

# 1 | Historical Women Composers and the Transience of Female Musical Fame

PAULA HIGGINS

*For Margaret Bent\**

Amidst debates of the early 1880s about the status of women in music, the English organist and scholar Stephen S. Stratton delivered a self-avowed ‘polemical’ paper at the 7 May 1883 meeting of the Musical Association.<sup>1</sup> Entitled ‘Woman in Relation to Musical Art’, the talk included a list of women composers ‘drawn from many sources’ and compiled, he said, ‘as evidence that women have been engaged in composition for a longer period of time, and in more branches of the art, than is generally supposed’. Stratton’s ‘list’ consists in 389 names of mostly verifiable historical women dating back to the *trobairitz* Beatrix, Countess of Dia (twelfth century), each annotated with an approximate date of birth and the genres in which they had composed.<sup>2</sup> Where Stratton unearthed this remarkable trove of information he does not say, although as co-author of the then forthcoming *British Musical Biography* (1897), he may well have been culling pre-existing reference works for information.<sup>3</sup>

Fast forward to March 2015. Jessy McCabe, a seventeen-year-old English school student, launched an online petition seeking a change in the national curriculum to include ‘just one woman’ among the sixty-three male composers on the existing A-level syllabus for music.<sup>4</sup> The largely positive response to her petition met with some media backlash.<sup>5</sup> A male author rating music by some of the syllabus contenders, Clara Schumann (Piano Concerto: ‘within 10 seconds we know it’s a dud’) and Fanny Hensel (Sonata in G minor: ‘it’s bloody awful’), opined that ‘Neither would have been recorded had they been written by a man.’<sup>6</sup> Another author, a ‘woman and a feminist’, felt McCabe’s petition premature since ‘far too few women composers [existed] in the past to warrant attention’.<sup>7</sup> These responses encapsulate two obdurate music historical myths that persist with fierce

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tenacity to this day: first, there weren't (m)any historical women composers, and secondly, there were historical women composers but their music lacks 'genius', and is hence unworthy of attention.

While the proposals of both Stratton and McCabe – spanning some 130 years – exemplify laudable initiatives towards gendering 'the canon' (that is, the vaunted body of 'great' musical works that has excluded women), they might also be read as cautionary tales about the fraught reception history of women composers.<sup>8</sup> Like the outcry elicited by McCabe's petition, Stratton's proposal drew sharp criticism from (all but one of) the men in attendance, their objections indistinguishable from those in 2015.<sup>9</sup> To dwell on misogynous shibboleths of the past that endure into the twenty-first century obscures a more intriguing question. How did Stratton's list of 389 women composers in 1883 plummet to zero – not a single one on the syllabus – 130 years later? Where did these women disappear to in the course of the twentieth century?

### The Transience of Female Musical Fame

A half century ago, Germaine Greer highlighted 'the phenomenon of the transience of female literary fame' whereby some women writers celebrated during their own lifetimes seemed 'to vanish without a trace from the records of posterity'.<sup>10</sup> Elaine Showalter noted its serious implications: 'Thus each generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew.'<sup>11</sup> Examples of the phenomenon in the history of art permeate Greer's *The Obstacle Race* (1979), whose opening describes the curators of a 'pioneering' 1976 exhibition of women artists who, unaware that a Paris exhibition seventy years earlier had covered the same ground, 'had to start virtually from scratch'.<sup>12</sup> As with their literary and artistic counterparts, women composers manifest a 'transience of female *musical* fame', fading from the historical record on their deaths until their 'rediscovery' generations later.<sup>13</sup> My aim in this chapter is to offer some exploratory thoughts on the transient fame of women composers, to consider the social, historical, and ideological discourses that contribute to it, and to propose strategies for ending the recurrent cycles of amnesia that have consigned the music of women (and other identity groups subordinated by race, class, and sexuality) to oblivion.

## Creative Women and the Evanescence of Posthumous Renown

The disappearance of women from all spheres of creative and intellectual endeavour dates from the beginning of recorded history. In a survey of 1,000 years of Bible criticism by women, the historian Gerda Lerner demonstrated ‘the endless repetition of effort, the constant reinventing of the wheel’ by women unaware of their predecessors:

Men created written history and benefited from the transmittal of knowledge from one generation to the other, so that each great thinker could stand ‘on the shoulders of giants’ . . . Women were denied knowledge of their history, and thus each woman had to argue as though no woman before her had ever thought or written. . . . Men argued with the giants that preceded them; women argued against the oppressive weight of millennia of patriarchal thought.<sup>14</sup>

Studies of artistic reputation, such as the classic prosopographical research of Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang on British female etchers, have noted several criteria that tend to foster the likelihood of posthumous renown: 1. active self-promotion and self-curation during the artist’s lifetime; 2. biological heirs and/or artistic progeny with a stake in preserving the artist’s legacy; 3. proximity to networks of wealth, fame, and influence; and 4. retrospective interest in individuals conforming to emergent cultural/political identities (notably, gender, race, class, and sexuality).<sup>15</sup> A fuller assessment of how these and other factors have impacted on the reputations of women composers over time must await another occasion, but some general observations can be made.

