Feminists, including Belle Hooks, feel that rap's relationship to women must be studied. She says, "How to get an articulation of a raw sexuality that is not misogynist is the unanswered space in rap"(10). Chairwoman of the National Political Congress for Black Women believes that rap is "destroying the souls of our sisters" (10).

The essay concludes with four separate fans, ages fifteen to twenty-six, speaking about their ambivalent reactions to rap. Marcia says, "If I think about it too much then I would have to stop listening to gangsta rap, because it isn't saying anything positive to me. But it's hard because I do love the *music*. You just have to ignore what's being said and concentrate on what makes you move" (14). Sweet T goes even further, "So

[Snoop Doggy Dogg] has gone from calling black women bitches to white women, so what? What's so radical about that? I think it's a shame that guys feel that dissing women makes them even more manly. I'd like to see what would happen to Snoop if he called his mother a bitch" (15-16).

The rich texture of essays organized by Sarah Cooper includes a number of wonderful pieces which might best be categorized as reminiscences. One of the strongest is "Tell the Truth, Meeting Margie Hendrix". Val Wilmer writes of her one meeting with one of Ray Charles' background singers, Margie Hendrix, in May 1963. It was one of Wilmer's defining moments. "She turned her back on us and 'talked black' to the others. It was really 'down' stuff, much of which we could only barely grasp the significance of back then.... To be treated as invisible and made to feel ignorant was preparation for understanding the situation of marginalized others" (64). As a British young adult, this experience helped Wilmer comprehend and appreciate the complexities of black American performers and their music.

American music lovers are likely to find that *Girls! Girls! Girls!* presents a broad spectrum of topics on women and music within British popular culture. References to Elvis, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, Muddy Waters, Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee, The Grateful Dead, and the Osmonds help Americans comprehend the wide variety of musical influences imported to British soil, the parallels between American and English popular culture, and most importantly, the articulation of a uniquely English perspective. In the end, one is left wondering about the title of the book, *Girls! Girls! Girls! Essays on Women and Music*. Utilizing both terms, "girls" and "women", the message is an ambiguous one. Are women perceived as girls within the music industry? Do women perceive themselves as girls? Do girls become women as a result of their success? Where is the intersection of meaning? The reader has a wealth of choices concerning both the writers' and editor's perceptions of gender and gender-related issues. The reader is challenged to participate in her/his own understanding of these complex issues. In fact, the whole is better than the sum of its parts!

-Naomi Amos

Reflections on Marcia J. Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon

This is an important book. Reading it has permanently changed the way I think about teaching the history of music.

Marcia J. Citron, a Professor of Music at Rice University, signals in her title the two central issues of her book. She is concerned with examining the canon--or "standard repertory"--of Western art music: what it is, how it was formed, how it perpetuates itself, and what it means for our musical life. (She freely acknowledges not being able to deal here with the many other important musical traditions: popular musics, jazz, World music traditions, and so on.) And second, she explores the relationship of female musicians to this canon: above all, the historical and ideological forces that have kept woman composers from having a significant place in it. Their absence, by the way, is far more complete than non-musicians might suspect. If the literary canon is heavily dominated by men, it nonetheless includes women whose work is universally accepted as central: Jane Austen, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf. But there are no comparable female figures in music. Indeed, the typical music major graduates from college without having studied in detail a single work by a woman composer, and the average concert-goer may attend concerts for years without hearing a composition written by a woman.

Thanks to much-publicized battles in recent years over the canon in literature, the basic concept of the canon is probably familiar by now to most readers. It is meant to suggest the most central, the most important, and at least by implication the greatest works in any field: those that represent the highest standard of achievement, those that should be studied and emulated. In literature, arguments about the "Great Books" have been raging for some time, as both the content and the very notion of the canon have been directly challenged (and heatedly defended). A highly oversimplified sketch of the conflict might read like this:

--The defenders of the canon see it as a collection of the best literary works ever written, works that have "stood the test of time" and, in some hard-to-define way, are simply better than other works that have fallen by the wayside. The greatness of these works transcends history: Shakespeare, Dickens, and Hemingway stand side by side. To include literary works on any other basis than their greatness would undermine the canon's pure and meritocratic status by bringing ideology into the picture.

