

The Hartt School  
University of Hartford

February 10, 2006

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DOCTORAL THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY  
SUPERVISION BY: Joanna Ross Hersey

ENTITLED: "Such Unfeminine Instruments," Women Brass Musicians in America Before 1940.

BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF  
MUSICAL ARTS DEGREE

---

Thesis Advisor

---

Division Director

---

---

Thesis Committee

## Vitae

Joanna Ross Hersey  
6 Promenade Street  
Moosup, CT 06354  
[joannaross@mac.com](mailto:joannaross@mac.com)  
(860)564-6805

## Education:

Arizona State University  
Tempe, Arizona  
Bachelor of Music in Tuba Performance begun, 1989-1992

University of Connecticut  
Storrs, Connecticut  
Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies  
Summa Cum Laude  
May 1999

New England Conservatory of Music  
Boston, Massachusetts  
Master of Music in Tuba Performance  
With Academic Honors  
May 2001

University of Hartford  
The Hartt School of Music  
Hartford, Connecticut  
Doctor of Musical Arts in Tuba Performance  
August 2006

## Current Positions:

Principal Tuba  
New Hampshire Symphony Orchestra  
Manchester, New Hampshire  
1999-present

Instructor of Tuba and Euphonium  
The Hartt School of Music  
Hartford, Connecticut  
2002-present

## Abstract

“Such Unfeminine Instruments,” Women Brass Musicians in America Before 1940.”

Joanna Ross Hersey

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in Tuba Performance

University of Hartford, Hartt School of Music Dr. Charles Turner, Faculty Advisor

Little is known about the history of women brass performers. In the past, brass instruments were associated with the military, and their loud, heavy nature caused them to be identified mainly with men. It is important today to bring to light the complete history of brass performance, which includes women. Instrumental barriers tied to gender still exist, as can be seen in the small numbers of women brass players in our nation’s top orchestras today. A broader understanding of the origin and evolution of gender stereotypes in brass instrumental performance will enable us to better challenge today’s prevailing beliefs. Until such folklore is examined and revised, women will continue to be discriminated against and discouraged from careers in brass performance.

This dissertation will explore the careers of women brass performers in chamber music, large ensemble, and solo performance. The gender expectations established in the Victorian era were difficult to blend with the reality of women playing these louder, more aggressive brass instruments. The established orchestras and bands of the day did not accept women members, press reporting was often decidedly negative, and race and class segregated musical society. Despite these setbacks, many female brass musicians persevered and were commercially successful. While there were many women brass performers in the United States before 1940, they were often not included in history books, and their names have largely been forgotten.

Unfortunately, many of the same assumptions and stereotypes these women experienced are still present today. Despite the advances made by women in classical performance in recent decades, some still question whether women have the strength, stamina, and aggression necessary to play brass instruments at the highest level. Recognizing that history is not complete and that gender stereotypes are still a problem in brass performance today is a vital first step toward change. We need not only alter what we believe to be true about the past, but to re-evaluate what we believe to be true today.

“Such Unfeminine Instruments,”  
Women Brass Musicians in America Before 1940.

Joanna Ross Hersey

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts  
The Hartt School, University of Hartford  
May 15, 2006

## Table of Contents

Chapter One:	
A Historical Perspective: Where <i>do</i> Women Belong in the History of Brass Performance?	1
Chapter Two:	
The Origins of Gender Exclusion: The Biology of Blowing Horns.	12
Chapter Three:	
Changes in the Nineteenth Century Musical Scene: “Ladies” Bands and Orchestras Emerge.	27
Chapter Four:	
The Exception Which Proves the Rule: Women as Brass Soloists.	43
Chapter Five:	
The Entertainment Value of Novelty: Reinforcing and Challenging Femininity.	53
Chapter Six:	
The Twenty-first Century: Discrimination and Testosterone.	68

## Chapter One

### Where *do* Women Belong in Brass History?

Little is known about the history of women brass performers. Faded concert programs, yellowed newspaper clippings which crumble as they are touched, and the occasional black and white photograph challenge us to look more closely at this subject. The stories of these women help us fully appreciate the rich and varied musical life present in America before 1940, when concert bands and vaudeville brought entertainment to the masses. While women brass players in the past often had to overcome surprise and skepticism, many were successful and their stories inspire us today. This paper will celebrate the contributions of these woman brass musicians and add to the knowledge of women's history in America. At the same time, public attitudes toward these women will be explored and the situation for women in brass performance today will be discussed.

This chapter will begin with a look at some of the challenges in researching women's history and ways in which women's contributions have sometimes been marginalized in the past. An overview of brass publications will demonstrate that not only was there often a lack of information about women players, there was usually a masculine bias in language, which was standard practice in the past. A discussion of brass publications today will show us that, while

much improved, this situation is not yet resolved. This chapter will explore how today's brass players are dealing with these issues, and what is being done to help correct old assumptions.

Researching women's history requires tenacity. Often, as is the case with women brass musicians, it is difficult to find evidence of their existence in historical literature. There are numerous reasons why women's lives have not been documented with the same level of attention as have the lives of men. The first step in negotiating the path of women's historical scholarship is to recognize that our history books are often incomplete. Researching and inserting what has been left out is obviously the next step. Finally, however, it is important to ask why it was left out in the first place, and what that omission reveals about the society of the time. Without the voices and experiences of women, history is incomplete. We need not only to fill in the gaps in our knowledge, but also to re-evaluate what we believe to be true about the past.

One of the main reasons we know so little about women's history in general, and music history in particular, is the belief that women's lives as a whole were less important, interesting, or valuable than men's. Traditionally history has focused on the activities of men rather than women, and, while this is changing, it remains common today. Historians have often promoted the assumption that a study of men's experience is valid as an example for both sexes, the idea that a man can be taken to be representative of society as a whole. As historians tried to become more inclusive, other problems emerged. Tokenism, still a common problem, is a description for the situation in which a story is told from one perspective (often white male) but includes information about a lone 'other' (the minority) as an attempt at inclusiveness. The problem with tokenism is twofold. First, it gives the impression that the woman or person of color is an

exception, a unique situation, rather than common. This perpetuates the idea that there are few women in history because they did not do anything worth mentioning. The second problem is that tokenism validates the male (white) experience, since the ‘other’ voice or contribution was mentioned but not fully explored. What has been created is a difference between history as recorded by most historians and the actual reality of the situation.

In the words of historian Virginia Sapiro, the lack of information “allows us to deal with women without really having to pay close attention to them or to any contradictory evidence in the facts of their lives.”<sup>1</sup> This “contradictory evidence” is the lives of women which are now coming to light as some historians make it a priority to find out the full story. Understanding history can transform our consciousness today. Feminist scholars have argued that “women’s struggle to comprehend their own history lies at the heart of their ability to envision a world in which they are full participants.”<sup>2</sup> Since as a society we are taught to revere and respect historical writing as valid and truthful, this male-dominated approach continues to influence our belief system long after the society which prompted it has disappeared.

In 1957, a small, useful book on brass playing was published, entitled *Brass Today*. *Brass Today* was a collection of the “wisdom of experts”<sup>3</sup> and contained chapters on intonation, embouchure problems, and general information about the various brass instruments. This book is an example of brass literature of the past which is written from a male perspective. While

---

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Sapiro, *Women in American Society* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1994) 7.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Kerber, ed. *U.S. History as Women’s History* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995) 4.

<sup>3</sup> Wright, Frank, ed. *Brass Today* (London: The Euston Press, 1957) 7.

*Brass Today* is valuable as a historical document (for example, one of the chapters is entitled “Pitch Today Means A-440”<sup>4</sup>), the focus on male performers makes it clear that women do not play brass instruments.

The use of masculine language is common to most writing of the past and to many does not signify any disrespect. While some might point out that ‘he’ and ‘his’ is simpler to use and should be taken by the reader as referring to both the male and female experience, it can be argued that the reality succeeds only in cementing more deeply the idea that women do not exist in the discussion. For example, all of the chapters about brass playing use masculine language, as in “the student should hold his cornet firmly,” “never allow a student to overtax his strength,” “do not allow him to strain his lip muscles”<sup>5</sup> and so on. The contributing experts are all male, and the photos of professional brass players are all of men. While women brass players were certainly less visible in the 1950s than they are today, there were some who were successful. By 1957, Connie Welden had toured the country as tubist with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra for the two previous seasons, and Dorothy Zeigler had been principal trombonist of the St. Louis Symphony for thirteen years.

Interestingly, there is one discussion of women brass performers in *Brass Today*. In the chapter on school bands it is noted that a positive aspect of band programs is they encourage young people to take up brass instruments, which they would hopefully continue to play as adults. School bands, the author states, can serve as an incentive “for boys (or girls, for there is a

---

<sup>4</sup> Wright, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Wright, 104.

rapidly increasing number of the fair sex in bands)”<sup>6</sup> to become brass musicians. Later in the chapter in a discussion of the importance of band camps, where “boys (and girls) from the surrounding areas meet for a course in instruction,”<sup>7</sup> both boys and girls are mentioned again. A photo of a six piece brass group in rehearsal at a middle school includes two young female performers. While it is an improvement that the author recognizes that a new generation of performers includes both boys and girls, the use of parentheses makes it clear that these two are not equal. The addition of the “fair sex” is something new, clearly the exception rather than the rule, something extra or secondary. The use of the term “fair sex” communicates to the reader that girls are delicate, ladylike, and somehow different. Despite the mention of girls in the chapter, the masculine language marginalizes them, as in the advice that the director choose a responsible student to “be entrusted with the task of assembling the boys ten minutes before the time of rehearsal”<sup>8</sup> to warm up the band.

As may be expected, other brass sources from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s demonstrate a similar lack of information about women performers. The periodical *Brass Quarterly*, a research journal devoted to issues of brass performance and pedagogy and edited by Mary Rasmussen, still retains the use of masculine language in discussion, even in editorials written by Rasmussen herself.<sup>9</sup> Another popular brass publication was *The Brass World*, devoted to “outstanding

---

<sup>6</sup> Wright, 78.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, 79.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, 78.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see the editorial by Rasmussen in *Brass Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 31.

contributions to brass teaching and performance.”<sup>10</sup> One article from 1970 discusses Fay Hanson, a brass player and teacher at Weber State College. The article, by Robert Weast, contains a review of a recent trumpet symposium in which Hanson gave a masterclass on trumpet performance and pedagogy. Weast spotlights several performers and, in the section on Hanson, writes a positive review of her work, highlighting some of her recommended teaching techniques and philosophies. He concludes the section with the statement, “Probably the finest compliment I could pay to Mrs. Hanson would be that I have every confidence in her abilities, and moreover, I would be delighted to have her teach my own children.”<sup>11</sup> For whatever reason, Weast felt he needed to conclude his review of Hanson’s work with this personal statement. Why would he feel it necessary to mention that he had confidence in her abilities? He did not mention that he had confidence in the abilities of the other performers discussed in the review. Weast likely viewed the emergence of a female trumpet player and teacher as a new development worthy of comment. Whatever the intent, the addition of this statement to an otherwise positive article can be viewed as an indication of the rarity of women in the brass world at this time.

Most people today admit that we did not do all we should have done in the past to include women or people of color in the history books. It comes as no surprise to find that in brass publications of the 1950s and 1960s there is little space devoted to women musicians, or that the language assumed the players were all male. While it is unfortunate these sources were not more inclusive, many today feel confident that we are finally getting the whole story, and “political

---

<sup>10</sup> Robert Weast, “The National Trumpet Symposium” *The Brass World* 5 (1970) 24-5.

<sup>11</sup> Weast, 25.

correctness” assures we will all be very careful from now on. As Benokraitis and Feagin state in their work on discrimination in the United States, “Many people are convinced that sex discrimination is no longer a problem. This conviction is based, first and foremost, on a lack of information.”<sup>12</sup> Few Americans, they contend, ever see data on sex discrimination and are uninformed about the reality. Many people “ignore even blatant sexism in search of other explanations. Perhaps, many wonder, there really aren’t many qualified women. Perhaps women don’t want to be in powerful jobs.<sup>13</sup> Sex discrimination is alive and well in this country, despite the fact that “many Americans feel that sex discrimination is practically nonexistent and they are optimistic about the future.”<sup>14</sup>

One of the most popular recent brass publications is the periodical *Brass Bulletin*. Published in three languages, this magazine was received four times a year by a worldwide readership until the magazine ceased publication in 2004. The *Brass Bulletin* contained articles on various issues of interest to brass players, including interviews with famous artists, articles on technique, repertoire, instrument making, health, conferences, and reviews of recordings, all arranged in a flashy, upbeat manner with numerous photos. The *Brass Bulletin*, published in Switzerland, gave the reader a worldwide perspective on artists, trends and issues. As a modern publication, the *Brass Bulletin* could be an example of a newer, more inclusive source of brass-related news and information. This was not the case. Each issue contained between eight and

---

<sup>12</sup> Nijole Benokraitis and Joe Feagin. *Modern Sexism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1995) 1.

<sup>13</sup> Benokraitis and Feagin, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Benokraitis and Feagin, 1.

sixteen articles, and the magazine ran for thirty-two years, but only nine times was there an article about a woman brass player. An examination of the covers of the magazine reveals that a woman brass player has never appeared on the cover. However, women's naked breasts have appeared on the cover of this publication twice in the past four years.<sup>15</sup> While the covers were chosen because of their depiction of brass instruments, it is insensitive to use these particular images in a field where some women continue to experience harassment and discrimination.

The magazine's final issue culminated in a large article entitled "Where do Brass Players Stand Today?" This article asked twenty-four of the world's "brass players and personalities"<sup>16</sup> to comment on the future of brass playing and the changing role of brass instruments and literature. The twenty-four worldwide brass experts were all men. Some might argue that this is more of a popular magazine, and should not be held to the same scholarly standard as other sources of history. Certainly this is true. This magazine, whatever its label, is reaching people worldwide and stands as an example of the perpetuation of outdated stereotypes. As this paper will demonstrate, we have a rich and valuable history of women brass musicians for inclusion in brass news media. Leafing through the magazine one is struck overwhelmingly by pictures of men, one reads articles all about men, and when it is time to examine the future of brass playing, we read the opinions of twenty-four men. Despite the fact that it recently ceased publication,

---

<sup>15</sup> Both covers are reproductions of paintings. The 2000 (IV) issue features the commonly reproduced fifteenth-century manuscript illustration of Venus, goddess of beauty and love, bathing nude in a fountain while being serenaded by musicians. The 2001 (I) cover features a modern painting of three objects: a naked female torso with the head and arms removed, a tuba, and a chair.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Pierre Mathez "Where do Brass Players Stand Today?" *Brass Bulletin* IV (2003) 24.

*Brass Bulletin* is a music periodical on the reference shelves of most college music school libraries today.<sup>17</sup>

While the *Brass Bulletin* is actively supporting and encouraging the old assumptions and stereotypes, it is being counteracted by other brass publications such as the *Historic Brass Society Journal*. While the *HBSJ* reaches a much smaller audience, it represents brass scholarship at the highest level and remains a record which can counteract the historical publications of the past. Despite the fact that most brass players probably do not read this journal on a regular basis, it remains an example of a non-gendered approach to music scholarship. A recent article by Richard Schwartz represents a more inclusive, non-marginalized approach to scholarship. Schwartz's article focuses on African-American cornet players in nineteenth-century America, highlighting photos and biographical information about several prominent soloists of the time, including three women. Rather than writing an article about men where a woman might be referred to only in passing, Schwartz includes valuable information about these women cornet soloists in the main body of his article. We need constant reminding that women were there too, whether in a discussion of brass bands, African-American cornet soloists, the history of the euphonium - whatever the topic.

