

## The Cambridge Companion to Women Composers

Moving beyond narratives of female suppression, and exploring the critical potential of a diverse, distinguished repertoire, this Companion transforms received understanding of women composers. Organized thematically, and ranging beyond elite, Western genres, it explores the work of diverse female composers from medieval to modern times, besides the familiar headline names. The book's prologue traces the development of scholarship on women composers over the past five decades and the category of 'woman composer' itself. The chapters that follow reveal scenes of flourishing creativity, technical innovation, and (often fleeting) recognition, challenging long-held notions around invisibility and neglect and dismissing clichés about women composers and their work. Leading scholars trace shifting ideas about composers and compositional processes, contributing to a wider understanding of how composers have functioned in history and making this volume essential reading for all students of musical history. In an epilogue, three contemporary composers reflect on their careers and identities.

MATTHEW HEAD is Professor of Music at King's College London. His books include *Orientalism, Masquerade, and Mozart's Turkish Music* (2000) and *Sovereign Feminine: Music and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Music* (2013). He is currently writing a life and works of the English composer and singer Harriet Stewart (née Wainewright).

SUSAN WOLLENBERG is Professor of Music (emerita) and Emeritus Fellow at the University of Oxford. Her recent publications include chapters in *The Songs of Fanny Hensel* (2021), *Clara Schumann Studies* (2021), and the *Routledge Handbook of Women's Work in Music* (2022). She co-edited, with Aisling Kenny, *Women and the Nineteenth-Century Lied* (2015), and, with Mariateresa Storino, *Women Composers in New Perspectives, 1800–1950: Genres, Contexts and Repertoire* (2023).

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# The Cambridge Companion to Women Composers

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*Edited by*

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*For Catherine Adie (née Leach) – MH*  
*For Jean Fielden – SW*

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MATTHEW HEAD is Professor of Music at King’s College London. He researches the cultural history of eighteenth-century music. His books include *Orientalism, Masquerade, and Mozart’s Turkish Music* (2000); *Sovereign Feminine: Music and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (2013), and *Harriet Stewart (née Wainewright): English Music between the Highlands and Bengal* (in preparation). He is a contributor to several other Cambridge University Press titles, including the *Cambridge Companion to Haydn* (2005), *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia* (2019), the journal *Eighteenth-Century Music*, *Music and the Sonorous Sublime in European Culture, 1680–1880* (2020), and the *Cambridge Companion to The Magic Flute* (2023).

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NICOLA LEFANU has composed around 100 works for a variety of mediums. Her music is published by Edition Peters and Novello and is widely played, broadcast, and recorded. She has composed eight operas, which have been staged in the UK, Ireland, and the USA. In April 2017 she celebrated her seventieth birthday and was BBC Radio 3 'Composer of the Week'. The same year also saw premieres of five new works, including 'The Crimson Bird', with text by John Fuller, a dramatic scena commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society (RPS) for the BBC Symphony Orchestra (BBCSO). In 2020, a CD with four of her major orchestral pieces was released by NMC Recordings. It features the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and the BBCSO. Premieres since 2021 include a string quintet, 'Triptych', for baritone and chamber orchestra, music for saxophone orchestra, and solo works for horn, clavichord, and piano. She was born in England in 1947 to Irish parents; her mother was the composer Elizabeth Maconchy. LeFanu studied at University of Oxford, the Royal College of Music, and Harvard University. She is active in many aspects of the musical profession and was Professor of Music at the University of York, 1994–2008. <http://nicolalefanu.com>

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ROXANNA PANUFNIK (FRAM, GRSM (Hons), LRAM, b. 1968) is one of the most versatile and cherished British composers working today. She studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music, and her works for opera, ballet, choirs, and orchestras and chamber music and music for film and television are performed worldwide. Thanks to her hybrid heritage, she has a great love of music from a variety of cultures and different faiths. Her mission to build musical bridges between the three Abrahamic faiths has resulted in commissions from the World Orchestra for Peace in Jerusalem, and from the BBC for the Last Night of the Proms in 2018. The year 2023 saw the premiere of the reworking of her father Andrzej Panufnik's Five Polish Folk Songs with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and her debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus at the Ravinia Festival. She composed a piece for King Charles III's Coronation (commissioned by His Majesty) and a song cycle *Gallery of Memories* co-commissioned by Oxford Lieder and Presteigne Festivals (and was appointed composer-in-residence at the latter, which took place in August 2023). She is Associate Composer with the London Mozart Players and composer-in-residence with VOCES8. Her works are published by Peters Edition and recorded on many labels, including

