"WHENCE COMES THE LADY TYMPANIST?" GENDER AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSICIANS IN AMERICA, 1853–1990

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At the turn of the century, women's roles moved from the domestic to the public sphere. Historians of the Progressive Era have documented this emergence, describing the suffragists' fight for political rights and the college-educated "new women," who eschewed or postponed marriage to forge careers and play leading roles as social scientists and reformers. They have also described the clubwoman's application of a more cautious "domestic feminism" to problems of women, families and workers, as well as the activities of Progressive Era women who gained new prominence as patrons and "apostles of culture."[1]

Developments in music followed similar patterns as performers moved from the parlor to the concert hall,[2] but the accomplishments of women instrumental musicians are not widely known.[3] This is unfortunate, since their achievements were considerable. At the turn of the century, violinist Maud Powell toured the country and was widely recognized as one of the preëminent violinists of her day. Julie Rivé-King and Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler were similarly accepted as pianists worthy of comparison with Anton Rubinstein and Ignace Paderewski. Women's orchestras flourished during the 1920s and 1930s, and in 1925 Ethel Leginska made her American conducting debut with the New York Symphony Orchestra, a group comprised almost exclusively of men.[4]

But the acclaim for these individuals and groups obscures the fact that in music, as in other fields of endeavor, success was shaped and defined by gender expectations. As we shall see, for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women instrumentalists could succeed as public performers only on certain musical instruments; they were not likely to be accepted in most symphony orchestras; and very few women have held major posts as conductors. Even though music programs expanded rapidly in the public schools after 1900, women rarely achieved prominence as instrumental music teachers; and the discomfort of male music teachers with girls in the marching band has often shunted girls into baton-twirling and flag-waving. The likelihood that women would play particular musical instruments did not change significantly between the late nineteenth century and the 1980s. In short, the gender expectations that defined and limited women's musical participation at the turn of the century are, for the most part, still in place one hundred years later.

When the young ladies of Madison Female College gave a concert in 1853, John Dwight of *Dwight's Journal of Music* was there to document the novel event. He took pianists, guitarists and harpists in stride, but expressed shock at "13 young lady violinists(!), 1 young lady violist(!!), 4 violöncellists(!!!) and 1 young lady contrabassist(!!!!)."[5] As the rising chorus of exclamation marks shows, Dwight's tolerance was in inverse proportion to the size of the instrument. Dwight's reaction was characteristic of his time. The fact that the young ladies were playing music was not the problem. His discomfort arose because these women went beyond the narrow range of what was considered their proper musical place by

playing instruments that contemporary audiences were unaccustomed to seeing played by women.

There is irony in the restrictive views of Dwight and his contemporaries about women performing music, since many nineteenth-century writers endowed music with the same qualities as those imputed to women. In the words of one late nineteenth-century author and critic, music was the "interpreter and the language of the emotions.... It inspires, ... saddens, cheers, and soothes the soul ... and performs its loftiest homage as the handmaid of religion."[6] In much the same vein, the nineteenth-century woman was expected to be gentle and refined, "guardian of religion, inspiration to man, bestower of care and love."[7] The medical orthodoxy of the time enhanced this notion, asserting that in females, the nervous system and emotions prevailed over rational faculties, and that it was "inherent in their very being" to "display more affect than men."[8] Hence respectable opinion held that women had a special gift for music. But professional public performance of music required self-assertion, tight control of one's nerves, and pursuit of a career in a competitive milieu already dominated by men—all qualities widely thought suspect in women. Countertenors notwithstanding, women were irreplaceable and therefore widely accepted as vocal performers. Public instrumental performance, however, remained highly problematic and hedged about with restrictions.

At the time Dwight wrote, only certain musical instruments were considered socially acceptable for women, namely keyboard instruments, the guitar, and the harp. Their volume was relatively soft and delicate sounding, and the melody was in a high range, corresponding to the soprano voice.[9] The posture the lady assumed while playing was natural and graceful; she did not have to sit awkwardly or distort her features. She could usually remain seated while playing and perform adequately without much physical exertion. And since these instruments provided both a melody and harmony line, she could pursue music as a solitary pastime, without the need for an accompanist. When women played other instruments, they made themselves vulnerable to sarcasm and ridicule. As one critic noted in *Musical America* in 1906, "For the sake of the veneration in which all women should be held it is to be hoped that none of them will follow the suggestion of [Sidney] Lanier and take to playing the trombone, the French horn, or the gigantic Sousaphone for, as Byron once said: 'seeing the woman you love at table is apt to dispel all romance.' And seeing a woman get red in the face blowing into a brass instrument is just as likely to prove an unpleasant shock.... "[10] It was important that women always appear delicate and decorative; to appear otherwise by playing a massive or "awkward" instrument challenged accepted notions of what was appropriately female.

Not surprisingly, the piano was the first instrument to be seen on the concert stage with a woman soloist. The sight of a woman playing a keyboard instrument was hardly startling; reviewers, however, were unaccustomed to seeing a woman display the strength and mastery required of a soloist, and invariably compared the style and tone of the performance to that of a man. Men, of course, were believed to be stronger and more vigorous than women. They had greater respiratory power and greater muscular superiority. According to one source, they were better able to "discipline their strength," making their movements "more precise than those of women. Thus men make the best pianists."[11] An 1898 review

of pianist Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler, who received almost universally positive notices, stated: "The wonder of the little woman is that she can be both woman and man in the illustration of her art.... The marvel of her playing is that she commands so much virtuoso strength with such an abundance of feminine delicacy and subtlety of expression."[12] A 1906 review of a performance by pianist Minnie Coons remarked that "slight stages of virility in the fortissimo movement undoubtedly enhanced the refreshing delicacy of her pianissimo touch."[13] Pianist Olga Samaroff, who concertized extensively in Europe and America from 1905 to 1925, observed: "During all the years of my career as a woman pianist at least eighty percent of my press reviews either stated that I played like a man, or alluded to my playing like a woman. When the critic said I played like a woman, it meant that he did not like me at all."[14]

