12 First-Wave Feminism and Professional Status

SOPHIE FULLER

Writers and scholars define the period of first-wave feminism in the Western world in various ways. For some the first 'wave' grew out of the demands for equality from women during the French Revolution, for others it had its roots in the Women's Rights Convention in New York, United States, in 1848. However, it is generally agreed that the period 1880–1920 saw the height of feminist activity from a wide variety of women in Britain, Europe, and the United States.[1]

Women organized together to demand rights to employment and education, and most agreed that the right to suffrage, being able to vote and take part in political power, was fundamentally important. By 1920, certain women in Canada, Germany, Russia, the UK, and the United States, had been granted the right to vote. But full suffrage was not granted to women in the UK until 1928, in France not until 1944, and Italy not until 1945, for example.[2]

This was a time that saw the appearance of the 'new woman' in much Western discourse. Commentators and writers, both male and female, approved or disapproved of this independent, radicalized, disruptive woman and persistently argued about what became known as the 'woman question'.[3] For some, the 'new woman' upset the commonly perceived attributes of the accommodating, subdued woman of the time. For others, she presented an exciting freedom and sense of opportunity.

Many of the women involved in the worlds of music drew inspiration from the political and social battles raging around them, and chose to fight against the barriers they faced in gaining access to equality of opportunity, whether as instrumentalists, singers, teachers, scholars, composers, or embracing any mixture of the above, especially if they wished to be regarded as professionals.[4] As far as composers are concerned, many fought for a comprehensive music education and embraced large-scale, complex genres to be heard in the public sphere. Others remained within their accepted sphere of the private performance space and the small-scale genre such as the song or piano piece, although often pushing the boundaries of these expectations.

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While some women fought solitary battles, others grouped together to find strength in numbers and comradeship. An interesting example is the Society of Women Musicians in the UK.[5] This organization was formed in 1911 by the singer Gertrude Eaton (1861–1939) and the composer and musicologist Marion Scott (1877–1953).[6] The establishment of such a society was doubtless influenced by other contemporary women's organizations, although the composer and activist Katharine Eggar (1874–1961), chair of the inaugural meeting, trod careful ground in her opening speech, distancing the organization from those fighting for the vote:

> Perhaps in the minds of some there is a lurking fear that we are a Suffragist Society in disguise; our only connection with the Suffragist Movement is a similarity of Ideals. In both political and musical life there is a great deal of wire pulling and Party policy; one does not need to know much about musical dealings in general, to know this. The suffragists saw there was a great deal in Political matters which needs purifying and they believed that women could do a great deal to effect reform. We see a great deal that is corrupt in Artistic life, we believe that most women desire a higher Ideal in Musical transactions, but they have been unable to fight against the monster of Commercialism which rules in the Musical World.[7]

As well as Eaton, Eggar, and Scott, the women at this first meeting were a mixture of composers and performers and of amateur and professional musicians from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, including the composers Ethel Barns (1874–1948), Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979), Cécile Hartog (1857–1940), and Liza Lehmann (1862–1918), who became the society's first president. Other early composer members included Florence Marshall (1843–1922), Ethel Smyth (1857–1944), and Maude Valérie White (1855–1937). Exploration of some of these women's careers and music, and of their European and North American contemporaries, demonstrates the diversity and power of women composers' work at this time. Much of this music is largely unheard in the early twenty-first century, regardless of its popularity, acclaim, and success during the composer's lifetime.

Ethel Smyth (1858–1944)

Ethel Smyth was to become the best-known British female composer of her generation. In fact, in the later twentieth century, for a while she was regarded as the only British woman composer of her generation. Smyth came from a well-to-do upper-middle-class military family and undertook

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most of her musical education in Germany towards the end of the nineteenth century, despite opposition from her family. Suffering from growing hearing loss from the second decade of the twentieth century, she started publishing her memoirs, writing for journals and newspapers as well as broadcasting, and fighting for equal opportunities for women orchestral instrumentalists. Her memoirs tell the story of her own career and her battles to obtain a hearing for her music, particularly her six operas, which she regarded as the core of her output. Smyth's writings tend to reinforce the misleading idea that she was, as a woman, a lone, exceptional figure fighting against the patriarchal musical establishment.[8]

Certainly Smyth, both in her determined self-belief and in the sheer power and assurance of her musical voice, was a uniquely memorable, disruptive, and inspirational figure. She was also one of the most politically engaged women composers of her generation. After meeting (and falling in love with) Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), Smyth dedicated two years of her remarkable energy to the cause of the suffragettes, as they came to be known. As well as civil disobedience (in her case throwing stones through a cabinet minister's windows) and experiencing subsequent brief imprisonment, she also produced music for the movement, most notably *Songs of Sunrise* for chorus and optional orchestra (1911), which used her stirring suffragette anthem, *The March of the Women*, as a final movement.

Smyth's music is often characterized by a propulsive energy and exuberance, but her involvement with Pankhurst and the WSPU also produced her poignant, reflective, and strangely restless love song, 'Possession' (Ethel Carnie), dedicated to Pankhurst, the second of her *Three Songs* (1913) for mezzo or baritone and piano. The last of this collection, 'On the Road' (Carnie), a more overtly militant song, was dedicated to Emmeline Pankhurst's radical daughter Christabel and also briefly quotes from *The March of the Women*. Smyth was always drawn to the human voice, whether in her robust, early Mass in D major (1891), the inventive and elegant *Songs* (Henri de Régnier, and anon.) for mezzo or baritone, violin, viola, cello, flute, harp, and percussion (1908), or her intense and momentous late orchestral and vocal work *The Prison* (1929–30), a setting of a philosophical text by her frequent collaborator and only male lover, Henry Brewster.