Perhaps the single most important step towards rectifying unequal treatment of women brass players is to simply recognize that it is still a problem today. Several groups of musicians, of both sexes, have tackled this lack of information with campaigns to raise awareness about

---

<sup>17</sup> Music schools whose libraries hold this periodical on their shelves include the University of Michigan, New England Conservatory of Music, Eastman School of Music, Indiana University, The Hartt School of Music, Yale University, Cincinnati-Conservatory of Music, and Juilliard School of Music.

women brass musicians of the present and past. One such group is the International Women's Brass Conference. Susan Slaughter, principal trumpet of the St. Louis Symphony, founded the IWBC in 1993. Slaughter, as one of only handful of female principal brass players in major symphony orchestras, felt something needed to be done to raise awareness about women brass musicians. The organization's mission is to "provide opportunities that will educate, develop, support, and inspire all women brass musicians who desire to pursue professional careers in music."<sup>18</sup> The IWBC holds conferences every three years which feature *both* men and women performing and speaking about various issues which affect all brass players: audition preparation, practice routine, performance anxiety, sexism in the workplace, and all aspects of technique of both jazz and classical music. A main feature of the organization is the devotion to discovering and preserving the history of women and brass music. Through the Pioneers program, the IWBC chooses important female brass players who they feel have made major contributions to the field of brass performance. These Pioneers are proof that there were indeed women making their livings in brass performance while books such as *Brass Today* were being written. The effort to document and honor these women's lives and careers is an important part of the IWBC's mission. In addition to historical research, the IWBC commissions new brass works, provides scholarships to aspiring students, and provides a platform for discussion about issues of discrimination. Through numerous discussions, performances, and workshops, the IWBC creates role models for a new generation of young students.

---

<sup>18</sup> Cathy Leach. "The International Women's Brass Conference: Personal Reflections" *ILWC Journal* (1993) 34.

Another example of a strategy to increase awareness is the Washington D.C. brass group *USB21. United States Brass-21<sup>st</sup> Century* is a brass ensemble comprised entirely of women who are professional musicians employed with the various military bands in the Washington D.C. area. These women use the unique nature of this ensemble to draw attention to women's issues in society as a whole, not only in the field of music. The ensemble's website lists statistics about violence against women and problems concerning young girls today in the areas of education and self-esteem. In addition to their dedication to a highly professional level of brass performance, *USB21* donates proceeds to various causes focusing on issues such as women's health and domestic violence. Having "struggled against an undercurrent of discriminatory attitudes"<sup>19</sup> in the field of professional brass performance themselves, the musicians wish to bring issues of inequality to light. *USB21* gives workshops "designed to illustrate the dominance of gender selection of musical instruments, to demonstrate the need for educators to use gender neutral language in the band room, and provide much needed encouragement to young female musicians."<sup>20</sup> Part of the mission statement of this ensemble is the desire to present programs and offer education which is "designed to develop artistic talents and leadership skills of young female brass instrumentalists."<sup>21</sup> These musicians offer valuable experience, as many are not only women in the competitive field of professional brass performance, but also members of the United States military. Able to capitalize on the unusual sight of a ten to twenty piece brass

---

<sup>19</sup> Kimberly Stewart, Executive Director. [www.usb21.org](http://www.usb21.org). October 4, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Stewart, [www.usb21.org](http://www.usb21.org).

<sup>21</sup> United States Brass, 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Stewart, ed. [www.usb21.org](http://www.usb21.org). October 4, 2004.

ensemble composed entirely of women, these musicians can be especially effective in helping change our understanding of who brass musicians are today.

As we research women brass musicians it is important for us to recognize that some of the criticism those women experienced is still with us today. The following chapter will examine the origins of commonly held beliefs about women's physical limitations, which became more emphasized in the nineteenth century, regarding upper class white women who were expected to remain at home. Various biological arguments were set forth to explain why women should not attempt careers in music, especially playing brass instruments, which took too much stamina and weakened the body. Newspaper and magazine articles from this time articulate that while music was considered appropriate as a leisure activity for women, this was understood to mean only when performed in the home, on certain instruments, such as piano and harp. The argument that women are not capable of playing brass instruments because they are biologically weaker than men might seem ridiculous today, if it were not still being used.

## Chapter Two

### The Origins of Gender Exclusion: The Biology of Blowing Horns.

“There are design problems inherent in the basic personalities of women when it comes to brass instruments,” states world famous trumpet virtuoso Rolf Smedvig, “women have trouble playing brass instruments because your basic nature is not terribly aggressive.”<sup>1</sup>

How have we formed our definitions of what is and is not appropriate and possible behavior for men and women? What criteria do we use to decide what women and men can do? How do we organize our thoughts regarding the differences between men and women? Surprisingly, the origin of today’s conception of appropriate behavior for women is relatively recent. This chapter will examine the belief that women do not play brass instruments as well as men because they are biologically weaker and not naturally aggressive. Could it be true that women do not possess the necessary strength, aggression, or drive it takes to succeed playing brass instruments? The origins of our belief system, which stems from the nineteenth century, will be discussed. What has history said about women and their capabilities in music? How did society react to women who broke with tradition and played instruments which had been thought of as more masculine? Today, the experiences of professional brass players such as Abbie Conant, whose story will be discussed below, serve as examples of the way these questions continue to color our perception. Arguments continue about the effectiveness of women brass

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Dyer, “Of Gender, Bravado, and Brass.” *The Boston Sunday Globe*. April 21, 1991, B5.

musicians. Can a woman play trumpet as loudly and aggressively as a man? Does biology make a brass player?

The changes which took place in American life between 1800 and 1900 were so far-reaching that they necessitated a change in the roles of both women and men. In an economy based largely on farm production which relied on the work of every citizen, both male and female, women were active participants. Women's tasks required physical strength and stamina. The shift from a farming economy to an industrial one caused a shift in gender roles as well, as society adjusted to the new situation. Race and class divided the country as jobs outside the home caused competition, and money rather than goods became more desirable. As the woman's role continued to be defined by the home, the man's role began to be defined as belonging outside of it. As Sapiro has noted,

The value of labor came to be assessed more exclusively in the currency of money, and productivity began to be defined as the amount of monetary profit one's labor returned to one's employer. Women's domestic sphere of labor did not involve wage labor, it could not be assigned a monetary value, and it was no longer seen as productive.<sup>2</sup>

Out of this period of change came the beginnings of what scholars have termed the "cult of true womanhood" or the "cult of domesticity." As men moved out into the workforce, women "began to be viewed as delicate, frail, asexual, and as the keepers of the home fires to which men could return after a harrowing day in the world."<sup>3</sup> However, this referred only to upper-class women whose families did not need their income for survival, and thus to only a small portion of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Sapiro, 399.

<sup>3</sup> Sapiro, 45.

American population. This set of beliefs, or rules, has helped to shape our ideas of what women are and should be today. Without realizing what we are doing, many of us today use a standard of behavior more than a hundred years out of date. What's more, it wasn't accurate even then, as the following chapters will demonstrate. We must realize that our understanding of what is appropriate today is based upon a weak foundation.

One of the major changes which occurred in the nineteenth century was the emergence of science as a respected field of study which could tell us about our universe and ourselves. While today we revere science and the scientific method as accurate and truthful, teaching it in our schools and using it as a basis for human understanding, the science of the past was not so reliable. The scientific community made pronouncements and offered scientific evidence about women that supported the popular feeling that women were second class citizens whose main function was primarily that of homemaker.<sup>4</sup> Scientific 'proof' was used to explain why women should not work as professional musicians, especially on instruments which were deemed too exhausting and which were thought to require excessive strength.

Perhaps the most influential scientific figure of the nineteenth century was Charles Darwin. Darwin, and his focus on evolution, did much to solidify the notion that women were lesser beings. Darwin, in common with many people, believed that men were more intelligent, on average, than women. In his 1871 book *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Darwin notes that women's "greater tenderness"<sup>5</sup> differs sharply from man's ambitious, aggressive nature. Darwin offered as proof a comparison to the animal kingdom, stating "No one

---

<sup>4</sup> Cynthia Eagle Russett. *Sexual Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 11.

<sup>5</sup> Eagle Russett, 41.

disputes that the bull differs in disposition from the cow, the wild boar from the sow, the stallion from the mare”<sup>6</sup> and so on. Darwin’s conclusion was that man is capable of reaching a “higher eminence in whatever he takes up, than can woman – whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands.”<sup>7</sup>

While simply noting and recording the various biological differences between the sexes is not harmful, the danger lies in drawing conclusions based upon those differences. In 1873, the Supreme Court upheld an Illinois decision to prohibit women from passing the bar exam and becoming lawyers. “Man is, or should be, woman’s protector and defender,” concluded the court; “The paramount destiny and mission of women are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the Creator.”<sup>8</sup> That the Supreme Court of the United States would uphold and defend these beliefs is an example of how pervasive these ideas became and how they affected all aspects of society.

In 1894 Havelock Ellis published a summary of the differences between the sexes entitled *Man and Woman*. Ellis claimed that the physical traits of women placed them lower on the evolutionary scale, alongside members of all non-white races. Ellis pointed to scientific evidence that the (white) male pelvis is “proof of high evolution” while the female pelvis is compared to that of “some of the dark races which is ape-like in its narrowness and small capacity.”<sup>9</sup> French scientist Delauney noted that “diagrams of the feminine brains of the different races show that even in the most intelligent populations...the skulls of a notable

---

<sup>6</sup> Eagle Russett, 40.

<sup>7</sup> Eagle Russett, 41.

<sup>8</sup> Sapiro, 246.

<sup>9</sup> Sapiro, 29.

proportion of women more nearly approach the volume of the skulls of certain gorillas than that of better developed skulls of the male sex.”<sup>10</sup> The comparison of white women to all people of non-white races was a common one in the nineteenth century, designed to distinguish white men alone as being capable of occupying positions of power and authority. As Ryan states, “scientists fastened on anything from a cubic centimeter difference in brain size to a slight curvature of the skeleton as the natural explanation of sexual inequality.”<sup>11</sup> Since the average American did not fully understand biology in the nineteenth century any more than he or she does today, it is unsurprising that society took at face value the claims made by the scientific community about the limitations of women’s abilities.

In the 1880s, journalist Helen Gardener attempted to challenge the assumptions made as a result of ‘scientific’ findings. Fighting fire with fire, Gardener interviewed numerous scientists about the arguments relating brain size to intelligence. Gardener succeeded in forcing well known scientist Dr. Edward Spitzka to admit that under a microscope, there could be no way to distinguish a man’s brain tissue from a woman’s. This startling admission did nothing to advance the cause of equality however, as most continued to believe the physical differences between men and women determined their lives. While there was some debate within the scientific community “the overwhelming consensus of this work was that women were inherently different from men in their anatomy, physiology, temperament, and intellect.”<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Sapiro, 36.

<sup>11</sup> Mary P.Ryan, *Womanhood in America*. (New York: New Viewpoints, 1979) xi.

<sup>12</sup> Eagle Russett, 11.

How did these attitudes toward women and their limitations affect women musicians? Certainly, despite the claims of scientists to the contrary, many women possessed the capabilities to work as musicians in the nineteenth century. One factor, which will be explored more fully in Chapter Four, is the idea of the exception which proves the rule. One or two superstar women musicians might be accepted as being unusual and interesting, without threatening a belief that generally women are not capable, much in the same way allowances were made for a few talented child stars. When violinist Camilla Urso performed as a young girl in the 1850s, one reviewer was unable to reconcile her level of skill and expertise with her gender. In a brave attempt to keep from admitting she was a fabulous instrumentalist who happened to be female, the reviewer stated that “such music has not the stuff of manhood or womanhood in it...it has not actual passion, either of love or ambition...it is fantastic, fairy-like, belonging to other wandering instincts of child geniuses.”<sup>13</sup> As Abelson Macleod has observed, “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.”<sup>14</sup>

Nineteenth and early twentieth-century press coverage of women musicians was mixed. Generally, the more appropriate the instrument, the more positive the press reporting. For example, even as late as 1929, the *Boston Globe*, in a review of a Boston Women’s Symphony Orchestra concert, clearly expected the worst. When the orchestra made its debut, the reviewer stated, “it was hardly to be taken seriously, polite condensation rather than criticism was in order. If the strings as a whole or an individual wind player or two showed ability, other departments of

---

<sup>13</sup> Beth Abelson Macleod, “Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist? Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990.” *Journal of Social History* (1993) 294.

<sup>14</sup> Abelson Macleod, 294.

the orchestra were far from meeting the requirements of symphonic performance.”<sup>15</sup> The unidentified reviewer admitted, however, that this state of affairs had changed. He could not resist adding his opinion regarding the appropriateness of certain instruments, concluding, “Granted that women performers are not likely to attain masculine proficiencies with such unfeminine instruments as the double bass, the horns, trombones, or tuba. The players of these instruments in Miss Leginska’s orchestra are at least adequate to any ordinary demands that may be placed on them.”<sup>16</sup>

Not all press coverage was negative. In 1888 the *Boston Herald*, commenting on the increase of “girl violinists” in the city, remarked that “under the modern view of things girls may aspire to almost any attainment of which humanity is capable. The girl of today will astonish no one, even if she carries about the cornet or trombone, as well as the violin.”<sup>17</sup> Two years later, cornet soloist Anna Berger so astonished worldwide audiences that London’s *Musical Herald* was moved to remark that she had “electrified English audiences at Covent Garden by her cornet playing. She played fifty nights in succession and has accepted offers from France, Germany, and Russia.”<sup>18</sup>

This more positive reporting was counteracted by articles such as one in the *Musical Standard* which remarked, “Women cannot possibly play brass instruments and look pretty, and

---

<sup>15</sup> “Leginska’s Orchestra in Concert” *Boston Globe*, October 4, 1929. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

<sup>16</sup> “Leginska’s Orchestra in Concert.”

<sup>17</sup> Judith Tick, “Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870-1900.” *Women Making Music*. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987) 328.

<sup>18</sup> Christine Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987) 120.

why should they spoil their looks?”<sup>19</sup> Following this line of thought, a critic in *Musical America* wrote in 1906 that he hoped women would not “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 a brass instrument is just as likely to prove an unpleasant shock.”<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, a reviewer for the *New York Sun* asked readers, “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 a lady cornet soloist.”<sup>21</sup> As Abelson Macleod states, “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.”<sup>22</sup>

One of the most central media influences of the nineteenth century was *Godey's Ladies Book*. Published in Philadelphia, *Godey's* was a monthly women's magazine, published from 1830 to 1898. Prior to the Civil War *Godey's* was America's most popular and widely read magazine, and in the latter half of the century it continued to be an important source of information. *Godey's* had a great deal of influence, either directly or indirectly, upon society about a variety of subjects, including music. Louis A. Godey believed it was his mission as publisher not only to entertain his readership, but to attempt “nobler purposes,” which he felt

---

<sup>19</sup> Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 67.

<sup>20</sup> Abelson Macleod, 292.

<sup>21</sup> Abelson Macleod, 297.

<sup>22</sup> Abelson Macleod, 292.

included giving his readers instruction on the “behavior appropriate to the ideal woman.”<sup>23</sup> As a central figure of the nineteenth-century popular press, Godey had great deal of power over society’s conception of women and music.

*Godey’s* catered to women of the upper classes who were well-educated and had the means and time to read magazines. The magazine reinforced the Victorian ideal of the wife and mother who remains at home, in leisure, while leaving all worldly matters to her spouse. Many Victorian women who grew up in that tradition fully supported it and passed on those ideals to their children. Music was thus encouraged as an appropriate pursuit, as it was connected with the home and therefore denoted amateur status. Musical skills were considered essential for an educated woman, as long as she displayed them in private on certain instruments, such as piano or harp. Brass instruments were not appropriate. Imagine a well-dressed, refined Victorian lady playing tuba in her drawing room. That this image is amusing to us today is an example of how thoroughly we have absorbed the strictures presented in cultural rule books such as *Godey’s*.

