The Works and Worlds of Female Composers

Heidi Moulzolf
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

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Selected Female Composers  
of Art Song

A THESIS  
The Honors Program  
College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment  
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by  
Heidi M. Moulzolf  
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Professor of Music

Professor of Music

Assistant Professor of Music

Chair, Department of Music

Director, Honors Program
Table of Contents

Introduction................................................................. 6

Amy Beach............................................................... 11

Lili Boulanger............................................................ 16

Nadia Boulanger.......................................................... 19

Josephine Lang........................................................... 24

Alma Mahler.............................................................. 27

Clara Schumann.......................................................... 30

Appendix................................................................. 36

Works Cited.............................................................. 43
**Introduction**

_The history of all times, and of today especially, teaches that... women will be forgotten if they forget to think about themselves._

*Louise Otto - Peters, 1849*

In today's society, with its claims of increased enlightenment and equity, it has become easy to disregard the inequalities of the past as irrelevant and irreparable. To do this is to say that our history has no effect on today, and in turn, that today will have no effect on tomorrow. Such an outlook is shortsighted at best. The key to creating justice in today and tomorrow's society is to remain ever mindful of the past and its consequences.

A careful examination of our current society shows us the arenas in which we have come the furthest in eradicating gender biases and striving for true equality. Unfortunately and surprisingly, the composition of Western music is not one of them. Ask any five music students to name three composers. Chances are great that among the fifteen names listed, not one will be female. We have consistently neglected to educate ourselves about the women who participated in the development of music throughout the centuries. It is only recently that information about these women is becoming readily accessible through biographies, textbooks and other publications.

Many argue that the work of female composers is less significant because much of it was never published, and therefore remained virtually unheard. This
prevented it from ever having had the chance to affect the development of music throughout the ages. The fact of the matter is that many of these women enjoyed a significant degree of success and influence during their lifetimes. It is ludicrous to even consider claims to the contrary when examining the careers of figures such as Nadia Boulanger and Clara Schumann. It is merely the bias of past historians which rendered them temporarily anonymous for future generations and all but erased their impact on the development of music. However, recent efforts are supplementing these historians' accounts. With continued effort, we can and will produce a more accurate picture of the role women have played in the formation of Western musical tradition.

Ignoring important female figures in music is to say to each music student, and to society in general, that the compositions by women throughout the ages were of such poor quality that they are simply not worth study or performance. It also sends out a message that composition is not appropriate work for women to even attempt. This is a dangerous mind set because it perpetuates the problem. By recognizing their efforts instead, we nurture a musical tradition in which everyone has a place, regardless of gender.

A survey of college music history texts that was taken in the 1980's showed that of 47 texts, 12 mention absolutely no female composers whatsoever. 17 mention one or two, 12 include one or more paragraphs (all on American or 20th century composers), and only 1 text included musical examples by women (Zaimont II 451-9). Mention of female figures often included no more than a brief mention of them in relationship to a male figure. The truly discouraging fact is that even college level
students, as recently as five to ten years ago, were still being given the message, albeit unintentionally, that all composers worth mention are male, and that women have not been, and should not be involved in composition.

However, efforts are currently being made to alleviate this problem. A wonderful example is the music history text by K. Marie Stolba which consistently integrates information on important female composers throughout the text rather than placing a meager section on them in the back. The text also includes references to the *Historical Anthology of Music by Women*, edited by James Briscoe, thereby providing not only information, but examples of their work and some brief readings which give additional information about each of the women's lives and works. Studying these women, their achievements, and examining the societal constraints they faced is increasingly being seen as a worthwhile undertaking. It is our great fortune that appreciating their works has the potential to greatly increase our understanding and enjoyment of music.

Unfortunately, there is a wealth of material available that is still not being performed because people are unaware of its existence. When selecting performance material, we tend to settle for the tried and true. Choosing old standards, rather than sifting through things which are unfamiliar, perpetuates our ignorance of female composer works.

The history of prejudice and the repetitive nature of its effects give it new birth in the music world of today. Until women's works have been fully recognized in history, special efforts must be taken to ensure that their music continues to be kept
alive and given special attention. It is these efforts which have allowed us to begin the destruction of the cycle of prejudice and create enlightened musicians in an equitable society.

So much progress has been made, but we cannot allow ourselves to become complacent. Performers and scholars need to continue seeking information about female composers, supporting efforts by organizations such as the International League of Women Composers, and performing quality music by women.

However, token efforts are not necessary or even helpful. There is an abundance of truly high quality music that has been written by women over the ages. We must be cautious that our efforts are motivated by a desire to learn and discover what this music has to teach us, not just a desire to increase the number of women's names in the history books. Efforts to promote music of less than high quality, simply because it was written by women, undermines the progress which has been made. Instead, we must strive to look at the quality and significance of their work in the areas in which they made true contributions to the music world.

Art Song is the perfect genre in which to explore women's efforts. It was more easily acceptable for a woman to compose lieder or art songs than a large scale work such as an opera or symphony. This genre seemed consistent with the domestic environment in which the society of the time felt women belonged. It was often performed at home and was a small form, deemed appropriate for female endeavors. Music of this type was often encouraged as a leisure activity. In fact it was often part of a woman's well-rounded education. Unfortunately, some families believed that if a
woman engaged in public appearances, publication, or paid teaching, it reflected negatively upon them and implied that they were unable to support her (Pendle 98).

To some extent, people still believed that composition, by its active, creative nature, was an inherently male activity. It was acceptable for women to dabble, as long as they didn't actually expect anyone to take them seriously. Most female composers had several things in common. They came from musical families who could afford private teachers and received early training on keyboard. Unfortunately, most also faced negative societal attitudes towards them becoming published composers, and as a result, many doubted their own talents.