--The challengers in turn argue that ideology has always been there. They say that the canon, and the individual works in it, inherently convey ideological meaning: they have political and social messages, and the presence of a work in the canon depends on the acceptability of those messages to the people--above all professors of literature--who decide what the canon is. Since those professors (until recent years largely white males) have a certain set of social and political beliefs, the books they include in the canon reflect those beliefs. And the exclusion of writers who are women (along with those who are people of color, or gay or lesbian) has more to do with the different values and beliefs expressed in their writings than with any notions of pure "quality" or "greatness". Therefore, the challengers argue, we need to discuss openly what ideological values are contained within the traditional canon, how those values may exclude or oppress many members of our diverse culture, and how the canon should be changed and expanded to be more inclusive.

Citron's exploration of the canon in Western art music (where these controversies are far newer and less well-explored) reveals some important differences between literature and music. For one thing, the path of creation, transmission and reception of music (and thus the process of canon-formation) is more complex. Books are written, published, and then read, both by the public and by reviewers and critics,

whose written commentaries influence the public. Over time, the reactions of the public and (more important) of the literary establishment determine whether a book will be included in the canon. However, once a composer writes a piece, its presentation to the public depends on finding one or more performers who will perform it (and in our century, make a recording). Publication of the music may help it receive more performances or recordings, but the ability of a composition to reach the public and the reviewers and critics rests on its aural transmission, an additional step that complicates the process. (To give a simple example: a novel that no mainstream publisher will publish may be printed by a small publisher and thereafter still have a chance of finding an audience. But if a composer of a symphony cannot find an orchestra to perform or record her work, it will remain invisible to the public even if the score is published.)

Another distinction, less fully explored by Citron, between the canon in music and its literary analog is the apparently abstract, non-referential quality of instrumental music. Much of the canonic music written in the 19th century (when, as Citron shows, the canon was born) is so-called absolute music: pieces like symphonies or string quartets with no words and no link to any extra-musical subject. Since a novel by Dickens, for example, deals with human characters and their relationships within the constraints of a particular society, it can easily enough be said to deal with social and political concerns. But many musicians resist the notion that a symphony by Beethoven carries such meanings; it seems implausible to them that Beethoven's music is considered great in part because it reflects the ideological values of the dominant culture of his (and our) time. In addition, the procedures by which students are taught to analyze music stress technical matters--chords, phrase-lengths, or formal structures--over questions of expression and meaning. For these reasons the cultural and ideological nature of the musical canon may in the short term be harder to demonstrate than has been the case in literature.

While the opening and closing chapters of Citron's book consider the canon in broad perspective, drawing extensively on writings from philosophy, feminist theory, and the literary canon debates, her central chapters trace some of the processes that have tended to exclude women from the musical canon. One of these is the gendered view of creativity in our culture. "Creation, which involves the mind, is reserved for male activity; procreation, which involves giving birth, is applied to women.... Conceiving for males is mental and takes place in the head; conceiving for females is physical and occurs in the womb." (p. 45) This cultural message has at least two important effects. First, any women who creates in the arts is "behaving like a man"--her activities cast doubt on her womanliness. Second, the creative products of a woman are (to critics) inherently suspicious, even unnatural. While this formulation is clearly oversimplified as presented here in such brief form, Citron shows the considerable power of this view in the 19th century.

The chapter on "Professionalism" argues that to be a respected composer meant receiving a certain kind of technical training and following a particular, very public career path. At the same time, Citron demonstrates that the necessary training was frequently unavailable to women, some of whom were for instance barred from advanced classes at conservatories. This lack of training was far more critical for composers than for writers, since unlike literature "Western art music [depends on an] array of specialized skills...that one can acquire only through some kind of formal training." (p. 60) Because the public world was deemed to be masculine, with "woman's place" the more private realm of the home or the salon, many of the steps on the composer's career path were also closed off to women. Mendelssohn and Berlioz, for example, conducted leading orchestras throughout Europe and had many opportunities to present their own compositions; while for a woman to conduct an orchestra in the 19th century (and indeed in much of the 20th) would have been unthinkable. The public/private distinction was also reflected in views of musical genres: the larger, more public genres like symphony, opera, and concerto were seen as

masculine and valued more highly--in particular, deemed to have lasting historical significance--while smaller forms like songs and character pieces for piano were viewed as feminine and less important. Thus if a woman wrote symphonies, she was intruding in a realm for which her feminine talents were not suited; while if she wrote appropriately feminine works like songs her music was likely to be seen as charming but ephemeral. (A fascinating question not addressed by Citron is why Chopin, a composer mainly of smaller works for piano and someone whose music was seen from the very beginning as being feminine, has nevertheless become a canonic figure.)