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LAURIE STRAS is Professor Emerita of Music at the University of Southampton, and director and researcher of the early music ensemble, Musica Secreta. She has published many articles and chapters on women musicians in the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, and has made six critically acclaimed albums with Musica Secreta. Her scholarship has been recognized by a number of awards: her 2007 article, ‘White Face, Black Voice: Race, Gender, and Region in the Music of the Boswell Sisters’ (in the *Journal of the Society for American Music*), received an American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) Deems-Taylor Award; her co-edited book (with Bonnie Blackburn) *Eroticism in Early Modern Music* was awarded Best Collaborative Project by the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women in 2015; in 2016, she received the Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society for her work with Musica Secreta; and in 2019, her monograph *Woman and Music in*

*Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) received the Otto Kinkeldey Award, also from the American Musicological Society. She was elected a Corresponding Member of the American Musicological Society in 2020.

SHIRLEY J. THOMPSON OBE, PhD, DPhil, DMus, DLitt, MusD, DArts, award-winning composer, visionary artist, and cultural activist, has attracted new audiences worldwide with her groundbreaking works, transforming contemporary classical music. She is highly versatile, producing many works for orchestra, the operatic stage, the instrumental/vocal/dance/multimedia Shirley Thompson Ensemble, TV, film, theatre, choir, and the solo voice. Her music has been described as ‘superbe’ (*Le Figaro*), and ‘powerful and striking’ (BBC Radio 3). She is thought to be the first woman in Europe within the last forty years to compose and conduct a symphony. The work, *New Nation Rising: A 21st Century London Symphony*, an epic musical story, celebrates London’s thousand-year history; the recording, by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, features two choirs, solo singers, a rapper and dhol drummers, altogether almost 200 performers. The concept of this extraordinary work (originally commissioned to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen’s Golden Jubilee in 2002) was assumed as a framework for the 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony. She co-scored the ballet *PUSH* which toured to more than forty major opera houses, including the Marinsky Theatre, La Scala Milan, and Sydney Opera House. Her opera series, *Heroines of Opera* (2006), encapsulating narratives of iconic women in history, especially those of African and Caribbean heritage, has created exciting new roles for extraordinary performers and challenged the traditional portrayal of women in the operatic canon. She has consistently demonstrated in her work a belief in the transformative power of music to effect social, cultural, and political change.

SUSAN WOLLENBERG is Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of Oxford, Faculty of Music, and Emeritus Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall. She has published widely on topics including keyboard music, the music of Schubert, the social history of music in Britain, and women composers. Among her recent publications, she contributed chapters to the *Cambridge Companion to Schubert’s Winterreise* (ed. Lisa Feurzeig and Marjorie Hirsch, 2021) and *The Songs of Fanny Hensel* (ed. Stephen Rodgers, 2021), as well as to *Clara Schumann Studies* (Cambridge

University Press, ed. Joe Davies, 2021) and the *Routledge Handbook of Women in Music* (ed. Rhiannon Mathias, 2022). She co-edited, with Mariateresa Storino, *Women Composers in New Perspectives, 1800–1950: Genres, Contexts and Repertoire* (2023) and, with Robin Darwall-Smith, *Music in Twentieth-Century Oxford* (2023).

