

Silenced Voices Program Notes

Although their voices have historically been silenced, women have been actively involved in the development of Western classical music since antiquity. The compositions on today's program shatter the often-perpetuated false narrative that historical women lacked the skills and/or opportunities to compose music outside the domestic realm, especially orchestral works. While restrictive cultural norms surely stifled an immeasurable amount of female creativity, many musical women defied the odds.

Marianne von Martinez was a singer, keyboardist, and composer who hosted salons that were frequented by Haydn and Mozart. While visiting Vienna in 1772, Charles Burney attended a salon performance and recalled that Martinez's tone, expressiveness, and ornamentation were "more perfect than any singer I had ever heard." He was also so impressed with her compositions that he copied several to take back to London. Martinez's *Sinfonia* dates to 1770 and is the only work she wrote in the genre.

The English singer, pianist, organist, and composer Cecilia Maria Barthélemon sang for the King of Naples and the Queen of France when she was just nine years old. Several years later, more than 300 prominent musicians and social elites subscribed to her first book of keyboard sonatas. The 1792 op. 2 sonatas are scored for keyboard with flute or violin accompaniment. Doubling the melody line of a keyboard work with a treble instrument was a means of enhancing the melody's prominence.

Maria Antonia Walpurgis was a German princess, composer, singer, and artistic patron. In addition to writing the libretti and composing the music for two operas, she sang the lead roles in their premieres. Walpurgis's 1754 *Il trionfo della fedeltà* was an influential work that reached many—it was published by Breitkopf und Härtel, translated into several languages, and performed in other cities.

Amélie-Julie Candeille was a composer, librettist, singer, and actress active in revolutionary France. At age fifteen, she sang the title role in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* and played a piano concerto by Clementi to great acclaim. The next year, she delighted audiences with a performance of her own piano concerto. Candeille also wrote plays, for which she often acted the lead roles. Her most successful stage work was the 1792 *Catherine*, which was performed more than 150 times. Candeille's compositions include stage works, a piano concerto, vocal music, and solo piano works.

When Maddalena Laura Sirmen was seven, she was accepted by audition to live, study, and perform in the Venetian Ospedale Mendicanti. Sirmen remained in the Mendicanti for fourteen years, studying with Giuseppe Tartini and becoming an exceptionally successful composer and concert violinist. Sirmen composed violin concertos and is the earliest known woman to write string quartets. Her music circulated throughout Europe and the United States, and she toured frequently as a concert violinist. The op. 3 violin concertos were published in 1772.

The composers on today's program represent a minute portion of the women who were creating classical music during the time of Mozart and Haydn. Their music was heard in a wide range of venues, from the home salon and court chambers to the concert hall and opera theater. Each made substantial contributions to classical music's development, and twenty-first-century audiences can look forward to experiencing the rich repository of their works.

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