1. ‘Self-promotion’ often worked to the detriment of women constrained by prevailing societal expectations of feminine propriety and modesty. Those who dared to attract a reputation through publication risked campaigns of innuendo and calumny.<sup>16</sup> Barbara Strozzi (1619–77), for example, dedicated her *Opus 1* to a female patron ‘so that, under a cloak of gold it may rest secure against the lightning bolts of slander prepared for it’.<sup>17</sup> Corona Schröter (1751–1802) equated publication of her music with promiscuity: ‘A certain feeling toward propriety and morality is stamped upon our sex . . . how can I present this, my musical work, to the public with anything other than timidity?’<sup>18</sup> Two hundred years earlier, the first named woman in the history of music to appear in print, Maddalena Casulana (c. 1540–90), betrayed similar expectations of cultural disapprobation in the dedication of her first book of madrigals (1568) to Isabella de’ Medici Orsina: she aspired ‘to show the world the vain error of men, who so much believe themselves to

- be the masters of the highest gifts of the intellect, that they think those gifts cannot be shared equally by women.<sup>19</sup>
2. Casulana's publications appeared amidst what I have called 'an evolving biopolitics of musical genealogy' in early modern Europe, in which male composers had begun acknowledging and paying public homage to their teachers as metaphorical fathers.<sup>20</sup> In so doing, they established their creative pedigrees and self-consciously situated themselves within a music historical continuum – a lineage of 'good teachers and fathers'.<sup>21</sup> Women, bereft of their own histories, cannot fail to have noticed their exclusion from these discourses of creative genealogy linking generation after generation of musical fathers and sons. 'Their questionable creative paternity' rendered them "illegitimate children", as it were, of music history.<sup>22</sup> Whether lacking (or outliving) biological heirs and/or musical progeny with a stake in preserving their creative legacy, another criterion for achieving lasting renown often eluded women composers.
  3. Access to relational networks of cultural power and influence explains in part the posthumous survival of women composers whose reputations have by now become common coin, Clara Schumann (1819–96) and Fanny Hensel (1805–47) above all. These wives, sisters, and other relatives of famous male composers – 'women of' – are often stigmatized as beneficiaries of undue reputational and creative advantage with respect to others who lacked such relationships. It is worth bearing in mind, though, that social conventions have historically fallen disproportionately upon women – bearing, supporting, and caring for children, husbands, or ageing parents – and have often worked to the detriment of their creative legacies. Even the extraordinarily well-connected Schumann, beset with severe economic challenges while Robert was in the asylum, stopped composing at age thirty-six to concertize internationally in support of their eight children.
  4. Retrospective interest in individuals conforming to emergent cultural and political identities accounts for the greater proportion of historical recovery work on women and other composers of minority status. It is no mere happenstance that the work of Stratton and others in the 1880s arose in the context of first-wave feminist activism. Nearly a century later, the Civil Rights and second-wave feminist movements gave rise to the advent and rapid proliferation of Women's Studies programmes in American universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>23</sup> Academics began questioning time-honoured androcentric assumptions, researching historical women in every sphere of creative endeavour, writing their own histories, and above all, reclaiming and rediscovering the

creative pasts that had been ignored, overlooked, marginalized, trivialized, or obliterated.<sup>24</sup> As Ruth Solie observed, though, ‘quick upon the heels of one’s initial glee at these discoveries comes the uncomfortable awareness that intentional acts of one sort or another have occurred to consign these women to historical limbo’.<sup>25</sup>

One ‘uncomfortable awareness’ of ‘intentional acts’ involved the speciousness of androcentric assertions about musical quality. Another awareness dawned that male composers were canonized because the intentional acts of individual scholars and critics rested on arbitrary aesthetic hierarchies and personal preferences.<sup>26</sup> Systematic investigation of the entries on women composers in historical periodicals and standard music reference works, comparable to the regression analyses of Tuchman and Fortin on British women writers in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, would doubtless prove enlightening to those inclined to underestimate the power of reviewers of the past to influence our understanding of the present.<sup>27</sup>

## The Discourse of the Exceptional Woman

This brings us to the most insidious reason women composers are ‘forgotten’: a timeworn critical discourse that sees music as an ‘all male affair’ and women as lacking musical genius and hence incapable of creative production.<sup>28</sup> Where evidence to the contrary proved undeniable, women acclaimed for their work were subjected to ‘the discourse of the exceptional woman’ that proves the rule of female creative incompetence.<sup>29</sup> Owing to their aberrance, these exceptions could, as Coventry Patmore (1851) wrote of their literary counterparts, be safely ignored: ‘There certainly have been cases of women possessed of the properly masculine power of writing books, but these cases are all so truly and obviously exceptional . . . that we may overlook them without the least prejudice to the soundness of our doctrine.’<sup>30</sup>

