THE UNFINISHED SYMPHONY:

The Growth of Women's Orchestras and Women in Orchestras in America

by Rosaria Macera

MUSC 611
Dr. Russell Murray
May 22, 1996

Introduction

The *women's orchestra* is a symphonic performing ensemble exclusively comprised of female instrumentalists. The conductor may or may not be a woman. The term, which began to be used around the turn of the century, is meant to distinguish this type of ensemble from an *orchestra*, which, as contemporary practice dictated, admitted only men.

Historical accounts of all-female performing ensembles have been recorded in the history of music. The wealthy, late sixteenth century Italian convents, like San Vito in Ferrara, were famous for their instrumental music, which included cornetti and trombones in their ensembles.[1] In addition, the Venetian conservatories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, called *ospedali*, produced highly acclaimed soloists and ensembles. These orphanages were run by the state and provided an education for illegitimate, orphaned and destitute girls. Performances at these conservatories attracted visitors, dignitaries and officials from other lands. French government official, Charles de Brousses, recounts after a visit to Venice in 1739-40,

> The ospedali have the best music here. Indeed they sing like angels, play the violin, flute, organ, oboe, cello, bassoon-in short, no instrument is large enough to frighten them....Each concert is composed of about forty women....all dressed in white, a sprig of pomegranate blossom behind one ear.[2]

Dr. Charles Burney, noted English musical historian , reported that upon attending a concert at the music school of the Mendicanti in 1771, he observed female musicians playing "French horns and even double basses."[3]

The social and historical circumstances that supported these early women's ensembles are beyond the scope of this paper. However, they establish the precedence of female instrumental groups and define a period in history where

women were permitted to learn and perform all the instruments of the orchestra, including those that have more recently adopted a "masculine" connotation. This paper seeks to trace the development of the women's orchestra, from its late nineteenth century roots, through its fruition prior to World War II and finally, to the examination of its active organizations. Prejudices and popular sentiments regarding female instrumentalists will also be examined within a chronological context.

The Seeds Are Planted

Musicologist, Christine Ammer, traces prejudices against women instrumentalists back to Puritan origins.[4] By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, women were permitted to play the harp, guitar and keyboard instruments (except organ) because performance of these instruments required a seated pose--a natural and graceful posture befitting the demure lady. These instruments could provide both melody and harmony and therefore would be well suited to the solitary performance.[5]

By the second half of the century, women began taking up the flute, violin and lower strings. The flute gained acceptance because it could be performed without facial contortions, although the pursing of the lips was initially considered unattractive. Traditionally, the cello was not suitable or appropriate for women's performance because it was held between the legs. The invention of the endpin in 1860, enabled women to play "side-saddle," a trend which lasted from 1898 to 1915. By the turn of the century, the cello gained popularity as a solo instrument, largely due to the writings of Popper and Goltermann and the performances of soloists like Pablo Casals. According to Beth Abelson Macleod, public acceptance of female cello soloists was almost immediate since the instrument did not have a long history as a male dominated solo instrument.[6]

The violin emerged as an accepted solo instrument, in part due to the successful career of the violin virtuoso, Camille Urso (1842 - 1902). Born in Nantes, France, Urso, at age seven, became the first female violin student to be accepted to the Paris Conservatory. In the early 1850's she emigrated to the United States, embarked on her first cross country tour at age ten and continued to serve as a source of inspiration to female musicians until her death.

The other key figure in the promotion of women as violinists was Julius Eichberg (1824-93), who was one of the few pedagogues of his time to accept female students. After emigrating to the United States from Dusseldorf, Germany, he became the director of the Boston Conservatory and shortly thereafter, superintendent of musical instruction in the Boston public schools.

While one critic in 1878 asserted that "a violin seems an awkward instrument for a woman, whose well formed chin was designed by nature for other purposes than to pinch down this instrument into position," Eichberg questioned, in an article he wrote in 1879, why more women hadn't taken up the instrument since it required "little muscular strength but great adroitness and agility."[7]

By the turn of the century, women had begun the study of woodwinds and brasses, though much contemporary thought maintained that ladies lacked the physical strength and endurance necessary to play wind instruments (other than flute), and would ruin their looks through their performance.

Talent Takes Root

The roots of the modern women's orchestra can be traced back to the influences of the Vienna Damen Orchestra, conducted by Josephine Weinlich, which toured the United States for the first time in 1871. The group consisted of 20 female musicians. The instrumentation (4 vln. I, 3 vln. II, 1 vla., 2 vcl., 1 db., 1 fl., 1 picc., 1 hp., 1 parlor organ, 3 drums) notably excluded brasses and lower woodwinds.