Brewster was also the librettist for the work which can be regarded as one of her crowning achievements, the three-act grand opera *The Wreckers* (1902–4) or, as it was originally conceived, *Les Naufrageurs*.[9] This is a mighty and unjustly overlooked work, which had a troubled performance

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history. Following a premiere in Leipzig in 1906 (where it was given in German translation as *Der Strandrecht*) and production at Prague later that year, it was not performed in Britain until 1909. During Smyth's lifetime it was performed again in Britain the following year (1910) and then not until 1931 at the Royal Opera House and finally in 1939 at Sadler's Wells.

For many years after Smyth's death *The Wreckers* was largely forgotten. In 1994 it received a concert performance at the BBC Promenade Concerts in London.[10] More recently the work has received fully staged productions at Bard Summerscape in the United States (2015)[11] and at the Glyndebourne Festival in the UK (2022). In 1906 the British critic J. A. Fuller-Maitland travelled to Leipzig to hear *The Wreckers*. More than twenty years later, in his memoirs, he wrote:

> The great love-duet sung by the ill-fated lovers . . . gave me the same sort of thrill that I had hardly known since the early days of Tristan, and I still feel that some day the British public will take this beautiful and really English work to their hearts, though it is improbable that either Dame Ethel or I shall be there to see it.[12]

The Wreckers was Smyth's third opera. (Smyth's two earlier operas were *Fantasio* (1892–4) and *Der Wald* (1899–1901), both premiered in Germany.) *The Wreckers* exudes confidence, and compositional authority, gripping the audience from the outset with its dramatically tempestuous overture, which was widely performed as a concert piece. The story is as dramatic as Smyth's music. Set in an eighteenth-century Cornish fishing community, it centres around the impoverished villagers luring ships onto the rocks to plunder cargoes. Set against this morally ambiguous and intensely religious community are the lovers, Thirza and Mark. Thirza is married to the village headman, but it is for the lovers' act of lighting warning beacons to save ships that approach the coast, that she and Mark are judged by their community, with tragic results. Their second-act love duet is as thrilling, involved, and intense as Fuller-Maitland remembered.[13]

Liza Lehmann (1862–1918)

Smyth had had to fight hard for her operas, and indeed her other works, to be heard, battles compellingly recounted in her memoirs. Her contemporaries Maude Valérie White and Liza Lehmann published equally captivating memoirs. Lehmann's were published posthumously in 1919, while White's appeared in two volumes in 1914 and 1932.[14] Lehmann presents

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herself as a fiercely professional musician and composer, while also taking pains to focus on her roles as wife and mother. White's memoirs, rather like her music, are full of passion, exuberance, and her enduring love of travel and new experiences.

Both Lehmann and White achieved resounding success as songwriters. White was at the height of her acclaim in the 1880s and 1890s, while Lehmann, who turned to composition after retiring as a concert singer, achieved her most popular success, the song cycle *In a Persian Garden*, at the turn of the twentieth century. In her essays, Smyth is disparaging about women songwriters, writing of 'the few women composers who have contrived to get their songs printed'.[15] This does not reflect the experience of many of her contemporaries whose songs were not only published but also far more widely distributed and heard than Smyth's own music. Lehmann's *In a Persian Garden*, for example, was issued in numerous editions and arrangements and was being heard in concert and on the radio well into the twentieth century.

In a Persian Garden, written for four voices and piano accompaniment, set Lehmann's own selection of passages from the Rubáiyát of the twelfth-century Persian poet Omar Khayyám, in the translation by Edward FitzGerald which was so popular at the end of the nineteenth century.[16] Lehmann produced a large-scale, continuous song cycle that falls into clearly defined sections linked by recurring themes. Most sections use the singers as soloists, but there are also a duet and four quartets. The solo vocal writing moves between recitative-like declamation and more lyrical song, accompanied by rich chromatic harmonies and expansive piano writing. Contemporary commentators were struck by what they saw as the modernity of Lehmann's harmonic language. Edward Dickinson wrote that she 'often exhibits a startling boldness in the use of dissonant harmonies'; he considered that 'occasionally she almost exceeds the bounds of the permissible'.[17] The musical language and unusual musical forces made it initially difficult for Lehmann to publish this work. But her friend Angelina Goetz, a musical salon hostess and herself a composer, arranged a performance which was favourably reviewed by Hermann Klein, music critic for the *Sunday Times*. The work was quickly taken up by musicians and by the publisher Metzler, rapidly reaching appreciative audiences throughout Britain and the United States. The critic Edwin Evans, writing seven years after the first performances, felt that 'its phenomenal success places it almost beyond the sphere of ordinary discussion'.[18]

Lehmann went on to create further successful song cycles as well as being commissioned by Frank Curzon to produce the score for a 'musical farce', *Sergeant Brue*, with a libretto by Owen Hall (pseudonym of James

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Davis) and lyrics by J. Hickory Wood. This was an undoubted success, playing in London for 290 performances between 1904 and 1905.[19] Her opera *Everyman* was staged at the Shaftesbury Theatre in December 1915 by the Beecham Opera Company in a double bill with Debussy's *Enfant Prodigue*.[20] By this time, Lehmann had fallen out of critical favour and one reviewer of the work dismissed its creator as a composer of 'songs and quartets touched with a pretty feminine grace, a charming sentiment, and a sense, if not of humour, at least of coquettish fun'.[21] *Everyman* is an austere and intense work which is long overdue a revival.