Indeed, the allowable instruments were few, as *Godey’s* makes abundantly clear. In her analysis of some one thousand seven hundred stories and articles from the magazine, Eklund Koza has observed that while “music was deemed part of the feminine domain, some musical styles, activities, and instruments were considered inappropriate for women.”<sup>24</sup> Women were, according to Godey, allowed and encouraged to perform upon only two instruments, the keyboard and the harp. In the articles and stories there are only two references to women playing the violin, one reference to a woman playing a woodwind instrument (a flageolet), and three

---

<sup>23</sup> Julia Eklund Koza, “Music and the Feminine Sphere: Images of Women as Musicians in *Godey’s Ladies Book*, 1830-1877.” *Musical Quarterly* 75 (1991) 103.

<sup>24</sup> Eklund Koza, 107.

references to women playing percussion instruments. It is interesting to note however, in the case of the percussion, how this is identified solely with women of lower class. For example, in one story from 1852, it is mentioned that Sally, an Irish servant, sometimes plays the bones. Another, from 1875, discusses the sad fate of a young “penniless girl” who is doomed to walk the streets singing and playing the tambourine.<sup>25</sup> It is no accident that these less appropriate instruments are associated with women of the servant classes.

As could be anticipated, women in *Godey's Ladies Book* do not play brass instruments. Even toward the end of the magazine's publication, when, by the 1890s, many women had begun to take up brass instruments, there is a significant silence from the magazine on the subject. In the entire body of articles from the sixty-eight year history of the magazine, there is only one reference to women playing brass. In a fictional piece published in 1871, a humorous story is told about the performance of a play which called for brass players offstage. These musicians were to emit shrieks on the instruments designed to bring to mind screams of the insane (an enlightening comment on the role of brass instruments in general). However, as the moment approached, the regular players were not in evidence, so a woman took up an instrument (specified only as a “brass tooter”<sup>26</sup>) and got the job done. The author remarked that this one note was the beginning and the end of this woman's “career as a feminine wind instrumentalist.”<sup>27</sup> The humor of the story underscores the absurdity of women playing a brass instrument, even as it underscores the absurdity of brass instruments in the first place. The story

---

<sup>25</sup> Eklund Koza, 108.

<sup>26</sup> Eklund Koza, 108.

<sup>27</sup> Eklund Koza, 108.

is a very safe reference, for it is clear to readers the woman was not actually playing the instrument, just blowing into it, and just one time (done in order to save the play from disaster). She has no aspirations, will never play such an instrument again, and exhibited no skill in the area at all. In case there was any doubt, the author jokes about the incident marking the end of her career. However, it is also clear that a true lady would never be loitering backstage in a theater unescorted, so the reader can draw his or her own conclusions about the appropriateness of committing such an act.

The readership of *Godey's* was warned, directly and indirectly, about the consequences of moving outside the accepted sphere. As Eklund Koza has shown, the stories and articles made clear that women who “defied social norms would regret their choices and their lives would be dangerous, unhappy, and unfulfilled.”<sup>28</sup> In 1844, in an article titled “The True Rights of Women” author Park Benjamin states that even in areas “most congenial with woman’s nature,” meaning apparently activities within a woman’s sphere, women are inferior to men.<sup>29</sup> An article from 1859 debated the issue of whether women could teach music as well as men; the conclusion was that they could not. The author gave evidence for his opinion, stating that “to instruct upon the pianoforte, there must be actual strength, as well as powerful talent.”<sup>30</sup> Note the reference to both strength and power in one sentence, and this in a discussion centering around an instrument which has been acknowledged as acceptable. The argument that women were weaker and therefore incapable applied to any situation which took her outside the household and into the

---

<sup>28</sup> Eklund Koza, 118.

<sup>29</sup> Eklund Koza, 121.

<sup>30</sup> Eklund Koza, 116.

public eye, even if it was simply to teach piano lessons. As Eklund Koza notes, “lack of physical strength is a common explanation for women’s exclusion from the instrumental arena.”<sup>31</sup> This argument is convenient, acceptable, and difficult to challenge. Do we really understand how much physical strength is required to play brass instruments? Can we begin to separate the qualities which make a good brass player from the entanglements of gender? Why is it difficult to think of the qualities of brass instruments as having nothing to do with gender?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, many today understand that we have not always treated women with respect and equality in the past. The negative press and public opinion about women musicians and women brass players in particular is an example of this. Today we would not expect such open discrimination or an attempt to use scientific evidence to show that women are inferior. This is why the story of Abbie Conant is so difficult to believe.

When Abbie Conant arrived in Munich in the summer of 1980 to audition for the principal trombone opening in the Philharmonic, she was already a well-known performer, bringing with her a substantial amount of skill and experience. She easily won the position (she was the only woman auditioning), advancing through the rounds, which were conducted behind a screen, and into the open final round. The members of the orchestra, whose votes were needed to confirm the winner, were thrilled with her performance and voted unanimously to hire her. The orchestra’s musical director, Sergiu Celibidache, was unhappy with the fact that a woman had won (and the orchestra stopped using screens at auditions from that point on), but, in contract negotiations himself, was unable to stop her appointment. Conant played her probationary year without a problem and was voted tenure by the full orchestra. However,

---

<sup>31</sup> Eklund Koza, 117.

Celibidache then demoted her to second trombone, stating “You know the problem, we need a man for solo trombone.”<sup>32</sup>

The saga which followed has been well documented elsewhere by Buzzarté and Osborne. For the next thirteen years, through numerous court battles, Conant fought for her position, finally winning in 1993. The elements of her struggle which are relevant to this discussion include the musical director’s attempt to gather scientific proof that Conant was not capable of physically handling the job of solo trombonist with the orchestra (despite the fact she had won their audition). One of the finest players in the world, Conant was confident enough in her abilities to allow herself to be subjected to degrading physical exams, hoping to prove once and for all she could do the job. The orchestra’s lawyers claimed that Conant did not “possess the necessary strength to be a leader of the trombone section.”<sup>33</sup>

As Buzzarté describes, Conant “underwent extensive medical testing to measure the capacity of her lungs and the speed at which she could inhale and exhale air. She had blood drawn from her ear to see how efficiently her body absorbed oxygen. She stripped and let the doctor examine her rib cage and chest.”<sup>34</sup> In addition, the court ordered Conant to perform an audition in front of orchestral “experts” to determine if she possessed the “necessary physical strength, endurance, and durability to play the most difficult passages.”<sup>35</sup> Through it all Conant performed second trombone with the orchestra at a lower pay rate. It was not until 1993 that the courts finally ruled that in addition to regaining her position as solo trombone, Conant had to be

---

<sup>32</sup> Monique Buzzarté, “We Need a Man for Solo Trombone: Abbie Conant’s Story.” *IAWM Journal* (1996) 8.

<sup>33</sup> Buzzarté, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Buzzarté, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Buzzarté, 9.

paid back pay for those years she played second part. The court statement put at rest the questions about Conant's physical capabilities.

She is a wind player with an outstandingly well-trained embouchure, i.e., lip musculature, that enables her to produce controlled tone production in connection with a controlled breath flow, and which gives her the optimal use of her breath volume. Her breathing technique is very good and makes her playing, even in the most difficult passages, superior and easy. In this audition she showed sufficient physical strength, endurance, and breath volume, and above and beyond that, she has enormously solid nerves. This, paired with the above mentioned wind-playing qualities, puts her completely in the position to play the most difficult phrases in a top orchestra, holding them out according to the conductor's directions for adequate length and intensity, as well as strength.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the proof offered by musical and medical experts alike, some still believe that women are biologically incapable of performing at a high orchestral level. As Buzzarté states, "Unfortunately, Abbie's story reflects the rule, not the exception, for women trombonists. Her case is distinguished from so many others not by the actions she endured, but by their severity, her documentation of them, and most notably, by her eventual victory."<sup>37</sup>

While it might be tempting to consider the case of Abbie Conant as an unfortunate example of an outdated, European way of thinking which would not happen in the United States, let us return to the words of trumpet star, Rolf Smedvig. Smedvig caused a controversy in 1991 when, in a trumpet master class at Boston University, he made comments which several of the students found offensive. Since the master class was recorded, there is no debate over what he said. The debate centered upon the meaning and validity of his comments. Smedvig used the physical strength argument, stating that the very nature of a woman affects her ability as a brass

---

<sup>36</sup> Buzzarté, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Buzzarté, 11.

player. This is, as we have seen, a commonly held view, and one which has been difficult to challenge. Smedvig stated “I’ve got this thing about women and brass playing...if you want to play brass instruments, you have to change your character.”<sup>38</sup> “Boys,” continues Smedvig, “I mean, we grow up at the age of 5, you know, and we’re playing in the dirt and you guys are playing with dolls. I’m sorry to say that...but some women have a really tough time leaving those womanly traits behind and getting more aggressive.”<sup>39</sup> After one young woman had played for the group, Smedvig criticized her performance, saying “You came out there and it looked like you had your doily dress on and you were going to tiptoe through the tulips, you know, and play this...you can’t do that when you have a trumpet in your hands.”<sup>40</sup>

While the situation in the United States has certainly improved, these remarks are evidence that we have not been completely capable of escaping the stereotypes of the past. Smedvig is a respected, internationally renowned artist who many consider an expert in the area of brass performance. It might even seem to make sense that if women are weaker physically, then it follows that they cannot play brass instruments as well. However, the general public has no idea how much physical strength or aggression it takes to play the tuba, trumpet, or other brass instrument. Instead of making outdated assumptions, we must judge each brass player individually against a set of performance standards which are not gender-based. As Eklund Koza

---

<sup>38</sup> Dyer, B5. Interestingly, Smedvig’s Empire Brass Quintet recently added female hornist Michelle Perry, the first permanent woman member in that group’s history.

<sup>39</sup> Dyer, B5.

<sup>40</sup> Dyer, B6.

states, “If equality in music is to become a reality, then the Victorian ghosts impeding the achievement of this goal must be recognized, faced, and exorcised.”<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Eklund Koza, 124.

## Chapter Three

### Changes in the Nineteenth-Century Musical Scene:

#### “Ladies” Bands and Orchestras Emerge.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the United States had developed a flourishing musical culture. The industrial revolution had brought leisure time and money for the arts. The Civil War created a need for brass bands to be formed and helped make band concerts an American institution. Education was becoming more standardized, including music in the curriculum. Women began to go to college and join the workforce in greater numbers. Professional orchestras were founded in major cities such as Boston, New York and Chicago. Women participated in music performance but found obstacles in their way, especially in brass playing. While women finally had access to a high quality music education, they were not eligible to perform in the bands and orchestras of the day, as such groups would not accept women. It was not until 1904 that the musician’s union began to accept women as members, and only then because they were forced to by the American Federation of Labor. Women instrumentalists responded by forming their own groups, as this chapter will discuss.

The all-female bands and orchestras gave the musicians the experience and opportunity to play their horns and in some cases, make a good living at the same time. Public reaction was mixed, however. Women found they had to contend with unflattering stereotypes regarding women on stage and, in response, were required to go out of their way to emphasize their virtue. By focusing on the city of Boston, this chapter will illustrate the experience of female orchestral players and examine the press

coverage they received. Helen May Butler's Greatest American Ladies Concert Band and Lora Antoinette Reiter's American Ladies Concert Band are proof that women were capable of professional level brass performance in the band area as well.

By the year 1900, many women in America had crossed one hurdle on the way to professional musicianship; they had access to a quality education. Though still thought of as a hobby for women of the upper classes, music education in the United States was co-educational, and young women were being trained by the nation's top conservatories. Aside from the usual private instruction, which had always been available to the privileged, public institutions opened their doors to women in the United States as well as in Europe. In Ohio, Oberlin College Conservatory accepted both male and female students from its founding in 1865, followed by conservatories in Cincinnati, Boston, and New England in 1867. In 1868 Boston's New England Conservatory of Music had 1097 female and 317 male students enrolled, though it reserved its violin scholarships for men.<sup>1</sup> Boston became a center for music education.

Perhaps the most important thing to happen to women brass players in the nineteenth century was the acceptance of the violin, and later the other stringed instruments, as appropriate for women. As stringed instruments became more allowable for women, the success women demonstrated helped pave the way for woodwind and brass instruments. Most importantly, however, it made possible the formation of orchestras, which needed brass players. As Block notes, when the Boston Conservatory allowed women to enroll in string classes, it "forever changed the prospects for women as instrumentalists."<sup>2</sup> Violin instructor Julius Eichberg taught both male and female students, organized

---

<sup>1</sup> Ammer, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Adrienne Block, "Women in American Music, 1800-1918." *Women and Music, A History*. Karen Pendle, ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991) 149.

student recitals, and garnered positive press for his students. A performer, composer, and instructor, Eichberg was a Boston legend. For him to take a stand for female students was a vital part of the growth of music education for women. The Boston press became accustomed to seeing young women performers at Conservatory recitals, and commented favorably on the quality of their work. A review in 1877, appearing in the *Evening Transcript*, addressed the issues surrounding women and instrumental music, stating, “Who that has seen or heard Camilla Urso...could fail to feel that the violin seemed particularly fitting to the female constitution and capacity?”<sup>3</sup> Urso, a former student of Eichberg who would later become concertmaster of the Boston Women’s Symphony, was a familiar name in Boston at the time. As one reviewer noted, it was not possible to hold a negative opinion of women violinists in Boston; they had proven that the instrument could be played successfully by both sexes. Despite this, it would be another ninety-three years before the Boston Symphony Orchestra accepted a woman violinist.

These young women studied intensely, often with European-born instructors, as was the custom, and performed in high-caliber student orchestras. There was only one problem. Where were they to perform after graduation, when the nation’s orchestras excluded women? Female graduates of the nation’s conservatories needed a chance to gain experience and make music, and as they were barred from existing groups, they began to create their own. Around the country, from the 1880s through the 1940s, all-women orchestras flourished. By 1925, when women made up the majority of music students, all-female orchestras had been founded in major cultural centers across country, including Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago and New York. As has been documented by Neuls-Bates, these orchestras were led by well-known and established conductors and often toured extensively, countering the common arguments that women were not physically up to the rigorous demands of being

---

<sup>3</sup> “Music” *Evening Transcript*. June 12, 1877. Boston Public Library Brown Collection ML 46.E43S3.

an orchestral musician. To perform the common repertoire of the day, these groups needed brass players.

Boston was a forerunner in the formation and encouragement of women's orchestras. As has been documented by Ammer, two types of women's orchestras existed side by side. In addition to amateur orchestras whose members played for the love of music, there were professional groups who paid their musicians. The paid orchestral work consisted of performing "mostly popular but some serious music, often in conjunction with other kinds of popular entertainment, principally vaudeville."<sup>4</sup> The vaudeville employment opportunities for female brass players extended beyond band and orchestra performance, as will be discussed in Chapter Five. While the musicians in the amateur orchestras and bands could be and often were professionally trained, the professional groups certainly were. Larger cities such as Boston and New York often could support several women's orchestras of different levels. In Boston alone, for example, there were at least a dozen women's orchestras of various sizes which performed before 1940. One of the first professional women's orchestras in the nation, founded in 1888, was the Boston Fadette Ladies Orchestra. While today this group is little known, in its day it was a major ensemble which rivaled the Boston Symphony for audience attendance. The story of this orchestra is an example of the commercial success which women brass players were capable of attaining over a century ago.