If nobody ever offers an opinion, or takes the slightest interest in one's productions, one loses in time not only all pleasure in them, but all power of judging their value.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel

Taking an in-depth look at these women does not remove the prejudice and inequities they faced during their lifetimes. But it does provide us with the healthy perspective on history that will become the basis for a better future.

This project contains research profiles of six women who, through their artistry, were able to affect the development of western music. The stories of their lives, both personal and professional, demonstrate the magnitude of effect that female composers were capable of having, despite the societal constraints they faced. It is important that their lives be studied and their music performed. It is only through these means that this effect can truly be appreciated.
Amy Beach (1867-1944)

Amy Marcy Cheney was born September 5, 1867 in Henniker, New Hampshire. Her mother, an accomplished singer and pianist, began to recognize her talents when she was only two years old. By this time Amy habitually improvised alto parts to the soprano melody of her mother's lullabies. She began to show interest and aptitude for the piano at just four years of age. Able to play back whatever she heard, she soon moved on to composition of her own simple piano pieces. Thus her mother began her formal training on the instrument at age six. At just sixteen, she made her public debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Her early pianistic abilities are understandable given the amazing accuracy of her ear. An ornithologist, hearing of her talent, requested that she aid him in his research. Only eleven years old, Amy was able to provide notations of bird calls that were soon published within his research. However, this fostered an interest in birdsong which was to last throughout her career as a composer. She occasionally used the calls in her music, particularly her piano and vocal selections.

Although her incredible abilities were noticed at quite a young age, her education was surprisingly minimal. Because composition was not considered a suitable activity for women of her time, her training centered on piano performance. Throughout her youth, she was provided with wonderful piano instructors. Unfortunately, her training in composition was neglected. Her formal study of harmony and counterpoint lasted only a year, resulting in her becoming almost
completely self-educated. She would go to performances and notate what she heard, compare it with the actual score, and then study the structure of the composition. Her study focused on the European masters, particularly Wagner and Brahms.

Despite these apparent educational disadvantages, Amy soon began a successful career. By 1885, she had already established an association with Schmidt publishers. This may have been made possible by her husband Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, whom she married on December second of that same year. From that time onward, she insisted on being known as Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, which explains the use of this title on the majority of her works.

Dr. H. H. A. Beach was a local surgeon and society physician as well as an amateur singer, pianist, poet, and painter. At the time of their marriage, Amy was merely eighteen years old, he was forty-three. During their twenty-five year marriage, Amy did very little performing. Her husband considered it inappropriate for a married woman to perform publicly (Pendle 168). Her only concerts were rare charity performances. Although this sacrifice seems unfortunate, it did give her time to concentrate on her composition. Her husband provided continual moral and financial support for Amy. Unlike most composers, she was never required to teach in order to support herself. This gave her the opportunity to focus on her composition. In fact, it was during the years of their marriage that Amy composed some of her most significant works.

She was the first American woman to develop an international reputation as a composer of orchestral and chamber music in addition to piano and vocal works. An
important social trend was starting to transform gender issues. Women were beginning to enter the workforce. As a result, they were taken more seriously in all walks of life -- especially in Boston, a city which tended to nurture both feminism and composition (Bowers 342).

This is not to say that any measure of true equality had been reached. The works composed by female composers were still evaluated differently from those written by men. Both the virtues and the flaws of any piece were attributed somehow to the sex of the composer. Critics of the time characterized music as feminine or masculine. Feminine music was graceful, delicate and melodic. It included only small forms of music such as song and short piano compositions. These were the types of works that were considered appropriate for women to compose. In contrast, masculine music was powerful, intellectually challenging, harmonically complex and often contrapuntal in nature. This included primarily large scale works such as symphonies and operas. Public sentiment held that women were clearly incapable of such large undertakings. (Neuhls-Bates 223).

Amy Beach was untroubled by such limitations. She maintained throughout her career that she had never felt limited by her sex (Jezic 151). This attitude is evidenced in her compositions. Undaunted by public opinion, she composed in any genre she pleased, including those clearly viewed as masculine. A clear example of this is her Gaelic Symphony. Premiered in 1896, this symphony was the first by an American woman to be performed anywhere. It was also the first by an American composer to utilize folk song melodies as thematic material (Pendle 169). Such
ground-breaking compositions began to create opportunity for women outside of parlor music.

Throughout the course of her career, Amy composed over three hundred works. They include a piano concerto, mass, symphony, piano pieces, choral works, chamber music, and over one hundred twenty songs. Over two hundred of these works were published by Schmidt (Zaimont II 159).

Amy's distinctive style was influenced by Brahms, Wagner, MacDowell, and Debussy. Her works, often described as late Romantic in style, were characterized by lush chromaticism, altered chords, and complex harmony and theme development (Jezic 152). After 1914, her works begin to show signs of Impressionistic influence. She often tried to include old English, Scotch and Irish influences which she saw as part of her ancestry (Briscoe 159).

Her songs are singable, sentimental and take advantage of her natural gift for melody. She used texts by many of the well-known American, English, French, and German poets of her time, as well as the Scottish dialect poems by Robert Burns and Robert Browning's poetry, which was a special favorite of hers (Briscoe 158). She set texts with an unusual sensitivity to language which makes her compositions truly effective.

Although her compositions were well-received in general, she turned back to performance shortly after her husband's death. From 1911 - 1914, she toured Europe extensively as a concert pianist. From then until the mid 1930's, she tried to concentrate on performance tours in the winter and composition in the summers. In
1941, Amy Beach composed her last work before dying in New York City in 1944 at the age of 77.