Another gender-based theme that emerges from contemporary reviews is the extent to which certain composers, such as Beethoven or Grieg, impressed critics as being particularly masculine, and therefore more difficult for a woman to interpret. At the turn of the century it was becoming increasingly difficult to understand what it meant to "be a man." The concept of "manliness" was being challenged both at home and in the workplace, and men—as well as women—felt threatened by proposed reforms.[15] In this context the idea of a woman musician interpreting the work of a male composer was a particular concern, especially when the music of the composer expressed massiveness and strength. A 1900 observer was typical: "Last Saturday's performance of the [Grieg] Concerto by Mrs. Bloomfield-Zeisler was indeed a wonder! Strange too, in one way, for Grieg was one of the most ... masculine of men, and Mrs. Bloomfield-Zeisler pushes femininity of conception and feeling to extremes; she is not only a woman all through, but seems tacitly to acknowledge and glory in it; she never attempts to ape virility. But herein lay the rare perfection of the situation; in the singular capacity of the very feminine woman of Southern blood for doing full justice to the work of the entirely masculine Northern man.... "[16] Music by other composers, most notably Chopin, was usually more delicate-sounding, and thus considered to express more feminine emotions; reviewers did not comment in a similar way when a man performed a piece by Chopin.

The other solo instrument that gradually became acceptable for women to perform publicly was the violin. In addition to its physical virtues—it was light in weight, had a high range, and did not require distortion of facial features—two other factors contributed to its emergence. First, several young violin prodigies began performing in America and paved the way for female soloists. The most publicized was Camilla Urso, who toured parts of North America in 1853, when she was 11 years old. Reviews of her performances were uniformly positive, and her visibility did much to alter the image of the "appropriateness" of the violin as an instrument for females.[17] Maud Powell, the noted American violinist who concertized in the early 1900s, said that she knew she wanted to be a violinist after she saw and heard Camilla Urso play.[18] A second source of support for female violinists was the enlightened attitude of Julius Eichberg, the violinist and teacher who founded the Boston Conservatory of Music in 1867. The Conservatory allowed both sexes to study violin, and contemporary sources frequently comment on successful performances by female violinists who studied there.[19] The visibility of prodigies such as Urso, and of the Boston Conservatory students

who then became performers and teachers, made it possible for the public to see performances by females. Even so, some early reviews of female violinists did question the appropriateness of the instrument. An 1878 reviewer, for example, complained: "A violin seems an awkward instrument for a woman, whose well-formed chin was designed by nature for other purposes than to pinch down this instrument into position."[20] As with accounts of piano performances, reviewers almost invariably used gender-related stereotypes to describe the performances, assuming strength, energy and dignity to be masculine virtues and expressing surprise to find them in a woman performer. Maud Powell's style was "full of masculine power and of superb spirit ... her entire handling of the movement was devoid of anything tentative or timid"[21] or Florence Austin's "most marked characteristic is a certain reserve force, a strength and dignity that are masculine rather than feminine. Nevertheless she possesses all the grace and delicacy that are so distinctly a part of the successful woman violinist, but she combines with these a dignity and repose that could never mistake hysteria for temperament or an emotional spasm for abandon.... "[22] An early twentieth-century publicity poster for violinist Maud Powell announces: "The arm of a man; the heart of a woman; the head of an artist."[23] The successful woman performer was one who could play like a man—but not appear unfeminine.

The careers of many women violinists began as child prodigies, and some observers found it easier to accept female soloists if they were children; the emotions they expressed were safe. Contemporary reviews of girl child prodigies contrast "mature passion" with the child-like innocence expressed in their performances. "Such music has not the stuff of manhood or womanhood in it" remarked an observer of an 1852 performance by Camilla Urso. "It has not actual passion, either of love or ambition ... it is fantastic, fairy-like, belonging to other wondering instincts of child geniuses." A reviewer of a performance by young Lenora Jackson in 1900 felt that her "conception of the composition was pure and bright as her own girlish self."[24] It was easier for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century audiences to accept expressions of passion and mastery from a child than from a grown woman.

During this period, as each new profession became open to women, fresh theories were developed as to why the feminine mind and nature were innately suited to the task. Teaching allowed women to nurture children; social work and nursing gave women an opportunity to express their inborn capacity for sympathy and compassion.[25] So it was with violin playing; as women violinists became more common, reviewers began to describe it as not only an acceptable but even an appropriate and noble pursuit for women. Critics emphasized the emotive qualities of the instrument with the implication that females, as emotional creatures, might be among its finest interpreters: "The instrument [is] justly considered to be most preëminently suited to woman because [of] its lightness, its form, the natural grace required in its treatment, but, above all, because of the deep poetry of its tones, its emotional qualities and its sympathetic appeals."[26]

Once the violin became acceptable, the door was open for other stringed instruments as well. At the turn of the century the cello was just beginning to evolve as a solo instrument in its own right and no longer merely the bass line for other melodic instruments. Composers like David Popper and George

Goltermann wrote showy pieces for the cello; and new performers, most notably Pablo Casals, who made his first tour of North America in 1901–02, demonstrated its technical and emotional capabilities. The obvious impediment to its acceptance for women was physical: anything held between the legs—whether horse, bicycle or cello—engendered discussion as to its suitability for women. Before the mid-1800s, viols and cellos were held steady between the knees or calves. Around 1860, however, the end-pin (a sharp, pointed rod extending from the bottom of the instrument) became standard equipment on the cello. While this did not evolve in response to women's concerns, the result made the cello more acceptable for women, since by anchoring it to the floor a woman could play "side-saddle" and still maintain a decorous pose. One cello methods book, published in 1898, described the side-saddle position in great detail. Yet even this restriction faded fairly quickly as more active pastimes became acceptable for women, as well as new styles of dress which allowed more freedom of movement.[27] The third edition of the same book, published in 1915, states that by then almost all women were placing the instrument between their knees because that position "brings the instrument under more complete control. The other methods, which were considered more graceful, have become almost obsolete on account of the obvious disadvantages."[28]

Since the cello did not have a long history as a man's solo instrument, public acceptance of women soloists was almost immediate. Turn-of-the-century music periodicals describe the solo performances of a number of young women cellists. Leontine Gaertner, Elsa Ruegger, A. Laura Tolman, and others performed regularly for an appreciative public. There were occasional derisive references, such as a 1902 *Boston Eagle* review which described Elsa Reugger as "a winsome lass" who played with an artistic expression and grace "not often commanded by women who have to hold a baritone violin with their knees,"[29] but such comments were definitely the exception.