Maude Valérie White (1855–1937)

The composer Maude Valérie White also continued to create compelling music for several decades after the height of her success at the end of the nineteenth century, despite falling out of critical favour in the earlier twentieth century. White's song writing is notable for her ability to capture and distil the emotion she found in a wide variety of texts, in many different languages. But, as with her friend Lehmann, White's focus on song has ensured her absence from serious consideration (with a few exceptions).[22]

White did in fact compose music in genres other than song, including some incidental music, a ballet *The Enchanted Heart* (1912–13) and an unfinished opera. In 1898 she was commissioned by Henry Irving to write the incidental music for *The Medicine Man*, a 'melodramatic comedy' by White's close friend Robert Hichens and the journalist H. D. Traill, which received twenty-seven performances that year.[23] White did not enjoy the experience of composing for the stage:

> Oh, what agonies it is to write incidental music for a play! At every instant the orchestra was stopped and someone would say, even if they were playing pianissimo, 'We can't hear ourselves speak. Please take out all the wind instruments and put mutes on the violins.' No sooner had this been done than another objection was raised. 'Heavens! How dull it sounds! Isn't something wanting?' I felt inclined to rush out and say, 'Look here, if someone cut off your noses, and pulled out your teeth, all of you would also be rather less good-looking than you are now!'[24]

In their memoirs both Lehmann and Hichens remembered White at work on her opera, *Smaranda*. With typical self-deprecation, White recalled apropos the work's genesis:

> I had always longed to go to Roumania [*sic*], and in my youth had composed the greater part of an opera to a libretto founded on some of the stirring Roumanian

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ballads collected by Mademoiselle Helene Vacaresco under the title of 'Bard of the Dimbovitza'. The libretto – a really fine one – had been written for me by Alma Strettell, who translated these ballads into very beautiful English. But my knowledge of orchestration was not sufficient to enable me to write an opera, and much to my regret I had to abandon the idea.[25]

White spent many years working on the opera, and surviving manuscripts show not only that it has much to offer but that she came very close to finishing it.[26]

However, undoubtedly White was drawn almost exclusively to creating the single song, sometimes with several published together in groups, but never as song cycles. One of her most perfectly judged songs is her setting of Byron's lyric 'So We'll Go No More a Roving', published by Chappell in 1888. This song has a typically ambiguous harmonic structure, a haunting melody built with characteristic simplicity around the interval of a minor third, and a compelling rhythmic impulse. Passages of full chordal piano accompaniment, the use of decoration in the vocal line, rich harmonies using added sixths and sevenths or diminished sevenths, dramatic crescendos which suddenly cut down to *piano*, all add to the fervour that White poured into her work, creating a beautifully crafted and much-loved song.

While 'So We'll Go No More a Roving' has found its way into the repertoire of a few late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century singers,[27] other songs by White remain unheard, for example her stark and absorbing *Four Songs from Tennyson's In Memoriam* (1885), or her sultry and seductive D'Annunzio setting, 'Isaotta Blanzesmano' (1904). When the publisher Tito Ricordi heard this song, he described it as like an opium dream.[28] The languid, almost impressionistic quality of 'Isaotta Blanzesmano' was a departure for White, one which can be heard in later songs such as her setting of Verlaine's 'Le Foyer' (1924).[29] Stephen Banfield described this song as 'one of the few Debussy-like songs by an English composer'.[30]

White's songs were frequently heard in musical salons such as those hosted by patrons like the Speyers or Frank Leo Schuster. Some of Smyth's chamber works were also occasionally heard at these kinds of venues, although she does not seem to have appreciated the opportunities such occasions offered her.[31] However, for White and many other composers – women and men – these semi-private spaces offered vibrant and welcome opportunities for the performance of music that was not embraced by the musical mainstream.

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White also frequently organized public concerts of her own music. In 1905, for example, she put on a concert of her songs at London's Bechstein Hall. The performers who took part in this event reflect the esteem in which White was held by important figures in the British musical world; they included Percy Grainger and Roger Quilter as pianists, and the singers Gervase Elwes, Harry Plunket Greene, Robert Kennerley Rumford, Elsie Swinton, and Maude Warrender.[32] In her memoirs White noted that 'from a financial point of view it was one of the most successful concerts I ever gave in London'.[33] The reviewer for the *Times* summarized White's achievement as a composer:

> There are few composers of either sex whose fountain of melodic invention has flowed so freely for so long . . . The secret of her success is that she is at once passionate and sincere, and if her ideas, and the manner of their performance, sometimes suggest the clinging air of a hot-house they have much of its fragrance too.[34]

Cécile Chaminade (1857–1944)

A composer whose music was also frequently heard at musical salons and in private homes, as well as being cultivated in numerous American music clubs, was the Frenchwoman Cécile Chaminade, who was president of the British Society of Women Composers in 1914. Best known for her piano music, Chaminade was herself a pianist much in demand, performing her own works as part of her extensive concert tours. Like both Lehmann and White, Chaminade wrote music in genres other than songs and piano pieces. Her early output includes several orchestral works, such as her *Suite d'orchestre*, Op. 20 (1881), the symphonic ballet *Callirhoë*, Op. 37 (1888), the *Concertstück*, Op. 40 for piano and orchestra (1888), or the dramatic symphony *Les amazones* (1888).