Amy Beach enjoyed one of the most successful careers possible for a woman of her time. All but three of her one hundred fifty opus numbers were published, most of them in her lifetime. Her works, especially her songs, were quite popular and were therefore known and performed during her lifetime. She was also given a multitude of other honors. She served as president of Music Teacher's National Association and president of Music Educators National Conference. She was cofounder and president of the Association of American Women composers, member of the Second New England School of Composers and was recognized as the dean of American women composers (Briscoe 158).
Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

Lili Boulanger lived a tragically short life, and yet she managed to leave her mark in a profession few women of her time even attempted. Lili (Marie - Juliette Olga) was born, in 1893, to an exceptionally musical family. Her father taught voice at the Paris Conservatory. Her mother, a self-proclaimed Russian princess, was a professional singer. Yet the most significant musical influence in her life was probably her sister Nadia, who is recognized as one of the foremost composition teachers of her time.

Lili was, from birth, a model child. She was beautiful, charming, intelligent, and perhaps one of the most naturally gifted composers of her time. Unfortunately, her lifelong health problems provided continual roadblocks to her development and success. In 1895, Lili suffered a severe bout of pneumonia which marks the beginning of her courageous struggle with illness and depression. Lili battled undiagnosed with what today's physicians call Crohn's disease (Jezic 141).

Her health problems did not prevent her from developing her immense talent. Along with being a phenomenal sight reader, Lili had an intuitive understanding of harmony, counterpoint and composition (Briscoe 232). As a result, she learned in a short amount of time, what took most students a lifetime. She began auditing Nadia's classes at the Paris Conservatory in 1898 at the age of five.

The sudden death of her father two years later was a terrible shock and significant setback for Lili. However, by 1901 she made her violin performance debut and began to attend composition classes in earnest. In 1904 she gave her first public
piano performance before encountering some significant health setbacks. From 1905 to 1909 Lili's music studies became sporadic due to health concerns.

She began formal instruction again from 1909 to 1913 -- the years in which she prepared for the Prix de Rome. The renowned composition competition had only recently begun to allow women to compete. Yet Lili was determined to struggle through the grueling experience. She made her first attempt in 1912, but was forced to drop out as a result of health problems. Her second try in 1913 was considerably more fruitful. The contest rules of complete contestant seclusion were altered slightly to allow Lili the special assistance her medical condition required (Jezic 142). So, while struggling through periods of extreme illness, Lili composed her first prize winning cantata, *Faust et Hélène*.

Her triumph resulted in a publishing contract in Italy. However, her time in Rome was shortened by the outbreak of the first World War. She returned immediately to Paris and became as active in the war effort as her health would allow. In 1916, she returned to Italy, but once again her trip was unavoidably cut short. Her illness worsened and necessitated her return to France. It was not long before she was confined to a sickbed from which she continued to compose. Finally, in 1918, she died at the age of 25.

Lili's accomplishments would have been remarkable regardless of the circumstances. But taking into consideration the brevity of her life and her chronic health problems, her accomplishments are even more astounding. From 1908 to 1918, Lili produced over 50 works including numerous works for chorus (some with
orchestra), several vocal chamber works, and a large selection of songs, cantatas, and an unfinished opera.

Her style reflected the French musical tradition of which she was a part. Her works are often compared with both Debussy and Ravel. She grew up surrounded by great musical figures in her parents' salon. Some of the more important influences on her music are Gabriel Fauré, Georges Caussade, and Paul Vidal, all teachers who helped prepare her for the Prix de Rome (Jezic 141). Her sister Nadia also influenced her life and works greatly. Nadia provided a strong female role model and imparted her with the sense that her possibilities were unlimited by the confines of gender differences (Pendle 131).

These influences resulted in a blend of Impressionistic and Neo-Romantic style. The Impressionism within her style is evidenced by her frequent choice of symbolist poetry, the abundance of subtlety and understatement within her works, the rarity of forte or fortissimo dynamic levels in her music, and her frequent use of whole-tone and pentatonic scales (Jezic 143).

"But Boulanger also inherited a neo-Romantic style, similar to that of the music of Gabriel Fauré...Boulanger's early works tend to emphasize chromaticism and contrapuntal textures, more characteristic of romanticism than of impressionism." (Jezic 143).

More important than these technical tendencies in her work is the overall atmosphere she created. Her music quite often sounds uncertain or regretful. This quality may reveal understanding of her ever-deteriorating health conditions and her fear of death (Jezic 143).
Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

Although in retrospect it may seem that Nadia Boulanger was destined to affect the music world -- especially American music, her beginnings would have suggested otherwise. Although she was born into a tremendously musical family, she showed little or no interest in or aptitude for music. From her birth, September 6, 1887, until age six, she actively proclaimed that she disliked and wanted nothing to do with the art form (Irvin vii).

However the strong-willed, temperamental child was eventually drawn to music. And the same stubborn will which prompted her previous actions now prompted her to a feverish study of composition. By age nine, she was accepted into the Paris Conservatory where her father taught voice. Her concentration was never performance, though; her dreams were of composition. Her success at the conservatory astounded many. By age 11, she won her first solfege competition and went on from there to earn top honors in nearly every category as her studies progressed.

Her family was an important part of her drive and motivation. Her mother, a vocal performance artist, was a very demanding, critical woman. It seemed as though Nadia could never quite please her (Irvin vii). Her father was, to some degree, a source of support. But she was quite young when he died of heart failure during an animated discussion with her. Not only was she left reeling from the shock of his death, but she felt pressured to succeed in every arena so that she would be able to support her family. (Irvin viii).
However, it was Lili, Nadia's sister who had the most influence on her life. From the time Lili was born (Nadia was six), Nadia was held responsible for her. Although the two had an extremely close relationship, there were always some resentful undercurrents. Lili was the perfect child. It seemed that she outperformed Nadia in every way possible. She was seen by everyone as prettier, more charming, more naturally musically gifted, and more intellectually gifted. Jealousy was almost inevitable under the circumstances (Irvin vii).