Largely because of the absence of facial contortion, for a long time the flute was the only blown instrument considered socially acceptable for women. The flute embrouchure (the way the lips make contact with the mouthpiece) allows the player to form a pout and blow much as one would make a sound by blowing into the mouth of a soft drink bottle. This is very different from the process of forcing air through the thin reed of the clarinet, oboe or bassoon, which results in tightly pursed lips and possibly a flushed face. It also differs significantly from blowing into the mouthpiece of a brass instrument, which necessitates pressing the cup-like mouthpiece directly against the partially open mouth. As a reviewer in the *American Art Journal* commented approvingly in 1880, "The unusual sight of a lady playing such an instrument did not strike people as strange as we thought it would be. She ... avoids the ugly contortions of the lips.... Thus managed, the flute is decidedly not an unfeminine instrument."[30] As with the violin, once women began to perform publicly on the flute, some observers found reasons to declare their superiority on the instrument. "On the flute," the American poet and musician Sidney Lanier wrote in 1898, "a certain combination of delicacy with the flexibility in the lips is absolutely necessary to bring fully out that passionate yet velvety tone ... and many male players ... will be forever debarred from attaining it by reason of the intractable, rough lips, which will give nothing but a correspondingly intractable, rough tone."[31]

If a woman somehow achieved prominence on another wind instrument, problems remained. Saxophonist Elisa Hall (also known as Mrs. Richard J. Hall) studied at the Paris Conservatory and was the first amateur to play with the Boston Symphony. Hall commissioned Debussy to write a piece for her; but even though she had already paid him, he postponed writing it. According to one account, "he thought it ridiculous when he had seen her in a pink frock playing such an ungainly instrument, and he was not at all anxious that his work should provide a similar spectacle."[32]

It was not easy for women to pursue the demanding and unconventional career of an instrumental soloist, and those who persisted paid not only a physical price but an emotional one as well. Contemporary accounts in music periodicals and newspapers allude with surprising frequency to temporary absences from the concert stage, absences usually described as nervous breakdowns. Violinist Maud Powell's biographer notes that her health was weakened by her heavy tour schedule. Pianist Julia Rivé-King collapsed on tour and was forced to stop performing for a time to recover her health. Pianist Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler collapsed from "nervous strain" and temporarily cancelled all appearances. Ethel Leginska failed to appear for a 1925 Carnegie Hall piano recital, an absence described by friends as having been caused by a nervous breakdown.[33] This diagnosis is certainly consistent with the medical literature of the period, when physicians were quick to assign the label of neurosthenia, hysteria or nervous breakdown to women's disorders that had no apparent physical cause.[34] Historian Lorna Duffin has suggested that Victorian women may have used illness as a way of escaping from the tedium of their lives. Florence Nightingale wrote of her contemporaries: " ... many a woman was heard to wish that she could break a limb that she might have a little time to herself."[35] In much the same way, women performers might have unconsciously had "nervous breakdowns" to give themselves a break from the very real stresses of their performing lives. Such longings to escape the pressures of the performer's life were of course, not confined to women. In 1901, when Pablo Casals injured his hand in a climbing accident, his first thought was "Thank God, I'll never have to play the cello again!" He continued: "No doubt a psychoanalyst would give some profound explanation. But the fact is that dedication to one's art does involve a sort of enslavement, and then too, of course, I have always felt such a dreadful anxiety before performances."[36] But incidence of debilitating strain appears to have been more prevalent among women than men.

Relatively few musicians, male or female, could have careers as instrumental soloists; ensemble playing was the obvious performing option. But female participation in most ensembles was unlikely because of the reluctance of men to allow women to join all-male groups, and also because of continued gendered attitudes regarding the appropriateness of particular instruments. Patterns of sexual segregation already existed within most organizations in a work setting. The issue of morality was a frequently-cited concern. "Wherever the sexes work indiscriminately together," argued the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1911, "great laxity obtains." The intermingling of the sexes was "thought to threaten the virtue of even the most well-intentioned young women." "There is such an obvious impropriety," declared Robert McClelland, Secretary of the Interior, "in

the mixing of the sexes within the walls of a public office that I am determined to arrest the practice."[37] Wives also supposedly feared that career women could lead their husbands astray, while husbands might feel threatened if their wives competed in the workplace.[38] One observer expressed concern that the mere presence of women [in orchestras] would be a distraction for the men; "you shouldn't expect a man to keep his eyes divided between the music on his stand and the stick of his conductor when his sweetheart is a member of the organization, and is seated somewhere across the room."[39] There was also the reluctance of tour managers to deal with the complications of sharing accommodations, a difficult task "when womanhood must be protected."[40]

Invariably, in discussions of women's ability to function as orchestral musicians, the issue of stamina was raised. An article in an 1895 issue of *Scientific American*, stated unequivocally that a woman did not have the stamina to be an orchestral musician; "her physical incapacity to endure the strain of four or five hours a day rehearsal, followed by the prolonged tax of public performances, will bar her against possible competition with male performers."[41] In a 1908 U.S. Supreme Court case involving the number of hours allowed in a woman's workday, the authors stated that "women are fundamentally weaker than men in all that makes for endurance: in muscular strength, in nervous energy, in the powers of persistent attention and application,"[42] certainly all qualities necessary for an orchestral musician.