An early feminist consciousness of the discursive hegemony of male writers appears already in the work of medieval poet Christine de Pizan (1364–1431) whose texts were set to music by fifteenth-century male composers: ‘if women had written these books, I know full well the subject would have been handled differently’.<sup>31</sup> Eighteenth-century female writers often earned chivalrous ‘spurious praise’, as Greer labelled it, through a ‘critical double standard’ for characteristics that would be deemed risible in men: ‘purity of sentiment, delicacy, piety, and womanliness’ (and execrated for an absence thereof).<sup>32</sup> Women composers in late eighteenth-century northern

Germany were celebrated for similar aesthetic criteria, 'delicacy' above all. For a brief time, though, as Matthew Head observed, this encouraging 'feminocentric' creative environment gave rise to no fewer than fifty women composers, including the remarkable Sophie Westenholz, court Kapellmeister in Ludwigslust.<sup>33</sup>

After 1800, however, as ever greater numbers of women composers began to publish, assessments of their music assume a formulaic critical tactic: isolate the especially gifted woman; juxtapose her accomplishments with an anonymous mob of female musical mediocrities (like Hawthorne's 'damned mobs of scribbling women'); and bestow the highest compliment any woman could expect – 'she composes like a man'. A classic formulation can be seen in the report (1830) of Scottish composer, John Thomson, concerning Fanny Mendelssohn:

I cannot refrain from mentioning Miss Mendelssohn's name in connexion with these songs, more particularly when I see so many ladies without one atom of genius, coming forward to the public with their musical crudities, and, because these are printed, holding up their heads as if they were finished musicians. . . . She is no superficial musician; she has studied the science deeply, and writes with the freedom of a master.<sup>34</sup>

As with myths of musical genius, 'these formulations then become conventional wisdom and as such tend to go unchallenged, thereby eliminating competing discourses'.<sup>35</sup> Such commentaries recur for the next century. The critic Victorin Joncières labelled the Irish–French composer Augusta Holmès (1847–1903) 'an exception to the rule. Her music has a vigor, a virility, an enthusiasm that deserve better than the banal praise that is ordinarily given to women composers.'<sup>36</sup> The German composer Luise Adolpha Le Beau (1850–1927) garnered attention in pejorative juxtaposition with 'the work of such *Blaustrümpfe* [bluestockings] who currently [are found] by the hundreds in our conservatories'; she was hailed as a 'laudable exception among women' who 'composes like a man'.<sup>37</sup> Cécile Chaminade (1857–1944), whose songs were thought to 'breathe the very fire of genius', was said to be 'lifted . . . from the mob' of female mediocrities.<sup>38</sup> Her compatriot Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983), the sole female member of Les Six, though saluted 'as a charming exception' by her colleague Jean Cocteau,<sup>39</sup> provoked a vituperative diatribe from Cecil Gray (1927), immortalized for posterity in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929):

Of Mlle Germaine Tailleferre one can only repeat Dr. Johnson's dictum concerning a woman preacher, transposed into terms of music: 'Sir, a woman's composing is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all.' Considered apart from her sex, her music is wholly negligible.<sup>40</sup>

The identical adjective reverberated sixty years later in the sweeping denunciation of Fanny Hensel by Edward Rothstein, music critic of the *New York Times* (1991): ‘No matter how much her talent was left undeveloped, her achievement was *negligible*.’<sup>41</sup> Nor do such misogynous attitudes remain relics of the past: a Google doodle celebrating Hensel’s birthday on 14 November 2021 triggered a Twitter rant from a male writer who proclaimed her ‘the definition of mediocrity’, ‘at best 12th rate’, and ‘her music justly forgotten’.<sup>42</sup>

While male critics dominated the musical press well into the twentieth century, recent research has drawn attention to the burgeoning French, German, and English feminist press from 1880 to 1930, targeted at women readers and ranging politically from radical feminist to moderate to working class/populist. Music, seen as extraneous to the first-wave feminist activist agenda, was rarely discussed in radical outlets. The moderate and populist press featured women composers on occasion; but women critics, complicit in their own oppression, tended to echo the prevailing androcentric narrative of male genius, portraying ‘female creative brilliance . . . as exceptional to women’s general musical mediocrity’.<sup>43</sup> Philippa Senlac, for example, voiced equivocal optimism while pandering to conventional male wisdom in her evaluation of Ethel Smyth (1858–1944): ‘the contention of men that she is a brilliant exception has a sufficient critical germ of truth in it to rouse women’s pride to make the exception less rare’.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever the gender of their authors, critical evaluations of women composers time and again expose the confirmation bias of female creative ineptitude. Thus an anonymous critic in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (1811), reviewing publications of the fifteen-year-old Hélène Liebmann (1795–1869), ‘was carried away so far beyond his expectations’ that he had to keep flipping back to the title page to confirm that the composer was indeed a woman.<sup>45</sup> More than a century later, Charles Seeger, a founding member of the American Musicological Society, admitted similar bias when he faced the prospect of taking on Ruth Crawford as a student:

