

SPEECH IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR
OF
MUSICA FEMINA MÜNCHEN
by Susanne Wosnitzka, board member of mfm



English translation of the original German speech¹: Julia Schwartz
(composer, singer and conductor, member of mfm)

“Women who don’t make demands get taken literally: they get nothing.” – Simone de Beauvoir

In the name of the association and all board members please let me welcome you to today’s anniversary celebration of musica femina münchen: thank you for celebrating with us. I would like to thank all of the performers, whose brilliance has brought today to life and who have shown their great skill and musicianship. I also thank our composers, who have, through their thoughts and emotions, brought us into their own particular cosmoses: individual, colorful, intellectual and full of ardor. In addition, I thank all of the women who were in some way involved and who helped organize this event: graphic designer Irmgard Voigt, our ambassador to the outside Marie-Pierre Beckius, moderator Ulrike Keil, musical director Katrin Schweiger, our untiring blogger Gaby dos Santos, and last but not least our manager Anne Holler-Kuthe. Nothing functions without Anne: she keeps all of our threads together, from business administration through organization to assisting and taking care of our artists.

I would also like to thank our tireless supporters: the Cultural Department of the city of Munich, the Department for Equal Treatment, the Gerda Weiler Council, the International Research Center and the Archive for Women in Music in Frankfurt and many private patrons and sponsors, without whom our work would not be possible. Only through them can today not only be a milestone in the history of our association, but also a milestone in the history of women in Munich. Thank you for believing in us!

I especially thank the women who were here before we were, who have made today possible, “gone before and felled trees and blasted rocks and built bridges,”² to quote Virginia Woolf, who dedicated these words in gratitude to the composer and suffragette Ethel Smyth.

“Deeds not words” was the main slogan of the historical women’s movement and it is still up-to-date.

We need deeds. We have heard many wonderful works by women. But where can we hear them today? And how many of them can we hear? What has been achieved and what is still to be done?

A motto of musica femina münchen is “We want to be out of a job. We will have achieved our goal when we are no longer necessary.”

As it looks right now we won’t be out of a job for a long time. Unfortunately. We could quickly change a great deal with deeds instead of words. In any case: every second year we award a

¹ Web link to the German speech: <http://www.musica-femina-muenchen.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/FESTREDE-MFM-2018-Endversion.pdf> (retrieval date: May 23, 2018).

² „She is of the race of pioneers, of path-makers. She has gone before and felled trees and blasted rocks and built bridges and thus made a way for those who come after her. Thus we honour her not only as a musician and as a writer [...], but also as a blaster of rocks and the maker of bridges.” Virginia Woolf about Ethel Smyth, in: [Speech before the London/National Society for Women’s Service, January 21, 1931], in: Virginia Woolf, *The Pargiters. The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*, publ. by Mitchell A. Laeska, New York 1977, p. xxviif.

composition commission to a woman, generously aided by the Cultural Department of Munich and excellently performed by the Munich Chamber Orchestra in the Prinzregententheater. Every third year the Archive for Women in Music awards a stipend called Composer in Residence. But what good does it do when we can only see success and progress in the tiniest steps, but not in big strides? “If she can see it, she can be it” – if a girl can observe female role models, she can become one herself, according to the slogan of American actress and activist Geena Davis.

For this reason we ask ourselves the following: how visible are female composers and conductors? Let’s clarify with numerical data. We will be out of a job when school projects which integrate female composers and conductors as role models are developed. At the moment we have the following distribution here in Germany:

In school books the composers listed are 100% male and 0% female. Composers such as Fanny Hensel and Clara Schumann are mentioned, but only as “sister of” or “wife of”, and always in subordinate clauses and not as autonomous personalities. If female composers and their achievements are not equally weighted in schoolbooks, the loop of non-knowledge and non-teaching will remain closed. Right here we have the possibility of creating a new and different basis. The women at the Information Center Fraen an Gender in Luxemburg developed a textbook ten years ago already though which female composers, their works (including a CD) and pertinent questions can be integrated into class instruction³. This can only work, however, if instructors are themselves informed and hold female composers in equal esteem as they do male ones. Standards are enormously important in this matter: the equal treatment of female and male composers in schoolbooks must be self-evident.