The idea of women in orchestras had occasional supporters, but their opinions did not change hiring patterns. Sidney Lanier wrote in 1898 that woman's "patience, fervor and fidelity, combined with deftness of hand and quick intuitiveness of soul" were desirable qualities in a perfect orchestral player—qualities more often found in women than in men. And Leopold Stokowski, in 1916, described the exclusion of women from symphony orchestras as an "incomprehensible blunder."[43] It was a blunder he did not and possibly could not correct: Stokowski conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1912 to 1935, yet in the 1934–35 season the orchestra included only three women—two harpists and one cellist.[44]

When critics and observers commented on the occasional woman member of a predominantly male ensemble, they were unable to suppress their snideness and innuendo. A 1935 editorial in the *New York Sun* responded to a reader who expressed "astonishment" that the reviewer of a Philadelphia Orchestra performance had not noted that "a woman was seen operating a cello at the last desk, which she faced in solitary devotion." The music reviewer generously responded that he saw no good reason why women should not be employed in orchestras. "Are there female performers on all kinds of instruments? Certainly." But he proceeded to question the "soul" of the woman who takes up the timpani. "What is the outlook for the female bassoonist?" he continued. "Does anyone wish to see a woman playing a bass drum or an E flat tuba? . . . And a forgiving heaven has often looked down on the puffings of the lady cornet soloist."[45]

Women responded to exclusion from orchestras by forming their own. The existence of early all-women's orchestras has been described by Judith Tick and Carol Neuls-Bates.[46] While Tick believes that the reason for women's exclusion was primarily economic—if a woman got the job, a man was denied one—gender

stereotypes also played major roles in fostering and shaping these all-women's groups, affecting both their early instrumentation and the public perception of them as oddities and novelties.[47]

Because women were less likely to have learned larger instruments or winds and brasses, many early women's orchestras had gaps in instrumentation. The Vienna Lady Orchestra, which performed in New York in 1871, lacked horns, trumpets, trombones, clarinets, oboes and bassoons.[48] The Women's Philharmonic Society of New York, performing in 1899, had a double bass, several flutes, clarinets and cornets, but no "heavy brass." The same was true of a woman's orchestra which performed in Salt Lake City in 1915.[49] Reviewers sometimes expressed surprise. "The orchestra turns out to be only half an orchestra," declared an indignant reviewer of the Vienna group in the *New York Sun*.[50] There were two solutions to this problem. Some early groups supplied the missing parts on other instruments considered more suitably female. The missing brass parts in the Women's Philharmonic Society orchestra were played on the piano; the missing wind parts in the Salt Lake City orchestra were played on an organ.[51] When such substitutions were made in public performances, however, reviewers frequently complained about the thin sound of the group as a whole and the inappropriateness of such instruments as permanent fixtures in the orchestra.[52]

As women's orchestras sought recognition as serious groups on par with their male counterparts, they tried a second solution: if a suitable woman could not be found to play a particular instrument, use a man instead. An account of a performance by the Chicago Woman's Symphony in 1927 indicates that male players filled in to play oboe, French horn, bassoon, tuba and double bass, "because it is impossible to secure women players of these instruments in Chicago."[53] Three years later the orchestra's conductor, Ebba Sundstrom, still expressed concern over the lack of women players of oboe, French horn, and double bass: "It has been one of our greatest troubles, for we want the personnel to be 100 per cent feminine."[54]

It is difficult to gauge audience response, since most reviewers comment on the audience only if their response is highly unusual. Audiences appear for the most part to have received performances by women's orchestras favorably. Reviewers, however, were simply not ready to accept without qualification a first-class performance by an orchestra of women. A description of Ethel Leginska's New York conducting debut with the National Women's Symphony Orchestra in 1932 declares,"Where Miss Leginska found them all can only be conjectured ... [she] had eight double basses, all women, and evidently no novices. Only one of them used an Italian bow; the other seven went at it full-fisted.... Where, when and why do women take up horn? ... [Where] do you get a female tuba player? And whence comes the lady tympanist? No matter. There they all were.... "[55]

One of the principal reasons for the popularity of some early women's orchestras *was* their oddity, an oddity derived from the perceived incongruity of women playing instruments usually reserved for men.[56] Much of the heyday of the women's orchestras, from about 1880 to 1930, was also the height of the vaudeville era, and some early women's ensembles sought acceptance by embracing features of vaudeville—notably the effort of performers to appear unusual or otherwise distinctive.

An early example of women in masculine musical roles was the popular

vaudeville troupe known as the British Blondes, which toured the U.S. in 1868. "The assumption of masculinity permeated their performances ... they did clog dances and played banjos and trumpets."[57] Douglas Gilbert lists many vaudeville acts prominent from 1880 to 1930. It is not possible to determine the sex of many performers, since acts were frequently known by their last names, such as Adams and LeRoy. But many were novelty items that featured women in stereotypically masculine roles—lady cornetists, trombonists, and baritones are listed alongside the lady fencers, boxers, and strongwomen.[58] Caroline Nichols's Fadettes Orchestra, formed in 1888 and performing regularly throughout the country until 1918, pursued a more sophisticated version of this strategy of playing upon mixed gender roles. The women musicians wore shimmery feminine gowns while playing the whole range of musical instruments.[59] This juxtaposition provided the kind of incongruity that vaudeville audiences found entertaining.

Publicity for smaller instrumental ensembles of women playing non-traditional instruments particularly stressed entertainment rather than artistic distinction. One group of four women, a saxophone quartet called the Saxonians, pose on an advertising flyer from 1918. Billed as "Four Young Women Who Entertain Delightfully," they stand in a row wearing frilly dresses, smiling flirtatiously and holding their saxophones.[60]

The clothing these women wore on stage may be seen as a clue to how they wanted to be perceived—entertainers or artists; musicians or women musicians. The Fadettes Orchestra wore shimmery gowns in the early 1900s, as did the Orchestrette Classique in 1937. The Women's Symphony Orchestra of New York, performing in 1935 under Antonia Brico, wore black dresses, as did most women's orchestras performing in the 1930s.[61] Violinist Maud Powell felt that elegant gowns were essential for "maintaining the dignity and beauty expected of a female concert artist." Her husband and manager, knowing how much she disliked taking the time to choose gowns and have them fitted, tried to persuade her to adopt more of a concert uniform, but she remained unconvinced.[62] Ethel Leginska did adopt tailored concert attire for performing—a black skirt and jacket, and white blouse—which she said allowed her to forget her appearance and concentrate on her art.[63] Women performers still differ on this issue. Rosalyn Tureck, a pianist performing in the mid-twentieth century, concertized in a plain black dress so as to provide no distraction from the music; internationally acclaimed violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter favors fashionable, low-cut, off-the-shoulder designer gowns. "Never in my life would I go onstage in a dress which is not beautiful," she stated in a 1988 interview.[64]

