

Book Review: Textbooks for Women in Music Courses

Karin Pendle, ed., *Women & Music: A History, 2nd Edition.*

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001. 516 pp., endnotes, bibliography, index.

I was a graduate student in composition hungry for information about historical women composers when the first edition of Karin Pendle's book was published. The book did, and does provide a wealth of information about women composers, all of which has been meticulously updated. Some updates reflect new information about historical composers; for example, the new information about Francesca Caccini's later life unearthed through Susan Cusick's feminist approach to available documents. Some of the new material suggests reevaluating the contribution of historical composers; for example, works by Germaine Tailleferre and Marion Bauer are recontextualized as being up-to-date at the time of composition, though their work has been dismissed as outdated when compared to later works by close contemporaries. Other updates reflect the continuously evolving careers of contemporary composers and the availability of new information about composers whose careers evolved behind the Iron Curtain, with a brief discussion of how European modern history (wars, displacements, socialist realism) has affected the output of women composers.. This edition also includes information about the younger generation of composers now in their 40s. In general, as the reader moves forward in chronological time, the amount of detail and length of the updates increases.

On the whole, the new edition reflects a growing awareness of feminist theory; this is particularly apparent in the chapters by Renée Cox Lorraine and by Karin Pendle herself. Cox's chapter on Feminist Aesthetics has been expanded and moved from the end of the book to the beginning, providing a feminist theoretical framework for approaching the material to follow, drawing new examples of the use of gender analysis in music from Plato, instrumental music, and contemporary movies. In addition to looking at the ways in which the "feminine" is defeated by the "masculine" theme, Cox's argument also shows ways in which the defeat is subverted (what is sometimes described as the "envoicing" of women—the strong female character who seems to be defeated is in fact the one whose music is remembered afterwards. Pendle's chapter on Musical Women in Early Modern Europe shows the most extensive rewriting, using new categories that emphasize the importance of class in the role that women have played throughout history, rather than using time period or country labels that are more appropriate to men's history. The chapter also reveals a feminist approach to history in the inferences made about women's musical lives; for example, inferring noblewomen's participation in music is partly based on knowledge about their training, since improvised secular music has not been preserved through notation. Also reaffirms centrality of nuns to their cultural, not marginalized Also the retitling of the section from "women composers" to "women and the written tradition" underscores that not all composers *write*. In my opinion, these are the two strongest chapters, precisely because of their bent toward feminist theory.

As in any group-written book, the approaches taken by various chapter authors vary. Some of the chapters include women performers; others focus entirely on composers. Among the chapters that focus on composers, some are arranged geographically (10) and others are arranged by style (11, which covers North America). I realize that there are space limitations, but the exclusion of women performers seems to negate some of the ideas behind feminist musicology (for example

the importance of oral traditions). It also makes it difficult to follow through on threads of thought about class and racism. For example, the discussion of the effect of racism on the careers of women singers in Chapter 8 is never followed through, and there is never any mention of pioneering African American singers such as Marian Anderson or Leontyne Price. On the other hand, some of the threads are strengthened, such as a discussion of women as patrons, which is newly emphasized in Chapter 3, 4, 8 which also draw attention to the effect that the taste of women patrons and later women's clubs had on the development of musical styles and performing ensembles.

Two chapters from the previous edition (12. Women and Music in The Mediterranean and 14. Women in Blues and Jazz have been joined with a third chapter on 13. Women in Music in Latin America, Native America, and the African Diaspora to form a new section, titled "Women in the World of Music: Three Approaches." The strength of this section lies mainly in what is suggested by the section title—that it exemplifies three types of ethnomusicology. Chapter 12 reveals a generalist approach, looking at music to understand society; Chapter 14 is historical musicology applied to popular music, and Chapter 13 reveals a focus on specificity and difference as elements of cultural change. Chapter 12 remains unchanged in respect to its late author. The chapter on Blues and Jazz, which is one of the weaker chapters in the book, reveals very few changes from the original addition—amounting to one inadequate paragraph on Lil Hardin Armstrong and a list with very brief descriptions of the younger generation—overemphasizes a few big name singers and shortchange women jazz instrumentalists and composers. Even with the chapters emphasis on singers, the bibliography omits Angela Davis' feminist analysis of Women Blues singers'.

With the exception of the Section on Women in the World of Music, the primary focus of the book is on the western art music tradition; however, this edition does include new material about women from more marginalized regions such as early music in China, Japan (ch. 3) and Spain (ch. 4), contemporary composers from The Low Countries, Israel (ch. 10), a modern Native American composer (ch. 11) as well as an expanded discussion of women composers from Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada (ch. 11). There is also expanded material on important African American women composers outside the religious tradition, for example Julia Perry, with a brief look at the difficulty of issue of race added to gender for an experimental artist

The book also includes a chapter on American Popular music, which has been slightly updated for this edition. I find this chapter particularly problematic because it seems to suggest that women's only contributions to pop music are soft rock, pop, and folk-influenced genres. There is no mention of the Riot Grrrl movement, or of hard rock performers and the only reference to punk is a paragraph on Courtney Love. Rap music is dismissed with a paragraph, and there is no mention of New York-born salsa at all. I also found it problematic to group together Motown and Soul, which come from totally different racial stances, the first being geared toward white audiences, and the latter a voice of racial pride. The treatment of female singers by the Motown producers—often white, though the labels were black-owned—was exploitative on a variety of levels. There short bibliography omits a number of important feminist writers on popular music that are left off the short bibliography—Sheila Whitley, Mavis Bayton, Francis Aparicio, Tricia Rose

On the whole, this would be a good textbook for an upper-level music history course. It requires some knowledge of music history and music theory/literature. Some chapters are more accessible than others; the chapters covering the last two centuries generally require more background because they focus more on descriptions of works and biographies, with less cultural analysis. A few of the chapters (1, parts of 3 & 4) could be used in a Women's Studies class. The book is not linked to a set of recordings, but discussions of musical examples are keyed to reference readily available anthologies. The musical examples themselves are short and sometimes hard to read (some of them are more legible, others are less legible than the previous edition). While the book does provide a theoretical framework, the application of that framework to the material is sporadic and dependent on the chapter authors. That in itself could provide an interesting topic for class discussion.

I use the chapter on Feminist Aesthetics and part of the material from Chapter parts of it in the 100-level Women and Music class at Gettysburg College, which is a 100-level course cross-listed with the Women's Studies Department. This course is designed to fulfill the arts distribution requirement for non-music majors. For my class I use a course pack to cover a wide variety of topics such as feminist musicology (relating to both art and popular music), women in opera and music video, women composers and performers in art music and popular music traditions.

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