Citron's discussion of "Reception" raises issues that lead naturally from those just mentioned. For instance, the response by 19th-century audiences and critics to large, public works like symphonies is more visible to music historians today: performances are better-documented, written reviews appeared in newspapers and music journals, and so on. Conversely, the music performed in more private settings was less likely to receive public (written) commentary, so it more easily escapes attention today. And, of course, ideological views about women as creators powerfully affected the content of any reviews (by male critics) that did appear in print. Citron quotes a revealing pair of reviews of music by Cécile Chaminade: the first deplores the excessive virility of one of her works, while the second claims that a different Chaminade composition "has a certain feminine daintiness and grace, but it is amazingly superficial and wanting in variety." (pp. 186-87)

Another aspect of the musical canon that renders women invisible is in a way prior to all of the above concerns: namely the emphasis on composers and their works above performers. This emphasis dates back only to the 19th century. Before that performers (many of whom were female) and composers ranked much more equally in public esteem. In such musical institutions as the 18th-century opera house, for instance, the leading male and female singers were much more important figures than the composer of the music: they were far more highly paid, and it was their performance at least as much as the music itself that determined the success or failure of an opera. In the realm of instrumental music the composer and the performer were frequently the same person (Mozart playing his own piano concertos, Haydn leading the orchestra in a performance of his own symphonies). Even today this different balance between composer and performer may be seen in the world of popular music, where a hit song is identified with the artist(s) who recorded it rather than the one(s) who wrote it. (Some of the songs Mariah Carey performs are written by her, and some by other people; yet how many Mariah Carey fans know which are which?)

Citron's discussion of the possible solutions to the "canon problem" is practical and modest, not going far beyond what has been written about the situation in literature. Abandoning the concept of the canon entirely is impractical, for a host of reasons. She explores the advantages and drawbacks of the two main options: opening up the canon to works by women, by simply insisting on the greater inclusion of their music in various venues--above all concert-programs and musical anthologies for students--and creating a separate canon of music by woman composers.

Many of the points in Citron's book seem rather common-sensical, even obvious, once they have been made (and this is probably especially true for those who have read a certain amount of feminist theory before); though this certainly does not mitigate the value of her having made them. The book depends throughout on a large body of philosophical and theoretical work by other scholars, and reading it is frequently slow going. Occasionally Citron's predilection for discussing all possible theoretical sides of a point gets a bit too ruminative: one wishes she'd stop chewing on it and move along. In short, the book is not easy to read.

But it is also valuable. Citron pulls together a number of important arguments and views, focusing them on musical problems and illuminating a number of concerns in our field that will have to occupy us seriously in the years to come. Not everyone who teaches the history of Western art music will read this book, but they should.

--John Platoff

Women and Music: A Music Librarian's Experiences and Perspectives An Interview with Margaret Ericson

Margaret Ericson, Music Librarian at Tufts University, is the author of Women and Music: A Selective Annotated Bibliography on Women and Gender Issues in Music, 1987-1992 (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996). The bibliography is a recent and most welcome addition to the Trinity Library reference collection (ML128.W7 E75 1996). The interview took place on 1 August 1996, at Tufts. Suzanne Risley is Music and Media Services Librarian at Trinity.

SR: Your bibliography was nearly ten years in the making. Could you give some background on what culminated in its publication, how your research developed and/or matured over the years, and how this might have changed your thinking about the subject of women and music?

