

Afterword

As can be seen throughout the pages of this book the history of women, after being accorded their rightful respect as caregivers and lifebringers in very early societies, settled into a consistent saga of subjugation based on the obvious: that most men are physically stronger than [most] women. As civilization progressed beyond clubbing and hair-pulling, humanity's built-in awe of unseen powers and fear of death evolved into the formidable domination of the Catholic Church with its dictates and indulgences. The process of female subjugation reached an epitome with the brand of Christianity Jesus never had in mind: *chastity* or *chattel*. Very few women had a choice. Only daughters of the upper classes could enter a convent, and many unwanted or unmarriageable girls of noble families were thrown into cloisters, or served as a tithe. The virtues of unrealistic celibacy, long hours, menial work and self-denial were the trade-off for the independence of not being a man's physical property. In the secular aristocratic world, marriages were arranged for advantageous political alliances and heir breeding. Women lived by rules laid down by men as to what was "ladylike" and, for the most part, had little option but to believe in modesty, humility and the inferiority of their sex.

Since tyranny usually breeds rebellion, and as the Renaissance unleashed emotions, women strained at their leashes despite their gender brainwashing—which lingers even into the 21st century. Strong wives intellectually overcame weak husbands and managed to wield influence within the confines of the bonds of matrimony. Money equals power, and many wealthy women used theirs to the benefit of the arts. The Industrial Revolution (1760–1830), the rising middle class, and women entering the work force were all factors in fostering fledgling forms of female independence. It has, of course, taken centuries to get to the serious business of "Women's Liberation," begun in America in the 1960s. The process was far from unanimous, with the majority of women reluctant to leave their main "comfort zone" of those times, the traditional housewife-mother roles. However, as more women ventured into the workplace, that second income which once provided luxuries has unfortunately, in today's economy, become a necessity—to the detriment of "latchkey" children who come home from school to empty houses. Over four decades later, "emancipated" women are still fighting for equal pay for equal work or, with the erosion of moral values, struggling as single mothers to bring up children without a second breadwinner or father figure. Their challenges are chronicled in the mounting statistics of drug abuse, AIDS, and juvenile crime, amongst other pandemic societal decay.

This book, being about music, has obviously focused on women who have made their mark in this field. Music, however, like all the arts, is a telling reflection in the social mirror, and cannot be separated from the course of history. Music is its own magnetic force affecting entire civilizations and generations. Divided in the past into church, secular or folk music, it has evolved into classical or "popular." Popular, in turn, has branched from ragtime to jazz and blues, to big band, romantic croon tunes, to country western, rock and rap, the latter proliferating into degenerate "heavy metal" and "gangsta rap," whose foulmouthed lyrics complete a vicious cycle of denigrating women.

Meanwhile, classical music is engaged in a continuous survival contest—witness the *one* classical station on the radio dial (in fortunate areas) versus the profusion of other blarings. Signs of the times are the attrition of symphony orchestras and the graying of concert audiences—not so much in Europe—versus the staggering salaries of rock "stars" and stadiums filled to capacity for live rock concerts. There remains, however, a

loyal nucleus dedicated to the durability of “great” music. In performance, prodigies continue to appear and amaze, with many of Asian descent setting their work ethic example for the younger generation of other ethnic groups. In composition, just as the 1920s began “shocking” audiences with the strange sounds of the twelve-tone scale, atonalism, minimalism and serialism, the ’70s opened the era of electronic and other experimental dissonance. Inevitably, the purse of the audience tends to dictate what remains popular in every artistic field.

Now, in the 21st century, the trend appears to be settling for something vaguely blanketed as *Neo-Romantic*, which covers anything short of the out and out bizarre. What is bizarre is also relative. Beethoven was “bizarre” as he forged out of the Classical into the Romantic Period. Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* outraged Parisians of 1913, who threw vegetables *et al* at the musicians. Many beloved operas, symphonies and concerti received negative criticism at their premieres. Only time will show which newer cream will rise to the top and stay there.