The situation was not improved by the two sisters' performances in the Prix de Rome. Nadia was one of the first women to compete in the prestigious competition. She made her first attempt in 1906, but was eliminated in the first round. Undaunted, she entered again in 1907 and advanced to finals. Finally in 1908, she won Second Prize for her *La Sirène*, a tremendous coup for a composer of her time. She made one last attempt in 1909, but it was not until 1913 that the Grand Prix de Rome was awarded to a woman, Lili Boulanger. Nadia rejoiced at her sister's triumph, yet it must have been a bittersweet moment for her.

Regardless of the competition which existed between the two, there was also a strong sense of devotion. It was soon after Lili won the competition that her continual health problems brought her back to France. Nadia was devoted to caring for her dying sister. In 1918, when Lili's struggle finally ended, Nadia mourned grievously. She determined that Lili would not be forgotten and devoted much of her time to keeping her sister's works alive (Irvin ix).

Outside of her family, Gabriel Fauré and Igor Stravinsky were probably the
most influential figures in her life. Fauré had been one of her composition teachers during her years of study at the Paris Conservatory. A falling out caused a sixteen year rift in their relationship, but eventually Nadia felt the misunderstanding was a great loss and suggested a reconciliation which restored their relationship (Zaimont II 428). Stravinsky and Nadia had a constant friendship, mutual admiration, and respect for one another's works throughout their lives. They advised each other on matters of composition and he occasionally collaborated with her on the teaching of her classes (Zaimont II 428).

Another prominent figure in Nadia's career was famous pianist Raoul Pugno. He heard her works very early in her career and was impressed. He became a very important aid in her career development. He referred students to her and helped her secure performance as well as publication opportunities. Later, the two collaborated on several compositions. Together they composed a song set, Les Heures Claires, and an opera, La Ville Morte. There were also rumors of a personal involvement between the two, which was actually a bit scandalous since Pugno was infamous for his womanizing and partying antics (Irvin viii).

Nadia herself had an interesting reputation concerning personal character -- she was well known for her eccentricities. Her style of dress elicited comment throughout her life. As a child she wore boys' clothes, and throughout her life she chose black masculine clothing. She was also known for going about unchaperoned during all hours of the day and night which was absolutely scandalous for a woman of her social status. Overall, she was known as a radical, liberal, free-thinker, which was quite
unusual for a woman of her time (Zaimont II 429).

It was Nadia's career which was truly unusual. Throughout her lengthy career she achieved great strides as an organist, conductor, music critic, lecturer, and composer. Early in her career, she saw herself primarily as a composer. Her style was basically conservative. A majority of her works are tonal and rather metrically regular. She took ordinary chords and tonal structure and added interest to them through dissonance. She worked within tonality, but she pushed the boundaries of the system outward (Irvin x).

Unfortunately, her stringent personal standards for achievement eventually forced her to give up composition. Although she saw her works as well-written, she saw no particular potential. "I would never have been a great genius", she said of herself with regard to composition (Irvin x). So as a matter of pride in excellence she gave up her first love - composition, and turned completely to teaching, the field for which she is primarily remembered. An unfortunate loss, it was a decision which would greatly impact the music world.

Today Nadia is "considered to be the finest teacher in the world of music and a musical goddess of the 20th century" (LePage 147). The finest musical figures of her day studied under her. She was known as a demanding yet inspiring teacher who deeply affected the lives of those with whom she worked. She never imposed a set style upon her students, which accounts for their diversity.

Nadia's students were almost a family for her. They were companions -- always welcome in her home. Her home became a meeting place for the young
artistic crowd. However, she was also an incredibly demanding task master. Her philosophy of teaching mandated that all students must have a perfectly sound technical background before they could be capable of their best creativity. Her students excelled at harmony, counterpoint, and fugue. She believed that all theoretical exercises should be creations of beauty too, not just the final compositions (Zaimont I 130).

Although her students came from everywhere, some of the most noted were Americans. "Critic Harold Schonberg credits her with having single-handedly shaped the course of our music from 1920 to 1940" (Irvin vii). Over the course of her career, she taught approximately 600 American students -- among them, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, Helen Hosmer, and Louise Talma (Groh 88).

Nadia was also a well-respected conductor. She conducted many of the world's most famous orchestras including the Paris Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Symphony. She was the first woman to ever conduct the Royal Philharmonic Society of London, the Boston Symphony, and the Philharmonic Symphony of New York. Her knowledge and skill gained her respect with the orchestra members and audiences alike (Groh 105).

A comment she made when asked about her feelings on being the first woman to conduct the Boston Symphony sums up the attitude which may well have enabled her to succeed in the spite of the sexism of her time --

"I've been a woman for a little over fifty years, and have gotten over my initial astonishment. As for conducting an orchestra, that's a job. I don't think sex plays much part" (LePage 206).

Nadia Boulanger
Josephine Lang

As with most women composers of the time, Josephine Lang came from a musical family. Her grandparents and aunts were all involved in music-related professions. Even more importantly, both her parents were professional musicians. Her mother was a rather well-known opera singer and her father was a court musician. As a result, she was born into the musical court at Munich in 1815.

Throughout her childhood, she received training in piano and voice. It became easily apparent that her true gifts were in art song. Her voice was exceptionally sweet and she had an innate gift for composition, the first of which seems to have been written around age 13 (Tick).

Throughout her early career Josephine had the opportunity to hear and be heard by some of the most important musical figures of her day. In her teens, Josephine was introduced to Felix Mendelssohn, who was so impressed with her talents that he adopted her as his protegée. He gave her daily lessons in counterpoint and harmony. This naturally had a large influence on her style. He even offered to take her with him to Berlin to study, but her father refused (Tick). In 1834 she met Stephen Heller, a pianist through whom she first became familiar with the music of Robert Schumann. His works and later his and Clara’s personal support were an important influence in her life and work.

Overall, Josephine was exceptionally well accepted by the musical figures, press and publishers of her day. Unlike most female composers, she was treated as a respectable professional by critics and musical press alike. She was often praised as a
progressive vocal composer who managed to find a way to combine the formality and elegance of Classicism with the intensity and passion of Romanticism (Tick).