The Fadettes, as they were called, performed classical and popular music in glittering Victorian gowns, making the most of their unique status as an all-female group. The Fadettes' success was due in a large part to their grasp of the entertainment value inherent in an orchestra which was the complete opposite of what the public had been used to. As Abelson Macleod notes, the Fadettes provided "the

---

<sup>4</sup> Ammer, 123.

kind of incongruity that vaudeville audiences found entertaining.”<sup>5</sup> The orchestra performed regularly across the country under the baton of Caroline Nichols, a violinist from Eichberg’s studio. The Fadettes became hugely successful and were known nationwide. Nichols often shared the stage with the most famous conductors of her time, men such as John Philip Sousa and Walter Damrosch. In the 1940s, remaining members held a fifty-year reunion in Boston, and a small pamphlet was written on the history of the orchestra. This document records one reviewer’s response to Nichols and the orchestra, stating “If you did not for the moment consider Mrs. Nichols skill with the violin, which is unquestioned, you would be at once impressed with the earnestness which she displays in her work and character. Any orchestra is a natural reflection of it’s leader, and in this case one is struck by the fire and brilliancy and perfect rendition which they give to even the most difficult numbers.”<sup>6</sup> Nichols was praised as “quick to recognize talent,” a conductor who “trained more young women musicians for professional, wage earning and self-supporting orchestra jobs than any other individual.”<sup>7</sup>

The Fadettes, the “pace-setter of the turn of the century,”<sup>8</sup> played concert halls, top vaudeville theaters, and outdoor sites, giving 6,063 concerts during their thirty-two year career. They went on extensive tours of the country, traveling by train. The Fadettes played in Glen Echo Park in Washington D.C. to over ten thousand people and created a problem when the streetcar system became inadequate to handle the crowds. They performed in Asbury Park in New Jersey, City Park in West Palm Beach, to name a few, and in first class vaudeville theaters as the star act. The orchestra logged over five hundred fifty thousand miles, performing from coast to coast in the United States and Canada and giving

---

<sup>5</sup> Abelson Macleod, 298.

<sup>6</sup> Blanche Naylor, *Anthology of the Fadettes*. (Boston, 194?) Boston Public Library Brown Collection.

<sup>7</sup> Naylor, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Naylor, 8.

performances in all but three states. The repertoire included over five thousand standard classical works, including “popular up-to-date selections, many symphonies, all the classic overtures, seventy-five grand operas and numberless salon pieces of popular appeal.”<sup>9</sup> This is an extremely large repertoire, and the musicians who performed with the orchestra must have become adept at reading music on sight. Nichols began a tradition, which would become a popular concert feature, of taking requests from the audience. The orchestra handed out lists of prepared repertoire, often as many as six hundred pieces, and the audience members would select their favorites, which were sent to the podium on small pieces of paper. The orchestra was ready to perform any piece on the list, an example of the skill and experience of these musicians.

Over the years more than six hundred women performed with the group, earning a combined total of more than five hundred thousand dollars. The Fadettes performed with around twenty members on the road in their earlier years, including a brass section of two horns, two cornets, and one trombone. When at home in Boston for the summer, the group numbered about forty, increasing the size of the brass section and adding a tuba player. These summer concerts were enormously popular and, according to the history, drew bigger crowds than had the (all male) Boston Symphony the previous years. Personnel was enlarged as the group became more successful. In fact, over the thirty-two year existence of the orchestra, five different women played tuba with the group, an amazing number, which shows that there were indeed highly capable women brass players on all instruments. Many of the members of the orchestra studied with members of the Boston Symphony and later competed with them for the extra summer free-lance work available. As stated by one critic writing in *Musical America*, “It is said that certain Boston Symphony members became much aroused at the success of certain of their girl pupils,

---

<sup>9</sup> Naylor, 8.

who competed for their summer jobs – and got them.”<sup>10</sup> Aroused or not, the professional men of Boston had to move over and share the stage.

The Fadettes’ rigorous travel routine and established reputation served the members well throughout their careers. One Fadette recalled that the “many trials, discomforts, and odd experiences” of being on the road only served to be “good training for the future.”<sup>11</sup> Caroline Nichols’ “sure belief that when they were properly prepared for better and longer engagements, such engagements would come, was completely justified,”<sup>12</sup> noted one Fadette. At a time when women performing on stage were still considered to be without morals, the women in the orchestra “were always spoken of as the most dignified ladies”<sup>13</sup> and represented as paid professionals. By 1920 the orchestra had disbanded, leaving behind a large group of talented, experienced brass players who knew the rigorous tour routine and could play just about anything.

These musicians soon found work in another orchestra formed in Boston. The Boston Women’s Symphony Orchestra, performing from 1926-1930 and 1938-1942, was an organization which followed in the footsteps of the Fadettes, again giving women brass players experience and national exposure. The BWSO, under the direction of well-known conductor and composer Ethel Leginska who later went on to found the Boston Philharmonic in 1926, was a resounding success. One of the first concerts was given at Jordan Hall, at the New England Conservatory of Music, on March 23, 1927. Tickets were \$1.50, and repertoire included Mozart’s Symphony No. 35, a Liszt piano concerto with female soloist, Tchaikovsky’s *Marche Slave*, an orchestral suite by Pizzetti, and one of Leginska’s own compositions.

---

<sup>10</sup> Frances Q. Eaton, “Women Come Into Their Own in Orchestras,” *Musical America* 75 (1955) 179.

<sup>11</sup> Naylor, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Naylor, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Naylor, 10.

The orchestra numbered about sixty players, and the brass section included four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, and a tuba. Remarking on the success of the first few concerts, the program quoted a critic who stated the previous performances “showed a woman’s orchestra of symphonic size and calibre, an orchestra worthy in every way of the support of all music lovers, with programs worthy of comparison with any symphony orchestras in the land.”<sup>14</sup>

Many of the brass players who were hired for the new BWSO had been at school or freelancing around Boston for decades. An examination of the personnel lists from the Fadette orchestra is revealing when compared to one from a BWSO concert in December of 1927. The Fadettes had been disbanded for seven years in 1927 when the BWSO was performing its first concerts. The BWSO personnel for the December concert included sixty-seven women, at least eighteen of whom were veterans of the Fadettes, which is about twenty-seven percent of the orchestra. Interestingly, this percentage is even higher in wind and brass sections of the orchestra. Seventy-five percent of the brass players in the BWSO on this particular concert, nine of the twelve, had played with the Fadettes. This difference may be due to the larger number of female string players in Boston, as has been noted, providing a larger pool from which to draw. It is likely that female brass players were a much smaller group due to the limited amount of work available around the city for women who played these more unacceptable instruments.

It is noteworthy that nine of the twelve, which includes all of the horn and trombone sections as well as the tubist, had been Fadettes. A common stereotype is that the women who played with these all-female orchestras did so only when they were young, for a year or two before leaving music to get married, and thus never really had a professional career. This assumption helps cement the idea that

---

<sup>14</sup> BWSO Concert Program, March 28, 1927. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, ML 28. B7B77.

women brass players rarely, if ever, achieved professional status. The fact that most of the brass players in the Fadettes were still working in Boston seven years later, married or not, helps demonstrate that some women had long careers in performance. The tubist, Thelma Goodwin, was a member of both the Fadettes and the BWSO. She had learned tuba as a young girl, taught by her father who was also a tuba player. Belle Mann, a trombonist and former Fadette, also directed her own ensemble.<sup>15</sup> The brass section performing on that December concert was made up of women who had toured the country many times, given numerous sell-out concerts in Boston, and had been playing this type of repertoire for years. The fact that, in the city of Boston alone five different women were playing tuba before 1940, is evidence these women were not simply biding their time while looking for a husband. They wanted to perform, and they wanted it badly enough to put up with gimmicks, ridiculous costumes, and life on the road.

The orchestra, with Leginska at the helm, went on a whirlwind concert tour in 1929, giving seventy-six concerts across the country. Performing in Indiana, Arkansas, Virginia, Washington D.C. and in many more states as well as Canada, the orchestra received rave reviews. In Chatham, Ontario, the reporter from the *Chatham Daily News* wrote about the spectacular performance, “At its conclusion the audience rose to its feet as a tribute to the splendid artists who performed, and especially to Miss Leginska. Such a concert as given last night beggars description, it has to be heard to be appreciated or even described.”<sup>16</sup> This valuable exposure gave men and women across North America a chance to see women brass players performing difficult classical repertoire and doing it well. The group’s extensive

---

<sup>15</sup> Ammer, 134.

<sup>16</sup> BWSO Concert Program, January 29, 1930. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, ML 28. B7B77.

tours “provided encouragement to countless women to take up orchestral instruments,”<sup>17</sup> and provided audiences and critics with the common repertoire of the day. The brass section was made up of women who were accustomed to being on the road, performing to crowds who might have come to see an oddity, but left feeling they had heard an amazing performance.

Playing alongside the Boston Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1881 with a roster of seventy male musicians, the BWSO was proving the stereotypical view of female musicians wrong. The Boston critics on the whole embraced the orchestra, and reviews of concerts appeared in local papers regularly. In a fascinating *Boston Globe* review of a 1930 orchestra concert, the reviewer states that the orchestra “in a diversified program, gave an admirable performance. That their present state of excellence is the result of rigorous training was very much in evidence.”<sup>18</sup> There was, however, one “serious fault” in the performance of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 5, which was “an excess of volume from the brasses in stormy passages.”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this reviewer did not expect the women on stage to produce the loud, aggressive, and powerful brass playing this symphony demands. Whatever the case, these women were capable of playing the most demanding repertoire. “An enthusiastic audience filled every place,” a *Globe* reviewer wrote in 1929, and earlier that same year the *Boston Herald* commented that the “progress made by this orchestra within its two short years is nothing short of remarkable.”<sup>20</sup>

A tattered concert program from one of the first BWSO performances in 1927 is part of a scrapbook collection devoted to the orchestra in the Boston Public Library. Comments, written in pencil

---

<sup>17</sup> Carol Neuls-Bates, “Women’s Orchestras in the United States, 1925-1945,” *Women Making Music*, Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987) 358.

<sup>18</sup> “Women’s Symphony in Second Concert.” *Boston Globe*, January 30, 1930.

<sup>19</sup> “Women’s Symphony in Second Concert.”

<sup>20</sup> “Woman’s Band at Jordan Hall.” *Boston Herald*, April 15, 1929.

across the front of the concert program in a slanted hand, record the result of the evening's performance. "Good job with material,"<sup>21</sup> the witness noted. The program included the overture to *Oberon* by Weber, Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, a Delius piano concerto, and the *Nutcracker Suite* by Tchaikovsky. "Well-rehearsed, house  $\frac{3}{4}$  full, audience very enthusiastic, pianist good, big ovation for him. Oberon terrible, Tchaikovsky best, about 55 playing," were the views of this audience member. One can imagine this unknown music lover as he or she sat, with pencil in hand, ready to record an opinion of this rather unusual performance by a group of ladies. What they found, on the other hand, was simply a solid classical orchestral concert, with strengths and weakness, little different from the rest. The notes and program were tucked away to serve as a reminder eighty years later of a great symphony concert one evening in Boston.

The orchestra performed for five seasons before disbanding in 1930. Re-established in 1938 under the leadership of two male conductors, the orchestra continued to employ women brass musicians until World War II. Though the women's orchestras existed for a short period of time, they were a necessary first step toward women being thought of as acceptable, experienced musicians. Without professional experience, no musician could expect to win a tough, competitive audition for a major orchestra, even with a good education. Women brass players in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were able to get the training and experience necessary by performing with these orchestras, as well as the chance to perform challenging repertoire under experienced conductors. As more and more women brass players performed professionally across the country, critics could no longer use the excuse that women had not the stamina or temperament for brass performance. As the public became more accustomed to seeing women on stage, it was more likely that women instrumentalists would be

---

<sup>21</sup> BWSO Concert Program, December 12, 1927. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, ML 28. B7B77.

employed for their musicianship rather than their entertainment value. The women's orchestras gradually disappeared, and by World War II most had been disbanded as women musicians were able to find jobs more readily during the war years.

While women brass players were joining the field of orchestral performance, the popularity of concert and brass bands at the end of the nineteenth century ensured their inclusion in this area as well. Women musicians were drawn to bands for the same reasons they were drawn to orchestras. For brass players, the high level of playing opportunity available in a concert or brass band made it all the more enticing. Bands, due to their association with the military, were thought of as traditionally male, and all-female groups were able to exploit this in the same way as in the orchestral field. The popularity of Henry Fillmore and John Philip Sousa only increased the nation's appetite for band concerts, and the entertainment value of an all-female wind and percussion group departed from the norm even more strongly than did an all-female orchestra. While much has been documented regarding the emergence of "all-girl" bands in World War II, many are not aware that the history of all-female bands began much earlier.

Perhaps the best known all-female concert band was the Ladies Military Brass Band under the direction of Helen May Butler. Butler's career, as has been documented by Bacchus and Edwards, began as a violin and cornet soloist. In 1891 Butler formed an all-female orchestra and for the next twenty years had an active career as a conductor of numerous groups of various sizes. The success her groups achieved is a tribute to her vision and creativity. Butler's drive to succeed commercially in band performance was unique, as up until that time it had been exclusively a man's field. Unlike the orchestral performance, where a group could get by with one or two brass players, band instrumentation required the full compliment of brass. The success of Butler's various bands is evidence that there were

plenty of women playing even the largest and most cumbersome euphoniums and tubas. Publicity material advertised the group as the “most attractive and at the same time the most artistic” band in existence, describing the musicians as “bright, young, handsome, and attractive.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1910, cornet soloist and conductor Lora Antoinette Reiter, along with a forty piece all-female band, toured the country on the vaudeville theater circuit. The American Ladies Grand Concert Band, following in the footsteps of Butler’s band, produced a publicity brochure for their 1910-1911 season. This brochure contains information on how to book the band for a performance as well as positive reviews garnered by the group in previous seasons. Similar in design and wording to the Butler band publicity material, this brochure makes it clear that despite the skill of the musicians, it was their looks and deportment that was top priority.

One of the differences between band and orchestral performance around the turn of the twentieth century was that the aspect of theater was present in band performance in a much larger way. While the Fadettes of Boston felt the need to dress in evening gowns to perform, women’s bands who wanted to be successful decided to go further. Elaborate uniforms, evoking a military association with polished buttons and ropes of braid, complete with large, dramatic hats, helped make the appearance of the group as impressive as possible. This focus on appearance was a disadvantage for the all-female bands as it may have caused the quality of the performance to become secondary, at least in the minds of the public. While bands such as Sousa’s were the norm and did not need to prove their worth to the public, the ladies bands did not have such an advantage. This can be seen in the emphasis in the press on the way the musicians looked rather than sounded. As with the women’s orchestras, the publicity was careful to emphasize that these women were ladies and not to be confused with other female theater acts such as

---

<sup>22</sup> [www.butler.com/link/biographies/butler/helenmaybutler](http://www.butler.com/link/biographies/butler/helenmaybutler). 39

dancers. Class was used as a selling point. Crowds could see the normal type of stage show anytime they chose, but the marketing strategy which advertised a “high-class company of artists”<sup>23</sup> was more unusual.

The American Ladies Band saw the commercial success being achieved by other such groups and marketed themselves in a similar way.<sup>24</sup> “Those who have seen the American Ladies Band in their natty uniforms ‘a la Militaire’,” boasts the advertising brochure, “pronounce them to be the most picturesque assembly of ladies now before the public.” The band’s attire is described as “rich, dignified, and classy” and the ensemble is described as providing a “charming stage picture.” The continued use of the words *class*, *lady*, and *ladylike* are common in the publicity material of the theater touring circuit, as will be explored in Chapter Five. Press reaction followed this, noting that these “lady musicians have proven themselves to be artists,” and that they “looked very pretty.” As has been discussed, this emphasis on femininity and beauty made the woman brass musician’s job all the more difficult. To be taken seriously in a military costume, playing with a group of “American beauties,” was a tall order. It is a tribute to the training and skill of the musicians that they played well enough to remind listeners that traditional gender stereotypes were inaccurate. As the Chicago *Theatrical Review* noted, “several special members of the band have also proven that even the larger musical instruments employed in band work are not for men alone.”<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> *Metropolitan Musical Club*, publicity brochure, 191?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/metromc/1>.