## Acknowledgements

We live in times when, if we switch on BBC Radio 3, we may find that we're hearing (for instance, in the popular mid-morning slot) Alice Mary Smith's beautifully scored *Andante for Clarinet and Orchestra* or, in the (also popular) breakfast slot, deftly and confidently written movements from symphonies by Emilie Mayer or Florence Price, all broadcast during May 2023. Or the 'Composers of the Week' may be Hildegard of Bingen and Isabella Leonarda (April 2023), or Pauline Viardot and Her Circle (June 2021). The widely read German encyclopaedia MGG Online announces the uploading of new articles as of April 2023 that include Florence Price and Margaret Bonds, while the also widely consulted Grove Dictionary (Oxford Music Online) features both Price and Bonds in articles published online in 2020.

These examples, among many others, reflect the 'sea change' in the representation of women composers within the Western cultural climate over the last few decades. Consideration of the journey that brought women composers of the past to this point in their history (and in the telling of that history) is accompanied in the present volume by the results of recent research shining new light on individual topics, drawn together in a series of chapters commissioned from leading scholars in the field.

We are enormously grateful to our contributors for their sterling efforts in producing their chapters during the time of pandemic, with all its pressures, and for their patience and diligence as our editorial work proceeded. We thank also most warmly the three contemporary composers who generously spared time to contribute their reflections to the epilogue: Nicola LeFanu, Roxanna Panufnik, and Shirley J. Thompson.

The present volume reflects not only the growth of scholarship on the subject, but also the questioning of received historical and systemic assumptions that process has generated. The Prologue outlines these developments, while some of the main themes arising from such questioning, and underpinning Parts II–IV, are explored in the chapters forming Part I. Although the chapters in Parts II–IV follow one another in chronological order, they are not designed to present any kind of continuous historical survey. Instead, the chapter authors share their

expertise in selected areas of particular significance in the history of women composers, bringing to the fore composers' lives and works, considered within the social, cultural, and institutional structures of their time.

This Companion complements *The Cambridge Companion to Women in Music since 1900*, edited by Laura Hamer and published in 2021. We are grateful to Laura Hamer for sharing information about that Companion during its preparation. Where that volume concentrated on a century or so of musical culture, covering a spread of different areas to which women contributed in a variety of ways, the present volume (its contents outlined in more detail in the Prologue) ranges widely across the centuries from medieval to modern times. While focusing principally on women's contribution as composers to the 'classical' music repertoire, it recognizes that their compositional work often enmeshed with other strands involved in musical production, such as performance, improvisation, and adaptation of pre-existent material.

We have been grateful to all those who, knowing of our interest in women composers, have kindly shared with us, over the years, new information pertaining thereto, or issued invitations to participate in conferences on the subject. Gregory Burton and Rachael Seculer-Faber (Music Faculty Library, University of Oxford) gave invaluable assistance during the final stages of assembling the Bibliography. Kate Brett and her team at Cambridge University Press have given enthusiastic support from the moment when the volume was first proposed, and we have deeply appreciated their help and guidance throughout its progress. We thank most warmly our respective institutions, King's College London and the Faculty of Music, University of Oxford, for their support of the project.

Catherine Adie (née Leach) gave life-changing music lessons to many students of flute, piano, and music theory in South-West Cornwall in the 1980s. As Head of Music at Withington Girls' School, Manchester, from 1964 to 1988, Jean Fielden introduced her pupils to a wide range of repertoire, encouraging us to write music ourselves at a time when composition was not a standard element in the examination syllabuses. This Companion is dedicated to them both in abiding gratitude.

Abbreviations

Bowers and Tick, eds., <i>WMM</i>	Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds., <i>Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950</i> (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987)
Citron, <i>GMC</i>	Marcia J. Citron, <i>Gender and the Musical Canon</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
Glickman and Schleifer, eds., <i>WCMTA</i>	Sylvia Glickman and Martha Furman Schleifer, eds., <i>Women Composers: Music through the Ages</i> (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996)
<i>GMO</i>	Oxford Music Online (Grove)
Neuls-Bates, ed., <i>WIM</i>	Carol Neuls-Bates, ed., <i>Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present</i> (revised ed., Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996)
<i>NGDWC</i>	<i>New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers</i> , ed. Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel (London: Macmillan, 1994)
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. Brian Harrison, Lawrence Goldman, and David Cannadine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).