My opinions of women composers were quite often expressed and not very high, based mostly on the absence of mention of them in the histories of music . . . so that when I was approached by Henry Cowell with the idea of teaching Ruth, I was a little bit skeptical of the value of the undertaking.<sup>46</sup>

That Seeger attributed his negative opinion of women composers to their absence from histories of music highlights the dire intellectual stakes of their exclusion. Until recently, the standard music textbooks used in most American colleges and universities were as exclusionary of women

as the British National Curriculum, thus perpetuating the hoary misconceptions encountered at the outset: 'Women composers don't exist. They're not in the textbooks/they're not on the Syllabus. The music of the rare exception is "negligible".'<sup>47</sup>

### Musicology, Feminist Criticism, and Postmodern Theory: A Retrospective View

Musicology has never fully engaged with the remarkable critical agendas of second-wave feminism witnessed in the disciplines of art history and literary studies, that is, an assessment of women composers from the theoretically informed historical perspectives of gender, patriarchy, power, and ideology.<sup>48</sup> That the magisterial anthology *Women Making Music* (1986), with fifteen ground-breaking contributions from leading musicologists, was never reviewed in *JAMS* speaks volumes.<sup>49</sup> This oversight may be owed in part to the proximate publication of Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music* (1985) which, while raising the alarm at the absence of feminist criticism in music, relegated composer studies and edition-making to an outmoded, 'positivist', second-rate ('low-level') status within the then so-called New Musicology (now 'Critical Musicology').<sup>50</sup> Even Susan McClary, author of the enormously influential *Feminine Endings* (1991), proclaimed: 'Within the last two generations, it has finally become possible for relatively large numbers of women to enter seriously into training as composers',<sup>51</sup> echoing the words of Fanny Morris Smith nearly a century earlier (1901): 'The first practical entrance of women into music as composers has been within the last twenty-five years.'<sup>52</sup> (Both were wrong.) Like the radical feminists of the first wave, McClary, too, sidelined historical women composers, leading her to privilege popular female musicians of the late 1960s and beyond as 'models for serious women musicians' to emulate.<sup>53</sup>

As I observed at the time, '[T]he vigorous critique of allegedly "positivist" scholarship became fashionable to a (largely male) critical elite just around the time that a whole generation of feminist musicologists had uncovered and brought to light a rich hidden history of women composers.'<sup>54</sup> I also warned of the theoretical conundrum facing a discipline torn between historical musicology that centres its work on women and postmodern theory that dismisses such work as 'positivist', 'low-level', and *dépassé*: 'we must insist intractably on a feminist musicology that welcomes a plurality of diverse and eclectic critical approaches'.<sup>55</sup>



Meanwhile, younger scholars of the mid-late 1990s, keen to position themselves on the cutting edge of the discipline, jumped on the newly fashionable ‘constructions of gender in the (traditional male) canon’ bandwagon. One (now senior) scholar recalled colleagues reminding him ‘that “gender and sexuality” were hotter themes than “women composers”’ and noted that the ‘stigma’ once surrounding their music had begun to extend to research about them.<sup>56</sup> By 2010, Sally Macarthur was lamenting the failed promise of work on women: ‘what seemed like a future full of hope in 1993 is, perhaps, a shattered dream, for it seems . . . that feminist research on women’s classical music has all but disappeared’.<sup>57</sup> In 2012, Judith Tick, co-editor of the pioneering *Women Making Music*, diagnosed the situation in retrospect:

By the 1990s women’s history and second-wave feminism, with its classic language of recovery, repair, reparations, remediation, and ‘herstory’, had the sex appeal of orthodontia . . . second-wave feminism’s claims for history and scholarship as tools of intellectual emancipation were supplanted by the rise of postmodern theory . . . rendering ‘women’ too ‘exclusive’, it has promoted a larger, more abstract term, ‘gender’.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, empirical studies conducted by Macarthur and others (2017) documented a declining number of texts on women in music from 1995 to 2015 and its direct correlation with a diminishing number of performances of music by women during the same period.<sup>59</sup> The proliferation of individual composer monographs since 2006 would modify this view, but some of them manifest the ‘add women and stir’ approach of the 1970s and 1980s,<sup>60</sup> that is, treating the history of women as if they were men, while overlooking a half-century of feminist thought relevant to their gendered subjects.<sup>61</sup> Prosopographical studies that investigate shared characteristics of groups of women composers through a collective study of their lives remain exceptions.<sup>62</sup> Entire sub-fields, such as early music, eighteenth-century studies, and music theory, above all, have remained immune if not recalcitrant to historical concepts of gender, race, class, and sexuality.<sup>63</sup>