Marcia J. Citron, largely through her analysis of gendered readings of Chaminade's choice of genre in her Piano Sonata, Op. 21 (1895), has clearly demonstrated the care and skill with which Chaminade crafted her music.[35] But despite (or maybe because of) her popularity, during her lifetime there were conflicting assessments of Chaminade's work, particularly in relation to the fact that she was a woman, and what was therefore expected of her music. For example, in 1901 the American critic Henry T. Finck wrote: 'Mlle Chaminade's face is said to have "a boyish look", and there is no specific feminine tenderness in her songs.'[36] Yet just over

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a decade later, the Canadian writer Florence Withrow described Chaminade as

> the counterpoint in femininity of the mannish little artist . . . [who] has always been petite, fluffy and befrilled . . . Her compositions are refined and delicate and display temperamental vivre such as characterizes the popular Scarf Dance and Flatterer. Although her writing comprises orchestral suites and a symphonic lyric and ballet, it will yet be classed chiefly as salon music.[37]

Such assessments show just how deeply embedded physical appraisal of a woman's appearance was (and indeed, it still is) in assessment of her musical work.

There is no doubt that, as a talented and engaging pianist, Chaminade was able to take every opportunity to programme and showcase her own music. In a similar way, White would accompany her songs, often improvising a much more complex and involved piano part. Lehmann, until she retired, would frequently sing her own songs, and after her retirement she would accompany other singers in her work.

Augusta Holmès (1847–1903)

Although she is now best remembered for her compositions in large-scale genres, Augusta Holmès was well known by her contemporaries for her participation as pianist and singer in musical salons in Paris. This is not surprising, as it was (and largely still is) for canonical genres such as opera, cantatas, or orchestral music that composers were judged as successful and indeed professional. As with Chaminade, commentators – both her contemporaries and those writing later in the twentieth century – focused on Holmès's appearance, often linking this to her music. Ethel Smyth, writing about Holmès nearly twenty years after her death, remembered that she had originally dismissed Holmès as a woman whose reputation was mainly based on 'songs and seduction'. On hearing her songs, Smyth changed her mind about the quality of Holmès's music, describing her as 'this girl' (Holmès was nearly ten years older than Smyth) 'who, electing to live the life of a Bohemian, was at the same time a poetess, a superb musician, a classical scholar, a patriot of the orthodox Irish type, and an all-round revolutionary'.[38] But even Smyth played into the obsession with Holmès's appearance, writing that she was 'physically entrancing . . . golden hair, dazzlingly fair skin, and beautiful grey eyes'. Holmès once said, 'I have the soul of a man in the body of a woman', an assessment that may have

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reassured critics who applauded what they saw as the 'virility' of her music, something they did not expect in music created by a woman.[39]

After her death in 1903 at the age of fifty-six, Holmès, like Smyth, became better known as an unconventional personality rather than for her music, which still remains little known or heard (although Holmès and her music have featured more than once in Radio 3's Composers of the Week, most recently alongside Henri Duparc).[40] Of Irish descent, she grew up in and near Paris, becoming a French citizen in 1871. Like most women from the middle and upper classes, she had been discouraged (in her case by her mother) from training as a musician, but studied privately; her composition tutors included César Franck. She was at the height of her success during the 1880s and 1890s, when she had numerous high-profile and well-reviewed performances of her orchestral and choral music in Paris and elsewhere in France.[41] These works included *Les argonautes*, for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra (1881); the symphonic poem *Irelande* (1885); and *Ludus pro patria*, a 'symphonic ode' for chorus and orchestra (1888). Holmès's fourth opera *La montagne noir*, written in 1884, was finally performed at the Paris Opera over a decade later, in 1895.

As Jann Pasler has shown, Holmès can justifiably be – and frequently was – regarded as a fiercely independent 'new woman'. Like Smyth, she did not marry her male lover (the writer Catulle Mendès). Unlike Smyth, however, she lived with her lover; and she had five children by him. Holmès and Mendès split in 1885 and it appears that he (and his sister) took care of the children and that he supported Holmès financially.[42]

Holmès's music is strongly narrative, often relating to fervent ideas about nationalism and patriotism. She wrote many of her own texts and libretti, setting them to robust and resolute music, often in large-scale, ambitious genres. Among her most ambitious large-scale works was her *Ode Triomphale*, written for the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris (marking the centenary of the French Revolution). This required 1,200 performers and lasted 90 minutes. Holmès not only wrote both words and music but also designed the sets and costumes. The work was a success, with the composer Camille Saint-Saëns writing: 'We needed more than a man to celebrate the Centenary; in the absence of a god impossible to encounter, the French Republic has found what it needed: a Muse!'[43]

Holmès's *La montagne noire* was her only opera to reach the stage and it did not receive the critics' approval in the same way as her orchestral and choral music. In her thought-provoking article about the work, examining ways of exploring female authorship, Karen Henson suggests that

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contemporary commentators were uneasy with the addition of exoticism to the nationalism for which Holmès had been previously praised.[44]

After Holmès's early death, the unsigned correspondent for the British newspaper, the *Globe*, recognized the acclaim with which she was held, while still regarding her music as unusual among the work of women composers for its strength and grandeur:

> Augusta Holmes [sic] held, I fancy, by tacit consent, in the musical world the first, position among the ranks of women composers. Her magnificent music, so grandiose, so simply strong, so unlike the usual productions of feminine composers, and the thrilling accompanying verses, which she wrote herself, were known all the world over.[45]

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)

The critical reception of the younger French composer Marie-Juliette (known as Lili) Boulanger and her music was, like that of Holmès, closely bound up with her physical presence; but in Boulanger's case it was and is seen through the lens of her tragic life story.[46] Boulanger was a musically talented child, born into a family of musicians. Despite extensive ill health, she worked hard to develop her strikingly individual musical voice, and in 1913 became the first woman to win the prestigious first prize in musical composition, the Prix de Rome.[47] The Prix de Rome, a scholarship for arts students, offered the winner the funding to stay and work in Rome for a period of three to five years. Boulanger also received the welcome offer of a publishing contract with Ricordi and the consequent regular income it provided.[48]

