

## 8 | Women and Composition, circa 1600–1750

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Among women composers circa 1600–1750, a handful of names are well known today: among these are Francesca Caccini (1587–after 1641), Barbara Strozzi (1619–77), and Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre (1665–1729), all of whom composed a large quantity of music, published substantial books of their compositions, and were recognized by authoritative (most often male) musicians, critics, and listeners. Their music appears in concert programmes and recordings, and they may be understood to form part of a canon of women composers from the Baroque era. Recognition of these prominent women (if not yet widespread familiarity with their work) is surely a triumph of feminist musicology and performance in the past forty years.

Yet the attention paid to these prominent women has yielded a misunderstanding of women's compositional practice during the period – namely that only a handful of women engaged in composition. This myth was first established by writers such as Évrard Titon du Tillet (1677–1762), who lauded Jacquet de la Guerre, writing, 'never has a person of her sex had such great talent for the composition of music and for the admirable manner in which she played on the harpsichord and organ'.<sup>1</sup> In Titon's account, Jacquet appears as the exception proving the rule that women did not compose.

Throughout the early modern period, professional skills in composition were unavailable to most women. Obstacles to the development of such skills started in the educational system; for example, many church schools with robust music programmes did not accept girls.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, social norms that constrained women's authorship contributed to a high degree of self-consciousness and apprehension around musical composition.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, new opportunities for women's careers as performers emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the rise of professional ensembles at aristocratic courts and the emergence of opera and other genres depending on women's skill in performance. Hence more women began training as apprentices in music, appearing in performances, teaching music, studying instruments, realizing figured bass, improvising, and being paid for their work. Many of these performers engaged in composition, even if they never published their

work and little of it survives. Moreover, while Stephen Rose rightly observes that there was a clear distinction between the role of performer and professional composer at that time, professional employment and financial success as a composer were not the only motivators for composing.<sup>4</sup> Many women (as well as men) wrote music without identifying themselves as professional composers. Amateur women, too, sought out musical training and practised 'musicking' in a variety of forms – playing, singing, acting as patrons, collecting scores, hosting private concerts, and, as I show in this chapter, composing music, whether for private use or public consumption.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of rehearsing the chronological history of great women composers in the Baroque era,<sup>6</sup> I offer here an account of the many *women who composed*, exploring how social environments facilitated women's creative authorship in music. Whether they were professionally trained or not, and whether or not their music circulated in print, many women engaged in composition as a means of being creative and expressive. Women composed for a wide range of reasons, drawing on an array of systems of education and networks of support. While much evidence of women's composition has not survived, documentation of some 150 women across Europe and in the New World who engaged in composition between 1600 and 1750 allows us to conceive of a more inclusive history.<sup>7</sup>

Consideration of these broader circumstances sheds new light on 'canonic' women composers. While Strozzi, Caccini, and Jacquet de la Guerre were indeed exceptionally prolific, their engagement in composition was facilitated by environments within which women's creative authorship in music was accepted and valued. Recognition of the environments that encouraged their compositional practice bears important implications for the understanding of women composers throughout history.

## Women and Song Composition in Seventeenth-Century Italy

The sisters Francesca and Settimia Caccini (1591–c. 1660) provide a point of entry for understanding the divergent paths of professional women who composed during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Their father, Giulio Caccini (1551–1618), reportedly trained the women of his family in singing; he directed them as an ensemble similar to the *concerto delle dame* in Ferrara.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he embedded the study of vocal technique in his publications, boasting in his *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614) that, using his book, the student could 'learn all exquisite aspects of this art without needing to hear the author sing them'.<sup>9</sup> This statement

indicates new avenues for professional careers in music by linking authorship and performance in the *stile moderno*.

Settimia Caccini's career was built primarily on performance, although she composed as well. She apparently never published her original works, and few of her songs survive in manuscript; these are relatively unornamented, suggesting that she would have expanded upon them through added ornaments in performance.<sup>10</sup> Francesca Caccini, by contrast, attained professional opportunities in which composition was as important as performance, if not more so. As a musician in the service of the Medici court in Florence, Caccini created music within an environment dominated by powerful women, foremost among them the French-born Duchess Christine of Lorraine (1565–1637).<sup>11</sup> This woman-centred environment may have mitigated the risks associated with Caccini's composing and publishing – activities that might otherwise have seemed audacious – since, as Cusick argues, Christine's power as a ruler would have been enhanced by and mirrored in Caccini's creative works. Caccini wrote numerous *balletti*, *intermedi* and other occasional works, though most have been lost. She was the first woman to publish the score of an original opera, *La Liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* (1625).