<sup>24</sup> *American Ladies Grand Concert Band*, publicity brochure, 1910. University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/amerladies/1>.

<sup>25</sup> *American Ladies Grand Concert Band* publicity brochure, 1910.

As the field of women and music scholarship continues to expand, and many are now taking a closer look at the all-female bands and orchestras, there remains a need for more research in this area, especially focusing on the years before the Second World War. Although women brass players were able to work and perform with these groups, they sometimes did so with the requirement that they make the most of being feminine. The novelty of their existence was always put before their skill. This created an additional problem for women brass players, since the emphasis on being feminine and ladylike may have served to reinforce the imagined differences between male and female musicians.

Even as late as 1952, an article appearing in *Etude* magazine cautioned women against attempting careers performing on some instruments. Orchestras today, the author argued, are “reluctant to hire a player whose appearance at her instrument gives off a feeling of forcing or incongruity.”<sup>26</sup> Women who desire orchestral work “would do better to avoid anything heavier than the ‘cello, the clarinet, and the French horn,” claimed the writer, due to women’s “natural delicacy.”<sup>27</sup>

The following chapter will discuss a few women who were able to overcome discrimination and succeed as top soloists, thus proving that women did indeed possess the strength and power to perform on brass instruments. In some ways the role of soloist was easier for society to accept. As will be shown, anything was preferable to accepting the woman brass player performing in the brass section beside her male colleagues. Women playing in separate groups were not considered a threat to the established, all-male orchestras of the day. A few talented stars could be overlooked as the exception to the rule. Admitting women into the brass section, to sit alongside men, would mean admitting they were equally qualified. The all-female orchestras were tolerated because the alternative was a total

---

<sup>26</sup> Raymond Paige, “Why Not Women in Orchestras?” *Etude* 70 (1952) 15.

<sup>27</sup> Paige, 15.

restructuring of the instrumental system in orchestral music. What one reviewer described as “Adam and Eve in the orchestra”<sup>28</sup> remained unthinkable.

---

<sup>28</sup> Eaton, 183.

## Chapter Four

### The Exception Which Proves the Rule:

#### Women as Brass Soloists.

On a December evening in 1905, trombone soloist E. Ralphenia Parsons prepared for her usual night's work. Parsons was in the middle of a nationwide tour as a member of the Cleveland Ladies Orchestra, and that night they were performing in Boone, Iowa. Parsons, advertised as the "greatest of all lady trombonists,"<sup>1</sup> shared the stage with cornet soloist Adda Hutchinson. Both women performed in the ensemble and as soloists in theaters and parks across the country. On that chilly December evening in Iowa, Parsons might have played an opera aria by Donizetti, or perhaps a popular favorite written as a theme and variations such as the *Blue Bells of Scotland*. The variations would allow her to show off her technical skill, ending with a flourish of double or triple tonguing designed to leave the audience, and perhaps Parsons herself, breathless. The two women went on stage that night as usual and received rave reviews for their performance in the local newspaper the following morning. "Miss Parsons' renditions on the trombone were such that she was recalled for the third time," noted a *Daily News* reporter. "The work of the entire orchestra and soloists was of the highest order. The members played with vim and precision and showed such command over their instruments that the audience was fairly fascinated."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Cleveland Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 1906? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/cleveland/1>.

<sup>2</sup> *Cleveland Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 1906?

While it may seem incredible that a woman trombone soloist could have achieved such outstanding success in 1905, a time when she would not even have been allowed to vote, she was not unique. Women have had a strong presence in the history of solo instrumental performance. The role of soloist appears to have been less forbidden than that of ensemble member, and many women were successful in solo performance long before they were given an opportunity in the ensemble arena. Women such as Clara Schumann toured Europe and had phenomenal success as soloists, were financially independent, and had a great deal of freedom from the established gender expectations of the time. Schumann, from the 1830's onward, was a powerful force in the development of piano music, contributing compositions herself, performing those of her husband, and programming new music across Europe. As Reich noted, Schumann "had the courage to maintain a position that was irregular in the world in which she lived."<sup>3</sup>

The success of European soloists inspired American musicians. As the violin became more acceptable, famous women soloists dominated the musical world playing this instrument as well. Remarkable American's such as Maud Powell and Camilla Urso did much to destroy fallacies about women's lack of stamina in instrumental performance by traveling extensively and maintaining rigorous performance schedules. Despite criticism and the belief that violins were "instruments of the devil that no self-respecting women would play,"<sup>4</sup> the success of women soloists on these instruments proved it was possible. Soloists such as Urso and Powell "established precedents for other women and advocated

---

<sup>3</sup> Nancy B. Reich, "Clara Schumann." *Women Making Music*, Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 276.

<sup>4</sup> Block, 154.

equal opportunities for women instrumentalists,”<sup>5</sup> and it was a good thing, because women brass soloists were going to need all the help they could get.

In the brass field, women have often found it difficult to be taken seriously as soloists, as audiences associate these instruments with male performers. As mentioned in Chapter Two, brass instruments are commonly seen as requiring more strength and stamina than a typical woman might be thought to possess. By combining that with the additional power, nerves, and control required to survive as soloist, it is no surprise many assume there were few women capable of success, in any era. The fact that, even today, many feel the need to belong to an organization which challenges stereotypes about brass performance is evidence that the job of brass soloist is still not considered appropriately feminine. This chapter will explore women’s role as brass soloist, an occupation which many consider to be traditionally male. While on the surface this distinction may seem unimportant today, how we view the job as soloist will determine who is hired, what they are paid, and how they are viewed by the general public. Women such as Abbie Conant, now well known as a soloist and theater artist, will never be free from judgment based on their gender. As Reskin and Padavic have stated, “among socially unequal groups, separate is not equal.”<sup>6</sup>

While in the heyday of concert band performance there were many women who achieved international fame as brass soloists, their lives are little remembered. In recent years, feminist scholarship has begun to catch up with some of these women, as dissertations are written and research published which includes more in-depth information about women brass soloists. The female soloist had the dual problem of not only appearing capable as a soloist in the first place, but as a brass player in

---

<sup>5</sup> Tick, 328.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Reskin and Irene Padavic. *Women and Men at Work*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1994) 46.

particular. As Green has noted, the “biggest, loudest, and most technologically advanced instruments represent the greatest interruption”<sup>7</sup> of the status quo. While the lives of women performing around the time of World War II have begun to be researched in more depth, our knowledge of the history of women brass soloists before 1940 is limited. While we have begun studying the most famous star performers, much remains to be done documenting the lives of regular women such as Grace Brewer and Nellie Allen. These women worked diligently as soloists without ever hitting the big time but nevertheless represent an important stage in the development of brass solo performance in the United States. It is easy to dismiss today’s female brass soloists as an exception, when the reality is they are continuing a long line of courageous women whose hard work forced the status quo to bend a bit.

The instrumental solo, one of the “staples of the American band repertoire,”<sup>8</sup> gave musicians an opportunity to be the stars of the show. While solo performance had always been a part of music making, it was the inclusion of a flashy, exuberant soloist in a concert of winds, brass, and percussion which became an American tradition. Bandleaders such as John Philip Sousa and Helen May Butler knew the audience loved the showstopping brilliance they were treated to when the soloist left the ranks and walked to the front of the stage. Soloists became famous, created rivalries, competed with each other by forming their own bands, and even made money selling lines of instruments, instruction books, and their own solo compositions.

While all types of instruments had the potential to be played by soloists, it was the brass family which captured the public’s eye. While the cornet was certainly the instrument of choice, solos were rendered on all variety of horns, euphoniums, trombones, and occasionally tubas. As the instruments

---

<sup>7</sup> Green, 58.

<sup>8</sup> Robert M. and Margaret Hindle Hazen, *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800-1920*. (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987) 116.

developed and changed so too did the popular trend in solo performance. Keyed bugle gave way to valved cornet, opheclide gave way to the tuba and euphonium, and instruments changed shape and size throughout the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century saw the invention of valves to make the instruments more easily playable and better in tune, and a healthy manufacturing boom created many varieties of instruments from which to choose. As Wallace has stated, during the period between 1880 and 1920 the United States became a “central player in brass innovation.”<sup>9</sup>

Stars such as Arban in Europe and Clarke and Pryor in America helped make brass solos popular. French cornetist Jean-Baptiste Arban is a household name in the brass playing community even today, remembered for his flashy technique and popular teaching method. Herbert L. Clarke, cornet soloist with John Philip Sousa’s band, amazed worldwide audiences with his style and brilliance. Trombonist Arthur Pryor released numerous recordings and toured the country, proving that the same level of skill could be achieved on that instrument as well. The technical prowess demonstrated by these players raised standards for performance and amazed audiences worldwide. Even on euphonium and tuba, instruments which today are still considered by many to be unusual solo instruments, there were players who reached such high levels of skill that they are considered “pivotal figures”<sup>10</sup> in brass performance. William Bell, considered to be the first great tuba soloist, is honored yearly when low brass players gather to celebrate Bell’s Christmas birthday with concerts. The instrumental solo, and perhaps most often, the brass solo, made up part of the core of concert programming in the period around the turn of the century. Along with orchestral transcriptions, popular songs, marches, and dance numbers, solos provided the necessary drama and variety audiences craved.

---

<sup>9</sup> John Wallace, “Brass Solo and Chamber Music from 1800,” *The Cambridge Companion to Brass Instruments*, John Wallace and Trevor Herbert, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 245.

<sup>10</sup> Wallace, 246.

Women such as cornet soloist and conductor Helen May Butler were able to be commercially successful as soloists to a wide extent. Thanks to recent work by historians and by women brass musicians such as Backhaus and Edwards, the careers of women like Butler are becoming well documented. The 2005 Great American Brass Band Festival, which included a daylong series of presentations on the history of brass performance, featured a lecture on female brass soloists given by Dr. Backhaus. In an effort to educate the public about Butler and her band, Backhaus has also created and toured with a historic re-creation of “America’s Foremost Turn-of-the-Century Lady Bandmaster and her ‘Adamless Garden of Musical Eves.’”<sup>11</sup> Butler achieved great renown not only as a soloist but as a conductor and is an important example of someone who was able to succeed in brass performance despite, or perhaps because of, the stereotypes of the time. A clever market strategist, Butler knew that her unique status was an advantage. Putting together a group which she advertised as “without question the most attractive and at the same time the most artistic”<sup>12</sup> all-female band, Butler made the women’s appearance as important as their skill. As with the all-female orchestras, the public might have come out of curiosity, but they left having heard a fabulous and highly skilled performance. Thanks to the Butler family, a large collection of memorabilia now resides at the Smithsonian Institution, including concert programs, photos, correspondence, sheet music, and newspaper clippings. This collection is evidence of the success of Butler’s career in the entertainment industry. The availability of historic materials such as these is necessary for further documentation of an era little remembered today.

As a renowned cornet soloist, Butler is an example of a woman who was accepted as skilled by her peers, including stars of the day such as John Philip Sousa. While the majority of female brass

---

<sup>11</sup> Courtesy of Patricia Backhaus.

<sup>12</sup> [www.butler.com/link/biographies/butler/helenmaybutler](http://www.butler.com/link/biographies/butler/helenmaybutler). 48

soloists before 1940 were either unpaid or underpaid, there were a few, such as Butler, whose success equaled the men in her field. The few who made it big were considered the exception, however, rather than the norm. Historians are still investigating the financial aspect of many of the smaller women's orchestras, where it is often unclear if the musicians were paid on a regular basis. As Ammer has noted, much of the publicity material indicates that fees were charged for performances of groups such as the Englesbian Lady Orchestra in Boston, and more research is needed in this area.<sup>13</sup>

As has been mentioned, it was easier to think of the few soloists here and there as the exception, rather than admitting they were equally likely to be good players, a concept which would expose the discrimination in hiring practice present in the system. Music was not unique in this matter however. At the turn of the century the nation grappled with issues such as child and immigrant labor as it attempted to define and regulate the workplace with legislation. In 1908 at the height of the band era, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a case regarding women's place in the workforce, 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."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, it is precisely these qualifications that a brass soloist needs most.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, the vaudeville touring circuit provided opportunities for women brass performers and soloists to work playing their horns. While vaudeville was mainly segregated by both race and gender, it did allow women soloists to be seen and heard by a nationwide audience. Groups of men and women performing together were rare. For whatever reason, the family group, composed of both men and women, appears to have been more acceptable. Perhaps

---

<sup>13</sup> Ammer, 123.

<sup>14</sup> Abelson Macleod, 297.

the family musical company was not seen as such a departure from accepted behavior because the man, as head of the family, remained in charge. This phenomenon can also be seen in the groups in which a male conductor led a group of women; audiences were apparently much more comfortable with a mixed group if there was a man in charge. As the Hazens have noted, “there remained a reluctance to form a mixed band,”<sup>15</sup> even into the twentieth century. Women and men performing together was discouraged, as this put women on the same level as men and caused a breakdown of predetermined gender roles.

While some today may tend to dismiss the vaudeville era as an example of a lower-class form of entertainment far removed from the likes of the Boston Symphony, at the time the lines between types of entertainment were not as clearly marked. Musicians worked where they could, as they do today. Another woman who had a successful and highly publicized career as a brass soloist, Anna Theresa Berger, got her training and experience on the vaudeville stage. Thanks to a recent article by Miller, Berger’s career has been documented and she stands as yet another example of a star performer. By the time she was ten years old, in 1863, Berger was playing cornet with her family’s musical touring company full-time. It is important to note the financial aspect of Berger’s childhood, for when her father passed away she was able to support her entire family with the proceeds from her performances. Not simply an amateur who enjoyed music, Berger was a paid professional. Traveling the nation and overseas, Berger continued to perform after she married, stunning audiences with her ability and technique. A performance in New York in 1882 brought the following comment from the local journalist sent to cover the event, “Miss Berger played a cornet solo exquisitely. There is no manner of doubt that this lady is by far the best female cornet player that ever blew sweet music out of ‘sounding brass.’ Her

---

<sup>15</sup> Hazen, 57.

execution is equal to that of the greatest master of the instrument, and her tone is wonderful for a woman.”<sup>16</sup>

The reviewer is caught in the common dilemma of being incapable of separating Berger’s ability from her gender. It appears she must be judged within the category of female cornet players, as her gender is mentioned three times in two sentences. To be such a fine player was clearly such an anomaly, though audiences had to acknowledge her skill, a “lady” she remained. While Berger was, as can be seen from the international press coverage, hugely successful and one of the world’s finest cornet soloists, her career remains little remembered. As Miller notes, “her name has all but disappeared from the history books.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite the difficulties, some women were able to overcome obstacles and stereotypes and have successful careers as brass soloists, though usually restricted to the more acceptable cornet. Because the public appeared more ready to accept a women soloist than a rank and file ensemble member, a world of separate spheres in music performance continued. While Helen May Butler and Anna Berger were powerful and technical wonders on their instruments, major orchestras continued to act as if women instrumentalists did not exist. The public accepted this, and eventually the fame these women earned began to fade away. Before long, the large, predominately male urban orchestras became thought of as the musical institutions of greatest merit. People no longer recalled that women such as Ralphena Parsons walked out onto stage every night with their trombones, in towns like Boone, Iowa, performing for audiences who packed into theaters until it was standing room only.