While performance remained problematic, one might assume that public school teaching—generally conceded to be a female domain—would have been one area in which women could excel in instrumental music. This was not the case. Before 1900, when music in the public schools was exclusively vocal, songs were taught and led by the classroom teacher, who was usually female. With the introduction of instrumental music, around 1900, the job of music instruction in the public schools grew larger. School officials now wanted a "music supervisor"—someone who could organize the program, teach the various instruments, and then conduct the school band and orchestra. Joseph Maddy, a noted music educator and author of the standard book on how to begin an instrumental music program in the public schools, wrote in 1926, "The development

of the instrumental side of school music demands training for a new and difficult profession. Musicians there are in plenty who know one or two instruments, but to be supremely successful in this work one must know them all."[65] This expectation that the music supervisor have some ability to play the whole range of band instruments effectively barred women from the job.

In an era when leading educators often lamented the purported feminization of the schools,[66] writers also expressed concern that music not be stigmatized as a sissified activity. One way to combat this perception would be to have men teach the new subject in the public schools. "Might it not have a wholesome influence if at this most impressionable age the boys could receive their first associations with music through a man—and a real man at that, one who could show them in the only way an average boy can understand, i.e., by illustration, that music is as much a man's job as a woman's. . . . [67] Ironically, despite the association of artistic appreciation with women and the prominence of women in elementary and even secondary teaching, the teaching of instrumental music became a specialty that was predominantly male.

In a broader context, this phenomenon is consistent with what has been termed "the ascendancy of the male expert," the most notable example being the replacement of the birth attendant or midwife of the late nineteenth century with the male gynecologist.[68] Similar patterns have been noted in the professions of social work, teaching, and librarianship, where control was "removed from the hands of largely female practitioners to become the nearly exclusive preserve of male bureaucrats."[69]

The expectation that the music supervisor conduct the band and orchestra was a significant factor in women's exclusion. Of all the areas in music, the one in which it has been most difficult for women to gain acceptance has been conducting, for the obvious reason that it connotes the ultimate in forcefulness, leadership and control. Early twentieth-century women conductors met the same scorn and derision as players of "unusual" instruments. A 1925 review of a Boston concert conducted by Ethel Leginska, one of very few women who tried to succeed in this endeavor, acknowledged that the public was "handicapped by an unexplainable distaste for women as orchestral leaders."[70] A 1932 review of Leginska's New York conducting debut referred to "the reluctance of the superior male in the command of a slip of a woman."[71] In 1936 American music student Anne Kullmer won a violin scholarship to the Leipzig Conservatory, where her attempt to gain admittance to the conducting class was "met with laughter." She continued to apply and, after six months of vain attempts was unexpectedly summoned, "to the great amusement of the other students," to show what she could do. She proceeded to conduct the entire Symphony in D Minor by Cesar Franck without a score, and was immediately accepted into the class.[72]

Public school music educators professed commitment to providing boys and girls equal opportunities in their study of music. Adam Lesinsky, an Indiana music educator, observed: "Now that instrumental music in the public schools is recognized by all progressive educators as a part of the regular curriculum . . . there should be no discrimination made between boys and girls."[73] But even within the relatively egalitarian public school context, there were different standards for boy and girl instrumentalists. When 147 Chicago schoolboys competed in a solo competition for band instruments in 1929, girls were excluded. Instead,

59 girls were allowed to compete in a separate contest. An observer commented merely that "the girls do not compete against the boys, not that they aren't willing to—or able, but because it isn't believed to be the thing to do." When the awards were given out, the boys received 11 gold medals, 21 silver, and 13 bronze. But instead of gold medals, the 12 first-place girls received only bronze ones.[74]

Though girls did play a variety of instruments in school bands and orchestras, the extent of their participation in the band aroused male concern. One reason for continuing gender distinctions was the desire of school band directors to recruit boys. Early literature describing the formation of a school band invariably drifted to discussions of the needs of pre-adolescent boys and the adult desire to control them. Writers touted band membership as an antidote to juvenile delinquency and gang membership. They claimed that the exercise of playing wind and brass instruments would change the frail boy into a "deep-chested, sturdy youth." Such writers were consequently eager to make bands appear masculine, believing that boys would be attracted through their desire for uniforms and their "inherent love for the military."[75]

It was the marching band in particular that made directors especially anxious about girls' participation. Adam Lesinsky listed the reasons his colleagues gave for their exclusion. One said he simply couldn't be bothered; another said girls would ruin the appearance of the band; a third said girls could not learn wind instruments as well as boys, and a fourth expressed doubts that girls would be interested in playing the larger instruments. There was also the usual speculation that girls lacked the necessary stamina.[76] Band directors in the 1930s and 1940s solved the perceived dilemma of girls in the marching band by forming separate all-girl bands, especially in high schools large enough to support two groups. One educator observed that such an arrangement would be comparable to what is done in "athletics, glee clubs and industrial subjects." "The main reason for having a girls' band in Benton Harbor, Michigan, is merely to segregate boys and girls," explained one director.[77]

Another way in which band directors dealt with their discomfort over girls in the marching band was to develop other ways for girls to perform on the playing field. Joe Berryman, director of the school band in Fort Stockton, Texas, extolled the virtues of the "Bugle-Lyra," a set of bells especially designed for marching which would substitute for the bugles normally used. This would counter any objections that the bugle would "alter the shape of the girls' lips. . . . The Bugle-Lyra are easily played and a group of girls can be taught several 'bell-tunes' in even so short a time as a week. . . . This new instrument is not heavy, has a very attractive appearance, and in every way fills a long-felt need."[78] More common substitutes abandoned musical performance altogether in favor of decorative display. During the 1930s and 1940s baton twirling grew increasingly popular, and "pretty girls with flashing batons" decorated the playing fields. "Flag-waving"—the swinging of decorative flags to music—was another alternative. To accompany the girls, the boys in the band usually played a familiar waltz, "the ideal type of music for flag twirling. The combination is most effective and beautiful."[79] Activities such as baton-twirling and flag-waving flourished because of the discomfort music educators felt with girls playing and marching with brass and wind instruments.