We will be out of a job when works by female composers are part of the standard repertoire in youth music schools and conservatories. In these institutions there is a ratio that is reminiscent of the 19th century: 100% male to 0% female composers.

A conservatory where women study as a matter of course needs a library with literature and works by women. This would be expandable here in Munich, even here in the Gasteig culture complex.

We demand that works by women are compulsory at all competitions, whether in youth music competitions or in the prestigious ARD International Music Competition. It just can’t be that well-known and successful composers such as Barbara Heller are only reachable via private contacts (which one first needs to have!), and that their works can only be performed when a music school director is so inclined.

By comparison: a few years ago a 17-year-old girl in England managed a successful petition by which the performance of works by women is now obligatory in final exams at music schools and conservatories⁴. If a 17-year-old girl can do it, what could a government do if it had suitable resources and experts?

³ Danielle Roster/Daniela Höhn (Hg.): *Komponistinnen entdecken*. Unterrichtsmappe für LehrerInnen der Vor- und Primärschulen (92 Seiten, mit CD und mit 40 Illustrationen) [Discovering Female Composers, Instructional Folder for Primary School Teachers (92 pages, with CD and 40 illustrations)], Luxemburg 2006, ISBN 2-87995-684-6. <http://cid-fg.lu/cid/kek-unterrichtsmappe-komponistinnen-entdecken> (retrieval date: April 24, 2018).

⁴ Jessy McCabe; web link: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3230699/Teenage-musician-wins-battle-female-composers-sexist-level-syllabus-gets-personal-apology-Edexcel-boss.html> (retrieval date: April 24, 2018).

How does it look at the moment with female conductors in Germany? There are about 120 professional orchestras here, of which only one has a female musical director (Joana Mallwitz in Nürnberg). That makes 0.8% female against 99.2% male directors⁵. Mallwitz has not yet conducted a single work by a woman. All other female conductors are employed only as guests in the large houses.

How does this current season look in the main opera houses?

According to a list published in the *neue musikzeitung*, there have been 444 new productions, of which 33 were premieres of new works, and of these premieres only 4 were by women. 4 of 444! All of the 411 older works were composed by men⁶.

Here is a comparison of two randomly chosen opera houses in the USA: not a single work by a woman was performed in 2017 at the Houston Grand Opera. Not a single woman conducted a performance. In this current season at the New York Philharmonic 98% of the works performed were composed by men: only 2 of 34 conductors were women.

Back to Bavaria: how are female composers presented in the local radio? It is probably similar at many other radio stations. I chose a random day at BR-Klassik and checked the offerings over 24 hours. I took Thursday, April 26, just to be as current as possible. That day had a ratio of 95.5% works by men to 4.5 % by women⁷.

In the hopes that only that particular day had such a dismal share of women in music, I analyzed the following day as well. Here was the result: there was not a single work by a woman in those 24 hours, just a transmission about the representation of witches in music⁸.

In addition to the transfer of knowledge and culture, the educational functions of any radio station should include understanding for social, cultural and historical relationships. This legally anchored mandate has obviously fallen by the wayside, since accomplishments by women are being disregarded.

In 2015 Bavarian Radio gave an article the title *Female Composers – a Rare Species*⁹, as though female composers were aliens from outer space who could only be touched with forceps. Not a single word was wasted either about our association, which has existed here in Munich for 30 years and about which plenty of information exists¹⁰, or about the Archive for Women in Music, which has the world-wide oldest, largest and most important archive with more than 25,000 media items about more than 1,800 female composers from the 9th to the 21st century, and coming from 52 countries. One can draw an unbelievable amount of material from this archive. At the Archive for Women in Music there are also more than 3.500 CDs with works by

⁵ My own research.

⁶ Web link: <https://blogs.nmz.de/badblogger/2018/04/10/die-erneuernde-opernstatistik-der-spielzeit-2017-2018/> (retrieval date: April 24, 2018).