It was during this early portion of her career that she was most productive. From 1837 to 1843 she composed almost one third of her published works (Tick). It was also during this time that she met her future husband, Christian Reinhold Koestlin, a lawyer and amateur poet. He was a very important source of inspiration for Josephine. Their creative collaboration resulted in many songs created during their two year love affair. During the summer of 1840 alone she wrote 40 lieder. It was a very focused and intense period of composition which is now referred to by some as her "lieder years".

These years of active composition were followed by some of her least productive career-wise. From 1843 to 1856, she composed only four songs due to family concerns. She gave birth to six children and her main priority was domestic life. However, the death of her husband in 1856 necessitated a return to her musical career. She began teaching voice and piano to support her family. By 1859 she had begun to compose again as well. Although she initially had trouble securing a publisher, her long time friend, composer Ferdinand Hiller helped her reestablish contact with her publishers (Pendle 104). From the years 1860 to 1871, she published 38 compositions (Tick).

Over the course of her career, Josephine composed over one hundred fifty songs, several small piano works, and one chamber piece for cello and piano. Her vocal lines and accompaniment were quite independant and she was careful to respect
the poetic rhythm of the text. The accompaniments added color and texture without
obscuring the melody and text (Tick).

Josephine had many periods of upheaval in her life. During their courtship, Koestin abandoned her for nearly a year with no explanation or warning. Later, he
died unexpectedly and tragically, leaving her with their six children. One child was
crippled, another went insane and was sent to an institution where he died in a fire.
Yet a third child was disabled by a nervous condition and dependent on her for
support. She used her composition as a refuge. As a result she tended to choose texts
which related to her private life (Jezic 85). This provides her works with the deeply
expressive and personal style for which she is known. Some of her favorite poets
were Heine, Uhland, Kerner, Morike and her husband (Tick).
Alma Mahler Werfel (1879-1964)

Although her name is most often spoken of in relation to her husband Gustav's musical career, Alma herself was a promising composer. She was born in 1879 into a home that frequently hosted the cultural leaders of Vienna and virtually hummed with creative energy. Her father Emil Schindler was a leading portraitist of the day. Their relationship had a strong influence on Alma, who absolutely adored him. Some of her finest childhood memories include his fine tenor voice singing Schumann lieder (Pendle 133).

At age nine she began studying both instrumental and vocal composition. Unlike most female composers who were initially educated as performers or teachers, Alma's training was, from the very beginning, aimed at composition (Briscoe 245). Early in her education she studied counterpoint with Robert Gound and Josef Labor. Around 1900 she began study with Alexander von Zemlinsky, who was also Schoenberg's composition teacher. Zemlinsky was the means through which she was introduced to Gustav Mahler.

Her subsequent marriage to Gustav Mahler was the first of a lifelong series of relationships with creative men. Later in her life, Alma reflected upon these relationships as a result of her ability to single out men who were destined to be considered great by posterity. She saw it as part of her mission to nurture their talent and be an active participant in their success (Pendle 135-6).

She married Mahler who was then a major composer, director of the Vienna Opera, and 19 years older than she. Initially, he dominated every facet of her life.
Before they even married, he wrote to her and "told his wife-to-be she must stop composing and attend to their home, before he had even seen any of her pieces" (Bowers 292). His fragile ego saw her composition as competition -- competition with which he was not willing to contend (Pendle 135).

Perhaps it was Alma's awe of him as a composer, her insecurity as a composer, or the age difference that intimidated her into accepting this sacrifice. The best explanation may well be in the book she wrote years later:

"I buried my dream and perhaps it was for the best. It has been my privilege to give my creative gifts another life in minds greater than my own. And yet the iron had entered my soul and the wound has never healed" (Boulanger 21).

"I lived his life. I had none of my own. He never noticed this surrender of my existence. He was so self-engrossed that any disturbance, however slight, was unendurable. Work, exaltation, self-denial and the never-ending quest were his whole life on and on and forever" (Boulanger 104).

It was not until 1910 that, faced with marital troubles and fears that she would leave him, Gustav encouraged her to resume composition and helped her attain publication (Pendle 135). Just a year later he died.

Shortly after Mahler's death, Alma once again found herself in a relationship in which she again subordinated her talents to a man's work (Pendle 135). Her affair with artist Oskar Kokaschka lasted only a short while.

In 1915, Alma married architect Walter Gropius, a promising architect who founded the Bauhaus School of Art (Pendle 135). Unfortunately, the separation caused by the war and the love affair she had during his absence destroyed the marriage soon after the war's end. However, this affair with writer Franz Werfel was
the beginning of the only truly happy and long-lasting relationship in her life (Pendle 135). Married in 1929, they remained together until his death in 1945.

Although her musical career was sabotaged by her relationships and her own low opinion of her own talent, she composed a substantial amount of music during her lifetime. However, the only works surviving are her three books of published lieder and two songs which remain in manuscript. All others were destroyed when the Werfel house was bombed during World War II (Briscoe 245).

Her remaining lieder reveal a style influenced by Brahms and Liszt. Her accompaniments occupy a wide range and are built with lush harmonies that provide an equal partnership with the leaping vocal lines. But her style also includes controlled harmonic dissonances and tight forms that reach forward to the works of Schoenberg, another of Zemlinsky's students (Briscoe 246).

Alma generally chose modern texts -- works by her own contemporaries such as Rilke, Dehmel, and her husband, Franz Werfel (Briscoe 246). The sophisticated relationship between text and music show her perceptive grasp of literature and ability to translate its meaning into passionate musical works of art (Pendle 137).
Clara Wieck Schumann (1819-1891)

Clara Wieck Schumann was one of the first women musicians to consider her career a priority equal to or even more important than the domestic responsibilities of wife and mother. Perhaps this is less surprising when we consider her mother, Marianne Tromlitz.