Even those who got to play a band instrument won approval as much for

appearance as for performance. In school music magazines, captions on photographs of female instrumentalists almost invariably commented on physical attractiveness as well as performing ability. According to the caption writer, the Brownsville, Tennessee high school drum corps was "widely known for the beautiful girls ... not, of course that pulchritude is particularly essential to the success of your drum corps." A line of female tuba players from Lawton, Oklahoma won praise as "a background pretty enough for any band."[80] A high school director advised his colleagues who conducted all-girls bands: "Buy the members of such a band pretty uniforms and their appearance will even surpass that of the boys." Most telling of all were photographs of the winners of a national solo contest in 1934. The boys' photo was labelled "Lads of the Third Division" while the page of girl winners bore the heading "Beauty Plus."[81]

Thus twentieth-century public education, while professedly egalitarian, was less so in practice. In orchestras, meanwhile, though official rhetoric declared that opportunities for women were increasing, unofficial restrictions regarding women's choice of instruments remained unchanged. In 1952 Raymond Paige, music director of the Radio City Music Hall orchestra, assured readers of *Etude Magazine*, the foremost publication for music teachers, that the girl who desired a position in a symphony orchestra would be judged on "musicianship and character and not at all the fact of her being a girl." While he urged teachers to tell the girls to play whatever instrument they liked best, he also noted that "instruments requiring physical force are a dubious choice, partly because women lack the strength for them, partly because the spectacle of a girl engaging in such physical exertions is not attractive. There are women who play the heavier brasses, the contra-bass, the big drum, but their employment chances are slimmer. The orchestral manager, thinking in terms of full audience enjoyment, is reluctant to hire a player whose appearance at her instrument gives off a feeling of forcing or incongruity. In general, women who want orchestral work do better to avoid anything heavier than the cello, the clarinet and the French horn. On the other hand, their natural delicacy gives them an advantage with the violin, the viola, the flute and the oboe."[82] In other words, any instrument was all right, but appearance would ultimately determine success.

To what extent do appearances continue to define which instruments women are likely to play? Apart from the question of how many women belong to a given orchestra, what is the likelihood that those who do belong will play any given instrument? An examination of orchestral membership lists from the 1940s to the 1980s shows that the patterns Paige described in 1952 provide a fairly accurate picture of the instruments women have played and continue to play in American symphony orchestras (see Table 1).[83] Even in the 1980s, fewer than 15 percent of the orchestra members who played percussion instruments, the string bass, or the "heavier brasses" (any but the French horn) were women. In the woodwind sections, women substantially increased their representation as oboists, English horn players, and bassoonists between the 1940s and the 1980s. Female participation as violinists, violists, and cellists was already high and increased slightly. And women continued to predominate in the traditional female specialties. Sixty-one percent of the flutists in these orchestras were women in the 1980s, as were 60 percent of the keyboard players and 90 percent

Table 1
Instrumental Players in Selected American Symphony Orchestras: Percentage Female

Decade	*1940s*	*1950s*	*1960s*	*1970s*	*1980s*
Number of orchestras	47	63	36	49	44
Violin	46	44	41	57	53
Viola	33	29	34	36	45
Cello	44	47	45	55	53
String Bass	23	14	13	16	14
Flute/Piccolo	44	43	44	54	61
Clarinet	14	10	9	16	12
Oboe/English Horn	3	21	19	30	41
Bassoon	19	14	12	22	36
Trumpet	8	5	2	5	5
Trombone	6	5	4	2	3
French Horn	18	14	12	16	27
Tuba	7	2	0	0	2
Percussion	13	9	14	12	6
Keyboard	64	64	42	54	60
Harp	80	89	82	88	90

of the harpists. Even "blind auditions"—most orchestral players audition behind a screen so the sex of the player is not known—have not yet altered the likelihood that women will play particular instruments.

Gendered perceptions of musical instruments created a paradox for middle and upper-class white women. On the one hand they were expected to be proficient in music, the "language of emotions"; on the other hand this proficiency was unquestioningly accepted only when women stayed within the bounds of what was traditionally female. A woman could play an instrument, but only if she looked attractive; she could play in an orchestra or conduct, but it was best if the organization consisted only of women. She could be an educator but rarely hold a supervisory position; she could march on the playing field, but preferably as a decorative object rather than as a musical performer. The "debilitating aspects of gender stereotyping"[84] stunted women's musical growth, forcing many even of those who achieved public prominence to battle stresses created by social isolation and condescension.

The April 16, 1990 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine announced a performance of a piece for trombone and orchestra featuring solo trombonist Ava Ordman. The author felt obliged to add: "Those who find themselves a little startled by the prospect of a female trombone soloist may be assured that times are, however tardily, changing.... "[85] In many ways they have not changed significantly since John Dwight expressed bemusement in 1853.

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ENDNOTES

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1. See Barbara Miller Solomon, *In The Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, 1985), esp. 115–140; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935* (New York, 1991); Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York, 1990); Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876–1920* (New York, 1979); Kathleen McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849–1929* (Chicago, 1982); idem, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830–1930* (Chicago, 1991); and Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868–1914* (New York, 1980).

2. Judith Tick has traced women's musical emergence from parlor to concert hall in her article "Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870–1900," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950,* eds. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana, 1986), emphasizing the replacement of the dilettantish piano girl by the more independent "new woman."