## Ending the Cycles of Transience

The media frenzy surrounding Jessy McCabe’s 2015 successful campaign for a woman composer on the A-level syllabus drew worldwide attention to the ongoing exclusion of women composers in the twenty-first century.<sup>64</sup> As if on cue, yet another sea change, like those spawned by earlier feminist activisms of the 1880s and 1970s, is now in progress.<sup>65</sup> Women composers, it seems, have at last become a ‘hot topic’ in musicology. An explosion of

interest from younger scholars and performers active on social media has created a critical mass of passionate advocates enhancing the public visibility of historical women composers and championing living women composers as well. A veritable cottage industry of handbooks, companions, conference proceedings, and essay collections, recently published or imminently forthcoming, has been devoted to Clara Schumann, Ethel Smyth, Amy Beach (1867–1944), Fanny Hensel, and Florence Price (1899–1952).

And yet, many seem unaware of the hard-won scholarship, undertaken without fanfare in less receptive times, of their predecessors.<sup>66</sup> Needless ‘duplication of effort’ manifests itself anew in forthcoming monographs on women for whom recent authoritative tomes exist, while lesser known but deserving candidates languish in obscurity. This is owed in part to the much-touted and misguided scholarly fashion, rampant on social media, of ignoring bibliographical sources more than ten or so years ‘old’, as if to stamp products of the life of the mind with a commercial ‘use by’ date.<sup>67</sup> As Griselda Pollock observed in the discipline of Art History, ‘the idea of the new creates what then becomes the old . . . long before any serious understanding of the impact, resonance, or significance of any feminist intervention so far has been achieved’. Ignoring the founding work on women composers by intellectual forebears replicates the cycle of transience that has consigned their music to the dustbin. Instead, we might do well to follow Pollock and explore ‘the rich settlements of thought and critical practices produced by the exciting developments in both [music] history and [music] in the last half century’.<sup>68</sup>

Ultimately, like female writers and artists, women composers will be remembered not as names in a list but rather by the promulgation, performance, and study of their surviving artefacts: that is, their music, which must be published in critically edited scores to survive permanently. Apart from Louise Farrenc (1804–75),<sup>69</sup> not a single complete works critical edition exists for even the best known women composers (Schumann, Hensel, Smyth), let alone those less well known but once deemed worthy of standing shoulder to shoulder with their male contemporaries.<sup>70</sup>

Because they were unpublished, important musical landmarks by women composers have been ‘lost’ – the orchestral works of Cornélie van Oosterzee (1863–1943), performed by Arthur Nikisch and the Berlin Philharmonic<sup>71</sup> – or destroyed (often by the composers themselves), such as the *Dramatic Overture*, Op.12, by Margaret Ruthven Lang (1867–1972), the first work by a woman performed by a major symphony orchestra (Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893).<sup>72</sup> Victims of their own longevity, both women faded into obscurity towards the end of their lives, supplanted by younger, more fashionable composers.<sup>73</sup> And these are far from the only

casualties: myriad titles of 'lost' music appear in the work lists of Barbara Strozzi, Maria Theresia von Paradis (1759–1824), Alma Mahler (1879–1964), Louise Bertin (1805–77), Chaminade, and many others.

Perhaps the time has come to harness the energy and exuberance of this historically unprecedented moment and create monuments of music by women composers that will enshrine their renown for posterity. More than ever before, it is now possible to 'build on the shoulders of giants' – music-historical foremothers (and forefathers as well) – who laid the foundation for further study. Complacency is not an option if we are to end the perpetual cycles of historical forgetting and remembering – the transience of female musical fame. For even in this auspicious climate, a woman who ranks among the 'most famous' of historical female composers is still confused (as is her portrait) with her brother's wife: 'That musicians of the twenty-first century cannot recognize Fanny Hensel suggests how far she and her music still have to go to achieve a place in our musical world.'<sup>74</sup>

## Further Reading

- Head, Matthew. *Sovereign Feminine: Music and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).
- Higgins, Paula. 'The Apotheosis of Josquin des Prez and Other Mythologies of Musical Genius', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57 (2004), 443–510.
- Hisama, Ellie M. 'Power and Equity in the Academy: Change from Within', *Current Musicology*, 102 (2018), 81–92.
- Lang, Gladys Engel, and Kurt Lang. *Etched in Memory: The Building and Survival of Artistic Reputation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- Pollock, Griselda. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988; classic edition with new preface, London: Routledge, 2003).