That authorship and publication carried risks for women is confirmed by Francesca Campana (c. 1615–65), whose letter of dedication in her *Arie a una, due, e tre voci* (1629) admitted that she might 'be accused of being too daring for publishing it'.<sup>12</sup> Campana published two additional songs in the anthology *Le risonante sfere*, also in 1629; after that year, she never published again, choosing instead to focus her professional life on singing. Her marriage, probably after 1633, may also have played a role: many women who published did so only once, typically before marriage.<sup>13</sup>

The situation of Lucia Quinciani (born c. 1566), the first woman to publish a piece of secular monody, elucidates how some women's compositions came to be published. Her lament 'Udite, lagrimosi spirti d'Averno' appeared in the *Affetti amorosi* (1611) of the Veronese composer Marc'Antonio Negri (d. 1624). In the table of contents Quinciani is described as Negri's *discepola* (disciple), suggesting that he shepherded his pupil's work to publication. Such an arrangement was among the more common avenues available to women who published their music: it highlights the importance of a system of support for women composers of the period. Even if Negri was motivated to publish Quinciani's piece primarily to advertise his teaching skills, his decision preserved her work for posterity.<sup>14</sup>

Among the numerous other professional performers who also composed music, although their work does not survive, is the famed singer

Adriana Basile (c. 1580–83–after 1642), whose compositional skills were noted by Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643).<sup>15</sup> The French traveller André Maugars reported that Basile's daughter, Leonora Baroni (1611–70), also composed.<sup>16</sup> In some cases, these women may have written music solely for their own performing repertoire and consciously decided to protect their professional secrets by not sharing their work. In other cases, their notated compositions may simply be lost.

Even for the most prolific composers, the stability that came from professional success was far from guaranteed. Barbara Strozzi was among the most published composers – man or woman – of the seventeenth century. Her family situation initially supported her development and career in music. As the adopted (probably illegitimate) daughter of the poet and librettist Giulio Strozzi (1583–1652), she gained access to training, ideas, and personal connections allowing her to become immersed in musical life of mid-century Venice. Giulio was a member of the *Accademia degli Incogniti*, a group of literati (with a strong misogynist tendency) who were instrumental in the development of Venetian opera. Strozzi apparently never performed on the operatic stage, nor did she compose operas. However, as a pupil of the operatic composer Francesco Cavalli (1602–76), she gained professional-level training in singing and composition allowing her to produce arias and extended cantatas that are richly expressive and varied, and that often seem to respond to the emotional progression of the speaker with immediacy and intensity.<sup>17</sup>

Early in her career, Strozzi's father created an offshoot of the *Incogniti*, the *Accademia degli Unisoni*, at which she acted as hostess and for whom she frequently performed. While the members of this group praised Strozzi for her musical abilities and dedicated volumes of poetry to her, she was also ridiculed and attacked for alleged licentiousness.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, for decades, modern scholars have debated whether Strozzi was a courtesan.<sup>19</sup> As Sara Pecknold has observed, whether Strozzi actually worked as a courtesan or not, her public reputation was badly damaged; she was 'considered by many of her contemporaries to be a promiscuous woman of questionable morals, whose voice and body were to be praised and objectified'.<sup>20</sup> For Pecknold, Strozzi's *Sacri musicali affetti* (1655) – her one volume of sacred music, published a year before her daughters entered a convent – represents Strozzi's attempt to alter her public image to conform to that of a pious mother preparing to dedicate her virginal daughters to the church.

The varied dedications of Strozzi's publications suggest that she was attempting to attract the kind of stable patronage that Francesca Caccini enjoyed at the Medici court. Strozzi's *Arie*, Op. 8, was dedicated to another

musical woman who composed – the Protestant Duchess Sophie Elisabeth of Braunschweig-Lüneberg (1613–76), whom I discuss later in this chapter.<sup>21</sup> If indeed this and Strozzi's other dedications constituted attempts to gain stable employment, they were unsuccessful. Despite her family connections and success in publishing, Strozzi's fortunes may have been damaged by the perception of immodest behaviour.

## Composition in Monasteries and Cloistered Communities

If an environment fostering education and support for women's performance and authorship was a prerequisite for women composing, it is no surprise that women in cloistered religious communities composed. Within the walls of many Catholic female monasteries, a vibrant culture of music-making flourished.<sup>22</sup> Figure 8.1 demonstrates how some nuns framed their status as composers as a result of divine inspiration. In Italy, such an environment persisted despite intermittent pressure from church officials, who viewed nuns' music-making – especially if it involved contact with people outside *clausura* (enclosure) – as improper and potentially damaging. In central Europe, Spain, and the New World, monasteries and cloistered communities also gave rise to women's composition.

In early modern Milan, 'the cloister was by far the most likely future for patrician girls', and Robert L. Kendrick has documented generations of musical nuns there.<sup>23</sup> In other Italian cities, many monasteries featured robust musical environments. Nuns and their families sometimes brought male teachers to the monasteries to provide a musical education, in some cases without ecclesiastical permission. Some women took orders after already gaining a musical education outside the monastery walls, enabling them to teach others. And nuns developed independent systems for teaching and learning from one another.<sup>24</sup> Similar systems of mutual education existed outside Italy.