In their article on Boulanger published in 1930, Paul Landormy and Frederick Martens display a typical interpretation of Boulanger's work aesthetic, informed by their knowledge of her early death at the age of twenty-four: 'Her sojourn in Rome was a time of intensive production, and, incidentally, from that time until her last day she never ceased to produce with febrile haste, as though she feared that she would be unable to disclose all that her heart contained.'[49] In her diaries, as Caroline Potter has shown, while Boulanger frequently writes about her ill health, she also writes about her enjoyment of balls and parties.[50]

In her short life, Boulanger created a considerable number of memorable and striking musical works, such as the song cycle *Clairières dans le ciel* (Francis Jammes) for tenor or soprano and piano (1914), which has entered

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the repertoire in performance, or the heartfelt and inventive song 'Dans la immense tristesse' (Bertha Galeon de Calone) for alto and piano (1916). Potter suggests that this song 'has few parallels in the solo vocal literature as a study of despair'.[51] The voice (or voices) have a central role in Boulanger's output. She wrote numerous works on a more complex and larger scale than the song or song cycle, including her Prix de Rome winning cantata *Faust et Hélène* (Eugène Adenis) for mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, and orchestra (1913), or her lost opera *La princesse Maleine* (Maurice Maeterlinck).

Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979)

Seven years older than Boulanger, the British composer and viola player Rebecca Clarke had a very different (as well as much longer) life.[52] Clarke's father was American and she eventually settled in the United States, living long enough to see a renewed interest in her compositional work during the second wave of feminism in the 1970s.

Her compositional output is not large, and she composed almost nothing after the early 1940s, with most of her output appearing, whether published or not, in the 1920s. She produced no orchestral or large-scale choral or operatic works. However, her instrumental chamber works include several in mainstream genres, such as the sonata. This is doubtless one of the reasons, in addition to their sheer power and assurance, why music such as her Viola Sonata (1919) and Piano Trio (1921) have become established items, frequently recorded and heard on the concert platform.[53]

Clarke studied violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London from 1903 to 1905, followed by composition at the Royal College of Music, where she was Charles Stanford's first woman student.[54] Both periods of study were cut short by her autocratic father, who eventually threw her out of the family home. Clarke became a self-sufficient professional viola player. She was one of the first women string players to be taken into Henry Wood's Queen's Hall orchestra in 1912, and also worked extensively as a chamber music performer, often appearing with the cellist May Mukle (1880–1963).

Clarke's Viola Sonata and Piano Trio were both runners up in the American Berkshire Musical Festival of Chamber Music, sponsored by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.[55] In 1919, the panel judging had resulted in a draw between Clarke's Viola Sonata and Ernest Bloch's Suite for Viola and Piano. Bloch's Suite was deemed the winner. But, as Coolidge later told

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Clarke about her work, 'You should have seen the faces of the jury when it was revealed the composer was a woman.'[56]

Clarke's intimate knowledge of the viola's capabilities and possibilities is one of the factors making her Viola Sonata such an important part of the instrument's repertoire. From the dramatic, passionate, pentatonic opening, this is an assured and rewarding work. Despite Coolidge's interest,[57] Clarke received little support or encouragement for her compositions. Many of these are inventive songs, some of which have also found their way into the vocal repertoire. An example that has recently attracted analytical and critical attention is her haunting and evocative setting of 'The Seal Man' (Masefield, 1922).[58]

Amy Beach (1867–1944)

The American composer Amy Beach, like Clarke, Chaminade, and Lehmann, started her professional musical career as a performer, in her case as a pianist. She initially learned the piano from her mother, a gifted amateur pianist. Beach gave a few recitals at the age of seven, although her middle-class parents were not prepared to allow their daughter to continue this public exposure at such a young age or to train as a musician in Europe.[59] Instead, Beach took private lessons from teachers in Boston, where the family lived. As well as playing the piano she had started to compose and took some private lessons in harmony. In 1883, at the age of sixteen, Beach was allowed to make her public debut, an event that was followed by two more years of performing before her marriage to Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, a doctor and amateur singer, more than twenty years older than his wife.

Like Lehmann, Beach halted her performing career after her marriage, only giving occasional recitals for charity. Nonetheless, her husband encouraged her compositional work and she appeared in print as Mrs H. H. A. Beach. After Henry Beach's death in 1910, she resumed a public career as a pianist.

Meanwhile, however, Beach had established a considerable career and reputation as a composer. Her first work to appear in print had been a song, 'The Rainy Day' (Longfellow) that she had written as a teenager in 1880, and which was published by Oliver Ditson in 1883 under her maiden name of Amy Marcy Cheney. Her first work to be given an opus number was her collection of *Four Songs*, Op. 1, the first of which, 'With Violets' (Kate Vannah) was issued by Arthur P. Schmidt in 1885. This was the start of

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what was to become a valuable exclusive publishing relationship with Schmidt.