ME: My bibliography was a product of work that I had done from 1987 through about 1991 or 1992 for the Women and Music Roundtable of the Music Library Association (MLA). The Roundtable was formed in 1987 after a plenary session at the MLA annual convention in 1986, entitled *Making Changes: Women in Music, 1970-1985*, at which I was the moderator. The session was a big hit at the convention, and afterwards many women--actually, not only women--many librarians came up to me saying that we really needed a forum where topics on women in music could be discussed in an ongoing way. Two colleagues who were particularly interested and motivated, Cynthia Richardson and Jane Gottlieb, discussed the possibilities. Jane was the one who decided to take the lead, and she became the first chair of the Women and Music Roundtable. And it's funny, because at that time within our ranks of music librarianship, we had a number of women who were involved in publication projects-- Jane, of course, who was one of the editors of The Musical Woman,¹ Cynthia Richardson, who had co-authored a book on Mary Carr Moore,² Carolyn Rabson who was engaged in research on the status of women in music scholarship (that also for The Musical Woman), and Joan Swanekamp, who had done work on the College Music Society (CMS) report Women's Studies/ Women's Status.³ These were just a few. The time for establishing a forum within MLA was right because the activity was there.

When the Roundtable had its first meeting, the librarians who attended discussed how difficult it was for them to put their hands on new publications--scores, recordings, books--and how difficult it was to gain access to information. One of the chief reasons cited was the fact that Library of Congress (LC) subject headings did not support headings that could be applied to specifically identify individually authored works by women--individual scores, individual sound recordings--that just collective aspects of women and music could be identified by an LC subject heading. They also talked about how we, as music

¹The Musical Woman was published by Greenwood Press between 1983 and 1991, and was issued in three volumes. (Trinity call number: ML82 M8)

²The title of this book is Mary Carr Moore, American Composer. Cynthia Richardson's co-author is Catherine Parsons Smith. (Trinity call number: ML410.M7755 S6 1987)

³This is *Report Number 5* in the College Music Society's *CMS Reports* series, which presents pertinent information, findings, and recommendations of CMS committees and conferences. The Committee on the Status of Women, which is one of two ad hoc committees maintained within the organizational structure of CMS, produced this report. (Trinity Media Reference call number: ML82.W654 1988)

librarians, had to create our own finding aids to get around this problem; and they suggested that we find some way to share our efforts. Initially we conceived of the idea of establishing an information clearinghouse, and I was appointed Information Coordinator. In other words, I was to serve as the person to whom people could send their finding aids, and anyone interested in this information could contact me about distribution. I was to create and maintain a list that I would present each year in updated form at the Women and Music Roundtable. Well, what happened the first year was that I simply didn't get very much response from people. Since I didn't feel I could come to the following year's session with *nothing*, and since I was really motivated to do *something*, I took it upon myself to do a bibliographic search and create a bibliography of publications--articles, books, scores, sound recordings, videos--that had come out on the topic of women and music in the past year.

My first list was only 5 pages, but everybody was ecstatic to have at least *something* to put their hands on. It still wasn't a real finding aid--that was not forthcoming. However, the next year I did another list, 1987/88, picking up things that I had missed from the previous year because of the lag in indexing time. I did four annual installments of this bibliography. The first one, again, was 5 pages, the next was around 12, the next around 20, and the next was around 30! It became very obvious that there was just an explosion of publication activity during this time period.

It also became very clear that this was emerging, or could emerge, as a larger publication. But from the outset the focus was not on individual biographies, or scores by particular women composers. The publications I cited were those that dealt with the collective aspect of women and music--score and sound recording anthologies, different explorations on the topic of women and music in a general sense. So, the chief problem was not resolved by this bibliography, and we still have the same problem today finding the materials in our libraries when we are asked the question at the reference desk, "What do you have in your collection by women composers?" We still can't answer that question definitively!

However, after the 1991 MLA convention, by which time I had issued several annual updates of this bibliography, it was taken to some other conferences--ALA, AMS, etc.; and it was used as an example of an MLA publication at the MLA booth. G.K. Hall took note of my work, and I signed a contract with them in 1991. What I decided was needed then was an annotated, indexed, and classified bibliography. This meant that a lot of retrospective work had to be done, because I wanted to make it as comprehensive as possible.

I regrouped, looked at my search strategy, and basically had to return to the existing bibliography database and annotate the entries. Since these publications dealt with collective aspects of women and music, I felt annotations were necessary in order to provide access to the intellectual content of materials such as essay collections, anthologies, or general treatments that might, for example, deal with 5 different women composers..