Nuns' compositions reflect varying degrees of contact with musical styles outside the monastery walls, and they provide valuable information about performance practices in these all-women environments. A handful of examples will illustrate these points. While the *Motetti spirituali* (1619) of Sulpitia Cesis (1577–after 1619) are relatively conservative, featuring imitative polyphony and polychoral sections, the *Componimenti musicali* (1623) of Lucrezia Orsina Vizzana (1590–1662) reflect knowledge of the latest musical developments. The works of Chiara Margarita Cozzolani (1602–76/78) show familiarity with musical styles outside the monastery





Figure 8.1 Illustration from *Philomela Angelica: Cantionum sacrarum* (Venice: Daniel Speer, 1688). Image courtesy of the Bibiothèque nationale de France

walls. Of particular significance is her adoption of the sacred dialogue, a genre dramatizing stories and theological questions.<sup>25</sup> Many of her works are in the ‘concerted style’, in which voices rely on the harmonic foundation of the basso continuo line and obbligate instruments such as violins are sometimes added, despite being ‘forbidden in the liturgy of nuns’.<sup>26</sup>

The use of instruments occurs in other works as well. The *Sacri concerti* (1630) of Claudia Rusca (1593–1676) is noteworthy for its inclusion of, apparently, the first purely instrumental pieces published by a woman.

Rusca also provides some instrumental alternatives for vocal lines in her polyphony.<sup>27</sup> So, too, do Cesis's *Motetti spirituali*, which provide evidence about nuns' performance of polyphony: to accommodate women-only choirs, low voices could be played or reinforced by violone or trombone, with the latter possibility holding special interest since many critics viewed wind instruments as inappropriate for women.<sup>28</sup> Cesis notes that some lines could be transposed up an octave; in other cases, entire pieces notated in 'high clefs' (*chiavette*) could be transposed down. In many instances, nuns sang the low parts of polyphony as notated, whether because the voice parts were compressed or because some specialized in such low singing.<sup>29</sup> These principles may be seen and applied in music by the many nun-composers of the early modern age, of whom those mentioned here are a small sample, as well as in works written for them by male composers.

Among the most prolific women composers of the seventeenth century was Isabella Leonarda (1620–1704), a nun at the Collegio di Sant'Orsola in the city of Novara, who produced more than 200 works in a wide range of styles and genres.<sup>30</sup> Two of her compositions appear in a publication by Gasparo Casati (c. 1610–41), *maestro di cappella* of the Novara Cathedral from 1635 to 1641, suggesting that she studied with him. Leonarda must have been an accomplished violinist as well as a singer; with her *Sonate* Op. 16 (1693) she became the first woman to publish instrumental sonatas. The first eleven of these sonatas are for two violins, violone, and continuo, while the last is for solo violin and continuo. These are highly expressive works organized sectionally, in many ways reminiscent of the *stile moderno* of the early seventeenth century, rather than the simpler instrumental music popular in the age of Corelli.

At the Ursuline monastery in Graz, Maria Teresia von Gall (1664?–1741) wrote 'diverse beautiful compositions to the True God' to enhance the 'spiritual joy and recreation of the community',<sup>31</sup> and Viktoria Maria Wohl (1676/77–1755) composed and played wind instruments.<sup>32</sup> In Salzburg's Nonnberg monastery, Anna Magdalena Biber (1677–1742), daughter of the violinist and composer Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, may have composed some of the many anonymous works preserved in the monastery's manuscript archive.<sup>33</sup>

Vienna boasted an active culture of nuns' music-making, although the proportion of women who took the veil was far smaller there than in Italian cities. The canoness Maria Anna von Raschenau (1644 or c. 1650–1714) composed extensively for the convent of St Jakob, though her compositions were intimately connected with the world of the Habsburg Imperial court.<sup>34</sup> As in some Italian monasteries, the low parts of Raschenau's

full-voiced choral works relied on *Bassistinen*, women basses. Three Italian women also composed oratorios performed in Vienna during this same period, designed along the same formal and stylistic lines as those of Raschenau: Camilla de Rossi 'Romana' (fl. 1670–1710), Caterina Benedicta Grazianini (fl. early eighteenth century), and Maria Margherita Grimani (fl. 1713–18), who wrote an opera, *Pallade e Marte*, as well as two oratorios.<sup>35</sup> Other Italian women without known connections to Vienna also composed oratorios; these include Maria Barbieri (fl. 1672) and Caterina Benedetta Bianchi (fl. 1724), as well as Angiola Teresa Muratori (1661–1708), a painter whose artworks survive in Bologna but whose musical compositions are lost, though some librettos survive. Monasteries in New Spain enabled women artists, intellectuals, and musicians to flourish. In Mexico City, the renowned writer Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–95) wrote numerous song texts; aurality and musical aesthetics were central to her theological and philosophical thought.<sup>36</sup> Maria Joachina Rodrigues (late 1600s), a nun in Puebla, composed a Christmas cantata, as did Lupe Ortiz (fl. 1688–92) in Oaxaca. The Monasterio de la Piedad in Guadalajara was home to at least two nuns deemed 'great composers'.<sup>37</sup> And Geoffrey Baker has demonstrated that nuns in seventeenth-century Cuzco also composed.<sup>38</sup>

The Venetian *ospedali* (homes for foundlings) should be mentioned for their facilitation of extensive musical training, performance, and, in rare cases, composition. Girls at the *Ospedale della Pietà* who trained in music (the *figlie di coro*) studied singing, music copying, and performance on strings, wind instruments, and organ.<sup>39</sup> While most did not study composition, a handful did.<sup>40</sup> Lavinia della Pietà attended the music school of Giovanni Legrenzi (1626–90), studying composition.<sup>41</sup> In the early eighteenth century, Agata della Pietà and Michielina della Pietà are reported to have composed, though the compositions of these and other *figlie* have apparently not survived.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, their educations sometimes included counterpoint and other skills that would have been extremely useful in composition.

Non-Catholic cloistered communities sometimes also fostered women's musicianship and composition. As Christopher Herbert has discovered, the Ephrata Cloister, a celibate community in Pennsylvania founded in 1732, was home to North America's first women composers. The work of Sister Föben (born Christianna Lasse, c. 1717–84), Sister Ketura (born Catherine Hagemann, c. 1718–97), and Sister Hannah (born Hannah Lichty, c. 1714–93) appears in the Ephrata Codex, a manuscript assembled in 1746. As Herbert notes, within the Ephrata community, women's education was mandatory, including in music, and women did not have



the same domestic responsibilities as women in mainstream society.<sup>43</sup> Thus women composers emerged from a robust and supportive musical environment where they had time to study and practise their craft.

## Women Composers of the Upper Classes

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the publication of numerous lexicons cataloguing the achievements of central European women in literature and the arts. An extension of the sixteenth-century *Querelle des femmes*, these works ‘effectively established a long tradition of women’s writing which fortified women in a wish to write and helped to justify this wish in the public mind’.<sup>44</sup> Aristocratic women held pride of place in these lexicons. Indeed, early modern dynastic women typically obtained high-level educations. During and after the Thirty Years’ War, these women took to writing letters, poetry, dramas, and sometimes music as a means of cultivating and projecting their spiritual and political leadership.<sup>45</sup> Music served multiple important roles, facilitating religious devotion and offering a sense of healing to their communities and subjects. In the context of neo-Platonic theories of music, whereby harmonious sound was understood to penetrate and heal the body, the increasing musical creativity of noblewomen in the wake of the Thirty Years’ War may be considered an aspect of the medicinal arts.<sup>46</sup>

The musical compositions of elite German women include devotional songs intended for private meditation, and large-scale celebratory or commemorative ballets and theatricals. Sophie Elisabeth, Duchess of Braunschweig-Lüneberg, wrote in all these genres, composing songs, devotional hymns, and music for court festivities.<sup>47</sup> She benefited from the rich cultural life of her father’s court, as well as the guidance first of two successive stepmothers well-versed in music, and then of her husband, Duke August the Younger (1579–1666). Through her husband’s court Sophie collaborated with the composer Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672). Her *Friedens Sieg*, written to commemorate a preliminary peace treaty in 1642, contains one of her most moving songs, ‘Ich, der häßlich bleiche Tod’, a conversation among the horrors of war – Death, Hunger, Poverty, and Injustice. This piece highlights Sophie Elisabeth’s role as healer.

Another aristocratic German woman whose music survives is Amalia Catharina, Countess of Erbach-Erbach (1640–97); her *Andächtige Sing-Lust* (1692) consists of devotional songs for voice and continuo. Of a lower

social station but motivated by a similar impulse to compose for private devotion was Anna Ovena Hoyer (1584–1655), who belonged to the Brüder in Christo sect. In 1632 Hoyer moved from Germany to Sweden, where she became closely connected to the court of Queen Maria Eleonora. One volume of her poetry survives with a few notated melodies.<sup>48</sup> In the early eighteenth century, Wilhelmine, Margräfin of Bayreuth (1709–58), sister of Frederick the Great of Prussia (1712–86), continued the tradition of aristocratic German women who composed. She wrote a three-movement concerto in G minor for keyboard with obbligato flute – the ideal vehicle for her husband, a flautist and later the dedicatee of a set of flute sonatas by Anna Bon (1738–?; further discussed later in this chapter). In 1740 Wilhelmine's Italian-language opera seria *Argenore* was mounted for her husband's birthday. She and her husband would later oversee the building of the lavish opera house at Bayreuth.

Outside German-speaking lands, high-ranking women who cultivated music included Queen Maria Teresa Barbara of Spain (1711–58), widely known as a pupil of the keyboard virtuoso and composer Domenico Scarlatti; she is reported to have composed.<sup>49</sup> Marieta Morosina Priuli was careful to identify herself as *Nobil Veneta* (Venetian noblewoman) on the title pages of her two volumes of dance music, both published in 1665. The Morosini and the Priuli were prominent patrician families in Venice. The dedication of these volumes to Princess Maria Mancini Colonna (1639–1715) and Empress Eleonora Gonzaga (1630–86) indicates how well connected Priuli was; they also reflect a strategy of women composers seeking alliances with women patrons.

Tensions over authorship are discernible in the letter of dedication from Henry Lawes (1596–1662) to Lady Mary Dering (baptised 1629–1704) in his *Second Book of Ayres and Dialogues* (1655), which includes three of Lady Dering's compositions. Lawes admitted that 'your Ladiship resolv'd to keep it private', but protested: 'you . . . are your self so good a Composer, that few of any sex have arriv'd to such perfection'.<sup>50</sup> While Lady Dering is the only woman from early seventeenth-century England whose musical compositions are known to survive, the author Lucy Hutchinson (1620–81) attested that her husband's grandmother had gained 'such an excellencie in musick and poetry that she made rare compositions of both kinds'.<sup>51</sup>

The family of Leonora Duarte (1610–78) was of Jewish origin; they had converted and migrated from Portugal to Antwerp to escape the Inquisition. They assembled a dazzling collection of art and corresponded with intellectuals from across Europe. As Elizabeth Weinfield has argued, music-making formed an important part of the family's sociability and

business enterprises.<sup>52</sup> Duarte's compositions for viol consort are the only surviving viol pieces by a woman from the seventeenth century. Yet few of the sources that discuss music-making in the Duarte home – penned by writers such as Constantijn Huygens, John Evelyn, and Margaret Cavendish – mention Leonora's compositional activities, focusing instead on performance in her home.<sup>53</sup> If the score of her *sinfonias* for viol consort had not survived, it would be difficult to trace her activities as a composer.

## Women's Composition as Social Practice in France, 1650–1750

Perhaps the greatest concentration of women who composed and published their own music during this period was in France between 1650 and 1750. The chief genres in which they composed were songs – *airs à boire*, *airs sérieux*, *noëls*, *brunettes*, *chansons*, and other related types – though some composed instrumental music as well. While some issued complete volumes of original compositions, most published individual songs of modest proportions, included in anthologies issued by the Ballard printing firm or in the *Mercure galant*, the court circular.<sup>54</sup>

The basic parameters of the relevant song genres were established in the mid-seventeenth century by professional composers such as Michel Lambert (1610–96) and Bénigne de Bacilly (c. 1625–90).<sup>55</sup> Almost from the same time, however, both professional and upper-class women participated in their composition. French courtly and salon culture sanctioned a prominent role for women in the social, literary, and creative spheres – an acceptance that crossed boundaries of social rank.<sup>56</sup> Still, many of these songs were published anonymously or with only the initials of the composer given.

Françoise Senneterre de Ménéto (1679–1745) stands out as apparently the only aristocratic woman of the period to publish a complete volume of her own compositions, her *Airs sérieux à deux* (1691), which appeared when she was just eleven years old – two years after she first sang for Louis XIV.<sup>57</sup> Other aristocratic women composed also, including the Dauphine Marie-Anne-Christine-Victoire, Princess of Bavaria (1660–90), and Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy (1685–1712). Marie-Anne-Christine-Victoire also supported the compositional activities of Mlle Laurent, whose *Concert . . . donné à Mde La Dauphine* (1690) survives in manuscript and who published at least two other songs.

Julie Pinel (fl. 1710–37) came from a family of musicians in the employ of the Prince de Soubise. Her *Nouveau recueil d'airs sérieux et à boire*

(1737) contains thirty-one works, some with obbligato flute parts; she also wrote the poetry for nineteen of these pieces, suggesting that she had a wide-ranging education.<sup>58</sup> Anne Madeleine Guédon de Presles (fl. early eighteenth century) stands out for the high number of pieces she composed for anthologies or the *Mercure galant* – some forty-nine individual airs spread over numerous volumes.<sup>59</sup> She, too, came from a musical family, as did Mlle Sicard (fl. early eighteenth century), six of whose compositions appeared in various published volumes of her father, the prolific and witty composer Jean Sicard (fl. second half of seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries). (Mlle Sicard also had one piece published in the *Mercure galant* in January 1678.) Jean Sicard dedicated his 1678 publication to his daughter, expressing his hope that she would use the book to ‘learn what it is to compose an *air* according to the rules. . . . All that is required of you is to master this beautiful art to the point where, seeing your work one day, an observer will say, “this is the daughter of Sicard.”’<sup>60</sup>

It is within this context of women’s authorship that the careers of Antonia Bembo (c. 1640–c. 1720) and Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre should be understood. While the work of these women is clearly exceptional in complexity, skill, and quantity, it is unclear whether they would have been able to achieve such creative heights outside such a rich environment of women’s composition. Bembo (like Barbara Strozzi) had trained under Francesco Cavalli in Venice; having married the Venetian nobleman Lorenzo Bembo and had three children, she fled her abusive marriage and settled in France.<sup>61</sup> Louis XIV provided her with a stipend that allowed her to live at the Petite Union Chrétienne des Dames de Saint Chaumont. Her six substantial collections of compositions, unpublished during her lifetime, reflect knowledge of virtually all vocal genres of the period. They encompass French, Latin, and Italian arias and cantatas, sacred choral music, a serenata, and a setting (dated 1707) of the same libretto for the opera *Ercole amante* that her teacher, Cavalli, had set for performance in Paris in 1662. Bembo’s opera allowed her both to establish her link to Cavalli and to pay homage to the king in a new way. By the early eighteenth century, the French taste that had made Cavalli’s Italianate setting so controversial among its French audience had given way to a style that synthesized French and Italian tastes. Claire Fontijn argues that Bembo’s Italian heritage and training, combined with her years of living and working in France, allowed her to position herself at the crossroads of the *goûts réunis* – the ‘united tastes’.<sup>62</sup>

While Bembo maintained a relatively low profile, perhaps seeking to evade pursuit by her husband, another professional-class woman born into a musical family, Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, took advantage of both

courtly patronage and the growing commercial landscape at the turn of the eighteenth century. Jacquet made a youthful debut at Louis XIV's court (her precise age at the time is uncertain). She joined the court musical establishment around age fifteen and was mentored by the king's mistress, Madame de Montespan (1641–1707).<sup>63</sup> Jacquet left regular service of the court in 1684, the year of her marriage to the keyboardist and composer Marin de la Guerre, though she retained connections to the court throughout her life. In 1687 she published her first volume of compositions, her collection of harpsichord dance suites with preludes titled *Pièces de clavessin*. Her next publication, the *Pièces de clavecin qui peuvent se jouer sur le violon*, appeared in 1707. The wide gap between the two publications may be attributable to deaths in her family, including that of her ten-year-old son. Half of this collection is comprised of harpsichord works in the French tradition, while the other half consists of Italianate sonatas for keyboard with the accompaniment of a violin.

In vocal genres, too, Jacquet excelled. Her opera, *Céphale et Procris*, is thought to have been premiered at the Paris Opéra on 15 March 1694; the score was published in that year, making Jacquet the first woman to compose and publish an opera in France. (The next was a Mlle Duval, of whom little is known; her sung ballet *Les Génies, ou les caractères de l'amour* was performed at the *Académie Royale de Musique* in 1736.<sup>64</sup>) Jacquet published collections of cantatas on sacred themes in 1708 and 1711, as well as a collection of secular cantatas dedicated to another of her patrons, Maximilian II Emanuel (1662–1726), the exiled elector of Bavaria then living in Paris. Especially noteworthy are Jacquet's portrayals of women: in the interpretation of Michele Cabrini, Jacquet sought to project the experience of *femmes fortes* (strong women) – a common theme in French arts and letters at the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>65</sup>

## New Horizons in the Early Eighteenth Century

In the early eighteenth century, women continued composing for aristocratic patrons and for the church; in addition, like Jacquet de la Guerre, many began to direct their published work towards amateur musicians, for whom music assumed an increasingly important role in the formation of cultural identity. Some professional women composed but did not publish their music, perhaps reserving it for their own performances. Thus twelve cantatas of the singer Rosanna Scalfi (fl. 1723–42) – a pupil and, secretly, the wife of composer Benedetto Marcello (1686–1739) – survive in a manuscript copy in Rome.<sup>66</sup> Little is known of the



composer Beatrice Mattei (fl. 1740s–1750s); surviving manuscripts include keyboard sonatas and one for viola and continuo, a rarity in the eighteenth century.<sup>67</sup>

Anna Bon, daughter of professional musicians, trained as one of the paying students (*figlie di spesi*) at the Pietà in Venice, alongside the foundlings. It is unclear when she re-joined her parents, but by 1755 they were at the court of Bayreuth in the service of Margrave Friedrich and Wilhelmine, also a composer (mentioned earlier). Recalling that Wilhelmine's keyboard concerto includes an obbligato flute part perhaps written for her husband, it is not surprising that Bon's first opus is a set of flute sonatas dedicated to the margrave. That Bon published this collection (1756) indicates her desire to appeal both to her aristocratic patrons and to the broader public. Her Op. 2 keyboard sonatas and Op. 3 divertimenti for two flutes and continuo bear similar dedications. The title pages of all three publications note Bon's young age, perhaps to sensationalize her as a prodigy. A similar sensation surrounded the Milanese composer Maria Teresa Agnesi (1720–95), author of musico-dramatic works, keyboard sonatas and concertos, and arias with concerting instruments, some dedicated to high-ranking members of the nobility in Vienna and Saxony. The public excitement surrounding Agnesi and her sister, the famed mathematical prodigy Maria Gaetana Agnesi (1718–99), exemplifies what Marta Cavazza calls the 'spectacularization' of women's knowledge in eighteenth-century Italy.<sup>68</sup>

That women's composition gained greater acceptance in the eighteenth century is suggested by the portrayal of the fictional character Clarissa Harlowe as a composer in the 1748 novel *Clarissa* by Samuel Richardson (1689–1761).<sup>69</sup> While the true identity of the composer of the tune it features will never be known, it seems significant that Richardson deemed composition suitable for a young woman. Indeed, the number of women composers in England rose dramatically in the last decades of the eighteenth century,<sup>70</sup> while by the 1730s and 1740s, already increasing numbers of women were composing and publishing their music.

The singer and keyboardist Elisabetta de Gambarini (1730–65) performed at Covent Garden, among other venues, also giving public and benefit concerts, in which she included some of her own compositions. Her three publications include keyboard 'lessons' (sonatas) and Italian and English songs, all suitable for the amateur marketplace.<sup>71</sup> Similar in this respect are the published songs and keyboard lessons of Elizabeth Turner (d. 1756).<sup>72</sup> Her songs are simple and technically accessible; the inclusion of lines for concerting violins or flutes meant that they facilitated sociability

through music. Both Gambarini and Turner published music with extensive subscription lists including men and women, professional and amateur musicians, members of the aristocracy and those of lower stations. Gambarini's Op. 2, dedicated to the Prince of Wales, bears an elaborate dedicatory letter in Italian.

Other English women published single songs, some of which were printed independently while others appeared in anthologies. 'The Constant Lover' by Mary Worgan (1717–68) appeared in the two-volume anthology *Calliope or English Harmony* (1739), designed for amateurs; 'The Dying Nightingale' and 'The Power of Gold' were each printed independently around 1740.<sup>73</sup> In 1753 Worgan became the first woman in England appointed to the post of church organist, a position she held at St Dunstan in the East. A 'Mrs Ager' had a piece included in the anthology *Select Minuets: Collected from Castle Balls, and the Publick Assemblies in Dublin* (c. 1750), while several songs appeared in the first half of the century under the name 'A Lady'. Some women continued to publish anonymously, as can be seen in the collection of twelve Italianate *Sonate* published around 1715 by 'Mrs Philharmonica'.

## Conclusion

I have sought to highlight here the multiple avenues available to women who engaged in composition and, sometimes, publication of their music. The picture I have presented is necessarily incomplete. Many more women composed during this period than can be covered in a single chapter; moreover, we have no way of knowing how many women's compositions have been lost. Nevertheless, the findings from this account are clear: women used music, including composition, as a means of being creative and expressive. The prerequisite seems to be an environment that encourages and values women's musical education and creative authorship. In the Baroque era, such an environment could be established by women's families and professional networks and opportunities, by communities of women working together to educate one another, by women's status as political or dynastic leaders, and by support given to them by patrons who valued their artistry, among other factors. While much in society has changed since this early period, opportunities for education and systems of support for women's musical endeavours have remained essential to the flourishing of women composers.

## Further Reading

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## Notes

1. 'Jamais personne de son sexe n'a eu d'aussi grands talens qu'elle pour la composition de la musique, & pour la manière admirable dont elle l'exécutoit sur le clavecin & sur l'orgue'. Évrard Titon du Tillet, *Le Parnasse françois* (Paris: Coignard, 1732), 636. See also Citron, *GMC*, 200–10.
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3. See Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
4. Stephen Rose, *Musical Authorship from Schütz to Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
5. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).
6. Such histories may be found, for example, in Barbara Garvey Jackson, 'The Seventeenth Century', in *From Convent to Concert Hall: A Guide to Women Composers*, ed. S. Glickman and M. F. Schleifer (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 55–90; Valerie Woodring Goertzen, 'The Eighteenth Century' in *ibid.*, 91–152; Barbara Garvey Jackson, 'Musical Women of the Seventeenth and

- Eighteenth Centuries’, in *Women and Music: A History*, ed. K. Pendle, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 97–146.
7. Throughout this chapter, in addition to the sources cited in individual notes, I have relied on Glickman and Schleifer, eds., *WCMTA*; and Barbara Garvey Jackson, *‘Say Can You Deny Me’: A Guide to Surviving Music by Women from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Fayetteville, NC: University of Arkansas Press, 1994). I encourage readers to explore those sources as well as the more recent ones cited throughout.
  8. Suzanne Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Women and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 11–18.
  9. ‘Si possano apprendere tutte le squistezze di quest’arte, senza necessità del canto dell’autore.’ See Ellen Rosand, “‘Senza necessità del canto dell’autore’: Printed Singing Lessons in Seventeenth-Century Italy,’ in *Atti del XIV congresso della Società Internazionale di Musicologia, Bologna* (Turin: Edizioni di Torino, 1990), vol. 2, 214–24.
  10. Four of Settimia Caccini’s compositions can be seen in a manuscript housed in I-BC, online at [www.bibliotecamusica.it/cmbm/viewschedatwbca.asp?path=/cmbm/images/ripro/gaspari/\\_Q/Q049/](http://www.bibliotecamusica.it/cmbm/viewschedatwbca.asp?path=/cmbm/images/ripro/gaspari/_Q/Q049/) (accessed 23 December 2020).
  11. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini*.
  12. ‘Se nella publicatione sarò forse accusata per troppo ardita.’ Translated in Thomasin Lamay, ‘Francesca Campana (ca. 1605/1610–1665)’ in *WCMTA*, vol. 2, 5.
  13. On Campana, see Alberto Cametti, *Alcuni documenti inedita su la vita di Luigi Rossi compositore di musica (1597–1653)* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912), 22–3.
  14. Aneta Markuszewska, ‘The Lamento Udite lagrimosi spirti d’Averno by Lucia Quinciani in Marc’ Antonio Negri’s *Affetti amorosi* (Venice, 1611),’ in *Italian Music in Central-Eastern Europe: Around Mikołaj Zieleński’s Offertoria and Communiones (1611)*, ed. J. Tomasz, B. Przybyszewska-Jarminińska and M. Toffetti (Venice: Fondazione Ugo e Olga Levi, 2015), 171–81.
  15. Claudio Monteverdi, *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, ed. and trans. D. Stevens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 117.
  16. André Maugars, *Response faite à un curieux, sur le sentiment de la musique d’Italie. Escrite à Rome le premier octobre 1639* (Paris, [1639 or 1640?]), 21.
  17. Ellen Rosand, ‘Barbara Strozzi, “virtuosissima cantatrice”: The Composer’s Voice’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 31/2 (Summer 1978), 241–81.
  18. *Ibid.*, 250–2.
  19. See David Rosand and Ellen Rosand, “‘Barbara di Santa Sofia’ and “‘Il Prete Genovese’”: On the Identity of a Portrait by Bernardo Strozzi’, *The Art Bulletin*, 43/2 (June 1981), 249–58; Beth L. Glixon, ‘New Light on the Life and Career of Barbara Strozzi’, *Musical Quarterly*, 81/2 (Summer 1997), 311–35; Beth L. Glixon, ‘More on the Life and Death of Barbara Strozzi’, *Musical Quarterly*, 83/1 (Spring 1999), 134–41; Robert L. Kendrick, ‘Intent and Intertextuality in

- Barbara Strozzi's Sacred Music', *Recercare*, 14 (2002), 65–98; and Sara Pecknold, "'On Lightest Leaves Do I Fly": Redemption and the Renewal of Identity in Barbara Strozzi's *Sacri musicali affetti* (1655)', PhD diss. (Catholic University of America, 2015), 23–5.
20. Pecknold, 'On Lightest Leaves', 25.
  21. Robert L. Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Milan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 103.
  22. I follow Kendrick in using the term 'female monastery' to describe most women's foundations, rather than 'convent'. See Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens*, 18, n. 46.
  23. *Ibid.*, 40.
  24. *Ibid.*, 177–83.
  25. Frits Noske, *Saints and Sinners: The Latin Musical Dialogue in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
  26. Robert L. Kendrick, 'Chiara Margarita Cozzolani', in *WCMTA*, vol. 1, 98.
  27. Robert L. Kendrick, 'I mottetti di Claudia Rusca', in *Barocco padano. III: Atti dell'XI Convegno internazionale sulla musica italiana nei secoli XVII-XVIII*, ed. A. Colzani, A. Luppi, and M. Padoan (Como: AMIS, 2004), 423–53.
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  29. Laurie Stras, 'The Performance of Polyphony in Early 16th-Century Italian Convents', *Early Music*, 45/2 (May 2017), 195–215.
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  31. Original text: 'vielfältige schöne Compositionen zur Ehre Gottes'; 'geistlichen Freud und Recreation der Gemeinde', transcribed in Gerlinde Haas, 'Pauken und Trompeten . . . im Frauenkloster. "Komponistinnen", Chorregentinnen und andere Musikerinnen des Ursulinen-Klosters in Graz in der Zeit 1686–1755/65', in *Miscellanea musicae: Rudolf Flotzinger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Vienna: Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1999), 144.
  32. *Ibid.*, 145.
  33. Ernst Hintermaier, 'Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber von Bibern (1644–1704) und das Benediktinen-Frauenstift Nonnberg. Musikpflege und Musikkultur eines adeligen Frauenstiftes im hoch- und spätbarocken Salzburg', in *Deus Caritas—Jakob Mayr: Festgabe—25 Jahre Weihbischof von Salzburg*, ed. H. Paarhammer (Thaur: Verlagshaus Thaur, 1996), 209–18; Barbara Lawatsch Melton, 'Loss and Gain in a Salzburg Convent: Tridentine Reform, Princely Absolutism, and the Nuns of Nonnberg (1620 to 1696)', in *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. L. Tatlock (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 273–4.
  34. Janet K. Page, *Convent Music and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).



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41. Baldauf-Berdes, *Women Musicians of Venice*, 237.
42. Jane L. Berdes cites one surviving manuscript, I-Vc corer esposti, 65 no.192, 13, 82 attributed to one Santa della Pietà, but this cannot be confirmed through the current cataloguing system; see Jane L. Berdes, 'Della Pietà, Santa [Sanza, Samaritana]', *GMO*.
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60. 'Que vous apreniez ce que c'est que de composer un air dans les règles . . . il ne tiendra qu'à vous de vous rendre capable dans ce bel art, afin qu'on puisse dire un jour en voyant vos ouvrages; c'est la Fille de Sicard.' Jean Sicard, *Douzième livre d'airs sérieux et à boire, à 2. & à 3 parties* (Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1678), unpaginated letter of dedication.
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