

Es webt darin ein leidenschaftlich-männlicher Geist. Neue Perspektiven auf Orchestermusik von Komponistinnen (14–16 November, 2024, Graz)

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From November 14th to 16th, 2024, the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Graz hosted the international conference *Es webt darin ein leidenschaftlich-männlicher Geist. Neue Perspektiven auf Orchestermusik von Komponistinnen*, which focused on orchestral compositions by female composers from the 18th century to the present. The event took place in the historic premises of the university and was organized by Christa Brüstle and Nicole K. Strohmann (both from the aforementioned institution in Graz) in collaboration with Markus Neuwirth (Anton Bruckner University for Music, Drama and Dance Linz). One of the primary objectives of the conference was to assess the current status of female composers' orchestral music within the academic sphere and concert programming, while also discussing potential strategies to enhance its visibility and presence in contemporary musical life. In the opening session, it was highlighted that, although there is a growing interest in the vocal music of certain female composers, their orchestral works remain significantly underrepresented. The organizers expressed their firm belief that, despite persistent stereotypical biases regarding the so-called "lack of high-quality symphonies composed by women," it is high time to challenge and transform this prevailing situation.

The conference was attended by approximately thirty scholars from Germany, Austria, France, Finland, Italy, Canada, the United States, and the Czech Republic. Their contributions were organized into panels that largely corresponded to the geographic scope of the respective composers. Within these presentations, speakers employed various methodological approaches. Primarily, they introduced biographical perspectives, discussing the life circumstances that influenced female composers' orchestral works, including their education, access to orchestras, and publication opportunities. Most contributions focused on the technical and stylistic analyses of orchestral compositions and their place within the broader development of musical genres. Discussions also addressed the reception of these

works across different historical periods, as well as the prejudices and stereotypes that continue to shape their evaluation. Additionally, several papers examined the work of musicological editors and dramaturgical organizers, incorporating statistical and quantitative research methodologies.

As the keynote speaker, Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers from the University of Ottawa delivered a presentation titled *The Life, Death, and After-Life of Clara Wieck's Piano Concerto Op. 7*. In her talk, she introduced and analysed this sole large-scale orchestral work by the composer. In addition to presenting her diary entries, letters, and other documents, she situated the concerto not only within the context of Wieck's other orchestral endeavours but also in relation to the broader Romantic repertoire. During the discussion, some voices placed her work on the same level as that of Schumann and his contemporaries. Several contributions focused on the German composer Emilie Mayer (1812–1883), often referred to as the “weibliche Beethoven,” “female Beethoven.” One paper, presented by musicologist Michael Polth from Mannheim, provided an analysis of her *Faust* overture (*Analytical Remarks on Emilie Mayer's Faust Overture*), while Seonhwa Lee's contribution offered a summary of her extensive symphonic output. In connection with these composers and their contemporaries, a broader discussion emerged regarding the “cult of genius” characteristic of the Romantic era. Critical reflection on and potential deconstruction of this paradigm could create space for the recognition and integration of previously marginalized female composers into the musical canon.

Jean-Paul Montagnier presented a paper analyzing the orchestral works of Julie Reisserová (1888–1938), the first Czech female composer and a student of Albert Roussel. In previous years, Montagnier has also prepared editions of her compositions, including *Suite*, *Pastorale maritimo*, and *Březan*, as well as her piano works. Notably, he is the author of the forthcoming book *Julie Reisserová (1888–1938): Czech Composer and Feminist*, which is set to be published by Cambridge University Press in 2025. Czech female composers were also the focus of Miriam Blümllová's presentation, *The Orchestral Works by Ivana Loudová and Sylvie Bodorová as Demonstration of Their Artistic Independence Against the Politics in the Czech Lands*. In her talk, she introduced Loudová's *Concerto for Percussion, Organ, and Wind Instruments* (1974), composed for the American Wind Symphony Orchestra shortly after her return from Paris. As a counterpart, she discussed Bodorová's song cycle *Lingua Angelorum* (2012), dedicated to Thomas Hampson, which exemplifies key aspects of Bodorová's compositional style: “postmodern collage” and a historicizing thematic approach.

Let us also mention the first African American female composer, Florence Price (1887–1953), whose melodic style strongly resembled that of Dvořák and

whose symphonic works were long considered lost (Adrian H. Hartsough: *The Lost Symphony(ies?) of Florence Price: A Feminist Reading*). Another notable presentation explored women's musical ensembles and orchestras (Silke Wenzel: *Visibility Between Spectacle and Collegiality: Women Orchestra Musicians in England circa 1870–1940*). Otto Wanke discussed the electroacoustic music of Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho (1952–2023) during her tenure in Paris from 1982, in his paper *Die Schwelle zwischen Klang und Geräusch. Zur Orchestermusik von Kaija Saariaho*. A somewhat unusual source of inspiration—drawing from the moulting process observed in certain reptiles and insects—was examined in the orchestral works of Italian composer Clara Iannotta (b. 1983). This theme, along with its associated compositional techniques, was explored by French scholar Mylène Giofredo in her presentation *Moulting as a Creative and Exploratory Process: A Perspective on Clara Iannotta's Work*.