3. Until recently, most issues of music and gender have been neglected by both social historians and musicologists, possibly because many social historians have felt hampered by a lack of musical expertise, while musicologists have traditionally concentrated on close analysis of particular compositions and musical styles. The first of the new scholarly studies of women in American music was a history of neglected composers, Judith Tick's 1979 dissertation "Towards a History of American Women Composers Before 1870," published in revised form as *American Women Composers Before 1870* (Ann Arbor, 1983). Christine Ammer's encyclopedic survey of women in American music *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* (Westport, CT, 1980) describes many composers (mostly since 1890) but also chronicles an expanding volume of public musical performance by women that began in the second half of the nineteenth century and carried forward strongly into the twentieth. Influenced by the flowering of interest in women's roles and gender issues in literature and the fine arts, scholars in the 1980s have continued to publish on music in relation to gender. See *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Prospective* (Westport, CT, 1987); Judith Lang Zaimont, ed., *The Musical Woman: An International Perspective,* v. 1, 1983; v. 2, 1984; v.3, 1986–90 (Westport, CT); and Julia Eklund Koza, "Music and the Feminine Sphere: Images of Women as Musicians in *Godey's Lady's Book, 1830–1977*" *Musical Quarterly* 75 (Summer 1991): 103–129. For a pioneering work on feminist music criticism, see Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, 1991).

4. See Karen A. Shaffer and Neva Garner Greenwood, *Maud Powell: Pioneer American Violinist* (Ames, Iowa, 1988); M. Leslie Petteys, "Julie Rivé-King, American Pianist," D.M.A. thesis, University of Missouri, Kansas City, 1987; Diana Ruth Hallman, "The Pianist Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler in American Music and Society," M.M. thesis, University of Maryland, 1983; and Carol Neuls-Bates, "Women's Orchestras in the United States, 1925–1945," in Bowers and Tick, eds., *Women Making Music,* 349–369.

5. "A Monster Concert by Young Ladies," *Dwight's Journal of Music* 3 (August 6, 1853): 142. The phrase "monster concert" refers to the large number of instrumentalists on stage, not to the participants.

6. George P. Upton, *Woman in Music: An Essay* (Boston, 1880), 18.

7. T. L. Krebs, "Women as Musicians," *Sewanee Review* 2 (Nov. 1893): 76.

8. Charles E. Rosenberg, *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought* (Baltimore, MD, 1976), 55.

9. Since deeper instruments were also larger and more ungainly, it is difficult to separate issues of size and pitch. The aversion to deep tones produced by female performers, however, was obvious in the case of singers. A *New York Tribune* reviewer, describing a recital by a woman who possessed an extraordinarily wide vocal range, wrote in 1853, "The idea of a woman's voice is feminine; anything below that is disgusting: it is as bad as a bride with a beard on her chin and an oath in her mouth.... We hear a great deal about Woman's sphere. That sphere exists in music, and it is in the soprano region of the voice." "Black Swan," *Dwight's Journal of Music* 3 (April 9, 1853): 2. Music critic Robert Grau observed in 1916 that no contralto had gained the public adulation and popularity achieved by the sopranos. Robert Grau, "A Strange Public Aversion to Contraltos as Compared With the Sopranos of Great Fame," *Musician* 21 (November, 1916): 694.

10. "The New Woman in Music," *Musical America* 9 (April 28, 1906): 8.

11. Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 29–30.

12. "Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler," *Musical Courier* 37 (December 28, 1898): 40.

13. "Minnie Coons," *Musical Courier* 52 (January 31, 1906): 24.

14. Olga Samaroff Stokowski, "Women in Music," *Music Clubs Magazine* 17 (September–October 1937): 7–9, 12.

15. Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (Baltimore, 1986), 69ff. See also Peter N. Stearns, *Be a Man!: Males in Modern Society* (New York, 1979), 49ff.

16. "Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler," *Musical Courier* 40 (January 3, 1900): 18.

17. Tick, "Passed Away," 328.

18. Shaffer and Greenwood, *Maud Powell*, 16.

19. Tick, "Passed Away," 328. See also "Mr. Eichberg's Violin Classes," *Dwight's Journal of Music* 39 (January 4, 1879): 7.

20. Raymond Morin, *Worcester Music Festival, Its Background and History, 1855–1945* (Worchester, Mass., 1946), 42–43. Quoted in Ammer, *Unsung*, 30.

21. "The Symphony Society," *New York Times*, 20 January 1889, 3. Quoted in Shaffer, *Maud Powell*, 113.

22. "Florence Austin, A Violin Virtuosa," *Musical Courier* 61 (November 1910): 19.

23. Shaffer and Greenwood, *Maud Powell*, 148ff.

24. "Camilla Urso," *Dwight's Journal of Music* 2 (December 18, 1852): 86; "Lenora Jackson at Louisville Music Festival," *Musical Courier* 40 (May 23, 1900): 9.

25. Garrison, *Apostles of Culture*, 177.

26. Krebs, "Women," 80–81.

27. *Ladies Home Journal* pictured active and athletic women in its late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century issues. Recommended "out-door sports for girls" included bicycling, gymnastics, badminton, tennis and golf. Fashion pages showed clothes for these activities: divided skirts, sports frocks, looser corsets and lightweight girdles. (Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* [New York, 1983], 211–212).

28. E. Van der Straeten, *The Techniques of Violoncello Playing* (London, 1915), 19. Quoted in Elizabeth Cowling, *The Cello* (New York, 1983), 179.

29. "Elsa Reugger," *Musical Courier* 45 (November 12, 1902): 27.

30. Quoted in Tick, *American Women Composers*, 28.

31. Sidney Lanier, *Music and Poetry: Essays Upon Some Aspects and Interrelations of the Two Arts* (New York, 1898), 39.

32. Leon Vallas, *Claude Debussy: His Life and Works* (New York, 1973), 162.

33. Shaffer and Greenwood, *Maud Powell*, 338–340; Ammer, *Unsung* 54, 57; "Interview with Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler," *Musical Courier* 52 (April 4, 1906): 28–29; "Leginska is Found, Her Mind a Blank," *New York Times*, 2 February 1925, 1.

34. Lorna Duffin, "The Conspicuous Consumptive: Woman as an Invalid," in Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World* (New York, 1978), 26–56; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in 19th Century America," *Social Research* 39 (1972): 652–78.

35. Duffin, "Conspicuous," 51.

36. Pablo Casals, *Joys and Sorrows* (New York, 1970), 105.

37. Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York, 1982), 101–102.