A reviewer for the *New York Times* (September 13, 1871) described the orchestra as "a score of blushing maidens attired in purest white" [as were the musicians of the *ospedali* of Venice]. The reviewer goes on to praise the spirit of the performance but questions the substitution of piano and harp to make up for "the lack of heavy wood and string instruments" and for the absence of brass. The compensation was considered "insufficient to support a substantial ground" and their renditions were "devoid of color" and marred by the "undue prominence of a big drum."[8]

After the successful tour of the Vienna Damen Orchestra, American imitations of the Damen [Lady] Orchestras were organized and became closely associated with German-American entertainment. The Ladies Elite Orchestra (New York) was the most famous of these groups but in the last three decades of the century, more than a dozen professional and amateur ensembles were organized in New York City, Ohio and Boston. The groups usually performed popular music in beer gardens and theaters. Judith Tick contributes the success and endurance of these organizations to the flexibility of programming. However, she asserts that the lady orchestras "exploited the prejudices that made them oddities, since the curiosity value of women playing cornets and double basses could attract audiences on that basis alone."[9] She further states that the groups were relegated to the performance of light repertoire as an additional consequence of prejudice.[10]

There were some lady orchestras that were able to combine the performance of popular selections with the light and standard classical repertoire, the most successful of which was the Boston Fadette Lady Orchestra. Named after Fanchon Fadette, the principal character of George Sand's novel, *La Petite Fadette*, the ensemble was conducted by Caroline B. Nichols (1864-1939), a student of Julius Eichberg. When the group was founded in 1888, it consisted of six members and grew to two dozen by the turn of the century, at which time it boasted of having the only

two female horn players in the nation as members.[11] Nichols received financial backing from her brother-in-law, George H. Chickering, president of the Chickering Piano Company. She founded the group in order to provide performance opportunities for women who were either unemployed or working in the oversupplied teaching market.[12] In the orchestra's thirty two year history, it presented more than six thousand concerts in the United States and Canada and prepared more than six hundred young women for professional musical careers. The repertoire included classical symphonies, grand operas, popular songs and even vaudeville comic routines.

The musicians performed in fancy white gowns, as did the *ospedali*. On the occasion when a female musician could not be found, a male, dressed in women's clothing, was substituted and thus the illusion of the all-female ensemble was preserved. This practice served to heighten the vaudeville atmosphere often associated with their performances. Beth Abelson Macleod points out that the vaudeville period coincides directly with the era of the lady orchestra (1880-1930) and that the reason for their success was in part due to their novelty.[13] Christine Ammer attributes their longevity to the fact that they were able to compete, quite successfully, with all male ensembles.[14] During the summers of the early part of the century, the Fadettes displaced Boston Symphony members in performances at Keith's Theater in Boston.

Germination of the Women's Orchestra

As the success of the Fadettes continued, women's orchestras, initially called *woman's* orchestras, were being founded across the country. The distinction between these groups and the lady orchestras was that the women's orchestra performed classic symphonic repertoire which included full instrumentation from its eighty or more members. The most notable of these early ensembles was the Los Angeles

Woman's Orchestra which was founded in 1893 by Harley Hamilton (1861-1933), concertmaster of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, in order to give women the opportunity to perform large-scale orchestral works. At its inception, the group included 25 amateur musicians and over its 68 year history, grew to be a professional organization of 75 members. Other groups that were founded at this time were: the Women's Philharmonic Society of New York (1899-1920), the Women's Orchestra of Minneapolis (founded 1910), the Salt Lake Women's Orchestra (1915) and the Women's Orchestra Club of New York (1914-16).

As we cross over into the new century, several significant developments created a favorable climate for germination. The Mutual Musical Protective Union, which was chartered in 1864, had amalgamated local organizations. In July of 1903, it became affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, but in order to do so, was required to admit women. The first female members were harpists from the New York Metropolitan Opera. By mid 1904, 31 of the 4,500 members were women, 10 of which were players from the Ladies Elite Orchestra of New York's Atlantic Garden.