Marianne came from a musical family and was herself a gifted singer and pianist. She, like Clara after her, maintained an active career throughout the births of her children. But in 1824 Marianne left her husband, and due to laws at the time, custody of the children was automatically offered to the male. As a result, Marianne had very little to do with Clara's life from that point on (Bowers 253). Although she is given little credit for the development of this extraordinary artist, perhaps she was at least somewhat of a role model in that she believed strongly in the importance of her own musical career.

A much more obvious influence in Clara's development was her father, Friederich Wieck. Music was his first love and he saw Clara as a demonstration of his prowess as a teacher, if not even as an extension of himself. He managed her education and career with determination and skill. He never viewed her sex as a drawback. It was simply not an issue as far as he was concerned, although he did discourage development of domestic skills (Bowers 254). He was indeed a brilliant educator, but he also was domineering, stubborn, and violently temperamental. He mistreated Clara's siblings, and though he was never violent with her, he was extremely possessive (Bowers 259).
Clara must have been somewhat of a frustration for him initially. She did not speak or comprehend language from her birth in 1819 until age four. He still insisted on attempting to begin her piano instruction (Bowers 254). Her entire education was focused on music. Although her general education in other subjects was poor, her musical education was comprehensive (Bowers 254-55). Piano performance ended up being her primary strength, but it was not the only area on which she focused. Her studies included piano, theory, harmony, counterpoint, composition, voice and violin. Part of her training included systematic exposure to concerts and performances which helped develop her ear for composition, especially vocal compositions (Jezic 94). In 1828, she wrote her first piano compositions and gave her first public performances. Because the Wieck household was a center for publishers, writers, and musicians, Clara was surrounded with some of the finest creative minds of her time. In fact, this was the very manner in which she first came to know Robert Schumann. In 1830 Schumann came to live at the Wieck residence so that he could study with Clara's father.

During the next few years, Clara did an extensive round of concert tours. She was acclaimed as a child prodigy and admired by Goethe, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Paganini among others. In 1837 Clara gave her first performances in Vienna. Her seasons there were highly successful. She gained great admiration and respect. Her concerts sold out due to rave reviews which soon resulted in publishing opportunities (Bowers 266).

It was around this time that Robert Schumann asked Clara's father for
permission to marry her. Thus began a lengthy struggle, resulting in a court battle which eventually granted Robert and Clara permission to wed in 1840.

Long before the wedding occurred, Clara indicated that she would not give up her career to assume domestic responsibility as so many women musicians of the day did. Early in 1837 she wrote to Robert -- "I shall be unhappy if I cannot always work at my art" (Neuhls-Bates 92).

Although marriage and children had some effect on Clara's career, she remained as active as possible in the music world. It was in the years after her marriage to Robert that she began to develop her skills as a lieder composer. In fact, one of her first sets was written as a Christmas gift for Robert (Pendle 105). Although her songs were not extremely innovative or forward-looking, they show a fine balance between text and music (Jezic 94). Some use a declamatory style that is both powerful and expressive while leaving the text completely unobscured. Her accompaniments are independent and often technically demanding because of an increased amount of chromaticism (Pendle 103).

Her output includes three collections of lieder, piano and chamber music. Some of her early works are published jointly under Robert's name, which helped prevent rejection of her material because it was labeled women's work. Robert was an unending source of encouragement for Clara. He didn't believe that she should completely center her life around family and home. As a result she was able to continue her career throughout her eight pregnancies (Jezic 94). This was one of the most distinctive differences between her and her peers. There were numerous other
successful female performers who quit after their marriages and disappeared from the music world (Bowers 250). Clara was determined not to let this happen. Her art was her first priority (Bowers 275).

Rather than sabotaging her career, Clara and Robert's marriage was able to add dimensions of strength. Although it kept her from performing as much as she ideally would have liked, it also gave new depth to the emotion of her playing and composition (Neuhls-Bates 97). It may have negatively affected public opinion of the couple, but Clara eventually began to travel without him, enabling him to write at home without hampering either of their careers (Neuhls-Bates 98-99). More importantly, their marriage combined her performing with his composition. Clara premiered the majority of Robert's works. In fact she became somewhat jealous when others played them (Bowers 259).

Yet they were still products of their own society. There were often times when Robert had trouble with her career. He never really wanted her to give it up, he just longed to be taken care of, to have her near (Bowers 259). He hated the separation when she traveled without him, yet could not do satisfactory work while on the road. And in the same way, Clara loved her career and refused to give it up, yet often felt guilty for not having made the sacrifices so many other women did. Robert summed it up well when he said:

Well, so it must be when artists marry; one cannot have everything; and after all, the chief thing is the happiness which remains over and above, and we are happy indeed in that we possess one another and understand one another, understand and love with all our hearts." (Neuhls-Bates 99).
However, this happiness was to end abruptly with Robert's suicide attempt and subsequent mental collapse in 1854. From that time onward, he was institutionalized. Clara was not even allowed to visit him until two weeks before his death in 1856 (Bowers 263). Clara was completely disconsolate. Her only comforts were her family, her friendship with Brahms, and performing Robert's music.

Clara had never felt confident in her own abilities as a composer. Her insecurities were based in her belief that women are intrinsically weak at such skills. She was also guilty of constantly comparing herself to Robert and Brahms -- always seeing herself as inferior (Neuhs-Bates 153).

"I once thought that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose - not one has been able to do it, and why should I expect to?" (Neuhs-Bates 154).

Therefore it was no great surprise when after Robert's death she virtually quit composing. Part of the problem was that she honestly did not have the time. She threw herself into performance as both a means of supporting her family and as a coping technique. Eventually her close friend Brahms begged her to give up her constant concertizing (McClary 151). Her response to him was: "I feel myself called upon to reproduce beautiful works, Robert's above all, so long as I have the strength" (Neuhs-Bates 107). Clara had always believed that only a composer could achieve true immortality (Briscoe 119). Her efforts were to ensure this for her beloved Robert.