38. Garrison, *Apostles of Culture*, 184.

39. Ralph Korn, *How to Organize the Amateur Band and Orchestra* (New York, 1928), 42.

40. Mary L. Stoltzfus, "Eve in the Ensemble," *Musical Courier* 136 (December 1, 1947): 9.

41. "Orchestral Women," *Scientific American* 73 (November 23, 1895): 327.

42. Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 186–187.

43. Lanier, *Music and Poetry*, 39; Frederique Joanne Petrides, "Women in Orchestras," *Etude* 56 (July 1938): 429–30.

44. According to one source, he later vindicated himself; when he founded the American Symphony Orchestra in 1962, he included many women, blacks and members of other minority groups. Jan Bell Groh, *Evening the Score: Women in Music and the Legacy of Frederique Petrides* (Fayetteville, AR, 1991), 60.

45. W. J. Henderson, "Music and Musicians," *New York Sun*, 16 November 1935, p. 9.

46. Tick, "Passed Away," 329–332; Carol Neuls-Bates, "Women's Orchestras in the United States 1925–1945," in Bowers and Tick, eds., *Women Making Music*, 349–369.

47. Tick, "Passed Away," 332–333.

48. "Vienna Lady Orchestra," *New York Times*, 13 September 1871, 5.

49. "World of Music," *Etude* 34 (April 1916): 320; Z. A. S. "Salt Lake Women Give Worthy Orchestral Concert," *Musical America* 22 (May 22, 1915): 27.

50. Reprinted as "Vienna Lady Orchestra," *Dwight's Journal of Music* 31 (September 23, 1871): 104.

51. "World of Music," *Etude* 34 (April 1916): 320; "Salt Lake Women," 27.

52. "Vienna Lady Orchestra," *New York, Times*, 13 September 1871, p. 5.

53. "Leginska, Guest Conductor of Chicago Woman's Symphony, to Play Solo," *Musical Courier* 94 (April 28, 1927): 32–33.

54. A.K.C., "Woman's Symphony of Chicago Completes Successful Season," *Musical Courier* 100 (May 24, 1930): 16.

55. "When Women Blow Horns," *Literary Digest* 113 (April 2, 1932): 19–20. There are two types of double bass bow. One is constructed like a modern cello bow and is held in an overhand position. The other is larger and grasped by the end, almost like a saw. "Bow" in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

56. Tick, "Passed Away," 329; Ammer, *Unsung*, 103.

57. Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York, 1983), 121–125.

58. Douglas Gilbert, *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times* (New York, 1963), 395–410.

59. Blanche Naylor, *The Anthology of the Fadettes* (Boston, 1941?), 8, 18.

60. "The Saxonians," Flyer, William Miles's Personal collection, Mt. Pleasant, MI.

61. "Women's Symphony Under Brico in Debut Before Invited Audience," *Musical America* 40 (Feb. 25, 1935): 11.

62. Shaffer and Greenwood, *Maud Powell*, 204–206; Ammer, *Unsung*, 109.

63. W.J.Z., "How Fashion's Dictates Handicap Woman Climbing Artistic Heights," *Musical America* 21 (Mar. 20, 1915): 29.

64. "Classically Modern," *Maclean's*, Dec. 5, 1988, p. 31.

65. Joseph E. Maddy and T. P. Giddings, *Instrumental Techniques for Orchestra and Band* (Cincinnati, 1926), 3.

66. David Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA and Their Forerunners, 1870–1920* (Madison, 1983), 47.

67. Harold Randolph, "The Feminization of Music," in Music Teachers' National Association, *Papers and Proceedings of the 44th Annual Meeting* (New York, 1922), 200.

68. Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 118.

69. Kessler-Harris, *Out To Work*, 117.

70. "Leginska Conducts Last of Three Concerts of People's Symphony," *Musical Courier* 91 (November 26, 1925): 24, quoted in Neuls-Bates, "Women's Orchestras," 357.

71. "When Women Blow Horns," 19–20.

72. "Young American Woman Conductor Trained Abroad Begins Home Career," *Musical America* 65 (Aug. 1945): 28.

73. Adam Lesinsky, "Give the Girls a Chance," *School Musician* 1 (February 1930): 7.

74. "Chicago Holds Her Solo Contest," *School Musician* 1 (January 1930): 18.

75. Edwin Franko Goldman, *Band Betterment: Suggestions and Advice to Bands, Bandmasters and Band-players* (New York, 1934), 14–15. See also Edwin Barnes, *Music As an Educational Asset* (Philadelphia, 1927), 46.

76. Lesinsky, "Give the Girls," 7; Franklyn Wiltse, "Girls!", *School Musician* 4 (April 1933): 8.

77. Wiltse, "Girls!", 8.

78. Joe Berryman, "The Bugle-Lyra in the Girls' Drum Corps," *School Musician* 8 (March 1937) : 18.

79. "Pretty Girls With Flashing Batons," *School Musician* 12 (February 1941): 28; Ray W. Dutcher, "Eastside High School Augments its Band With Flag Twirlers," *School Musician* 12 (February 1941): 17.

80. Roy R. Coates, "Put the Girls to Work in a Drum Corps," *School Musician* 8 (September 1937): 8; P. E. Laubach, "Girls," *School Musician* 11 (January 1940): 8.

81. Lesinsky, "Give the Girls," 7; "Lads of the Third Division," *School Musician* 6 (February 1935): 23; "Beauty Plus," *School Musician* 6 (January 1935): 27.

82. Raymond Paige, "Why Not Women in Orchestras?" *Etude* 70 (January 1952): 14–15.

83. I derived these figures by obtaining membership rosters from American symphony orchestras from each decade, counting the number of men and women who played each instrument, and calculating the percentages. I did not count unisex names or unusual names such that it was not possible to determine the sex of the player. The number of women in large prestigious symphony orchestras is generally far smaller than in the semiprofessional orchestras found in somewhat smaller cities. This study combines both types of orchestra.

84. Barbara Sicherman, "Working It Out: Gender, Profession and Reform in the Career of Alice Hamilton," in Noralee Frenkel and Nancy S. Dye, eds., *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era* (Lexington, KY, 1991), 128.

85. "Music," *New Yorker* 66 (April 16, 1990): 19.