Beach's success and esteem as a composer grew following the premiere of her Gaelic Symphony in 1896 at Boston's Music Hall. After this event one of the leading American composers, also a Bostonian, George Chadwick, wrote to her:

> I want you to know how much . . . I enjoyed your symphony on Saturday evening. It is full of fine things, melodically, harmonically, and orchestrally, and mighty well built besides. I always feel a thrill of pride myself whenever I hear a fine work by any one of us, and as such you will have to be counted in, whether you will or not – one of the boys.[60]

As well as music in canonical genres, including her Mass for four voices and orchestra, Op. 5 (1890), the Violin Sonata, Op. 34 (1896), the Piano Concerto, Op. 45, and her Piano Quintet, Op. 67 (1907), Beach composed numerous successful and popular songs and piano pieces. Songs such as 'Ecstasy' (to her own words) from *Three Songs*, Op. 19 (1893), or 'The Year's at the Spring', from *Three Browning Songs*, Op. 44 (1900), sold very well. As Adrienne Fried Block put it, 'Song is at the core of her style.'[61]

Beach also wrote several character pieces, such as the complex and demanding Romance for violin and piano, Op. 23 (1893), dedicated to the American violinist Maud Powell. This work was premiered by Powell and Beach in 1893 at the Women's Musical Congress, which formed part of the grand World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Several other works by Beach were heard at the Congress, and one reviewer (writing in the *Boston Post*) fell into the familiar trope of surprise at her appearance: 'The composer . . . instead of being imposing and antique, was just a fresh-faced, pretty young woman, in a stylish gown, who didn't look a bit like the regulation genius!'[62]

Beach had also been commissioned to write an ode, initially for the dedication of the Woman's Building at the Exposition, but eventually not heard until the opening day concert at the Woman's Building in May 1893.[63] Beach's ode for chorus and orchestra, *Festival Jubilate* (Psalm 100), Op. 17, was programmed in that concert alongside the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Marsch* (1871) by the German composer Ingeborg von Bronsart (1840–1913), and the Dramatic Overture (first performed in 1886) by the British composer Rosalind Ellicott (1857–1924).[64]

In this age of the 'new woman', with challenges to accepted barriers, and celebration of women's achievements, concerts of music composed by women were a means of demonstrating the breadth of women's musical

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work. Another concert where music by Beach was performed, and at which all the works programmed were written by women, was the 'Woman in Music Grand Concert' given by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in 1901. Beach's works in that programme were her *Eilende Wolken* (Schiller) for alto and orchestra, Op. 18 (1892), and the 'Graduale' (tenor solo) from her Mass, Op. 5 (1890). Other works heard at the concert included an orchestral Ballade in D minor, Op. 35 (1901), by the American composer Margaret Ruthven Lang (1867–1972); Chaminade's *Concertstück* for piano and orchestra, Op. 40 (*c*. 1893), and her *Suite de Ballet*; and Lehmann's *In a Persian Garden*.[65]

Such considered promotion of music by women composers was not very common in this period. Among early British examples were the two concerts of piano pieces by women given by Jane Roeckel (who composed under the pseudonym Jules de Sivrai) in 1885, in connection with the Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries. The programmes, described by *The Monthly Musical Record* as 'full of interest', included music by Jules Brissac (pseudonym of Emma Macfarren), Fanny Hensel, Kate Loder, Elizabeth Philp, Clara Schumann, Alice Mary Smith, and Agnes Zimmermann.[66] In Britain after 1911 the Society of Women Musicians gave regular concerts of music composed by its members. The first such concert, in 1912, included songs by Lucie Johnstone (*c*. 1860–1925), who wrote as 'Lewis Carey', Marion Scott, and Maude Valérie White; a vocal trio with piano quartet, *Autumn Leaves* (1909) by Katherine Eggar; the first two movements of Ethel Smyth's string quartet (1902–12); the Phantasy Trio, Op. 26, for two violins and piano (1911) by Ethel Barns (1874–1948);[67] and a vocal intermezzo, *In Sherwood Forest*, by Lehmann.[68]

Writing in the first decades of the twenty-first century, it is heartening to see that the work of so many women who were creating music in the period between 1880 and 1920 is starting to be heard again, although much still remains unheard. The music and the women who created it have begun to be given scholarly consideration, and much of the music is being both recorded and performed on the concert platform or in the opera house. However, notably, it is composers such as Beach, Boulanger, Clarke, Holmès, or Smyth, who, while they were drawn to the human voice and song, or the short piano piece, also created works in canonical genres that were heard in public spaces and that most clearly enabled their creators to be seen as professional composers worthy of a place in the mainstream, who have most readily been remembered, heard, and investigated. These composers had battles to fight in order to gain a hearing for their work, and

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they had to contend with being seen on the one hand as ‘one of the boys’, or on the other hand simply as never able to be as good as any of the boys.

It seems harder to find a place, whether in scholarship or in performance, for composers such as Chaminade, Lehmann, or White, who achieved resounding success, both critical and financial, and were extremely popular for much of their careers, while concentrating on smaller genres such as the solo song or short piano piece, often working within the liminal but significant performance space of the musical salon.

Influence on other composers is another marker of the accepted, mainstream composer, and most women composers of these generations are seen as working in a vacuum. Yet in many cases there are connections that can be acknowledged. The influence of White’s music can be heard in the work of many later British songwriters, such as Roger Quilter or Ralph Vaughan Williams, an area of research which still awaits detailed study. Scott Goddard ventured a remark in this direction: ‘From Maude Valérie White to Roger Quilter the line of influence stretches, thin but taut’; and Trevor Hold pointed to the admiration of both those composers for White’s songs.[69] Lehmann was one of the few women to acknowledge the inspiration she felt from the example of other women composers, writing in her memoirs:

> I always had within me a yearning to write music . . . and, as time went on, this yearning grew stronger and stronger until it could be gainsaid no longer, and I simply worshipped at the shrine of any woman who wrote music. Maude Valérie White, Marie Wurm, Chaminade – they seemed to me goddesses![70]

Further Reading

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Listening

Lili Boulanger. Clairières dans le ciel, Les Sirènes, Renouveau, Soir sur la plaine, Hymne au Soleil, Pour les funérailles d’un soldat, Martyn Hill (tenor), Andrew Ball (piano), New London Chamber Choir cond. James Wood, Hyperion: CDH55153 (1996).