As Judith Tick points out, "the change of policy was, of course, an inadvertent by-product of the new labor affiliation [which] resurrected the nineteenth century stereotype about feminine frailty."[15] Public debated ensued and the periodical, *Musical Standard,* printed "Opinions of Some New York Leaders on Women as Orchestral Players" on April 2, 1904. In the article, Gustav Kerker, musical director of the Casini Theater, made the following comment:

> It would be like oil and water to put men and women in the same organization ....The Musical Union is making a big mistake .... Nature never intended the fair sex to become cornetists, trombonists, and players of wind instruments. In the first place they are not strong enough to play them as well as men; they lack the lip and lung power to hold notes which deficiency makes them always play out of tune...[they] cannot possibly play brass instruments and look pretty, and why should they spoil their good looks?[16]

On a more positive (but none the less stereotypical) note, Nathan Frank, concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera, points out that women "would be easily

guided, punctual and reliable and would not be tempted, as so many men are, to send substitutes whenever they got a chance to make a little more money playing somewhere else."[17] Ada Heineman, musician at the Atlantic Garden Music Hall states,

> If I had a chance to substitute for a man, I should do so in a minute....I am sure a great many of us could hold our own with the majority of men; all we need is a chance...Sex should make not a difference whatsoever, if the woman can play the instrument well.[18]

Charles Eschert, director of the Atlantic Garden Orchestra, praised women for being punctual and diligent workers and adds that women should receive higher salaries since they "are considered an attraction outside their musical powers." He goes on to predict that "the outcome of this latest advancement for women will be the formation of many mixed orchestras."[19]

Many years were to transpire before the fulfillment of Escherts prediction. The new law did not provide equal opportunities for women and in many instances, common practice did not provide for equal pay either. Even after World War I, the only women accepted onto the exclusively male orchestras were harp players. In the period of 1915-16, Leopold Stokowski is quoted as saying that the enthusiasm and devotion of women would be "invaluable in the formation of symphony orchestras."[20] He adds that the exclusion of women from symphonies is an "incomprehensible blunder"[21] and was a waste of "splendid power."[22] How curious, then, to note that he did not hire a woman (harpist, Edna Phillips) for another fourteen years! We will revisit this topic in a later chapter.

More factors come into play in the germination of the women's orchestra. At the turn of the century, as Beth Macleod points out, "women's roles moved from the domestic to the public sphere." Women of the Progressive Era were becoming college educated, seeking careers and fighting for women's suffrage.[23] The twenties witnessed the construction of additional concert halls, the expansion of the concert season and an increase in the number of symphony orchestras.[24] In the years

between 1921 and 1924, three major music conservatories were founded--the Eastman School, the Curtis Institute and the Julliard School. Graduates were also competing against European-born men for positions. Since professional access was restricted, several training orchestras were established and women were represented, mostly as violinists and harpists. Due to the Depression and the advent of "talkies," many hotels, restaurants and theaters were disbanding their orchestras leaving musicians out of work. All these factors contributed to the growth of the women's orchestra which was to provide a major outlet for female musicians for the next several decades. Segregation became a harsh reality.

Fruition

Approximately thirty female performing institutions flourished during the twenties, thirties and forties. Most of them, especially the early ones established in the twenties, were located in major cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Boston. Later, in the thirties, cities like Cleveland, St. Louis, Portland (OR) and Stockton (CA) which had previously not been represented, now partook in the growing acceptance of the medium. For the most part, the founding of each women's orchestra was initiated by a local musician or conductor. However, there were at least two exceptions of female conductors who, having led all-male groups, chose to start a women's orchestra in a city with a sufficient number of unemployed female musicians. They were Ethel Leginska (Boston Woman's Symphony Orchestra) and Antonia Brico (Woman's Symphony Orchestra of New York).

Ethel Leginska (1886-1970) was an English pianist who by the twenties had established a successful solo career. Born in Hull, England, with the last name of Liggins (she changed her surname to make herself sound more exotic), she studied composition with Earnest Bloch and began studying conducting in 1923. By the next year, she was guest conducting major orchestras in Munich, Paris, London and

Berlin before coming to the United States and founding the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra (all male except for harp) in 1926, which she also conducted. She secured many of her guest conducting engagements, such as the New York Philharmonic and the St. Louis Symphony, through contacts she made in her years as a soloist and often by agreeing to perform a concerto on the program.[25]

A legitimate conductor in her own right, most of her energy was (by choice, or perhaps by necessity) focused on directing female groups. In 1926, she founded the Boston Woman's Symphony Orchestra which survived for four seasons. The ensemble completed two extensive concert tours of the eastern United States and once performed 55 concerts in 43 days. The programs included standard Classical and Romantic literature. The group's demise occurred when Leginska allowed a few men to perform with the orchestra. Unlike the fated male substitutes of the Fadette Orchestra, these men did not perform in drag. Apparently, no local women could be found to fill those positions and it was too expensive to import females from other cities. The group was renamed the Leginska Women's Symphony Orchestra for what was to be their last concert. A few years later, Leginska founded and conducted the National Women's Symphony Orchestra, based in New York. They debuted in Carnegie Hall in 1932 but soon disbanded.