SR: Regarding how this ten-year span of work might have changed your thinking about the subject of women and music, did you, in fact, come away changed substantially?

ME: Yes, I did, because as feminist theory began to impact the field of musicology and as feminist cultural theorists began to examine music--and these were not musicologists, but feminist theorists doing work in other areas and thinking of music as one of the arts--I realized that I needed to expand the parameters of the topic of women and music. It is much more than just biographies or histories of women composers and women musicians. For example, how did a woman function in culture and society in a particular time period, and how was she able to express herself?

Also, of course, at that time Susan McClary⁴ was beginning to utilize feminist music theory to analyze masterworks in music to illustrate how gender came into play in the way that these works were created. What reveals itself in these works? What can we look at to see what this composer is doing, either consciously or unconsciously? How does this relate to gender? How does this relate to gender in a particular historical period? I really had to change my strategy, and I had to look carefully at changing terminology as I used the different indexes. I had to look at non-music indexing sources and see where the terms *women and music* were turning up. I found that there was a great deal of material on women and music in small press feminist publications, and I also found that these publications are not easily accessible. Essentially, I realized that there was much work to be done in areas of literature in which one would not normally search.

SR: You touched somewhat upon what I was hoping to get at in my next question, but perhaps we could expand bit. In your preface--which I thought was very enlightening and illustrative of your work, in terms of your thought processes and the problems that you faced--you state that even at the very early stages of your work it was clear to you that "... the field of 'women and music' was not limited to a recovery of the history of individual women musicians throughout the musical past. The possibilities offered by feminist and gender theory as it could be applied to musicology, music theory, ethnomusicology, the sociology of music, and other realms of interdisciplinary music study were beginning to emerge, and this new phase of inquiry needed to be represented in any such bibliography." Could you comment further on this? In light of the proliferation of research in this area, what might be hoped for in the future in terms of how women in music, especially within the context of western classical traditions, are perceived and also how music history is taught?

ME: Well, in reference to the first question, I did touch a little bit on that, but I think that if you browse through some of the topics in the Table of Contents--in fact, as I browse at this moment-- it is interesting to me to recognize that I really approached this bibliography the way I approach music. The way I approach music on a *personal and individual* level is really to see how music fits into society and culture in general. And because I'm coming from a background and work in traditional music, I look at music making in a different way, I think, maybe, than in the way that a music theorist would or that a musicologist would. That's how I approached the bibliography as a *music librarian*. I really wanted to explore the whole gamut within the time period that I established for the bibliography. I wanted to be as broad as possible within those limitations. And I found that I actually didn't have to look very far. The material was everywhere. There were excellent treatments that came out of topics on women in music history, but also emerging were the results of work being done on feminist musical aesthetics, which addressed questions such as, "Is this person writing as a woman, and what is that, and what is she saying if she's writing as a woman?" I also found emerging fields of scholarship in the areas of women in jazz and women in rock and popular music.

But the whole aspect of how feminist theory was now targeting male works and how one could read a masterwork in music and interpret it from a feminist perspective--that this kind of scholarship was surfacing in the literature was very unique. And it was valuable, because it questioned a lot of the precepts upon

⁴Susan McClary has contributed to and authored several publications on women and music. She wrote the forwards to *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, edited by Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Trinity call number: ML82.C42 1994); and to *Opera, or, the Undoing of Women*, by Catherine Clement (Trinity call number ML2110.C613 1988). She authored *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Trinity call number: ML82.M38 1990). And she co-edited, with Richard Leppert, *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception* (Trinity call number: ML3795.M78 1987).

which we judge the works that came into the canon. It was important to represent. The fields of audience reception and music preference also were being explored. What are the differences between women and men in their preferences in music? How do women use music? Are there psychological and physiological aspects that come into play? I found a series of publications that examined, from the standpoint of clinical psychology, whether there are differences between men and women in terms of musical and creative ability. Relative to this is the status of women in the music profession--that was starting to be examined--all aspects-- women as composers, women as performers, women as conductors.