## Notes

1. On the debate prior to Stratton's paper see Sophie Fuller, 'Women Composers During the British Musical Renaissance, 1880–1918', PhD diss. (King's College London, 1998) and Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870–1914:*

- '*Encroaching on All Man's Privileges*' (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), 22–7. For excerpts of writings on 'The Woman Composer Question' see Neuls-Bates, ed., *WIM*, 206–27.
2. Stephen S. Stratton, 'Woman in Relation to Musical Art', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 1882–3, 115–46.
  3. James D. Brown and Stephen S. Stratton, eds., *British Musical Biography: A Dictionary of Musical Artists, Authors and Composers, Born in Britain and Its Colonies* (1897; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). All the British women on Stratton's list have entries therein. The sources for non-British women certainly included, among others, Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, ed. Othmar Wessely (1790–2; facs. repr., Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 2 vols; and François-Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2nd ed. (Brussels, 1883–4), both replete with entries on women composers.
  4. Nadia Khomami, 'Student Demands Female Composers on A-level Music Syllabus', *The Guardian*, 18 August 2015: [www.theguardian.com/education/2015/aug/18/female-composers-a-level-music-syllabus-petition](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/aug/18/female-composers-a-level-music-syllabus-petition).
  5. [www.change.org/p/edexcel-ensure-the-representation-of-women-on-the-a-level-music-syllabus](http://www.change.org/p/edexcel-ensure-the-representation-of-women-on-the-a-level-music-syllabus).
  6. Damian Thompson, 'There's a Good Reason Why There Are No Great Female Composers', *The Spectator*, 16 September 2015: [www.spectator.co.uk/article/there-s-a-good-reason-why-there-are-no-great-female-composers](http://www.spectator.co.uk/article/there-s-a-good-reason-why-there-are-no-great-female-composers).
  7. Alexandra Coghlan, 'Women in Classical Music Are Being Thrust into the Spotlight for All the Wrong Reasons', *Rheingold Media*, 1 October 2015: [www.rheingold.co.uk/classical\\_music/women-in-classical-music-are-being-thrust-into-the-spotlight-for-all-the-wrong-reasons-2/](http://www.rheingold.co.uk/classical_music/women-in-classical-music-are-being-thrust-into-the-spotlight-for-all-the-wrong-reasons-2/).
  8. See Citron, *GMC*, especially chapters 1 and 6.
  9. For a transcript of the discussion see Stratton, 'Woman in Relation to Musical Art', 132–9. For a summary of the comments of the principal interlocutors see Gillett, *Musical Women in England*, 25–6. The one male who supported Stratton's position was Mr Meadows-White, husband of composer Alice Mary Smith (1839–84), whose comments are reprinted in Neuls-Bates, ed., *WIM*, 214–16.
  10. Germaine Greer, 'Flying Pigs and Double Standards', *Times Literary Supplement* (26 July 1974), 784–5, at 784.
  11. Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 11–12.
  12. Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979), 1.
  13. Paula Higgins, 'Women in Music, Feminist Criticism, and Guerrilla Musicology', *19th-Century Music*, 17 (1993), 174–92, at 187, n. 54.
  14. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 166.

15. Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, 'Recognition and Renown: The Survival of Artistic Reputation', *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (1988), 79–109. This article figures prominently in the last section of their later book *Etched in Memory* (1990). See 'Further Reading' for bibliographical details.
16. Greer, 'Flying Pigs', 785.
17. Ellen Rosand, 'The Voice of Barbara Strozzi', in Bowers and Tick, eds., *WMM*, 168–90, at 174.
18. Marcia Citron, 'Women and the Lied, 1775–1850', in Bowers and Tick, eds., *WMM*, 224–48, at 230.
19. Jane Bowers, 'The Emergence of Women Composers in Italy, 1566–1700', in Bowers and Tick, eds., *WMM*, 116–67, at 140.
20. Paula Higgins, 'Musical "Parents" and Their "Progeny": The Discourse of Creative Patriarchy in Early Modern Europe', in *Music in Renaissance Cities and Courts: Studies in Honor of Lewis Lockwood*, ed. Jessie Ann Owens and Anthony Michael Cummings (Detroit: Harmonie Park Press, 1997), 169–85, at 182–4.
21. Higgins, 'Musical "Parents"', 178–9.
22. Higgins, 'Musical "Parents"', 184.
23. In 1971 there were 600 courses in 20 Women's Studies programmes; by 1974, there were 2,000 courses in 80 programmes ranging from Maine to Hawaii, with a small number in the United Kingdom and Canada. See Deborah Silverton Rosenfelt, 'New Overview of Women's Studies Courses', *Women's Studies Newsletter*, 2 (1974), 1, 11–12, at 11.
24. A history of courses on 'women in music' arising from the second-wave feminist era has yet to be written. One of the first was given at Portland State University by Jane Bowers in summer 1976. Her account of the syllabus, bibliography, and discography for the course provides an excellent snapshot of the nascent state of pedagogy at the time. See Jane Bowers, 'Teaching about the History of Women in Western Music', *Women's Studies Newsletter*, 5 (1977), 11–15.
25. Ruth A. Solie, *NCM*, 10 (1986), 74–80, at 75 (review of Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (London: Cornell University Press, 1985)).
26. A glaring example among many, Donald Francis Tovey's original essay (1937) on Ethel Smyth's *Mass in D* was deleted (along with others) from a subsequent abridged edition of his *Essays in Musical Analysis* because it had failed to endure in the repertoire. The essay still appears in the thirteenth impression (1978) of Tovey's *Essays in Musical Analysis*, vol. 5 (Vocal Music) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935–9), 235–42. It disappeared from the two-volume abridged second edition published in 1981.
27. Gaye Tuchman and Nina E. Fortin, 'Fame and Misfortune: Edging Women Out of the Great Literary Tradition', *American Journal of Sociology*, 90 (1984), 72–96.