Leginska was hired to conduct the Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago at the start of its third season in 1927. Founded in 1924 as a reading ensemble for professionals, the forty five member group gave their first public performance a year later under the baton of Richard Czerwonky. In the early stages, male performers of oboe, French horn and trombone were needed to fill vacancies. In order to gain independence from male assistance, the organization offered scholarships to retrain pianists and violinists on needed instruments and to encourage high school musicians to become wind and brass players. In addition to creating new opportunities for women, the program eliminated the need for male

assistance within five years.[26] The orchestra enjoyed a successful career until shortly after the end of World War II. Successors to Leginska included Ebba Sundstrom, Gladys Welge, Izler Solomon and Jerry Bojanowski. The Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago was featured on a nationwide radio series during its 1940-41 season.

The New York Women's Symphony Orchestra (1934-38) was organized and conducted by Antonia Brico. Born in Holland in 1902 and raised in California, Brico graduated in 1923 from the University of California at Berkeley. She then studied conducting in Berlin and was beginning a successful career when she was "booted out of Germany by the Hitler business which was getting very serious."[27] She obtained financial backing and support for the New York Women's Symphony Orchestra through sponsors like Eleanor Roosevelt, Olga Samaroff Stokowski, Bruno Walter and Mayor and Mrs. Fiorello LaGuardia. The orchestra debuted in Carnegie Hall on February 18, 1935 with 86 players performing works by Handel, Schumann and Tchaikowsky. They continued to give four concerts a season. As early as 1936, Brico used male musicians to cover vacant positions. She believed she had achieved her goal of showing that women were indeed capable of holding orchestral posts and that men and women could cooperate in a mixed group. She then set out to hire the most qualified performers available, admitting ten men and renaming the group, the Brico Symphony. Due to financial problems and lack of support from the board of directors, the group disbanded before the end of the 38/39 season.

Some of the personnel of the New York Women's Symphony were shared by the Orchestrette Classique (1932-43), founded and conducted by Frederique Petrides (1903-83). Born in Antwerp, Belgium, Petrides championed the cause of women in mixed groups. "I was never interested in promoting a woman's orchestra per se. Rather, I saw the Orchestrette as a stepping stone to the mixed orchestra. It was important to show that women could do fine orchestral work!"[28] She published a

newsletter from 1935-40 entitled *Women in Music* which chronicled women's orchestras, their players and conductors. "I began the [newsletter] because I wanted to show that women in previous times have been orchestral musicians and that their activity in the 1930's--if indeed more extensive--was just another phase in history."[29] The cost of the newsletter, as well as performing expenses not covered by ticket revenues, were underwritten by Petrides and her husband, Peter, a publisher, who acted as the group's manager and publicity agent. The orchestra consisted of thirty to forty members and performed five or six concerts a year, each at Carnegie Hall. Petrides promoted American music and programmed works by Diamond, Dello Joio, Copland, Barber, Menotti and Vaughn Williams (including the American premiere of "Flos Campi"). The Orchestrette commissioned Paul Creston to write the Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra (1940) which was dedicated to Brico. The first performance featured the Orchestrette's timpanist, Ruth Stuber, as soloist.

In 1921, trumpet player, Mabel Swint Ewer, founded the Philadelphia Women's Symphony Orchestra, with the assistance of Leopold Stokowski and Walter Damrosch. Ewer was a graduate of the New England Conservatory, mother of eight and went on to become the first female radio announcer in Pennsylvania. This non-professional group, conducted by J.W.F.Leman, programmed a mixture of light and standard classical repertoire. In a program dated February 14, 1929, 71 members are listed and over 230 "associate members and *patronesses*" (all women) are also inscribed. The list of guarantors is half female but also includes Ewer, William Moenig (violin maker), Philadelphia Music Club and Strawbridge & Clothier. In contrast, a program of fifteen years later, lists sixty two members, two of which were absent due to military service. Guarantors, *patrons* (twenty names; men are now included) and associate members were also listed. As the only conductor in the thirty two season history of the group, Leman recalls in a *Bulletin* interview:

> [At the time the orchestra was founded], I was reminded that women were not strong enough to play the brass instruments; that women oboists, flutists and

clarinetists were as rare as dandruff on a billiard ball; finally, that every young lady prefers to be conducted to the alter than to be conducted in a symphony, and would rather hug closely to her bosom a bouncing baby than a brass tuba.[30]

Other women's orchestras formed in the 1920's include: Chicago Woman's Symphony Orchestra (1924-28--Elna Moneak, conductor); [New York] American Women's Symphony Orchestra (1924-25--Elizabeth Kuyper, conductor); Long Beach [CA] Woman's Symphony Orchestra (1925-48--Eva Anderson, conductor). As mentioned above, these ensembles sprang up in major cities; however, the Long Beach ensemble was one notable exception to the rule. Boasting of 120 members, the orchestra gave over 100 concerts in its first decade. The key to its successful twenty four seasons could be attributed to its government sponsorship by the Municipal Recreation Department.

The greatest number of women's orchestras were introduced in the decade of the 1930's. Major cites like New York, Boston and Chicago added to their list of established ensembles mentioned above. Secondary cities like Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, St. Louis and Minneapolis formed groups. More isolated cities like Portland (OR), Stockton (CA) and Mason City (IA) also established orchestras. Even the Works Progress Administration got into the act, sponsoring the Commonwealth Women's Symphony Orchestra in Boston (1937-43) as part of the Federal Music Project of the FDR administration, which provided employment for out of work musicians.

In the 1940's, the cities of Montreal and Detroit established orchestras, but for the most part, this decade witnessed the demise of the majority of the ensembles mentioned above. The exceptions were Philadelphia and Portland which continued into the 1950's, Los Angeles and Montreal which endured into the 1960's and Detroit which disbanded in 1971.[31] Of the entire group of more than thirty women's orchestras performing from 1925 to 1945, only one--the Cleveland Women's Symphony Orchestra--remains active today.

Most women's orchestras, whether professional or amateur, were initially met with skepticism from critics while audiences were intrigued with their novelty. A review of Leginska's Boston Woman's Symphony Orchestra tour printed in the *Roanoke* (VA) *Times* on October 19, 1929 said, "Roanoke music lovers gathered to hear a symphony orchestra of women led by a woman. They stayed to hear a symphony orchestra played by a great conductor."[32]

So it was that these orchestras filled a void created by increased educational opportunities and employment restrictions of women musicians. The situation was complicated by the fact that more women were entering the work force at a time of economical depression. The orchestral vacancies created by the draft gave women an opportunity to demonstrate that they could perform with men. Some female musicians were displaced by veterans after 1945. However, as the mixed orchestra gradually gained strength, the need for the women's orchestra diminished and their popularity faded after World War II.

Branching Out

Prejudices and discrimination continued to exist for women musicians through the end of World War II. In 1938, the Committee for the Recognition of Women in the Musical Profession was formed in New York for the purpose of 1) gaining recognition of women's rights within the American Federation of Musicians and 2) bringing attention to the plight of female musicians trying to gain employment in orchestras. The Committee noted that women's pay scale was below the minimum union conditions and generally, women earned one third the weekly salary of their male counterparts.[33] The Committee also asked that women be permitted to audition for all orchestral openings and furthermore that these auditions be held behind a screen (a practice that was not adopted until the 1960's).[34]

In the years prior to World War II, women had gained significant positions in secondary orchestras. Cleveland hired four women in 1923. In 1925, San Francisco Symphony hired five female musicians and in 1937, Baltimore did the same. As women gained acceptance at the secondary level, they demanded to be admitted to mixed ensembles of the first rank. But in these orchestras, women were still restricted to the harp and piano sections. There were, however, some notable exceptions--Elsa Higler, cello (Philadelphia Orchestra, 1935), Lois Putlitz, violin (Philadelphia Orchestra, 1936), Ellen Stone, French horn (Pittsburgh Symphony, 1937) Nina Wolfe, violin and Elizabeth Greenschpoon, cello (Los Angeles Philharmonic, 1937). These women were the early pioneers. The Boston Symphony accepted its first woman, bassoonist Ann deGuichord in 1945 and the New York Philharmonic created quite a stir when it added double bassist Orin O'Brien to its ranks in 1966.

Though many conductors had grown to accept the inevitability of women in symphonies, there was still some resistance. Dmitri Mitropoulos, conductor of the New York Philharmonic, once said to Lois Wann, oboist with the Orchestrette Classique, "What a pity you aren't a man, for I would pick you for my orchestra."[35] In 1946, Sir Thomas Beecham said, "I do not like, and never will, the associations of men and women in orchestras and other instrumental combinations....As a member of the orchestra once said to me, 'If she is attractive I can't play with her and if she is not, I won't.'"[36] Hans Kindler, conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra at the time, responded in a letter to the *New York Times*.

> The women in the orchestras I have had the pleasure of conducting....all proved themselves to be not only fully equal to men, but to be sometimes more imaginative and always especially cooperative. Hence I think that Sir Thomas's jibe....though funny is also slightly unfair, and, as far as American orchestras are concerned, quite untrue. If anything, their ability and enthusiasm constitute an added stimulant for the male performer to do well. And as they were a variable godsend to most conductors during the war years,...it doesn't seem quite "cricket"... to drop them now.[37]

Even more recently, piano soloist, Susan Starr, in her 1975 article entitled "Prejudices Against Women," reports having heard a conductor once say, "I can always tell how good an orchestra is going to be by the number of women I see in it" implying, the fewer the women, the better the orchestra.[38] In a recent phone interview with Ms. Starr, this author learned that the quote was attributed to Riccardo Muti and stated early in his career though not publicly because, "after all, he was warned about law suits."[39]

In 1948, a survey of professional female orchestral players yielded the sentiment that the women felt they had to be more qualified than their male competitors in order to win a position.[40] *Musical America* reports in 1955 that 18.4% of the personnel of the thirty one major American symphonies were women and goes on to state that "older orchestras are still conservative about hiring women, particularly in the eastern part of the country."[41] In 1975, women's representation in orchestras varied according to the economic level of the ensemble--21.8% of major orchestras, 39.7% of metropolitan orchestras and 44.4% of community orchestras were comprised of women. Hence, the lower the wages and the shorter the season, the higher the enrollment of women.[42]

An interesting study published in *Social Forces* bears mentioning here. The researchers compiled data from seventy eight professional symphony orchestras in the United States, United Kingdom, former East Germany and former West Germany. In the study, the authors cite previous research on gender composition of organizations and report that even though homogeneous groups are run more smoothly and with less member anxiety, group creativity is enhanced through conflicts prompted by diversity.[43] The authors observed that as women infiltrated the ranks of an established male symphony, they initially achieved higher representation in the violin, viola and cello sections where their exposure is less prominent than if they were performing in the wind or percussion sections where

there is one player to a part. They also observed that when women begin to enter a profession that was previously male dominated, they initially appear in groups of lower status.[44] The authors' conclusions on member satisfaction were that, in situations of "token female representation" (10% or lower), men were quite satisfied with the work situation while women were not. When groups were in transition (10-40% female) the result was "heightened personal tensions for everyone."[45] However, in ensembles that were considered balanced (40-60% female), "both gender groups [were] likely to feel fully legitimate in the organization."[46]

Regeneration

As mentioned above, the decline of the women's orchestra occurred around the time of World War II when the mixed orchestra became a reality. Consequently source materials provide little or no historical information after that point, prohibiting us from tracing a continuous line of evolution. Therefore, we will resume our study in the present and examine those orchestras currently active.

A list of women's orchestras was obtained through the American Symphony Orchestra League and the Fleisher Collection of Philadelphia. Subsequent phone calls to each organization revealed that one had disbanded and two were not exclusively female groups. Five ensembles remained to be investigated.

The Community Women's Orchestra of Oakland, CA, founded eleven years ago, is conducted by Anne Krinitsky. Its members are not compensated for their services. The Women's Composers Orchestra of Baltimore is in its eleventh season and its members are paid, freelance musicians. The orchestra performs two or three concerts a season and programs only music written by female composers.

The Columbus Women's Orchestra, founded by Isabel Chandler in 1977, gave its first concert on April 23, 1978. Conductor, Janna Hymes, is the only paid member of the group. The forty musicians perform four concerts a season. This orchestra is

unique in that it is sponsored by a larger organization called Women in Music ,founded in 1882, which encourages women as composers, performers and scholars by providing them with performance and educational opportunities.