Music education was also starting to be targeted. There were authors who examined the way children are indoctrinated at a very early age--the music that's presented to them, and how gender comes into play in the way that teachers present music in class. Do we need to change that so that there is a more balanced representation of women composers, so that girls and boys in a classroom can feel free to create, and so that one is not favored over the other? At what point does a girl start feeling uncomfortable about creating? Where does support need to start coming in? So that aspect started coming into the literature.

In terms of what could be hoped for in the future, in terms of how women in western classical music are perceived, how music history is taught--Well, one would hope that, as more works by women are brought to light, as more works by women are performed, we won't have to be talking about this anymore! One would hope that it would become a matter of course that women's works would be represented on programs, and women's works would be recorded commercially, and that women's works would be analyzed in music theory courses, and that works by women would be examined and integrated into the classroom. One would hope that children, when they are taught music in schools, before they get to college, would come to appreciate upon what basis works by women were and are created, or to appreciate the way in which women did and do today participate musically in culture--whether it be composition or more informal ways of music making, whether it be women in classical music or women in jazz or women in popular music.

SR: But part of the problem, at least in terms of classical traditions--is it not--is that women's work *is* being brought forth, and it *is* being recorded, and it *is* getting on concert programs; but it also is constantly being compared to the works in the canon. Isn't it more than simply a matter of presence or visibility, but rather that these women and their works need to be recognized for their unique greatness, for their validity?

ME: Yes, you mean in terms of--"This woman composed this wonderful piece of music even though she faced this, this, and this--she met resistance here, she met resistance there ..." It's important, but it's also important not to apologize.

SR: And it's important not to make excuses as well. Still, we are seeing women's music courses separated. There's no curriculum integration. What has to happen for that integration to be brought about?

ME: Well, you could look at it from two sides; both approaches are valid. I think that a separate course on women and music, which really looks at more of the social and cultural history of women, and how music was created within that social and cultural history, is valid. That is something special. But if a course on women and music is merely going to go through the litany of, "These are the women, and this is their music ...", and not really get at the beef, and not require students to have to read period documents and gain a knowledge of general works of cultural history and theory, which put these musical works in a

context, then I would really question the value of the course. That aside, then, I also think that specific works by women should be integrated into music history and music theory courses. Again, both things really need to happen—especially at the upper level, for music majors and graduate students to experience. A big problem is that separate courses focusing on women in music or gender issues in music are often presented as electives, or oriented towards non-music majors. Achieving a balanced representation of women's creative works and gender study in music, which is fully integrated into all required academic music study, is the challenge of our time.

SR: You mentioned earlier, before we started the interview, the significance and importance to you of Marcia Citron's book, Gender and the Musical Canon,⁵ and your belief that it should be required reading of all music students. Perhaps a *course* on gender and the musical canon would help to bridge the gap, might encourage the necessary transition? You know, a course that isn't dealing specifically, or exclusively, with women and music, but one that explores the issues surrounding gender and the musical canon. Is that not the crux of the issue?

ME: Yes, it really is the crux of the issue. You could then look at musicological research in a particular light, question methodologies and ideologies, and maybe go back to research that has been done and look at it in a different way. I think Marcia Citron's book is an incredible piece of work, because of the clarity of her thought, and also because of the way she avoids using jargon. When she does use specialized terminology, she defines it, cites references to the way that particular terminology is used. It's almost like a—especially in light of her copious notes—it's almost like a summary of all the major works in cultural theory. It's an incredible piece of work, and it's great reading, interesting, engaging reading!. So I would say it should be—it certainly could be—a text book!

SR: Again, in your preface, you talk about the problems associated with your research, the barriers you encountered in terms of access to materials and how that figured into the "Selective" qualifier in the title. You mention first the problem of distribution--the boundaries of language and geographic distribution--and then suggest that access to newly published materials on women and gender issues in music posed an even more significant problem. Can you talk about some specific problems you faced to illustrate these points?