28. Paula Higgins, 'The "Other Minervas": Creative Women at the Court of Margaret of Scotland', in *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions*, ed. Kimberly Marshall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 169–85, 269–77, at 178–80.
29. Higgins, 'The "Other Minervas"', 178 and 184.
30. 'The Social Position of Women', *North British Review*, 14 (1851), 281, cited in Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, 63.
31. Christine de Pizan [Pisan], *l'Épître au Dieu d'Amours* (1399), in *Oeuvres poétiques*, ed. Maurice Roy, 2 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1891), 2: vv. 417–18.
32. Greer, 'Flying Pigs', 785. Presumably for these reasons the subject of Greer's essay, Dame Helen Gardner, eliminated twenty-three women included by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch in the original edition of *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, a critical move applauded by Greer: 'to be judged by the most unsparing criterion . . . is all that a feminist could ask'.
33. Matthew Head, *Sovereign Feminine: Music and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).
34. J. T. [John Thomson ], 'Notes of a Musical Tourist', *Harmonicon*, 8 (3 March 1830), 99.
35. Paula Higgins, 'The Apotheosis of Josquin des Prez and Other Mythologies of Musical Genius', *JAMS*, 57 (2004), 443–510, at 446.
36. Jann Pasler, 'The Ironies of Gender, or Virility and Politics in the Music of Augusta Holmès', in *Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 213–48, at 231.
37. Judith E. Olson, 'Luise Adolpha Le Beau: Composer in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany', in Bowers and Tick, eds., *WMM*, 282–303, at 302, nn. 33, 282, and 297. Second set of brackets in the original.
38. Rupert Hughes, 'Women Composers', *Century Magazine*, 55 (1898), 768–9, at 774.
39. Laura Mitgang, 'Germaine Tailleferre: Before, During, and After *Les Six*', in *The Musical Woman*, 2 (1984–5), ed. Judith Lang Zaimont (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 177–221, at 203.
40. Cecil Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 245–6, cited in Mitgang, 'Germaine Tailleferre', 211, n. 1. As Mitgang notes, Virginia Woolf cited Gray's full quotation. See *A Room of One's Own* (1929; New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1957), 56.
41. 'Yes Fanny is Neglected. But Unjustly?', *New York Times* (29 September 1991), 29, written in the aftermath of the Mendelssohn Festival held at Bard College in 1991. Emphasis added.
42. The four-tweet thread generated a Twitter storm in the aftermath of which the author deleted his account.
43. Amanda Harris, 'The Spectacle of Woman as Creator: Representation of Women Composers in the French, German and English Feminist Press 1880–1930', *Women's History Review*, 23 (2014), 18–42.

44. Harris, 'The Spectacle of Woman as Creator', 10, quoting Philippa Senlac, 'Personalities and Powers', *Time and Tide*, 21 (1921), 57–8.
45. Barbara Garvey Jackson, ed., *Lieder by Women Composers of the Classic Era*, vol. 1 (Fayetteville, AR: ClarNan, 1987), 8. Fétis held her in high esteem and considered several of her pieces (Op. 5 and Op. 13) 'the works of a master'. François-Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2nd ed. (Brussels, 1883–84), 'Liebmann . . .', 5: 301; 'Riese . . .' 7: 259.
46. Matilda Gaume, 'Ruth Crawford Seeger', in Bowers and Tick, eds., *Women Making Music*, 370–88, at 375.
47. Diane Jezic and Daniel Binder, 'A Survey of College Music Textbooks: Benign Neglect of Women Composers?', in *The Musical Woman*, ed. Zaimont, 445–69; Vicki D. Baker, 'Inclusion of Women Composers in College Music History Textbooks', *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, 25 (2003), 5–19.
48. Foundational texts in art history include: Greer, *The Obstacle Race*; Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); and Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988; classic edition with new preface, London: Routledge, 2003); in literature see Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*; and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).
49. The journal *Ethnomusicology* was the only American music journal to review the volume. The principal American reviews of the volume appeared in journals of women's studies, *Signs: A Journal of Women and Culture* and the *Women's Review of Books*.
50. Joseph Kerman, 'Musicology and Positivism: The Postwar Years,' in *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 31–59.
51. Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 19.
52. Fanny Morris Smith, 'The Record of Woman in Music', *Etude*, 19 (September 1901), 317. Cited in Judith Tick, 'Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870–1900', Bowers and Tick, eds., *WMM*, 325–48, at 345.
53. For a critique of the ramifications of McClary's sidelining of historical women composers see Higgins, 'Women in Music', 187–92.
54. Higgins, 'Women in Music', 189, n. 63.
55. Higgins, 'Women in Music', 189.
56. Head, *Sovereign Feminine*, xviii.
57. Sally Macarthur, *Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 90.

