

# **GEMS (Gender, Education, Music, & Society)**

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## **Women Music Educators In The United States: A History. By Sondra Wieland Howe**

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*Women Music Educators* is a comprehensive narrative of women teaching music in the United States from colonial days until the end of the twentieth century. Traditional accounts of the history of music education have often neglected the contributions of women, because these texts have emphasized bands and the top leaders in hierarchical music organizations. When music education is defined broadly, the contributions of many forgotten women are revealed. Women taught in many settings: the home,

community, churches, public schools, and teacher-training institutions. Women were music educators as writers, patrons, and through their volunteer work in organizations. Their stories are found in articles, dissertations, and books from the fields of musicology, education, and social history.

This book describes women music educators' experiences throughout the United States and in many national organizations, then includes narratives and photos from Minnesota, where the author has taught

for many years. The Introduction reviews literature from the history of music education, history of education, and musicology to give a background for writing the history of women in music education. The book includes an extensive Bibliography (pages 311-22), an Index (323-35), and sixteen pages of photos.

Part I: Early American Music Education to 1860. Women had the responsibility for educating children to become moral and virtuous citizens. Most education took place in the family, although there were “dame schools” for children. Colonial household inventories list a variety of instruments in homes. Women attended singing schools to learn music. Some women attended academies where music was an “accomplishment” along with dancing and painting.

By the early nineteenth century, women published compositions and published many hymn texts. Emma Willard founded the Troy Female Seminary to train teachers. Women taught music in private academies, Sunday Schools, and rural schoolhouses. Women were successful as organists in major Boston churches and taught keyboard lessons privately.

Part II: Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century (1860-1900). In the second half of the nineteenth century, public school systems expanded and included normal schools. The roles of women were changing through the suffrage movement, new opportunities in professions, and the founding of many clubs and organizations. In the private sphere, women continued to perform and teach in the home, write hymn texts, and publish compositions. The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 showcased the accomplishments of women in many areas of music.

In the public sphere, women supervised music in urban school systems, developed kindergartens, and published songbooks. Julia Crane founded the first institution to train music specialists for the public schools. Women studied and taught in normal schools, summer institutes, and conservatories. Many music organizations were established in the late nineteenth century. At local music clubs, women performed, created programs for students, and organized concert series for the public. The Music Teachers National Association (est. 1876) included independent teachers of voice and piano plus public school teachers. The NEA Department of Music Education involved women as committee members, performers, and speakers.

Part III: Twentieth Century through World War II (1900-1945). By the turn of the century, the need for youth labor decreased in agriculture and industry, and more young people entered public high schools. Immigration also increased the school population. Teacher-training programs expanded. Women had more opportunities to work in the public sphere by the 1920s. The decade of the 1930s brought unemployment for many, but new employment opportunities developed during World War II. During the expansion of the public school system in the first half of the twentieth, foundations for modern music education were formed with expanded offerings in band, orchestra, choir, and music appreciation.

Women became music supervisors in large urban school systems. In 1907, music teachers and supervisors met in Keokuk, Iowa, in a group that became the Music Supervisors National Conference (MSNC). Frances Elliott Clark was the first president of MSNC and several women were president in the early years. In public schools, classroom piano was popular, with women writing the materials for these new courses. With the demand for textbooks in public schools, women published music textbook series (Eleanor Smith, M. Teresa Armitage, Mabelle Glenn, Lilla Bell Pitts) and piano methods (Angela Diller and Elizabeth Quaille, Leila Fletcher).

In the field of music appreciation, Frances Elliott Clark developed materials through the Victor Talking Machine Company, Alice Keith taught music appreciation on the radio in Cleveland, Marguerite Hood worked on radio programs for rural Montana, and Anne Shaw Faulker Oberndorfer gave lectures on the radio in Chicago. Women developed music appreciation programs in the black community of Washington, D.C. through the Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society.

With the growth of instrumental music in schools, girls studied band and orchestra instruments and became orchestra teachers. When women were denied positions in major symphony orchestras, they created women’s orchestras. Women played in mandolin ensembles and town bands early in the twentieth century. By World War II, they had new opportunities to play in university bands and the military bands of the Women’s Army Corps, Coast Guard SPARS, Marine Corps, and the Navy WAVES.

Urban settlement house music schools provided opportunities for children to learn an instrument and appreciate quality music. Women were very involved in the settlement house movement. Eleanor Smith founded the Hull House Music School in Chicago. In New York City, music schools were established at Henry Street Settlement, Greenwich House, the Third Street Music School Settlement, and the Union Neighborhood Music School, and some of these schools still exist.

In the area of teacher training and higher education, women first studied in summer music institutes, then normal schools, which became teachers' colleges in the 1920s. Women founded several conservatories: Clara Bauer founded Cincinnati Conservatory, San Francisco Conservatory evolved from Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead's music school, Mary Louise Curtis Bok founded the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and Harriet Gibbs Marshall the Washington (D.C.) Conservatory of Music.

Part IV: Since World War II (1945 to 2000). The period from 1945 to 1960 was a conservative time when women were encouraged to return to their lives as full-time wives and mothers. Women's roles gradually changed by the 1960s with feminist movements and legislation, especially Title IX. MENC responded to demands for reform through various projects and symposiums.

The new methodologies of Dalcroze, Orff, Kodály, and Suzuki were all founded by men, but were developed and promoted by women. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze developed eurhythmics, or the Dalcroze method, in Switzerland. In the United States, women created Dalcroze training programs that spread the method internationally. Carl Orff developed his method with Dorothee Günther and other women in Germany. Doreen Hall created Orff materials in Canada and many women have been involved in the American Orff-Schulwerk Association. Zoltán Kodály developed his method in Hungary. Many American women studied in Hungary and founded the Organization of American Kodály Educators. The Japanese violinist, Shinichi Suzuki created his method, while his wife Waltraud Prange, from Germany, translated for him and organized his international travels.

Despite the promotion of feminist ideas in the United States since 1960, there were only three women presidents of MENC from 1950 to 1992: Marguerite Hood, Frances M. Andrews, and Mary E. Hoffman. From 1992 to 2010, half of the presidents were women, and women have been active at state and local levels. Vanett Lawler was involved in the administration of MENC from 1942 to 1968. She was also a driving force in the founding of ISME (International Society for Music Education). MTNA, an organization of independent and college music teachers, included many female members, but did not select a woman president until 1970. In contrast, the National Federation of Music Clubs (est. 1898) has only had female national presidents (1898-1995) and female state presidents (1921-2011). Band organizations have not been receptive towards women members or female leadership.

Music textbooks since 1950 have been published with several editors per series, including many women. Women have gradually joined the editorial boards of national journals and edited research handbooks. While women have found their places as orchestra conductors, band directors, performers in symphonies, leaders in organizations, there are still many gender issues that need to be discussed to understand the role of women in American music education.

In conclusion, there are many opportunities for new research on women music educators. This book includes stories of outstanding African-American educators, but more research is needed on all ethnic groups. The book describes women on the national scene and examples of educators in Minnesota, but work is needed on all areas of the country, especially the far West. This book will complement the current histories of music education and should be of interest to scholars in many fields.

## Reference

Howe, Sondra Wieland. (2014). *Women Music Educators In The United States: A History*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc.