



*The Cambridge Companion to Women in Music since 1900*. Edited by Laura Hamer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xxxii + 325 pp. ISBN 978-1-108-45578-7

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The Cambridge Companion series covers topics as small as single musical works and as large as major style periods, but even within this wide range, the topic of *The Cambridge Companion to Women in Music since 1900* is rather daunting. To be true to its title, it would include about half the population, in a long century of vast change in opportunities for women in music and in society, amid a profusion of new styles and technologies in both classical and popular music. Unifying this array in a volume of essays is a daunting task indeed, but quite ably accomplished by editor Laura Hamer.

The book is divided into four large sections – Classical, Popular, Electronic and Women’s Wider Work in Music. Readers of *Popular Music* will probably gravitate to the Popular and Electronic sections, but the final section also merits attention. Hamer admits that the collection does not address ‘world music’ (xxiii) – which effectively limits the definition of ‘popular music’ to the Euro and Anglo worlds.

In each major section, there are numerous scholarly articles and one experiential article written by a practitioner. Most of the scholarly articles engage with gender analysis and feminist musicology developed over the last 50 years. Jacqueline Warwick’s chapter on girl groups of the late 1950s and early 1960s is an especially cogent example of this. It reflects the best of the extensive theorising in these areas as she weaves together music analysis, political impact and gendered perceptions of the girl groups. This chapter highlights a moment in time when women’s musical offerings were shaping the popular music world. Warwick considers how the audience for this music included women and men, girls and boys, and how devaluing this era in rock music erases female contributions. When she extends this to the political tumult of the early 1960s (prior to the Summer of Love or the rise of the Women’s Liberation Movement), she finds connections to young women’s activism of the time, such as the students seeking to integrate Little Rock High School in Arkansas (p. 122).

Kristin J. Lieb’s chapter, ‘How MTV Idols Got Us in Formation: Solo Women and Their Brands Make Space for Truth Telling, Trauma, and Survival in Popular Music from 1981 to the Present’ was poignant reading for me, coming as it did in the light of Tina Turner’s and Sinéad O’Connor’s deaths in 2023. Lieb addresses the perpetually present issue of how women performers are perceived as images or icons of sexuality. What she highlights is how, by developing their own brands and constantly reinventing themselves (cue Madonna, p. 177), women were able to wrest more control over their image. This included the confessional nature of what O’Connor and Turner did. In her concluding section, Lieb offers the optimistic analysis that O’Connor and Turner ‘had the courage not only to share their experiences, but also to keep talking about them ... They are pop stars who bottomed out and survived, showing others that such a trajectory was possible’ (p. 186). What we are learning in the post-mortem period for these women is that the real-life costs, including PTSD, of having to repeat and relive the horrors of the abuse they suffered may, in fact, have taken a toll.

‘Women have had a permanent and lasting influence on the development of electronic music’ (p. 211). This factual statement, well documented in Louis Niebur’s ‘Case

Studies of Women in Electronic Music: The Early Pioneers', is not always obvious or acknowledged, but what this section of the book reveals is how the technology of electronic music could simultaneously liberate music beyond its previous gendered norms, yet also reinforce those norms. This section's chapters shared a hope that as the means to create electronic musics are being increasingly democratised and more widely available, the engagement of women with the technology will increase.

Music Education as a field highlights gender inequities with long-standing ironies. For instance, why is it that music educators, who are overwhelmingly female, resolutely retain the old tropes of heroic male composers? Robert Legg's 'Women and Music Education in Schools' seamlessly integrates the best academic writings on the subject – theorists like Roberta Lamb, Lori-Ann Doloff, Sondra Weiland Howe, Judith Tick and Jane Bowers – with a historical survey of pedagogical debates.

Musicians have lived in the 'gig economy' since time immemorial – female musicians even more so than their male counterparts. Yet with all of global capitalism shifting into the perpetual insecurity of piece work, musicians' experiences – both past and present – are particularly valuable. Critic, producer and musician Steph Power addresses this quite forcefully in her 'Practitioner Contribution' when she correctly notes that a "'portfolio career'" is 'but a glitzy euphemism for unpredictable work patterns' (p. 273). She then forthrightly adds that, like most academic writing, her essay in this volume was unremunerated (fn. 6, p. 275). Similarly, Clare K. Duffin's contribution, 'Women in the Music Industries: The Art of Juggling' highlights the astonishingly large gender gap in popular music producers, citing a study of popular songs between 2012–2018 as having a scant 2.1% women producers (p. 256). Analysing the precarious nature of the music business and potential solutions, Duffin argues for conscious correction of the gender imbalances. One of the most powerful illustrations in the book accompanies her article, showing singer Emma Gillespie embracing her toddler Oscar while in the recording studio (p. 263).

This is a well-constructed and, given the disparate subjects, well-unified collection. Hamer wisely did not attempt to produce a volume that would be everything to everyone. Instead she divined the mean between encyclopaedia entries and opaquely specialised scholarly articles, finding the ground where any educated reader could measure the impact of women in music over the last century and a quarter. The index serves as an absolutely necessary addition to a volume of this sort, that provides the reader with a quick overview of the terrain covered. This book deserves a place on the shelves of libraries, scholars and students, as a fine snapshot in time of the many roles of women in music, and the road that still needs to be travelled to full equality.

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***Récital 1961*. By David L. Looseley, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 113 pp. ISBN 978-1-5013-6210-1**  
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This short book about the significance of a live Édith Piaf album, *Récital 1961*, is hugely engaging and informative, packing in biographical detail and musicological analysis to