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Her Voice: Piano Trios by Farrenc, Beach and Clarke. Neave Trio, Chandos: CHAN20139 (2019).

Augusta Holmès. 'La Nuit et L'Amour', interlude from Ludus pro Patria *on* La Nuit étoilée: Hector Berlioz, Augusta Holmès, Orchestre Pasdeloup cond. Wolfgang Doerner, Gramola: B09DJCGXPX (2021).

Notes

1. On first wave feminism see Valerie Sanders, 'First Wave Feminism' in Sarah Gamble, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2001).
2. See *The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights*, ed. Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Netina Tan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).
3. On the 'new woman' see Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 1–14.
4. See Chapter 4.
5. See Sophie Fuller, 'The Society of Women Musicians', *Discovering Music: Early 20th Century*, British Library website, www.bl.uk/20th-century-music/articles/the-society-of-women-musicians; and Orietta Caianiello, 'The Emancipation of Female Musical Writing in Post-Victorian England. From Song-Cycles to Fantasies: The Society of Women Musicians', in *Women Composers in New Perspectives, 1800–1950: Genres, Contexts and Repertoire*, ed. Mariateresa Storino and Susan Wollenberg (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023), 181–99.
6. On Marion Scott, see Pamela Blevins, *Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott, Song of Pain and Beauty* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008).
7. 'Some notes taken at the Inaugural Meeting of the SWM', annotated typescript. Papers relating to the Society of Women Musicians, Royal College of Music Library Archives, London: 177–013 and 177–027.
8. The only women composers Smyth names in her volumes of memoirs and essays are Augusta Holmès and Dorothy Howell. See Ethel Smyth, *A Final Burning of Boats Etc.* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1928), 126–36, and 49. On Howell, as well as Smyth, see Leah Broad, *Quartet: How Four Women Changed the Musical World* (London: Faber & Faber, 2023).
9. Smyth and Brewster created an opera with a French libretto in the hope of achieving a production from André Messager, rumoured to be the new manager of the Royal Opera House in London and attracting the singer Emma Calvé to the lead role.
10. This performance, conducted by the Smyth champion Odaline de la Martinez, was issued as a CD: Conifer Classics: 75605 51250 2 (1994).
11. This production, a Bard SummerScape Opera directed by Thaddeus Strassberger, is available on YouTube: https://youtu.be/3mIyT62cBA4.

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12. J. A. Fuller-Maitland, *A Door-keeper of Music* (London: John Murray, 1929), 248.
13. Among ground-breaking work by the leading Smyth scholar Elizabeth Wood, see 'Sapphonics', in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. D. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 27–66; 'Performing Rights: A Sonography of Women's Suffrage', *The Musical Quarterly*, 79/1 (1995), 606–43, and 'On Deafness and Musical Creativity: The Case of Ethel Smyth', *ibid.*, 92/1–2 (2009), 33–69. Smyth is featured in Broad, *Quartet: How Four Women Changed the Musical World*. See also Chapter 5 in this volume for reference to the work of other Smyth scholars, including Elizabeth Kertesz, Christopher Wiley, and Amy Zigler.
14. Liza Lehmann, *The Life of Liza Lehmann, by Herself* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1919); Maude Valérie White, *Friends and Memories* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914) and *My Indian Summer* (London: Grayson & Grayson, 1932).
15. Smyth, *A Final Burning of Boats*, 13.
16. See Donald Read, *England 1868–1914: The Age of Urban Democracy* (London: Longman, 1979), 276, and Dick Davis, introduction to Edward FitzGerald, *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (London: Penguin, 1989), 1–2.
17. Edward Dickinson in *The Musician*, quoted in Lehmann, *Liza Lehmann*, 86.
18. Edwin Evans, 'Modern British Composers: Liza Lehmann', *The Musical Standard*, xx (17 October 1903), 243.
19. Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre 1865–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1986), vol. 1, 866–7.
20. J. P. Wearing, *The London Stage 1910–1919: A Calendar of Plays and Players* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982), vol. 1, 606.
21. Anon., 'A New "Everyman"', *Times* (29 December 1915), 11.
22. See, for example, Sydney Northcote, *Byrd to Britten: A Survey of English Song* (London: John Baker, 1966), 96, or Ronald Pearsall, *Edwardian Popular Music* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1975), 84 and 105.
23. J. P. Wearing, *The London Stage 1890–1899: A Calendar of Plays and Players* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976), vol. 2, 732–3.
24. White, *Friends and Memories*, 373.
25. White, *My Indian Summer*, 267.
26. The manuscripts are held at the Royal Academy of Music (London) Library: Rare Book Collection: 178091–7.
27. See, for example Felicity Lott (soprano) and Graham Johnson (piano) on *Favourite English Songs* (Chandos: CHAN 8722, 1990).
28. White, *My Indian Summer*, 93.
29. 'Le Foyer' is the first of *Two Songs*, published by Chappell in 1924. The second is 'La flûte invisible' (Victor Hugo).
30. Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 6.