As mentioned earlier in an earlier chapter, the only women's orchestra to survive the war years and still remain active today is the Cleveland Women's Orchestra. The ensemble was founded in 1935 by Hyman Schandler (1900-90), principle second violin in the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, who also conducted the group for fifty five years.

In 1935, Shandler, an emigrant from Riga, Latvia, was teaching violin in the city schools and noticed that female music students had no avenue to channel their talents and receive valuable experience. He founded the Cleveland Women's Orchestra for the purpose of providing women an opportunity to perform as symphonic musicians and soloists. Each concert since 1936 has featured a soloist on the program--either be a budding young star or an established performer. Soloists have included Natalie Hinderas, Oscar Shumsky and Lynn Harrell. In addition to the standard symphonic repertoire, the Columbus Women's Orchestra programs and commissions music by women composers.

The seventy members of this community orchestra are housewives, teachers, students, nurses and business women who range in age from sixteen to eighty. The conductor and concertmaster are the only salaried employees. The membership includes three generations of the Keenan family (daughters Johanna and Maggie, mother Mary Ann, and grandmother Rosemary Paterson), a set of twins, a visually impaired trumpet player and violist, Sabina Berman, who joined the group at its inception, sixty one years ago! The musicians perform six free concerts a year and one gala fundraising event at Severance Hall, wearing uniforms of white blouses and burgundy skirts. The group is currently conducted by Robert Cronquist.

The only active professional women's orchestra is the Women's Philharmonic of San Francisco, formerly called the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic. The ensemble aspires "to change the face of what is played in every concert hall by incorporating works by women composers into standard orchestral repertoire."[47] In its fifteen seasons, this sixty five member group has performed 144 works by women composers, 129 premiers and 35 commissioned works.

The orchestra experienced financial difficulties in its 95/96 season which forced the cancellation of all but one concert and the year was used to reorganize. Conductor, JoAnn Falletta, attributes some of the financial difficulties to the lack of cooperate connections of the all female board of directors. "Men tend to be in higher corporate positions. Women don't have those connections yet."[48] However, an all female board can be advantageous--there is more consensus building and less concern for hierarchy. The same holds true for the players. The musicians of a women's group are "more supportive and non destructively competitive than mixed groups."[49] According to Falletta, women in a homogeneous group are less inhibited to ask questions, and consequently, more rehearsal time is devoted to discussion.

Conclusion

The growth of the women's orchestra has gradually evolved from its nineteenth century American roots. Symbolic evidence of this transformation can be seen in the change of uniform from the fancy white dresses of the lady orchestras, implying a less serious role as entertainer, to the formal black attire of the women's orchestra which connotes serious, refined artistry.[50] Even the evolution of the nomenclature--from the demure and submissive *lady orchestra*, to the solitary and mature *woman's orchestra* and finally, to the multiplicity and solidarity of the *women's orchestra* --implies maturation and elevation of stature.

Was segregation an equitable solution? Of course not, but at the time, it was the only alternative. The situation was complicated by economic and social factors of the era. Prejudices against women musicians were fostered by fears of "women invading a traditional male domain, fear of economic competition, and the inexperience of women in orchestral playing."[51]

As the tree bends with the winds of change, so too has the growth and development of the women's orchestra had to conform to the modifying environment. Often external factors proved too heavy and branches are broken, but new ones formed and reached out to new generations. Change, however, is a positive force. As Ehel Leginska once said, "We will never be original, do great work, until we get some courage and daring and trust our own way instead of the eternal beaten paths on which we were always asked to poke along."[52]

Endnotes

[1]Carol Neuls-Bates, Women in Music, An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to Present (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 43.

[2]Ibid, 66.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Christine Ammer, Unsung, A History of Women in American Music (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 22.

[5]Beth Abelson Macleod, "Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?," Journal of Social History 27 (Winter 1993): 292.

[6]Ibid., 295.

[7]Ammer, 30.

[8]Neules-Bates, 193.

[9]Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, ed., Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 329.

[10]Ibid., 330.

[11]Ammer, 105.

[12]The 1880 census reported that 43% of all musicians and music teachers were women (categories combined in the survey). By 1910, 66% were women. In 1900, music and music teaching was the fifth most pursued vocation among women. (Bowers & Tick, 184).

[13]Macleod, 298.

[14]Ammer, 106.

[15]Bowers & Tick, 332-33.

[16]Neuls-Bates, 202.

[17]Ibid., 203.

[18]Ibid., 204.

[19]Ammer, 205.