58. Judith Tick, 'Reflections on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Women Making Music', *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 16 (2012), 133–8, at 136.
59. Sally Macarthur, Dawn Bennett, Talisha Goh, Sophie Hennekam, and Cat Hope, 'The Rise and Fall, and the Rise (Again) of Feminist Research in Music: "What Goes Around Comes Around"', *Musicology Australia*, 39 (2017), 73–95, at 74, 81–2 (see Figures 1, 2 and 3).
60. The phrase 'you can't just add women and stir' derives from a lecture given by the American feminist activist Charlotte Bunch in the late 1970s and published in her *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action: Essays, 1968–1986* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987), 140.
61. Claire Fontijn, *Desperate Measures: The Life and Music of Antonia Padoani Bembo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Harald Krebs and Sharon Krebs, *Josephine Lang: Her Life and Songs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Larry R. Todd, *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Irving Godt, *Marianna Martines: A Woman Composer in the Vienna of Mozart and Haydn*, ed. John A. Rice (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010); Suzanne Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Rae Linda Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020).
62. Florence Launay, *Les Compositrices en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2006); Head, *Sovereign Feminine*; Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) are among the most notable.
63. On eighteenth-century studies: Head, *Sovereign Feminine*, xvi–xviii; on early music: Cynthia Cyrus and Olivia Carter Mather, 'Rereading Absence: Women in Medieval and Renaissance Music', *College Music Symposium*, 38 (1998), 101–17; on music theory: see Ellie M. Hisama, 'Power and Equity in the Academy: Change from Within', *CM*, 102 (2018), 81–92.
64. As a result of the campaign, five women were added to the syllabus for the following year: Clara Schumann, Rachel Portman (1960–), Kate Bush (1958–), Anoushka Shankar (1981–), and Kaija Saariaho (1952–). Schumann is the sole historical woman composer represented. Nadia Khomami, 'A-Level Music to Include Female Composers after Student's Campaign', *The Guardian*, 16 December 2015. [www.theguardian.com/education/2015/dec/16/a-level-music-female-composers-students-campaign-jessy-mccabe-edexcel](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/dec/16/a-level-music-female-composers-students-campaign-jessy-mccabe-edexcel).
65. This observation is independently corroborated in the empirical studies of MacArthur et al., 'The Rise and Fall', 73–95, at 82, and Figure 3.
66. Among other examples, see Marcia Citron's account of 'Realpolitik' while researching Fanny Hensel as a graduate student in Berlin from 1979 to 1983: 'A Bicentennial Reflection: Twenty-five Years with Fanny Hensel', in *Fanny*



*Hensel (née Mendelssohn Bartholdy) and Her Circle: Proceedings of the Bicentenary Conference, Oxford, July 2005*, ed. Susan Wollenberg (NCMR, 4 (2007), 7–20, at 8–10); and Judith Tick's quest to find a publisher for the *Women Making Music* anthology (Bowers and Tick, eds., *WMM*) amid dismissive attitudes of the Board of the University of California Press that led to its rejection before finding a home with University of Illinois Press, in Tick, 'Reflections', 134.

67. For this reason I have throughout this text deliberately privileged the citation of pivotal founding texts of the last half century that have shaped my thinking about women composers over the past three decades.
68. Griselda Pollock, 'Whither Art History?' *The Art Bulletin*, 96 (2012), 9–23, at 9.
69. Louise Farrenc, *Kritische Ausgabe Orchester- und Kammermusik sowie ausgewählte Klavierwerke*, ed. F. Hoffmann (Wilhelmshaven, 1998).
70. Hughes, 'Women Composers' (see note 38), 779.
71. Hughes, 'Women Composers', 777; Helen Metzelaar, 'Oosterzee, Cornélie van', *GMO*.
72. Adrienne Fried Block, 'Lang, Margaret Ruthven', *GMO*.
73. Metzelaar, 'Oosterzee, Cornélie'. Lang and Lang ('Recognition and Renown', 94) noted the role of demographics – to wit, the extreme longevity of women etchers who outlived their families – as a partial explanation for their disappearance from collective memory.
74. Marian Wilson Kimber, 'Google Does It Again: This Is Not Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel', 13 December 2020. <https://marianwilsonkimber.wordpress.com/2020/12/13/google-does-it-again-this-is-not-fanny-mendelssohn-hensel/>.