---

<sup>16</sup> Betsy G. Miller, “Anna Theresa Berger, Cornet Virtuoso.” *ITG Journal* 22 (1998) 45.

<sup>17</sup> Miller, 43.

## Chapter Five

### The Entertainment Value of Novelty: Reinforcing and Challenging Femininity.

“The changes that separate us from the Victorians date to the turn of the century, and they were acted out on the Vaudeville stage.”<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will examine the publicity material and press coverage of numerous touring chamber and symphonic music acts performing with female brass players between 1890 and 1940. Groups such as the Phillips Sisters Orchestra, the Cathedral Trumpeters, and the Brewer Concert Entertainers toured the nation performing on the established vaudeville and theater circuit. Because many people associated women on stage with the chorus line and burlesque shows, these groups were careful to market themselves in specific ways. A close look at these marketing strategies reveals how carefully women had to work around common perceptions of women in musical theater by continually emphasizing their class and professionalism. Elaborate costume and presentation were an important part of the performances, and the programming was carefully planned to appeal to the widest possible audience.

As the public became more accustomed to women instrumentalists through the popularity of the all-female bands and orchestras after 1880, women brass musicians were still considered to represent the most direct challenge to the ideals of femininity and decorum. The result was an effort on the part of many of these women musicians to make themselves appear as feminine and ladylike as possible

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 132.

through costume and elaborate hair and make-up styling. The marketing of musical acts is certainly much the same today, where much is spent on glossy photos and flyers designed to sell recordings and concert tickets. Both male and female musicians use whatever they can to sell their act, and many female artists today choose to wear gowns or present themselves in glamorous ways in an effort to stand out from the crowd. The beginnings of this can be seen in vaudeville more than a century ago.

The combination of theater and brass playing was an interesting one. While the very existence of these groups challenged the prevailing assumptions about women and brass instruments, at the same time they went out of their way to reinforce their conformance to the aspects of femininity. Class became a major issue. As these musicians began to market themselves nationwide, they attempted to come as close to the Victorian ideal as they could while playing a brass instrument. By placing a strong emphasis on class and femininity, groups hoped to remind audiences that they were really little different from the accepted upper-class lady playing quietly and demurely in her drawing room. By keeping themselves in the sharpest possible contrast to the all-male groups, women brass players seemed less of a threat to the established order. By placing the theater and entertainment aspect first, these groups were able to work nationwide for many years without directly challenging the orchestras which did not accept women. Vaudeville touring circuits offered women real playing opportunities and the possibility of paid work playing their horns.

The period between 1880 and 1920 was an important time of change in the United States, and it is no accident that this change coincided with the arrival of women brass performers as a permanent part of the music scene. As Snyder notes, “the turn of the century marked a watershed in the history of American popular culture.”<sup>2</sup> The nation was in transition. The nineteenth century, with its roots in a

---

<sup>2</sup> Snyder, ii.

farming economy and small towns, was giving way to industrialization and growth of cities. Immigrants poured into the country and the culture simply had to change. Victorian ideals were no longer appropriate, if they ever had been. Mass media was on its way and Americans had leisure time and some change in their pockets to spend on entertainment, fantasy, and laughter. Vaudeville shows were the result of a society attempting to make sense of it all, providing a place to redefine cultural values and priorities for a new century.

Vaudeville was all about making money, and business was good. By 1900, there were an estimated three thousand theaters in the United States, providing a home for between eight and ten thousand variety show acts which toured the country each year.<sup>3</sup> In New York City, eighty-nine new productions opened on Broadway during the 1899-1900 season alone. In addition to the circus, minstrel shows, museums, and taverns that provided entertainment, the development of a traveling theater circuit made agents and a few lucky artists richer each year. A “centralized vaudeville empire,” in place by the turn of the century, sent musicians on a prescribed route which provided a simple concept, “stage shows with something for everyone.”<sup>4</sup> This touring circuit provided an opportunity to men and women alike. If you could do something people would pay money to see, you had a shot at fame and fortune. As Snyder notes, “despite the odds against success, vaudeville was egalitarian in a competitive way. Vaudeville was far more open than the formal professions: the key criterion for success was the ability to put an act over.”<sup>5</sup> People everywhere were star-struck and there began a “surge of young girls to the

---

<sup>3</sup> Albert Auster, *Actresses and Suffragists: Women in American Theater, 1890-1920* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984) 4.

<sup>4</sup> Snyder, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Snyder, 52.

stage.”<sup>6</sup> Some of them brought their trombones.

For women, this period of change had far-reaching consequences. Described as the era of the “New Woman,” the early twentieth century saw more young women getting an education, joining the workforce, and making lives for themselves which were in contrast to the Victorian ideal. While in the nineteenth century women such as Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth had been fighting for causes such as temperance and the vote, it was the arrival of a new generation of women that caused these movements to gain momentum. It was not until this period, in August of 1920, that the nineteenth amendment was finally passed and women were granted the right to vote. As Sapiro has noted, “It is difficult to identify an area of life that was not in some way touched by feminism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.”<sup>7</sup> The new century meant new opportunities, at least for white women. Women of color and immigrant women did find increased opportunities in the entertainment industry but also experienced discrimination and segregation. Non-white brass musicians played in separate groups even as late as the 1950s.

Women were questioning the prevailing assumptions not just in the field of music, but in all aspects of their lives. The “New Woman” was now able to reevaluate “her relationship to both home and a career, as well as men and marriage.”<sup>8</sup> It is no surprise, then, that women brass players participated in this era of cultural change in large numbers. They represented the cutting edge of musical opportunity for women, the final frontier of instrumental performance. While some were young girls away from home for the first time, taking advantage of the increased opportunities for single

---

<sup>6</sup> Auster, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Sapiro, 458.

<sup>8</sup> Auster, 5.

women in the new century, others were seasoned professional musicians such as those brass players in the Fadettes orchestra. Not afraid of travel and the hardships of being on the road, these women wanted to work in music, and if their ticket to success lay in their ability to perform in a band dressed in Scottish kilts, then that was what they did.

The novelty factor of women brass players was a sufficient draw for audiences, but if they also gave a great concert, that was better still. The Metropolitan Musical Club, a “ladies orchestra with singing,” was dubbed “an attraction of unusual merit”<sup>9</sup> when it toured the nation around 1915. The fact that these performances were “out of the ordinary”<sup>10</sup> allowed them to offer something these American small towns may never have seen before, and the publicity material made the most of this. While larger cities such as Boston had become accustomed to seeing female musicians on its streets, in smaller towns such as Bellbrook, Ohio this was more unusual. Nationwide, these women were on the move, stopping at places like Norfolk, Nebraska; Utica, New York; Jamesville, Wisconsin; Mannington, West Virginia; and Shelbyville, Iowa. Trombone and violin soloist Elsie Allen, of the Allen Family Concert Company, was a hit with audiences. “She has given these two most difficult instruments a careful study, and possesses all the required qualities necessary for an artist. Her technique and powerful tone creates sensation wherever she is heard,”<sup>11</sup> commented a reviewer just after the turn of the century. This statement is evidence that while instruments like the trombone were still associated with strength and power, women were capable of mastering them and were being paid for it. Vaudeville was a business

---

<sup>9</sup> *Metropolitan Musical Club*. publicity brochure 191?

<sup>10</sup> *Cathedral Trumpeters and Fern Cashford*, publicity brochure, 19?? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=cathedralt/1>.

<sup>11</sup> *The Allen Family Concert Company*, publicity brochure, 190? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=allenfam/1>.

where “novelty meant money.”<sup>12</sup>

Fern Cashford, an actress who toured with a brass quartet around 1920, took advantage of the novelty of brass instrumentalists to promote her show. The Edna White Trumpet Quartette, first organized in 1914, had been a popular touring group on its own when it decided to combine forces with Cashford. This “exceptional group of versatile musicians and entertainers” were of “unusual musical feeling, ability and skill.”<sup>13</sup> That their ability and skill was unusual may not have been completely accurate, but it played on the public’s assumptions regarding women musicians. Ignoring the fact that no woman was playing trumpet anywhere in the country with an established male orchestra, the group simply advertised the qualities of these instruments and left it at that. The quartet was a combination of trumpets, horns and a euphonium and was “ideal and quite different from that found in an ordinary company. The soft tones of the horns are brightened by the more brilliant and heroic notes of the trumpets, producing a colorful and delightful blending of tone. The instruments adequately fill the largest auditoriums, and because of the technical possibilities of the trumpets, and their inherent vocal quality of tone, the organization is admirably adapted for concerts.”<sup>14</sup> While the use of terms such as “heroic,” and “technical” do not fit with a feminine and ladylike image, this group was successful partly because of their attention to costume which was used to help counteract these more masculine qualities.

As entertainment historian Albert Auster notes, in the great chaos which was vaudeville, “the importance of costume cannot be overstated.”<sup>15</sup> After all, theater was about taking the audience away from the everyday. Vaudeville star Sophie Tucker gave the following advice to young women

---

<sup>12</sup> Snyder, 60.

<sup>13</sup> *Cathedral Trumpeters and Fern Cashford*, publicity brochure, 19??

<sup>14</sup> *Cathedral Trumpeters and Fern Cashford*, publicity brochure, 19??

<sup>15</sup> Auster, 54.

trying to succeed; “if you ever get on the stage, think of clothing, look smart, it helps you out.”<sup>16</sup> Women brass players who played in musical touring groups took their cue from the actresses and entertainers of the day and made costume a large focus of their acts. As with the all-female concert bands, the smaller groups made their appearance count. When long Victorian dresses were the fashion, women brass soloists appeared in silks and chiffons with their flounces and ruffles trailing the floor. As women’s skirts began to shorten in the early twentieth century, musicians followed suit, showing dainty satin shoes and silk stockings. In the flapper era, when young women began to bob their hair in rejection of outdated Victorian ideals, so too did brass players. With carefully curled hair, satin dresses, floral corsages and elaborate make-up, brass quartets and other groups performed in theaters nationwide.

The press did not miss this attention to fashion and appearance. In 1913, an Iowa newspaper reported the result of a concert by the Hearons Sisters, a quartet featuring performers on violin, clarinet, cornet, and piano. “These four young ladies are most attractive,” noted the reviewer, “appearing beautifully gowned, and in manners graceful and modest.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, they were not your average women of the stage. The quartet put this review in their publicity brochure, obviously feeling that it would help increase bookings. The Bostonia Orchestra was lauded as making “an exceedingly pleasing picture,”<sup>18</sup> and the L.A.C. Orchestra looked so lovely on stage that they “won the goodwill of the audience before the program began.”<sup>19</sup> Fern Cashford was known for adding drama to her performances

---

<sup>16</sup> Auster, 54.

<sup>17</sup> *The Hearons Sisters Concert Company*, publicity brochure, 191? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/hearons/3>.

<sup>18</sup> *The Bostonia Orchestra Women Players*, publicity brochure, 1908. University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/bostoniao/2>.

<sup>19</sup> *The Lyceum Arts Conservatory Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/lacorch/1>.

by “carrying a wardrobe of appropriate costumes.”<sup>20</sup> The Chicago Ladies Orchestra was lauded by a theater in Texas as the “prettiest and most talented company of ladies ever on our course.”<sup>21</sup>

While using costume to give them an edge in the competitive entertainment market, women brass musicians also used their appearance to downplay any masculinity or sexuality which might be construed from their performance of the less feminine instruments. This is perhaps an explanation of the lack of female tuba players on the smaller stage. While women tubists were performing with the larger groups whose instrumentation required them, smaller chamber groups did not often use the instrument. It appears that if they could get away without it, they did so. While cornet, horn, trombone, and even euphonium are seen played by women in these traveling acts, the tuba did not find a place to the same extent. As discussed in the previous chapter, the tuba may have been simply too difficult to fit into the ladylike image created by these smaller groups. The emphasis on make-up, hair styling, and pretty dresses served the performers well in the short term but had negative consequences in the long run. By making the most of the differences between themselves and the male professional musicians of the day, these women exaggerated the contrast to such an extent that it made the stereotype of women’s weak and frivolous nature seem all the more believable.

Concert programming was carefully selected to appeal to the widest possible audience. It was common for the women to double on various instruments or to sing as well as play, thus giving a wider variety to the concert. In 1913, the four member Maurer Sisters Orchestra advertised performances on

---

<sup>20</sup> *Cathedral Trumpeters and Fern Cashford*, publicity brochure, 19??

<sup>21</sup> *Chicago Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/chicagoladies/1>.

cornet, flute, piano, violin, and cello, using the slogan “Versatility without Mediocrity.”<sup>22</sup> This concept can also be seen in the program of the Hearons Sisters, a quartet who performed on brass, woodwind, and string instruments. Winifred Hearons “perhaps the most versatile of the four, delighted the audience not only with her cornet and mandolin playing, but as a reader.”<sup>23</sup> It was common for concerts to feature dramatic readings or vocal music in addition to the instrumental selections. Groups such as the Bostonia orchestra featured a “story teller,” often male, who “was an especial favorite with the big crowd and kept his audiences in laughter during his frequent appearances.”<sup>24</sup> Soloists, brass quartets, and bands of all sizes and instrumental combinations played the most popular music of the day.

The programs were “composed of orchestral selections, instrumental solos, vocal quartets, duets and solos, and readings.”<sup>25</sup> The L.A.C. Orchestra advertised a program “which is extremely well selected and contains sufficient variety to fulfill all requirements” and which “could be classed as popular, with a few pieces of the heavier sort.”<sup>26</sup> Overtures, arrangements from Mozart operas, folk songs, hymns, and orchestral pieces by composers such as Verdi, Rossini, Fauré, and Gounod were featured. The smaller groups did not appear to be hampered by their size. The Chicago Ladies Orchestra toured performing orchestral pieces in scaled down versions. Pieces such as the overture to the *Merry Wives of Winsor* and Wagner’s *Tannhauser* met rave reviews. The *Evening Mirror* of Warren, Pennsylvania was pleased with the group’s performance, noting, “though composed of but ten pieces, it

---

<sup>22</sup> *Maurer Sisters Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 1913? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/maurersis/1>.

<sup>23</sup> *The Hearons Sisters Concert Company*, publicity brochure, 191?

<sup>24</sup> *The Bostonia Orchestra Women Players*, publicity brochure, 1908.

<sup>25</sup> *The Lyceum Arts Conservatory Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191?

<sup>26</sup> *The Lyceum Arts Conservatory Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191?

was fully equal to the work required of it. This was especially so in the *Tannhauser* selection, which requires a large number of instruments to produce the heavy volume.”<sup>27</sup> One wonders what Wagner, who composed some of the most challenging and brass-heavy compositions in classical music, would have thought hearing his piece, originally scored for large orchestra including a ten piece brass section, rendered by a group of ten people total, with only a trumpet and a trombone for brass. These groups did what they needed to make the music work, and the result was “lively, well-balanced”<sup>28</sup> programming which was entertaining.

Brass quartets were a popular addition to concert programs and often received comment from the press. The Cleveland Ladies Orchestra featured a brass quartet as part of their concerts, on one occasion providing a “unique and highly pleasurable” performance which “made a lasting impression with the tender and sympathetic strains of the *Lost Chord*.”<sup>29</sup> *The Lost Chord*, by Sullivan, was also on the program of the Cathedral Trumpeters, a group which “plays beautifully” a “wide repertoire of...concert and sacred numbers.”<sup>30</sup> The horn quartet which was featured in performances of the Chicago Ladies Orchestra was unique, in that it contained a male performer, Louis Runner, the group’s musical director. Rather than promoting a feeling of equality, though, this group’s publicity material made clear that Runner was in charge, with a group of pleasant young ladies at his disposal. This ensemble emphasized Runner’s superiority with a photo depicting the seven women and one man involved in a tug-of-war. On one side of the rope the women are gathered together, in lovely gowns, with no instruments in sight.