The flip side, however, is the issue of how much *women’s* music is actually performed. Today, this still needs to become part of major orchestra repertoire,²⁶⁵ and should be played with regularity on classical stations to create listener familiarity, and therefore a demand for CDs and live performances. This has yet to happen.

A common cliché has been that, ideally, one should not be able to tell if a piece of music has been written or performed—on a recording—by a man or a woman. Yet a whole new line of musicology has sprung forth detailing *gender*, or *why* a woman writes as she does *because* of her gender. Women have always had the responsibility of perpetuating tradition. It is their challenge to remold the past into a future that holds justice and enlightenment for their sex.

While there are more opportunities for women in all fields of music today, it is evident that they are far from equal, especially on the podium, where the physical aspect of a woman wielding a stick over a group of (still) mostly male musicians is something society—and the male musicians—are as yet having trouble getting used to, especially in Europe, the prime example being the 97 percent all-male Vienna Philharmonic who for *twenty-seven years* denied full membership to their one female harpist. It is in the music *industry*, women have truly found their niche, dealing with performers, whether in the role of agent, orchestra/opera company manager, or in the recording or publishing business, etc.

The closest to equality is in the teaching field—long a women’s domain. Musicologists have won major prizes and produced significant books and articles on all aspects of music, with an ever-growing vital concentration on feminine subject matter. The pioneer books, *The Musical Woman* (3 Vols. 1983–90, eds., **Judith Zaimont, Jane Gottlieb &c**), *Women Making Music* (1987 eds., **Jane Bowers and Judith Tick**), *Women and Music* (1991 ed. **Karin Pendle**), *Women in Music* (1996 ed. **Carol Neuls-Bates**), each contain ground-breaking essays of great enlightenment on their subjects. The much-awaited *Norton-Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* edited by **Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel** (1995), is a fine research resource. *Music and Women* (1948!) by **Sophie Drinker** was the real forerunner of books written by a single author. Over thirty years later came *Unsung* (1980, revised 2001), by **Christine Ammer**, *Women Composers, Conductors and Musicians of the 20th Century* (3 Vols. 1980-88) by **Jane Weiner LePage**, *Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found* (1988), by the late **Diane Peacock Jezic**, *The Pandora Guide to Women in Music* (1994) by **Sophie Fuller**, *Women and Music in America Since 1900*, a two volume encyclopedia covering all styles of music, edited by **Kristine Burns** (2002), and *From Convent to Concert Hall—A Guide to Women Composers* (2003), written in formal scholastic style, edited by **Sylvia Glickman and Martha Furman Schleifer**.

My research for the two comprehensive chapters on women composers and conductors in my first book, *The Popular Guide to Classical Music* (1993), was my eye opener on the accomplishments of women in these genres, and provided the seed ground for *The WORLD of WOMEN in Classical Music*. This book attempts to

265. The 2006 statistic was still a pitiful 2 percent!

put a spotlight not just on the “stars,” but the multitude of women who conduct regional or community orchestras, sing in opera choruses, churches and synagogues, play their instruments in other than Carnegie Hall, and whose compositions reach select audiences in smaller venues. They and the musicologists who pass on their knowledge in the academia and in print, plus those involved in the “business” of music, as well as the patronesses, fundraisers and countless volunteers who stuff envelopes in symphony offices, and usher in the concert hall, form the vast network of women who, along with their male counterparts, help keep classical music alive and thriving in its own worldwide sphere.

Despite the still bleak lot of women in the few primitive societies left on our shrinking planet, who endure tortures such as declitorization and other atrocities in Africa and India, where women are routinely murdered when their husbands tire of them, as well as the gross plunge backwards enforced by Muslim nations who have once again veiled and thrust women into medieval bondage, irrevocable seeds have been sown to forge a future which will shed and shred the *manmade* rules and roles that have shackled women to traditions of the past.

The real resolution is that unique feminine characteristics should *complement* rather than *compete* with the best of masculine traits. The true ideal is that women be recognized, respected and equally compensated for their talent and ability in *every* field of endeavor!

Anne Gray, PhD
Christmas, 2006