This period of constant travel for Clara meant new adjustments for her already mourning family. While she toured, the children stayed with family, friends, or were in boarding school. Clara had always been an artist first, then a parent. Still, she
wrote the children constantly while on the road. She arranged reunions whenever possible, and was often able to arrange for the family to spend entire summers together. As her daughters grew older, they took responsibility for both the family itself, and parts of Clara's career management (Neuhls-Bates 100).

In 1878 Clara accepted a position as principal piano teacher at Hoch Conservatory. Although the contract allowed for touring, it lent some stability to both her schedule and financial situation. She continued teaching there until the age of 73 (Bowers 273).

She made her last public appearance in 1891, ending a career of over 1,300 public recitals. Her fame as a leading virtuoso was well established. She had often premiered new works by major composers such as Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms (Jezic 93). She was also one of the first to play entire solo recitals and memorize the music she played (Bowers 250). So she lives on, not only through her compositions, but as an important recitalist -- with the greatest longevity of performing career in her time (Bowers 251).
Appendix:
A program and notes for an art song recital using compositions written by female composers.

Program

Mrs. H. H. A. Beach
The Year's at the Spring
Far awa'!
O Sweet Content

Josephine Lang
Früzeitiger Frühling
Auf dem See in tausend Sterne

Clara Schumann
Sie Liebten sich beide
Es fiel ein Reif

Mary Carr Moore
Sola, abbandonata! from David Rizzo

- Intermission -

Alma Mahler
Ich wandle unter Blumen
Die Stille Stadt
Der Erkennende

Lili Boulanger
Selections from Clarières dans le Ciel:
Au pied de mon lit
Un poète disait

Nadia Boulanger
Chanson Elle a vendu mon car
Cantique
Was will die Einsame Thräne
**Program Notes**

Mrs. H. H. A. Beach (1867-1944)

Amy Beach is one of the foremost American female composers. Beginning as a child prodigy, she had a successful performance career as a pianist and composer. Most of her works were published during her lifetime. Her style is described as late Romantic with slight Impressionistic influences. Her songs are singable, sentimental, and take advantage of her gift for melody and sensitivity to language.

*The Year's at the Spring* is Pippa's song from the poem *Pippa Passes*. It is from a set of songs to poems by Robert Browning and was dedicated to the Browning Society of Boston. *Far awa*! is from a set of five songs to words by Robert Burns. *O Sweet Content* is a folk-like setting of a poem by Thomas Dekker.

Josephine Lang (1815-1880)

Although devotion to her husband and six children was the first priority in Josephine's life, she managed to compose over one hundred fifty songs, as well as several small piano works, and one chamber piece for cello and piano. Over one third of these works were composed during the years from 1837 to 1843. During the summer of 1840 alone, she wrote 40 lieder. Her songs are deeply expressive and personal. She used poetry which she felt related to her private life. The accompaniments add color and texture without obscuring the meaning of the texts.

*Frühzeitiger Frühling*, a setting of Goethe's poetry was composed around 1840 when Lang was only 15 years of age. The triplets in the accompaniment give it a sense of excitement and drive without overpowering the rather adventurous melody. This is the song she first performed for Mendelssohn who became one of her greatest supporters and influences. *Auf dem See in Tausend Sterne* is a setting of one of her husband's poems. Many of the lieder that Josephine wrote during their courtship were settings of his poetry.

*Frühzeitiger Frühling*

**Early spring**

*Days of Bliss when will you come.*

Will you give me the sun, the hills, the woods?

make the flow generous.

*You streams and brooks, or is it from the meadows?*

or the valley? Is it the pasture? Is it the valley?

*Under the green branches is a blossoming strength*

which the little bees are eating, humming with delight.

*Colorful birds flutter in the pasture and heavenly love is their song.*

*Heavenly love is their song.*

*A powerful movement is in my breath,*

but it gets lost right away in the shrubs.

*But it returns back to my bosom.*

*Help me muses to bear the bliss.*

*Gentle movement in the air.*

*Tender motion and sleepy scent*

tells me what happened, my beloved sisters,

*my lover is here my dear sisters, my lover is here.*
Auf dem See in Tausend Sterne
On the Lake of a Thousand Stars
On a lake of 1,000 Stars the sun disintegrated so that near and far
there was an ocean of glittering light, a trembling fire
and in the waves of my life your beloved picture fell down
from a 1,000 joys and created ever new songs.
Do you want to go out into this ocean of light in my gentle boat?
Come, oh come, and let it absorb you and overwhelm you in the intense glow of the light.
come, oh come, and let it devour you, the intense light, let it overpower you,
come, oh come.

Clara Schumann (1819-1891)
Unlike the majority of her peers, Clara's musical career was her first priority. Her father, a brilliant educator and very domineering figure, was determined that she be a successful musician. Other important influences on her work were her husband Robert Schumann and friend Johannes Brahms. Unfortunately, she constantly compared her works to theirs and was intimidated by what she saw as their superior talent. Composition was never her primary focus. She spent most of her life touring as a very successful and well-respected concert pianist. However, she did compose three collections of lieder as well as some piano and chamber works. Her songs show significant tonal and structural variety as well as independent and often technically demanding accompaniments.

Sie Liebten sich Beide and Es Fiel ein Reif are two of the songs she wrote in a rather declamatory style. Both have rather sparse accompaniments, bold harmonies, and pay careful attention to the texts, which were written by Heinrich Heine.

Sie liebten sich Beide
They Loved Each other
They loved each other,
but neither one wanted to confess it to the other.
They looked at each other in a hostile way.
And yet were overcome by love.
They finally parted and saw each other only
Occasionally in dreams. They had died long ago and hardly realized it.