---

<sup>27</sup> *Chicago Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191?

<sup>28</sup> *Pittsburgh Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 1930. University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrcredata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/pittsburghl/1>.

<sup>29</sup> *Chicago Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191?

<sup>30</sup> *Cathedral Trumpeters and Fern Cashford*, publicity brochure, 19??

Runner, appearing in exaggerated size compared to the ladies on the other end of the rope, has no difficulty seeming superior to the group, despite the caption, which reads “seven to one.”<sup>31</sup> While the male leadership removes much of the power from the women musicians and reinforces the stereotype that women need a man to lead and protect them, the group is notable as one of the few where men and women performed together in a brass section.

Class became a central marketing point for these groups. Over and over again publicity brochures, posters and concert programs emphasize the class status of these musicians. The limits Victorian society imposed on the activities of women who wanted to be considered ladies, enforced through the media and the courts, attempted to sharply define acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Women on the stage were unable to meet these criteria; they had jobs outside the home and were financially independent, they were often to be found in the company of men, they were out at night unescorted, and their profession required different and perhaps more risqué clothing. In addition there was an assumption of sexual availability of women who put themselves on display for men. The actress’s “mobility and professional equality”<sup>32</sup> did not fit with the Victorian image. Women musicians felt the need to separate themselves from the average actress or dancer and used their class and their professional skill as marketing tools in an attempt to downplay the sexuality inherent in a woman stage performer. As has been mentioned, many of these women paid such close attention to image and costume that in reality they probably looked little different from the dancers and actresses of the time. This was all the more reason to emphasize their musical skill and do whatever they could to seem different, and better, than everybody else.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Chicago Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191?

<sup>32</sup> Auster, 57.

The Chicago Ladies Orchestra toured the country making sure audiences understood just what they were, or perhaps more importantly, were not. “The entire personnel is made up of members of standing and marked ability, professional musicians, capable of playing with the best musical organizations in America,”<sup>33</sup> boasted their publicity material. In 1911 the Bostonia Orchestra advertised “good taste and judgment,”<sup>34</sup> and the Pittsburgh Ladies Orchestra claimed they worked “under high ideals and motives.”<sup>35</sup> In an attempt to signal professional status the Aida Quartet, of New York, advertised in 1916 that its members had played with John Philip Sousa and his band, and that their program was “of high standard.”<sup>36</sup> Class, in addition to gender and race, is one of the major ways society divides and organizes itself. In the United States, class is often defined by financial success and includes a set of behaviors which have been determined by the group with the most power. While certainly many people kept the business of Vaudeville rolling by paying to see women performers of all social classes, it is indicative of the strong class lines present during this period that these musical groups went out of their way to identify themselves with “a high and refined class of entertainment.”<sup>37</sup>

In addition to their class and femininity, these groups often employed special marketing strategies designed to appeal to audiences. Many groups felt that featuring patriotism gave them a special edge, especially in the time during and after World War I. Alberta and Lorene Davis, two sisters who performed duets and solos on cornet and euphonium, among other instruments, included a photo in

---

<sup>33</sup> *Chicago Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191?

<sup>34</sup> *The Bostonia Orchestra Women Players*, publicity brochure, 1908.

<sup>35</sup> *Pittsburgh Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 1930.

<sup>36</sup> *Aida Quartet: of New York City*, publicity brochure, 1916. University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/aida/7>.

<sup>37</sup> *Chicago Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 191?

their brochure which depicted the two women in military costume playing bugles in front of a huge American flag. Another musical group, calling themselves the Overseas Ladies Orchestra, toured the American circuit advertising that they had come straight from the “Y.M.C.A. huts in England and France, entertaining for the American Expeditionary Forces,” prepared to give home audiences “an idea of the programs the boys liked.”<sup>38</sup> The group toured with cornet soloist Helen Ferguson. According to the group, “the boys in the service have accepted Miss Ferguson’s work with unbounded enthusiasm,”<sup>39</sup> so home audiences could hardly be expected to do less. As a marketing strategy it was a clever move. In case audiences might not be eager to welcome a woman brass soloist, it was implied that to do so would be unpatriotic. While recent scholarship has explored the lives of women musicians during World War II, there were women brass musicians performing during the time of the First World War as well, fifty years before they would be permanently admitted into the United States military as musicians.

Some groups felt that assuming an international flair would give them an advantage. The Phillips Sisters Orchestra advertised “classical and popular concerts”<sup>40</sup> in a publicity poster depicting the six women in elaborate Scottish costume, complete with kilts and dashing hats trimmed in tartan. The instrumentation of the group consisted of a violin, clarinet, cornet, trombone, drums, and bagpipes. The Dungill Family Concert Company, which began touring in the 1920s and continued into the 1950s, was an African-American group which advertised a widely varied ethnic background.

---

<sup>38</sup> *The Overseas Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 192?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/overseas/2>.

<sup>39</sup> *The Overseas Ladies Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 192?

<sup>40</sup> *Phillips Sisters Orchestra*, publicity brochure, 195?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/phillipss/25>

“Descendant of an Egyptian Queen...[who] escaped to Florida and married a Seminole Indian”<sup>41</sup> states the brochure regarding Doyle Dunhill, leader of the group. The musical family, which consisted of a father, mother, and seven children, was marketed as having “a rich background of Egyptian, Indian, American Indian, African, and French ancestry,”<sup>42</sup> designed to appeal to the audience’s love of the exotic. This group was one of the few of this size to travel with a woman playing tuba, daughter Gloria Dungill, though not until the 1950s. Since, as Snyder has documented, “even the best-acclaimed and highest paid black vaudevillians faced discrimination,”<sup>43</sup> the opportunities for women of color were all the more scarce. Even into the 1950s segregation remained a reality for all touring musicians and was especially problematic in the South. This issue can be seen in Sherrie Tucker’s documentation of all-female black and white jazz bands touring during World War II.

While the female brass musicians employed by these traveling companies were able to earn a salary and play music for a living, they did so completely separated from the established professional orchestral and concert band system in the United States which would not admit them. The vaudeville circuit provided a way to work despite the barriers, though there were major drawbacks. Women were required to emphasize their looks and had to conform to the accepted standards of beauty of the time, and carefully planned costume and concert programming around what would sell the most tickets. Women had to accept that they might not be taken seriously until after their performance was over and they had their chance to prove their skill, if at all. The novelty of their career, while exciting, was also a

---

<sup>41</sup> *The Dungill Family Concert Company*, publicity brochure, 195? University of Iowa Library, Special Collection, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/dungill/4>.

<sup>42</sup> *The Dungill Family Concert Company*, publicity brochure, 195?

<sup>43</sup> Snyder, 54.

drawback, as it seemed to prove the old stereotypes right. The more these women emphasized their gender, the more they were getting away from the qualities everyone thought were needed to play a brass instrument. With the development of Hollywood as the new center for theater and entertainment, the traveling vaudeville show became a thing of the past. By the 1940s, the era which had seemed so positive for women's issues was over, and World War II loomed on the horizon. People forgot that flappers formed brass quartets and that bands to rival Sousa used to travel the country with women brass players in long ruffled dresses, who had to figure out how to play their instruments while looking like ladies.

## Chapter Six:

### The Twenty-first Century: Discrimination and Testosterone.

Americans will become more accustomed to women in the brass section as more girls take up brass instruments in school, as more women move into jobs in brass performance and as more research into past performers is published and read. Women brass players are often still a surprise, though this situation is slowly changing. Recently, at an orchestral performance in Connecticut, several brass players were crowded to the side of the performing area with little room to spare. At intermission, rather than put down their instruments and risk them becoming damaged, some performers chose to hold onto them as they chatted and stretched their legs. An audience member, intent upon asking the tubist a question, made her way toward the group. The tuba player was standing next to her chair, holding her tuba. The audience member looked at the woman and her tuba, then turned to a nearby trombonist and asked, “Where’s the guy who’s playing tuba?”<sup>1</sup>

For this unknown music lover, the idea that the tuba player was a man was so strongly ingrained that even the image of the woman standing in front of her holding a tuba could not override her assumption. Despite the fact that the woman was dressed in concert black holding a tuba, the listener assumed she could not actually be the tuba player. While there is nothing wrong with someone not expecting to see a female tuba player, this example is evidence of how deeply set these gender stereotypes are in many people’s minds.

---

<sup>1</sup> Personal experience of the author, December 2004.

A young woman, pacing her practice room nervously, tried to keep calm before her audition. She had practiced the excerpts over and over again, had flown across the country, and had carefully done her warm-up routine. Encouraged because it appeared there were fewer competitors than she had expected, perhaps about thirty, she was not bothered by the fact that she was the only woman auditioning; that was a situation she was used to. She was the only female student at the university on her instrument. Although this was her first audition for a professional job, she was excited and felt prepared. Some of her fellow candidates had brought along wives or girlfriends to offer support, but she was alone. She knew the audition was behind a screen but was a little worried that her breathing pitch in some of the excerpts would give her gender away. Outside in the hall, she heard the outgoing player wishing the candidates luck as he made his way upstairs to begin judging the audition. She opened her door and stepped out as he made his way by her practice room. “Hello,” he said, looking her up and down and smiling, “are you here with someone, or are you actually going to audition?”<sup>2</sup>

This comment is one of many examples of how women brass players are treated and spoken to by their mentors and peers even today. The young student’s chances of performing at the top of her game under the pressure of an audition were diminished as she was taken aback by the comment. As it turned out, she won the audition, demonstrating the importance of screened auditions, and showing that, despite the assumptions and stereotypes, she was the best player for the position. While the situation has changed for the better in recent years and more women brass players are winning jobs, improvement is still needed.

The situation as we begin the twenty-first century is mixed. Compared to a century ago, when there was a great change in the status of women as the new century dawned, we have not yet seen a

---

<sup>2</sup> Personal experience of the author, May 1992.

lasting and overwhelming shift in attitude toward women and the instruments they play. As this chapter will discuss, the issues of gender remain very real and help determine the instrument a person selects and where they perform. As trombonist Rebecca Bower has noted, “The treatment of women brass players goes far beyond simply rude behavior; it is part of a much larger, more profound problem.”<sup>3</sup> While today women brass players are out there performing in orchestral brass sections, in military bands, and teaching at music schools nationwide, the situation is still in need of attention.

When the Vienna Philharmonic toured the United States earlier this year, the orchestra stopped in New York to play at Carnegie Hall, one of the nation’s most revered concert sites, and one which is considered by many to be the ultimate indication of success. The Vienna Philharmonic has lately been criticized for being slow in accepting women or minorities into its ranks, as it feels doing so would alter the sound of the music. The orchestra, under heavily negative publicity (resulting from the work of women like trombonist Monique Buzzarté), finally began allowing women into the orchestra, but only five...two violinists, one violist, one cellist, and a harpist. The orchestra briefly hired its first minority member, a Japanese tubist, who was not hired permanently after his probationary year, so the orchestra remains all-white.

In March 2005, National Public Radio broadcast a program about the Vienna Philharmonic while they were in New York on tour. Invited guest commentators were trombonist Abbie Conant and her husband, composer William Osborne. Their account of the interview and the resulting broadcast is evidence that despite the work done by players such as Conant, the issue of women and brass performance is far from settled. As has been mentioned in the discussion of Abbie Conant’s discrimination lawsuit, many today are willing to admit that countries such as Germany or Austria have

---

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Bower. “Dear Members.” *IWBC Newsletter* 2:2 (1996) 1.

been slower to embrace equality but feel that here in the States the situation is not in need of improvement.

When NPR was planning the broadcast, the representative from the Vienna Philharmonic said he would not participate if Conant and Osborne were present, an indication of their importance in the international movement against discrimination in orchestral performance. A *New York Times* critic who had often supported Vienna's position was invited to participate but declined. Allowed only to speak in a separate segment, Conant and Osborne attempted to discuss the issues surrounding Vienna's hiring practices. Conant and Osborne mentioned the statistics, comparing Vienna to other German-speaking orchestras, and pointed out the very unequal hiring ratio of men to women. The host of the show, in Osborne's words, "spent most of the interview vigorously defending the orchestra" and "his strategy seemed to be to interrupt and quickly change the subject if the information we provided about the Philharmonic did not suit him."<sup>4</sup> As Conant and Osborne noted, "we felt a bit railroaded."<sup>5</sup> In an effort to respond to the host's repeated attempts to defend the orchestra, Osborne mentioned the small numbers of women hired and quietly asked the question "What are we supposed to think, that women are just inferior?" His answer from the American host of the program was, "Well, that's the question."<sup>6</sup>

While the NPR show is to be applauded for focusing on these issues and bringing together various players to discuss them, it can be viewed as yet another confirmation that men are orchestral

---

<sup>4</sup> William Osborne. "Report About the WNYC Show on VPO." Posting to the *IWM* discussion list, March 12, 2005. This interview is available at [www.wnyc.org/shows/soundcheck/archive.html](http://www.wnyc.org/shows/soundcheck/archive.html).

<sup>5</sup> Osborne.

<sup>6</sup> Osborne.

players and women are not. Even today we need to listen to a radio broadcast to determine if women are capable, because the issue is in question.

In the music classrooms of today issues of gender equality still exist. Recently, a college music education student called his teacher after the first day of his required field observation. The student, sent to the middle school to be helped and taught by an experienced music teacher, had been looking forward to his first day of working in the classroom with the students. However, the day had been a disaster. As he poured out the story to his teacher on his cell phone as he drove away from the school, it was clear he had had a frustrating and uncomfortable experience. The student's mentor, an older, experienced band director, had made sexist comments throughout the day to the students. When one of the trumpet players (a boy) made a mistake, the teacher became very upset and yelled at the student, "You're playing like a girl, do it again."<sup>7</sup>

To the student teacher's horror, the band director routinely made comments such as this while working with his students, who seemed to accept it. The situation became so difficult that the college student was removed from the school and transferred to another to finish his student teaching. The younger students, however, are still there, class after class and year after year. While it is important that the atmosphere in the classroom fosters growth and supports the students in all ways, the schools sometimes reflect the beliefs of the parents. "Often it is the attitudes of the parents which I notice influencing the children's ideas," notes middle school band director Erin Wyman. "Once when I needed

---

<sup>7</sup> Personal interview with Scott Bean, January 2005.

a few extra flutes I asked a parent if we could start his son on that instrument and he replied that he did not want his son to play a girl's instrument."<sup>8</sup> Certainly the instrumental labeling works both ways.

Gender bias is taught. From our Victorian ancestors comes the message that women take care of families, men take care of machinery like cars and lawnmowers, and women are naturally quiet and less aggressive than men. Many believe that such gender stereotypes translate into the choice of instruments in the music classroom. Social pressures cause us to label people based on gender alone, and not on other physical attributes which might actually prove valuable such as height, which helps determine lung capacity and can make a brass player's task easier. Studies have shown that the older a student is, the more fully ingrained the assumptions and stereotypes concerning gender and musical instruments have become. Once students have learned the gender rules, they are uncomfortable with a situation contrary to their preconceived ideas. Children absorb their understanding of gender through interaction with their friends, families, teachers, and the media.

Several studies have shown that by the third grade, most students have a clear labeling system in place for instruments and gender. Work by Abeles and Porter has shown that, for students from kindergarten through the second grade, there was not a significant gender difference in instrument preference, an indication of "insufficient gender-role socialization."<sup>9</sup> However, soon after the second grade students begin to exhibit an understanding that certain instruments go with a particular gender. A 1993 study tested children between five and seven years old by showing them video of a person playing the trombone.<sup>10</sup> One group was shown a woman trombone player, and one group was shown a male

---

<sup>8</sup> Personal interview with Erin Wyman, May 2006.

