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Foreword

by Hannah Bosma

In the 1990s, I decided to combine three of my areas of interest: electroacoustic music, voice and gender studies. In the Netherlands, women's and gender studies were flourishing and feminist musicology was an upcoming theme, but no one else seemed to be interested in this combination of gender and electroacoustic music; it felt like a lonely endeavour. Then I went to Canada to present a paper in the ICMC '95 conference (<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.bbp2372.1995.038>) in Banff, where gender issues was one of the themes for which submissions were invited and encouraged, and also visited Montréal. It felt like a completely different situation, another world. There, I didn't have to explain why it was important or interesting to do this research. And I met others who were also involved in this field. The work of Andra McCartney was particularly important, as was meeting her in person. In her papers, articles, master thesis and doctoral dissertation, she carefully addressed the topic of women and electroacoustic music on different levels, analyzing electroacoustic works of various women composers, profoundly embedded in feminist theory, as can be seen in this reissue of *eContact! 1.1 – Women in Electroacoustics 1* (https://econtact.ca/1_1/index.html).

As I argued in my doctoral dissertation "The Electronic Cry: Voice and gender in electroacoustic music", different feminist approaches can be discerned in the research of Andra McCartney (Bosma 2013 (<http://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.400268>), 20–21). For example, in McCartney's own 1997 thesis, "Creating Worlds for my Music to Exist: How women composers of electroacoustic music make place for their voices," the experiences and practices of fourteen Canadian women composers of electroacoustic music are discussed within a framework of feminist theory related to technology and to musicology. In addition, the gendering of electroacoustic music in the language and imagery of publications and software, in institutional processes and in individual practices, is discussed. It does not merely report negative experiences of women in the electronic music world but goes on to describe the positive feminine practices of those women when composing or teaching electronic music. Thus, McCartney focused on women composers, criticized the sexism of the institutions and practices of the electronic music world, brought positive and specifically feminine practices to the fore, analyzed and criticized gender constructions and metaphors in the discourse of electroacoustic music, and elaborated on the rich, multifaceted work of the women composers.

In this way, she combined the three feminist approaches, focused on equality, difference and deconstruction, respectively, that I had discussed in my contribution to *eContact! 1.1* in 1998 ("Gender and Electroacoustics (https://econtact.ca/1_1/bosma_gender.html)"), according to a framework offered by Rosemary Buikema and Anneke Smelik (1993/1995). The second and the third of these feminist positions can be considered as a critique on the previous ones. The numbering, and their implied critiques, suggest a temporal order, like the first, second and third wave, and even a hierarchy. However, I would like to emphasize their simultaneity and interdependence; and to conceive this scheme not as subsequent waves, but as a field of coexistent feminist possibilities, in which each may visit various positions. I find this particularly relevant to the field of electroacoustic music: a multiplicity of positions seems almost inherent for women in electroacoustic music, because of the hybridity of their backgrounds, career profiles and identification(s). Addressing feminist issues from different perspectives, going back and forth between different positions, has become even more important in the contemporary polarized cultural-political climate. Rather than taking one position or strategy, as a feminist one may "work through" a multidimensional terrain of gender, femininity, womanity and sexual difference, with its multiple paradoxes and contradictions.

[1. Such "working through" is a psychoanalytically inspired conscious and unconscious praxis evoked by feminist theorist and philosopher Rosi Braidotti.] It is such a position of multiplicity that Andra McCartney refers to when she states in this issue of *eContact!:*

Teresa de Lauretis talks of the "doubled consciousness" of women who work with technology, who are at once situated as the subject, rational, ordering reality with technology – as well as stereotypically constructed as the object, irrational, close to Nature. de Lauretis says that this position keeps women filmmakers (and, I would add, electroacoustic composers), always on the edge of these states of mind and always questioning them. (McCartney 1998 (https://econtact.ca/1_1/mccartney_water.html))

This is not to say that all women feel comfortable with all feminist positions. In particular, the positioning of women as a separate category, for example with concerts or records with music of women composers only, or with positive discrimination, is often resisted. Or, as Pascale Trudel states in the same issue of *eContact!*: “I look forward to the day we will be referred to as ‘composers’, and not as ‘women composers’” (Trudel 1998 (https://econtact.ca/1_1/trudel_studio.html)). This may be considered a phenomenon of disidentification with the stereotypical figure of Woman or of a desire to discard gender as a confining and repressive system of stereotypical roles, qualities, identifications and power relations. However, to change the representations, positions, roles and opportunities of women, to change patriarchal and phallogocentric structures, it is not enough to simply change rules and regulations or to deny gender or sexual difference. Because these are deeply, persistently and, to a large extent, unconsciously constitutive of subjectivity, intersubjectivity and culture, tackling this requires “working through” on cultural, social and psychological levels, changing experiences and identifications, of women and of other people. Wandering through a field of feminist positions may help this process without getting stuck in new dogmas. Electroacoustic music is a great area for such journeys, whether as composing, performing or listening subjects.

Amsterdam, 7 March 2022

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Biography



Hannah Bosma is an interdisciplinary musicologist specialized in voice, gender, electroacoustic music and preservation. Currently, she works at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) on her research project "Preservation as performance: Liveness, loss and viability in electroacoustic music," funded by the Dutch national organization for scientific research NWO with a Veni grant (2019–23). She is also leader of the research project "From Archive to Network: Syrian music in the Jaap Kunst audio collection and beyond," funded with an NWO Hestia grant (2021–23). As a co-ordinator and lecturer of the MA course "Archiving Art" she combines theoretical and project-based teaching in collaboration with various cultural organizations. She lectured on gender, voice and music technology at the Kunstuniversität Graz and other academic institutes, organized the conference "The Art of Voice Synthesis" (UvA, 2016) and has worked for various music and arts organizations. She completed her doctoral studies at the University of Amsterdam in 2013 with the dissertation "The Electronic Cry: Voice, gender and electroacoustic music (<http://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.400268>)."

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