Es Fiel ein Reif
A Frost Hit the Ground
There was a frost one spring night.
It hit the tender blossoms, they are dried and wrinkled.
A boy loved a girl and they secretly escaped from home.
Neither father nor mother knew about it.
They wandered back and forth.
They had neither luck nor fortune.
They died and perished.

Mary Carr Moore (1872-1957)
Mary Carr Moore was an extremely driven and energetic musician. She maintained her career as teacher, coach, and composer throughout a series of marriages, children and divorces. She composed 4 operas, 7 operettas, over 225
songs, and some orchestra, chamber, and piano works.  

David Rizzio is an opera based on the tragic story of Mary, Queen of Scotts. However, it ignores historical accuracy and portrays Mary turning to Rizzio for love and support. Sola Abbandonata occurs in her prison cell, in a moment of anguish and despair.

Sola Abbandonata

Alone and Abandoned

Forsaken! in direst danger! Ah forsaken! In my sorrow! I am forsaken! Within these dark walls, am I imprisoned. My tears are now blinding me! The tears of my grief. Ah alone! Forsaken! Ah! Within this sepulchre, this dismal prison! Weeping! Alone I tremble. In blinding rain, my tears flow on, my tears of grief! Alone! in sorrow! Ah in deepest sorrow!

Alma Mahler (1879-1964)

Although Alma's musical career was sabotaged by her relationships and her low opinion of her own talent, she composed a substantial amount of music during her lifetime. Unfortunately only three books of song remain in existence. The rest were destroyed during World War II bombings. Stylistically, her lieder were influenced by Brahms and Liszt. The accompaniments occupy a wide range and are built with lush harmonies that provide an equal partnership with the leaping vocal lines.

Ich Wandle unter Blumen and Die stille Stadt are settings of poetry by Heinrich Heine and Richard Dehmel respectively. Der Erkennende is a setting of a desolate, ironic poem by Franz Werfel, Alma's third husband.

Die stille Stadt

The Quiet City

There is a city in the valley.
A dim day is coming to an end.
It will not be long til moon and stars will shine.
Only night will rule the sky.
From all the mountains fog sinks down on the city.
No sound comes from the roofs, the houses, the smoke-stacks and not from the towers or bridges either.
But, when the wanderer became fearful a light went up and down in the valley it came from the smoke and filtered through the fog and started a praise from a child's mouth.

Ich wandle unter Blumen

I walk around flowers
I walk around flowers and join in their blooming bliss.
I wander as if in dream and float with every step.
Embrace me firm beloved, I am drunken with love.
I sink to your feet and realize the garden is full of people.
Der Erkennende
The Aware
Human beings love us, and, un blessed,
They arise from table to lament us.
So we sit bowed over the cloth
And are indifferent and can deny them.

That which loves us, how we thrust it away!
And no sorrow will soften us callous ones.
That which we love snatches a place,
Becomes hard and no more reachable.

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)
In a lifetime of only 25 years, Lili Boulanger managed to leave her mark in the world of music. She is remembered as the first woman to win the Grand Prix de Rome. Her style can be described as a blend of Impressionistic and Neo-Romantic style. Her music quite often sounds uncertain or regretful. This quality may reveal her understanding of her ever-deteriorating health conditions and imminent death.

Clarières dans le Ciel was written in Rome after the Prix de Rome and premiered the week before her death. The texts, written by Francis Jammes, speak in metaphors about different facets of love. The settings support the text with color and texture built with Impressionistic techniques.

Au pie de mon lit
At the foot of my bed
a black Virgin was placed
by my mother
and I love this Virgin
with a somewhat Italian religiousness
Lauretian Virgin
standing on a golden background
who makes me think
of a thousand shellfish
Which are sold on the piers
where not a breath of air moves
the tents which fall into a heavy sleep
Lauretian Virgin
you know that in those hours
when I don’t feel worthy of being loved
by her
it’s your perfume that refreshes my heart

And the word that rules is: Alone!
When we impotently burn to each other.
One thing I know: Never and nothing is mine.
Mine alone to recognize that.

Un poète disait
A poet used to say
that when he was young
he flowered in verses
as a rosebush in roses
When I think of her
it seems to me that
An ever-flowing fountain is chattering
in my heart
God places on the lily
a church perfume
As he put coral
in the cherry’s cheeks
I want to put on her with devotion
the color of a perfume without name
Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

Perhaps one of the greatest influences on American music, Nadia was a renowned teacher who shaped the careers of students such as Aaron Copland and George Gershwin. Early in her career, she concentrated primarily on composition. She took ordinary chords and tonal structure and added interest to them through dissonance. She worked within the system of tonality, but pushed the boundaries outward.

The texts for Chanson and Cantique were written by Camille Mauclair and Maurice Maeterlinck respectively. Was will die einsame Thräne is germanic in style, both textually and musically. The poetry is by Heinrich Heine.

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**Chanson "elle a vendu mon coeur"**

She sold my heart for a song.
Sold my heart on the public square, peddler, in place of the song.
Your songs were white, Mine is the color of blood
She sold my heart, peddler, She sold my heart for a lark.
And now sings my heart on the squares, the crossroads, you will make people weep, peddler, telling of my great love.
While she will make the people laugh who come to her wedding singing the song as a joke.
The one for which she sold my heart.

---

**Cantique**

To every weeping soul
To every passing sin
I open to the breast of the stars my hands filled with grace
There is no sin which can live when love has spoken
There is no soul that dies when love has wept and if love gets lost on the paths of this world its tears find me and do not disappear

---

**Lonely Tear**
**Larme Solitaire**

What does the lonely tear want?
It dims my view, it comes from old days and brings back past moments.
It has many shining sisters who have all floated away.
My sorrows and joys are running through the night and join the wind like fog they are flowing
The blue stars which always were a source of my joys and pains are smiling in my heart.
Also my love has floated away like a whisper.
You old, solitary tear flow and run like all the waters.
Sources of Songs


Works Cited