<sup>9</sup> For a review of this and similar work see Kenneth Cramer, et al. "Perceptions of Musicians: Gender Stereotypes and Social Role Theory." *Psychology of Music* 30 (2002), 165.

<sup>10</sup> Cramer et al., 167.

trombone player. The results were startling; only two percent of the girls who watched the male trombone player wanted to try the instrument. However, twenty percent of the girls were interested in the trombone when they were shown a woman performer. The children did not appear willing to stray far from what they saw as normal and acceptable. As children label instruments with certain qualities, they make judgments regarding the musicians who break the rules. As Cramer, Million, and Perreault have noted, assigning instruments certain characteristics “may lead perceivers to view individuals who choose to play instruments atypical with their gender with social reproach. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that musicians who play instruments incongruent with their gender should be perceived more harshly.”<sup>11</sup> It is important to understand the “social pressures”<sup>12</sup> behind our choice of instrument and to do all we can to counteract the constant application of male and female characteristics to instruments, especially when clearly we have a long and fascinating history of women performers on every instrument.

In American orchestras today, ninety-seven percent of harpists are women while ninety-seven percent of low brass players are men.<sup>13</sup> While the advent of screened auditions made a large overall difference in orchestral hiring practice over the past forty years, it has not had complete success in changing instrument’s gender identities. Boys have not begun taking up harp in vast numbers, and girls continue to shy away from most brass instruments. While we have seen an increase in women brass musicians in recent years, it remains a field which is predominately male. One can hope that this

---

<sup>11</sup> Cramer et al., 167.

<sup>12</sup> Cramer et al., 168.

<sup>13</sup> Douglas Myers, Sr. and Claire Etaugh. “Women Brass Musicians in Major Symphony Orchestras: How Level is the “Playing” Field? *LAWM Journal* 7 (2001), 29.

situation will continue to change as more people become aware of the possibilities, as has recently happened in the Philadelphia Orchestra with the hiring of the first women tubist in that ensemble's history. Carol Jantsch auditioned against 194 other tubists from all over the world, winning the prestigious position at the age of twenty. "That she is a young women on that very un-woman-like instrument is a fact that is very extraordinary," states Philadelphia Inquirer music critic Peter Dobrin "and that she is so young and accomplished is a miracle almost."<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps there are certain qualities which make a better, more successful brass player. Maybe it's easier and more fun for those who are especially energetic and outgoing and don't mind doing some heavy lifting or taking really big breaths. Maybe brass instruments seem appealing to those who appreciate that creamy, smooth, and rich sound these instruments can make in the softer dynamic range. Maybe there are some who have a certain daring, an especially dramatic personality, who are willing to work hard for years so they can play a really difficult and stressful trumpet solo perfectly, every night for a month on a concert tour. Maybe some people turn out to be better brass players, but it is not because of their gender. There are good and bad women brass players, just as there are good and bad male brass players. If anything at all may be concluded from the history of women brass players, it is that they were out there playing despite all the setbacks. While there was a bias against women who played certain instruments, there were more women brass players before 1940 than many may realize. Night after night, stage after stage, women made their instruments sing. The least we can do is give their great-granddaughters the opportunity to do the same.

---

<sup>14</sup> Peter Dobrin. "Breaking the Brass Ceiling." The Philadelphia Inquirer. [www.philly.com](http://www.philly.com). February 26, 2006.

## Bibliography

- Abelson Macleod, Beth. "Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist? Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990." *Journal of Social History*, Winter (1993), 291-308.
- Ammer, Christine. *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Auster, Albert. *Actresses and Suffragists: Women in the American Theater, 1890-1920*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984.
- Benikraitis, Nijole V. and Joe R. Feagin. *Modern Sexism*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995.
- Block, Adrienne Fried and Carol Neuls-Bates. *Women in American Music, a Bibliography of Music and Literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.
- Block, Adrienne. "Women in American Music, 1800-1918." *Women and Music, A History*, Karen Pendle, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, 142-174.
- Bloomfield-Zeisler, Fanny. "Women in Music." *American Art Journal*. October 17, 1891.
- Brower, Edith. "Is the Musical Idea Masculine?" *Atlantic Monthly*. March 1894, 332-339.
- Burns, Kristine H., ed. *Women and Music in America Since 1900*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- Cramer, Million, Perrault. "Perceptions of Musicians: Gender Stereotypes and Social Role Theory." *Psychology of Music* 30:2 (2002), 164-174.
- Delamont, Sara and Lorna Duffin, eds. *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*. New York: Croom Helm, 1978.
- Drinker, Sophie. *Music and Women, the Story of Women and their Relation to Music*. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1948, reprint 1995.
- Eagle Russett, Cynthia. *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Eaton, Frances Q. "Women Come into Their Own in Orchestras." *Musical America*. 75 (1955), 30, 179, 183.
- Ekund Koza, Julia. "Music and the Feminine Sphere: Images of Women as Musicians in *Godey's Lady's Book*, 1830-1977." *Musical Quarterly* 75 (1991), 103-129.
- Fay, Amy. "Women and Music." *Music* 18 (1900).
- Green, Lucy. "From Affirmation to Interruption: Women Playing Instruments." *Music, Gender, Education*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 52-81.
- Handy, D. Antoinette. *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*. London: Scarecrow Press, 1981.
- Hazen, Margaret Hindle and Robert M. Hazen. *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800-1920*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987.

Herbert, Trevor, ed. *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Hizer-Jenkins, Lynn. "Instruments and Gender in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Music Making." *NACWPI Journal* 44:3 (1996), 4-12.

Hosler, Ned Mark. "The Brass Band Movement in North America: A Survey of Brass Bands in the United States and Canada." Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1992.

Keene, James M. *A History of Music Education in the United States*. London: University Press of New England, 1982.

Kerber, Linda K., ed. *U.S. History as Women's History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

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

Lebrecht, Norman. "Still All White On The Night." *London Evening Standard*. August 6, 2002. [www.thisislondon.com](http://www.thisislondon.com).

Mark, Michael L. and Charles L. Grey. *A History of American Musical Education*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1992.

Mathews, W.S.B., ed. *A Hundred Years of Music in America*. Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1900.

Mathez, Jean-Pierre. "Where do Brass Players Stand Today?" *Brass Bulletin*. Vol. 124 (2003), 24.

McLean, Albert F. *American Vaudeville as Ritual*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965.

Miller Soloman, Barbara. *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Morris Smith, Fanny. "The Record of Women in Music." *Etude*, September 1901.

Naylor, Blanche. *Anthology of the Fadettes*. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, Boston Massachusetts. 194?. ML 200.8 B7F3.

Paige, Raymond. "Why Not Women in Orchestras?" *Etude* 70 (1952), 14-15.

Placksin, Sally. *American Women in Jazz*. New York: Wildview Books, 1982.

Rasmussen, Mary, ed. *Brass Quarterly*. [Editorial]. Vol. 2, No. 1, (1958), 31.

Reich, Nancy B. "Clara Schumann." *Women Making Music*, Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987. 249-281.

Reskin, Barbara and Irene Padavic. *Women and Men at Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1994.

Rico, Lauren, Narrator. "Instrumental Women: A Celebration of a Century of Women in American Music." National Public Radio Broadcast. WMPR, Minneapolis, MN. March 9, 2001.

Ryan, Mary P. *Womenhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: New Viewpoints, 1983.

Sapiro, Virginia. *Women in American Society*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1994.

Schafer, William J. *Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977.

Schwartz, H. W. *Bands of America*. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1957.

Schwartz, Richard L. "The African American Contribution to the Cornet of the Nineteenth Century: Some Long-Lost Names" *Historic Brass Society Journal*, Vol. 12 (2000), 61-88.

Snyder, Robert W. *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Tick, Judith. "Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870-1900." *Women Making Music*, Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987, 325-348.

----- "Women as Professional Musicians in the United States, 1870-1900." *Yearbook for InterAmerican Research* 9 (1973), 95-133.

Tucker, Sherrie. "The Prairie View Co-eds: Black College Women Musicians in Class and on the Road During World War Two." *Black Music Research Journal* 19:1 (1999), 93-122.

----- "Nobody's Sweethearts: Gender, Race, Jazz, and the Darlings of Rhythm." *American Music* 16:3 (1998), 255-288.

----- "Telling Performances: Jazz History Remembered and Remade by the Women in the Band." *Women and Music* 1 (1997), 12-23.

----- *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940's*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

Upton, George P. *Women in Music, An Essay*. Boston, 1880.

Warner, Carolyn. *Treasury of Women's Quotations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992.

Weast, Robert. "The National Trumpet Symposium." *The Brass World*. No. 1, Vol. 5, (1970), 24-5.

Wohlberg, Tara. "Boys will be Boys in the Band." *The Globe and Mail*. Saturday, June 8, 2002. R6.

Wright, Frank, ed. *Brass Today*. London: The Euston Press, 1957.

## Women Brass Musicians

Bower, Rebecca. "Dear Members." *IWBC Newsletter*. 2:2, May 1996.

Brubeck, David and John Olah. "Connie's Final Toot! An Interview with Constance Weldon." *TUBA Journal* 18:4 (1991), 28-37.

Bruenger, David. "Women Trombonists in North American Orchestras and Universities." *International Trombone Association Journal* 20 (1992), 12-21.

Buzzarte, Monique. "We Need a Man for Solo Trombone: Abbie Conant's Story." *Journal of the IAWM*. February (1996), 8-11.

Dobrin, Peter. "Breaking the Brass Ceiling: Philly's Rare Orchestral Find, A Female Tubist." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. February 26, 2006. [www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/13965758.htm?template=contentModules](http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/13965758.htm?template=contentModules).

- Dyer, Richard. "Of Gender, Bravado, and Brass." *The Boston Globe*. April 21, 1991, B1, B5
- Ellis, Katherine. "The Fair Sax: Women, Brass Playing, and the Instrument Trade in 1860's Paris." *Journal of the Royal Music Association*. 124:2 (1999), 221-254.
- Ewer, Mabel Swint. Record of attendance courtesy of the New England Conservatory of Music, Registrar's Office. Boston, MA. 2001.
- Jepson, Barbara. "Sexism in the Brass Section." *The Wall Street Journal*, "Leisure and Arts," July 7, 1993.
- Johnsen, Gladys. "An Interview with Rebecca Bower." *Music Educators Journal* 78 (1992), 39-41.
- Leach, Cathy. "The International Women's Brass Conference: Personal Reflections." *ILWC Journal*, October (1993), 34.
- Magliocco, Hugh. "A Special Endurance." *International Trombone Association Journal* 20 (1992), 22-28.
- Miller, Betsy G. "Anna Theresa Berger, Cornet Virtuoso." *ITG Journal*. 22:3 (1998), 42-49.
- Mullan, Pat. "Melba Liston: Jazz Master." *Newsletter of the International Women's Brass Conference* 2:2 (1995), 1-2.
- Myers, Douglas W. and Claire Etaugh. "Women Brass Musicians in Major Symphony Orchestras: How Level is the "Playing" Field." *IAWM Journal*. 7:3 (2001), 28-31.
- Nelson, Florence, ed. "Gail Williams: On Mentors, Mountains, and Motherhood." *International Musician*, October (1991), 16-19.
- Osborne, William. "The Purity of Pizzicato Polkas" Posting to the *International Alliance of Women in Music* discussion list, December 16, 1997.
- "Interview About VPO on WNYC." Posting to the *International Alliance of Women in Music* discussion list, March 10, 2005.
- "Report about WNYC Show on VPO." Posting to the *International Alliance of Women in Music* discussion list, March 15, 2005.
- Stewart, Kimberly, ed. *United States Brass, 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. <http://www.usb21.org>. October 4, 2004.
- Tucker, Sherrie. "Jane Sager." *Newsletter of the International Women's Brass Conference* 2:1 (1995), 2-7.
- Williams, Kathy. "One Small Toot for Womankind." *The Virginian-Pilot and the Ledger-Star*. September 12, 1993. 4.
- Woodbury, Mary Lazarus. *Women Brass Players in Jazz, 1860 to the Present*. Thesis (D.M.A.) University of Cincinnati, 1995. 4

## Articles Without Attributions

"A Monster Concert by Young Ladies." *Dwight's Journal of Music* 3, August 6, 1853.

“Carmen.” *Boston Herald*. Boston, MA. May 12, 1929. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

“Carmen, According to Miss Leginska.” Unknown Boston newspaper clipping. May 13, 1929. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

“Concert Review.” *Dwight’s Journal of Music*. Boston, MA. July 7, 1877. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

“Julius Eichberg Dead.” *Traveller*. Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

“Leginska’s Orchestra in Concert.” *Boston Globe*. October 4, 1929. Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

“Music.” *Evening Transcript*. Boston, MA. June 12, 1877. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

“Orchestral Women” *Scientific American* 73, November 23, 1885.

“The New Woman in Music.” *Musical America* 9, April 28, 1906.

“Vienna Lady Orchestra” *New York Times*, September 13, 1871, 5.

“When Women Blow Horns” *Literary Digest* 113, April 2, 1932.

“Women’s Band at Jordan Hall.” *Boston Herald*. April 15, 1929. Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

“Women’s Symphony in Second Concert.” *Boston Globe*. June 30, 1930. Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, scrapbook ML 46. E43S3.

## Concert Material and Brochures

*Aida Quartet: of New York City*, Publicity brochure, 1916. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/aida/7>.

*Alberta and Lorene Davis: Trumpet, Mellophone, Fluegel Horn, and Euphonium Soloists*, Publicity brochure, 192?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/davisal/2>.

*American Ladies Grand Concert Band*, Publicity brochure, 1910. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/amerladies/1>.

*Boston Women’s Symphony Orchestra*, Concert programs, March 23, 1927, and December 12, 1927, Jordan Hall, Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection. ML 28. B7B77.

*Brewer Concert Entertainers*, Publicity brochure, 1922. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/>

brewerc/1.

*Cathedral Trumpeters and Fern Casford*, Publicity brochure, 19???. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/cathedralt/1>.

*Chicago Ladies Orchestra*, Publicity brochure, 191?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/chicagoladies/1>.

*Cleveland Ladies Orchestra*, Publicity brochure, 1906?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/cleveland/1>.

*Closing Exhibition of the Pupils of the Boston Conservatory*, Concert program, June 23, 1871. Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection. ML 28. B7B77.

*Leginska's Women's Symphony Orchestra*, Concert program. January 29, 1930, Hancock Hall, Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection. ML 28. B7B77.

*Lyceum Arts Conservatory Orchestra*, Publicity brochure, 191?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/lacorch/1>.

*Matinee Program, Boston Conservatory of Music*, Concert program, December 20, 1879. Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, Boston Massachusetts. ML 200.8 B7F3.

*Metropolitan Music Club*, Publicity brochure, 191?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/metromc/1>.

*Phillips Sisters Orchestra*, Publicity brochure, 192?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/phillipss/2>.

*Pittsburgh Ladies Orchestra*, Publicity brochure, 1930. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/pittsburghl/1>.

*Student Recital, Boston Conservatory of Music*, Concert program, February 12, 1876. Boston, MA. Boston Public Library Brown Collection, Boston Massachusetts. ML 200.8 B7F3.

*The Allen Family Concert Company*, Publicity brochure, 190?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections. <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/allenfamily/1>.

*The Bostonia Orchestra: Women Players*, Publicity brochure, 1908. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/bostoniao/2>.

*The Dungill Family Concert Company*, Publicity brochure, 195?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/dungill/4>.

*The Hearons Sisters Concert Company*, Publicity brochure, 191?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/>

hearons/3.

*The Maurer Sisters Orchestra*, Publicity brochure, 1913?. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrcredata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/maurersis/1>.

*Transconintal Tour of the Bostonian Orchestra*, Publicity brochure, 1911. University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, <http://sdrcredata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/bostoniao/3>.