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31. On the Speyers and Schuster, see Sophie Fuller, 'Elgar and the Salons: The Significance of a Private Musical World', in Byron Adams, ed., *Edward Elgar and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 223–47. For Smyth writing disparagingly about a performance of her *Songs* at a Schuster salon, see her letter to Percy Pitt, 24 March 1908. British Library, *Percy Pitt Papers*, Egerton 3306, f. 78.
32. Greer, *A Numerous and Fashionable Audience*, 73.
33. White, *My Indian Summer*, 119.
34. *Times* (4 December 1905), 11.
35. See Citron, *GMC*, 145–59. For an alternative reading of Chaminade's work, while equally assigning significance to its qualities, see Susan Wollenberg, '"New Paths to Analysis": The Case of Women Composers', in *L'Analyse musicale aujourd'hui / Music Analysis Today*, ed. Xavier Hascher, Mondher Ayari, and Jean-Michel Bardez (Sampzon: Delatour, 2015), 291–312.
36. H. T. Finck, *Songs and Songwriters* (London: John Murray, 1901), 226.
37. Florence Withrow, 'Women of France (Concluded)', *The Public Health Journal*, 6/7 (July 1915), 341.
38. Smyth, *A Final Burning of Boats*, 127.
39. Jann Pasler, 'The Ironies of Gender, or Virility and Politics in the Music of Augusta Holmès', *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 2 (1998), 7.
40. BBC Radio 3, 'Composers of the Week', 6–10 June 2022.
41. Jann Pasler, 'The Ironies of Gender', 5. On Holmès, see also Karen Henson, 'Holmès [Holmes], Augusta', *GMO*.
42. Pasler, 'The Ironies of Gender', 8.
43. Quoted in Karen Henson, 'In the House of Disillusion: Augusta Holmes [sic] and "*La Montagne noire*"', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9/3 (1997), 239.
44. Henson, 'In the House of Disillusion', 258.
45. Unsigned, 'Paris Notes. Augusta Holmès', *Globe* (31 January 1903), 5.
46. On Boulanger, see Annegret Fauser and Robert Orledge, 'Boulanger, (Marie-Juliette Olga) Lili', *GMO*.
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48. Annegret Fauser, '"La princesse Maleine": A Composer and Her Heroine as Literary Icons', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 122 (1997), 68–108, at 71.
49. Paul Landormy and Frederick H. Martens, 'Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)', *Musical Quarterly*, 16/4 (October 1930), 512–13.
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51. Potter, *Nadia and Lili Boulanger*, 109.
52. On Clarke, see *A Rebecca Clarke Reader*, ed. Liane Curtis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), Broad, *Quartet*, and *Rebecca Clarke: Viola Player and Composer – The Official Website*, https://rebeccaclarkecomposer.com/.
53. See Liane Curtis, 'Rebecca Clarke and Sonata Form: Questions of Gender and Genre', *Musical Quarterly*, 81 (1997), 393–42.
54. For Clarke's fascinating life story see Liane Curtis, 'A Case of Identity', *Musical Times* (May 1996), 15–21.
55. On Coolidge see Cyrilla Barr, 'A Style of Her Own: The Patronage of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge', in *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists since 1860*, ed. Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 185–203, and Cyrilla Barr, 'The Musicological Legacy of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge', *Journal of Musicology*, 11/2 (1993), 250–68.
56. Quoted in Stephen Banfield, '"Too Much of Albion"? Mrs. Coolidge and Her British Connections', *American Music*, 4 (1986), 59–88, 9.
57. In 1923 Coolidge commissioned Clarke's Rhapsody for Cello and Piano.
58. See Broad, *Quartet*, especially 242–3, and 256–8.
59. For an extensive and illuminating account of Beach's career and music, see Adrienne Fried Block, *Amy Beach. Passionate Victorian: The Life and Work of an American Composer 1867–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
60. Quoted in Block, *Amy Beach*, 103.
61. Adrienne Fried Block and E. Douglas Bomberger, 'Beach [Cheney], Amy Marcy', *GMO*.
62. Quoted in Block, *Amy Beach*, 83.
63. For the full story, see Block, *Amy Beach*, 77–85, and Ann E. Feldman, 'Being Heard: Women Composers and Patrons at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition', *Notes*, 47 (1990), 7–20.
64. On Bronsart, see James Deaville, 'Bronsart [née Starck], Ingeborg (Lena) von', *GMO*; on Ellicott, see Sophie Fuller, 'Women Musicians and Professionalism in the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries', in *The Music Profession in Britain, 1870–1920: New Perspectives on Status and Identity*, ed. Rosemary Golding (London: Routledge, 2018), 157–61.
65. Block, *Amy Beach*, 175. Chaminade's *Suite de Ballet* was presumably the four-movement suite from her *ballet symphonique*, *Callirhoë* (1888).
66. *Monthly Musical Record* (May 1885), 116. Ten years later the journal was reporting a concert held in Denmark in which the music was played and composed entirely by women; see *Monthly Musical Record* (November 1895), 260.
67. Ethel Barns, a professional violinist as well as composer, frequently programmed and performed her own works, which included five violin sonatas, and a *Concertstúck* for violin and orchestra premiered at the

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Promenade Concerts in 1907. Her Phantasy Trio was commissioned by W. W. Cobbett for the Musicians' Company.

68. Unsigned, 'Musical Doings', *The Queen* (3 February 1912), 56. See also, Fuller, 'Society of Women Musicians'.
69. Scott Goddard, 'The Art of Roger Quilter', *The Chesterian*, 6 (1925), 216; Trevor Hold, *The Walled-In Garden: A Study of the Songs of Roger Quilter (1877–1953)* (Rickmansworth: Triad Press, 1978), 12.
70. Lehmann, *Liza Lehmann*, 23. Marie Wurm (1860–1938) came from a family of Bavarian musicians who had settled in Southampton. She studied music in Germany and Britain, winning the Mendelssohn scholarship for composition in 1884. In the 1890s she moved to live and work in Germany where, among other activities, she established a women's orchestra. See Sophie Fuller, 'Women Composers during the British Musical Renaissance, 1880–1918', PhD diss. (King's College, London University, 1998), 89.

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