[20]Jan Bell Groh, Evening the Score (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991), 29.

[21]Macleod, 297.

[22]Ammer, 202.

[23]Macleod, 291.

[24]Bowers & Tick, 349.

[25]Ibid., 355.

[26]Bowers & Tick, 354.

[27]Ibid., 359-60.

[28]Neuls-Bates, 260.

[29]Bowers & Tick, 363.

[30]Free Library of Philadelphia, Archival Folder of Women's Symphony Orchestra of Philadelphia. (Philadelphia Bulletin, October 29, 1950).

[31]One of the most unique women's orchestras I have learned about in the writing of this paper, is one from the Birkenau concentration camp of Auschwitz, which was conducted by Alma Rose, the niece of Gustav Mahler. The instrumentation consisted of 10 violins, 1 flute, reed pipes, 2 accordions, 3 guitars, 5 mandolins, drums and cymbals. The ensemble involved 49 women in performing and copying music. Their musical involvement exempted them from physical labor and provided them with a heated room and extra blankets (Ammer, 266).

[32]Bowers & Tick, 358.

[33]Adrienne Fried Block and Carol Neuls-Bates, Women in American Muisc: A Bibliography of Music and Literature (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 130.

[34]Secumbing to presure from minority, government and civil rights groups, as well as the recently founded International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, orchestras were forced to create audition processes that promoted fairness in selection..

[35]Neuls-Bates, 263.

[36]Ammer, 202.

[37]Bowers & Tick, 364.

[38]Susan Starr, "The Predjudices Against Women," Music Journal 32 (March 1974): 14.

[39]Susan Starr, telephone interview by author, April 13, 1996.

[40]Block & Neuls-Bates, 128.

[41]Ibid., 162.

[42]Mary Brown Hinley, "The Uphill Climb of Women in American Music: Part I - Performers ane Teachers," Music Educators Journal 70 (April 1984): 34.

[43] Jutta Allemendger and J. Richard Hackman, "The More the Better? A Four Nation Study of the Inclussion of Women in Symphony Orchestras," Social Forces 74 (December 1995): 424.

[44]Ibid., 442.

[45]Ibid., 453.

[46] Ibid., 454.

[47]Women's Philharmonic Press Packet.

[48]JoAnn Falletta, telephone interview by author, May 7, 1996.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Macleod, 299.

[51]Hinley, 33.

[52]Bowers & Tick, 355.

Bibliography

Allmendenger, Jutta and Hackman, J. Richard. "The More The Better? A Four Nation Study of the Inclusion of Women in Symphony Orchestras." Social Forces 74 (December 1995):423-60.

Ammer, Christine. Unsung: A History of Women in American Music. Westport, CT: Greenwood PRess, 1980.

Block, Adrienne Fried and Neul-Bates, Carol. Women in American Music: A Bibliography of Music and Literature. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.

Bowers, Jane and Tick, Judith, ed. Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Buffington, Monica, American Symphony Orchestra League. Telephone interview by author, March 22, 1996.

Cleveland Women's Orchestra press packet, compiled by Joan Ferst, April 20, 1996.

Columbus Women's Orchestra press packet, compiled by Jerry Cassey, April 19, 1996.

Falletta, JoAnn, conductor, Women's Philharmonic. Telephone interview by author, May 7, 1996.

Groh, Jan Bell. Evening the Score. University of Arkansas Press: Fayetteville, 1991.

Hinley, Mary Brown. "The Uphill Climb of Women in American Music: Part I - Performers and Teachers." Music Educators Journal 70 (April 1984): 31-35.

Hixon, Don L. and Hennessee, Don A. Women in Music: An Encyclopedic Bibliography. Metuchen, NJ: 1993.

Macleod, Beth Abelson. " 'Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?' Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990." Journal of Social History 27 (Winter 1993): 292-308.

Neuls-Bates, Carol, ed. Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.

Skowronski, JoAnn. Women in American Music: A Bibliography. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978.

Smith, Kyle, curator of the Fleisher Collection of Philadelphia. Telephone interview by author, March 23, 1996.

Starr, Susan. "The Predjudice Against Women." Music Journal 32 (March 1974): 14-15, 28.

Starr, Susan, piano soloist. Telephone interview by author, April 13, 1996.

Women's Philharmonic press packet, compiled by Daria Andrea, March 25, 1996.

Women' Symphony Orchestra of Philadelphia archival folder, Free Library of Philadelphia, compiled March 29, 1996.