A presentation focusing not only on the works of composers but also on archival research conducted by musicologists engaged in critical editions was dedicated to Mathilde Kralik (1857–1944), a composer from Linz, and her cantata *Weinachten*. Austrian scholars have prepared the piece for its premiere on December 1st, 2024—more than a hundred years after its first (and, presumably, the only) performance. Researchers Enrico Coden and Julia Purgina discussed the editorial process, addressing both the practical aspects and the potential advantages and disadvantages of sensitively adapting the composition to enable flexible performances with various orchestras and musical ensembles.

Several presentations focused on the management and programming of musical ensembles, with particular attention given to the process of integrating works by female composers into concert programs. Although this process is challenging and time-consuming, it aligns with the current trend of “promoting diversity” and, as such, offers promising prospects for the future. Significant insights were presented by musicologist and conductor Mary Ellen Kitchens in her paper *Reimagining Concert Program Planning for Orchestras*, in which she demonstrated—based on quantitative research—that the long-term inclusion of female composers' works, even on a limited scale, leads to increased attendance at classical music concerts. She also introduced a project developed by the BDLO (Bundesverband Amateurmusik Sinfonie und Kammerorchester) in collaboration with the *Archiv Frau und Musik* (AFM), which aims to facilitate access to orchestral and chamber works by female composers (see the list of references attached at the end of the text). Similar findings and developments in the integration of female composers were presented by Finnish musicologist Wilhelm Kvist in his paper *When Orchestras Do Little (or Nothing) to Promote Gender Equality: The Marginalization of Women Composers in Finnish Symphonic*

Concert Programmes (2007–2019) and by Markus Radke in *Markt oder Kanon? Eine computergestützte Analyse der Erfolgsfaktoren von Komponistinnenwerken klassischer Musik im Ländervergleich Deutschland und USA*.

The conference, both in its thematic focus and subsequent discussions, reflected contemporary trends in feminist and gender studies research. Not only merely examining and promoting these topics as part of the current liberal discourse, it aimed to actively intervene in musical life. The final part of the conference was dedicated to practical proposals on how to increase the representation of female composers' works in concert life, such as through targeted support for publishing houses, digital archives, databases, and festivals. A call was also made—particularly by practicing musicians—for more intensive collaboration between performers, theorists, and concert organizers to bring the orchestral works of female composers to wider public awareness. Numerous questions arose concerning international relations, feminist discourse, interdisciplinarity, and new perspectives on the contexts of female composers' works. Special attention was given to the often-overlooked yet crucial role of editorial work in preparing and staging previously unpublished compositions. Discussions also addressed issues of management and strategies for promoting artistically significant works by female composers. Finally, the need to integrate these works into music education was strongly emphasized. The event provided new insights, supported interdisciplinary approaches, and offered concrete pathways to begin addressing the current situation. It became evident that the topic of orchestral music by female composers is not only timely but also crucial for the future development of musical culture.

In conclusion, we can state that Czech female composers were given considerable attention during this conference, which, in this context, may represent a significant step toward their broader recognition. This approach could have a positive impact not only on the frequency of performances of their works but also on strengthening the general awareness of Czech female composers on a wider international scale.

Here are the links to the websites and databases related to the orchestral music by female composers:

1. **Archiv Frau und Musik, Frankfurt/Main**
 - www.bdlo.de/afm
 - Contains 1,300 orchestral works synchronized with the BDLO database.
2. **Institute for Composer Diversity – Orchestral Music Database, USA**
 - bdlo.de/instcompdiv
 - 5,692 orchestral works; requires filtering by gender (“woman”).

3. **Présence Compositrices – Demandez à Clara, Paris**
 - bdlo.de/prescomp
 - More than 21,500 works by nearly 2,000 female composers.
4. **Boulanger Initiative Database (BID), USA**
 - bdlo.de/bouldata
 - Over 8,000 works by female composers, including 478 orchestral compositions.
5. **Donne in Musica – Big List, United Kingdom**
 - bdlo.de/doinmu1
 - Information on 2,540 female composers who wrote for orchestra.
6. **Daniels Orchestral Music**
 - bdlo.de/dani
 - Contains 1,006 works by female composers (subscription required after 30 days).
7. **KVAST – The Repertoire Bank, Sweden**
 - bdlo.de/kvast
 - 611 symphonic works, 121 pieces for string orchestras.
8. **Sophie Drinker Institute, Bremen**
 - bdlo.de/sophie
 - Detailed list of 588 orchestral works by female composers.
9. **Symphonies by Female Composers**
 - bdlo.de/syko
 - Alphabetical list of hundreds of symphonies by female composers.
10. **Fleisher Collection/Philadelphia Free Library**
 - bdlo.de/fleisher
 - The catalogue contains 50 pages, including information on the origin of the composers.
11. **Wise Music Classical**
 - bdlo.de/wmc
 - 496 orchestral works by female composers.
12. **Repertoire List Women's Philharmonic (1980–2004)**
 - bdlo.de/rwp1
 - Contains 283 works and a list of 16 composers of African origin.
13. **Furore Verlag, Kassel**
 - bdlo.de/furore1
 - The “Music for Orchestra” catalogue includes more than 100 works by female composers.