ME: In terms of language, materials were coming out in all languages. One can't be fluent in every language, so I'm sure I wasn't able to find some materials, because of terminology differences, for example. In terms of geographic distribution, there is considerable publication activity in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and I'm sure there is considerable work going on at the doctoral level at Universities there. But how one finds out about those dissertations, those publications, is the challenge. At the time I was working on the bibliography--and this was before we had the International Alliance of Women Musicians (IAWM) e-mail discussion list⁶--we had the International League of Women Composers Journal, and with that you would get smatterings of information on activity at the women composer festivals, and you would discover a special publication that was done to accompany a particular festival. However, unless one was very involved in the international network, unless one was going to those festivals all the time and establishing the networks with people who were doing work there, it was very hard to gain

⁵Citron's book is represented in the CTW catalog (Trinity call number: ML3890.C58 1993)

⁶The address of the *IAWM Home Page*, which contains information on subscribing to the e-mail discussion list (not to mention a wealth of other information!), is <http://music.acu.edu/www/iawm/home.html>.

access, to have an awareness of this activity.

But in terms of how one would find out about European publication efforts in this country, you really had to have a comprehensive library at your disposal, primarily because standard music indexes were several years out of date. You simply had to get hold of the international journals and look through them. I was working at Ithaca College at the time, and I was very lucky in that the Cornell University Music Library was pretty much at my disposal, thanks to the generosity and support of the Music Librarian, Lenore Coral. They have a comprehensive collection on women and music. Cornell is an advanced level RLG conspectus site for women's studies in general, and, of course, women in music in particular. They have many international publications which are not represented in other academic music libraries in the United States.⁷

And the other issue is selectiveness--the degree to which libraries collect small press publications, and the degree to which libraries collect popular and jazz materials--academic libraries, in particular. For example, consider Hot Wire,⁸ and Bitch--which are now out of print, by the way. These are feminist music periodicals that few libraries would collect. These publications present a whole other perspective that's often overlooked and ignored--the field of feminist and woman-identified music, music coming out of the lesbian community. What they say about music, and their approach to music, is really great! The fact that these materials are not collected by music libraries, I think, is unfortunate.

SR: To continue along the same line, you suggest that "a far more subtle question, and one which needs more research, is posed by the varietal nature of the practice of subject analysis as applied to materials in this field by those creating our indexes and library catalogs." You cite several articles that have been written on this topic, but for the sake of this interview could you speak a little about what are the implications for information retrieval? Do you feel that translation from print to electronic formats with keyword access possibilities helps the situation in any way?

ME: Well, the singular implication for information retrieval is that you're not necessarily able to answer, in a succinct way, the question that we get most often in the music library, which is "What do you have by or about women composers or women musicians?" You have to use multiple strategies to get to the information that you want, and that's often a circuitous route. You also have to be very cognizant of what terms are bandied about in the field in order to be able to extract the literature that you want, and to do that you have to do a little bit of research before you start typing in search terms on the computer. The degree to which our online systems can accommodate multiple terms and truncation and nesting of words, I think is something we have to deal with; and we as librarians have to evaluate each indexing source to see how we are best going to be able to retrieve information on the topic. For example, if one is looking in an online catalog (from your institution or another institution), you know that by typing in the subject search *women composers' music*, you will only retrieve listings of anthologies or other types of collective treatments of the subject. Also, you can't necessarily expect to find consistent cross references to search terms. You must be cognizant of the fact that you are not always going to be using the same terms from one index or catalog to another, and you must be mindful that subject terminology often develops at a much slower rate

⁷RLG stands for Research Libraries Group, which is a library group that focuses on improving access to information supporting research and learning. A conspectus is a library collection assessment tool. The fact that Cornell is a women's studies conspectus site is indicative of the comprehensiveness of their collections in this area.

⁸Available at Trinity in the Women's Center (Vol. 1, No. 1 [Nov. 1984] through Vol. 10, No. 3 [Sept. 1994])

than the resources to which the terminology might be applied are published. You may find yourself five years down the road before you have the subject heading you need, but it's not going to help you get to all the retrospective literature. Therefore, you have to know the history and be able to apply multiple terms to attempt to retrieve information. Those are just a few things.

The translation from print to electronic formats with keyword possibilities--I have mixed feelings about that. I really do. There's something I like about knowing a particular source is going to be using a particular heading, rather than relying strictly on keyword access. That way I can expect to find most of what I am looking for. There's something comforting about having controlled language. However, keyword searching does help the situation. It can help pinpoint things, but it can also make things much more comprehensive, which means that you pull up a lot more that you don't want as well. I think to have more options always helps, but I think that you still have to be equally savvy with the terminology.

SR: You alluded earlier, at least a couple of times, to what I wish to address in this next question. You mention in your preface the fact that the lack of timeliness in the field's major indexing sources (i.e. Music Index, and RILM Abstracts) is another barrier to information retrieval. All these indexes are anywhere from three to five years behind. To what extent do you feel that access to World Wide Web Resources and Internet discussion groups is helping this situation?

ME: I think it's becoming pretty overwhelming, and what I would say is that it *may* be useful. I would look at who's creating the web pages. I think that, for example, the IAWM web page is a very useful resource, and that there are web pages being created out there by grad students who are putting their bibliographies online. That's good, but you have to know what the source is, and where it's coming from.

SR: Did you use Internet discussion groups to help you at all in the later phases of your work, to get around these issues of timeliness and distribution?

ME: Things have changed so much just since 1994, when I completed most of the writing for my book. I was primarily editing from that point on. I subscribed to the women's studies list at the University of Maryland and was able to get through the University of Maryland gopher to go to the various electronic resources they had on file for women's studies. They had mostly bibliographies and syllabi at that point. But I wasn't finding any publications that I wasn't able to find on my own. The way I found references to current publications on women and music was often by simply browsing through the journals and once a week by browsing the new books shelf at the Cornell University Music Library. New books were put out on Wednesday afternoons, and every Wednesday I was there first thing! I found that incredibly gratifying, because that's the way I unearthed things that I wouldn't normally have picked up through the indexing sources.

SR: But this also sounds like hard, manual labor.

ME: It was hard manual labor! It shouldn't be, I suppose, with all the information resources at our disposal in today's technological environment, but that's still the way it is. Regardless, I may be old fashioned, but there's nothing to compare with actually putting your hands on something, and looking at all the cited references, and looking at the way the author expresses him- or herself--you know, there's really nothing like that. I think that this is becoming lost in today's technology-driven world ...

SR: Do you have advice for undergraduate music students as they begin research in the area of women and music?

ME: I would say it's easy to get overwhelmed, I think, so stick to something that you're interested in, or something very specific. But I also would say that if you're not finding things, if you're running into a wall, then broaden your topic, think about changing terms, think about looking into who else was composing at a particular time period. Talk to your librarian!

I would suggest that they really listen to the music as well as look at the historical material. It's hard at the undergraduate level, because they might not have a very detailed vocabulary, one that's built from a solid background study of gender and gender and culture. If this is so, then that's a piece of advice--but that's not advice to the students. That's advice to the faculty--that it really helps their students to have that kind of grounding in the way that women's music making has been done and looked at historically.

I think there are lots of areas that need research, so I wouldn't say, for example, that, just because someone has done work on a particular woman, there isn't more that can be found. I would also say that there is a lot of uncovered music that really needs to be talked about, and my advice would be to use some creativity, to try to come up with something upon which you might base further research. Look at it in terms of an opportunity. The work you may do now could be a seed that you are planting for something down the road. You really never know. I offer my own work as an example. I had no idea when I started this in 1987 that it was going to emerge as it did. And look at what I have! I would say the same for an undergraduate. If there's a seed of interest there, think about making something that's your own and something that you can build on, rather than reproducing the words and thoughts of someone else. Because there is a lot of work to be done, a lot of material yet to be discovered, examined, and analyzed.

--Suzanne Risley

In Memoriam

Louise Talma (1906-1996)

The American composer, Louise Talma, died during the night of August 12-13, 1996 at the artists colony Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York. She would have been 90 on October 31st. Her long career was distinguished by a number of notable firsts:

First American member of the faculty of the Fontainebleau School of Music, France, 1936.

First woman to be awarded two Guggenheim fellowships, one in 1946 and one in 1947.

First woman recipient of the Sibelius Medal for Composition from the Harriet Cohen International Awards, London, 1963.

First American woman to have an opera (*The Alceste*) performed in a major European opera house (1962, Frankfurt am Main, Germany).

First woman composer elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, 1974.

"There's only one woman I know of who could never be a symphony conductor, and that's the Venus de Milo."

-- Margaret Hillis