⁷ Compare the BR-Klassik program, analysis from 6AM of April 25 through 6AM the following day, in which there were 88 works by men and 4 by or about women: no female conductors. Web link: <https://www.br-klassik.de/programm/radio/index.html> (please use the calendar, retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

⁸ Comparison of next day: also no female conductors.

⁹ By Ulrich Möller-Ansberg: only as podcast available, the article was removed. Web link: <https://www.br.de/radio/bayern2/sendungen/radiowissen/komponistinnen-selten-geschichte-100.html> (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

¹⁰ Web link: <http://www.musica-femina-muenchen.de> (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

women. Admittedly the archive is on the red list of endangered cultural institutions due to disregard¹¹.

According to a recent legal judgment¹², women in Germany do not have the right to be officially addressed as women. The generic masculine form is partly responsible for the fact that achievements of women remain invisible, because it implies that women are only along for the ride. A generic masculine form cannot be neutral because it is only one thing: masculine and not neutral. That judgment does not comply with the laws of the country, and defrauds history in the long run.

I think that it is not necessary at this point to go into the gender ratios of the nominations for the German Music Authors' Prize of GEMA¹³ or into the excrescences of the ECHO-Prize¹⁴, which are also the result of disrespect for women.

This persistent ignorant handling of women's accomplishments is a confession of failure for our culture. We should all ask ourselves the following question: whose culture is meant in our country, which is so famous for its musical traditions: the culture of all people in Germany or only that of men in Germany?

For over forty years waves of feminists have tried to change this situation. They have had little or only slow success. There will be no change without installing quotas.

To disregard women is radical. Demanding the regard of women is not radical, but seeks parity. According to Article 3 of our constitution, in which it is written in Paragraph 2: "Men and women are equal before the law. The state promotes the actual enforcement of equal rights of women and men and works towards the elimination of existing disadvantages."¹⁵

We demand:

Only institutes, projects, concerts and campaigns which are truly committed to equality will be promoted. Whoever ignores female composers and their achievements and doesn't incorporate them into their programs, should by law not be able to receive sponsorship.

We demand that instead of about 0% at least 20% (much better 50%) of the repertoire be works by women, not only in programs subsidized by Munich and Bavaria (The Munich Philharmonic, The Bavarian State Radio, The Bavarian State Opera, The Munich Biennial, etc.), but in all of Germany. One fifth. At least!

We demand that large works by women be performed as a matter of course by the subsidized Munich orchestras and throughout Germany. These large works exist: examples are the symphonies of Louise Farrenc, Amy Beach, Gloria Coates and Johanna Senfter, and the *Mass in D* by Ethel Smyth, and many more.

¹¹ Web link: <http://www.archiv-frau-musik.de/bedrohte-archivszukunft> (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

¹² Web link: <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2018-03/bgh-urteil-sparkasse-gendern-formulare-gleichberechtigung> (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

¹³ Web link: http://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/kritik-an-maennerdominanz-beim-gema-preis-wir-haben-das.2177.de.html?dram:article_id=410334 (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

¹⁴ Web link: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/eil-musikpreis-echo-wird-abgeschafft-1.3957445> (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

¹⁵ Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz [Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection]. Web link: https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/art_3.html (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).

We demand that research and publications about the topic “Female Composers in Munich” be promoted and issued. Bequests with works by Philippine Schick and Mary Wurm are to be found in Gasteig. There are also plenty of manuscripts in the music department of the Bavarian State Library. One could, for example, publish a new paperback book in the row of excellent ThemenGeschichtsPfade (Thematic Historical Paths)¹⁶ having to do with Munich, perhaps with *Munich – Music City of Women* as the title. Every city in Germany would actually need an institution like musica femina münchen – musica femina Stuttgart, musica femina Berlin, and so on.

We demand that women in the musical life of this city have equal rights. The above-mentioned Article 3 was anchored in law in 1957, so men and women have been nominally equal for the past 61 years. This fact, in any case, has nothing to do with reality. We find this unjust.

Now, in 2018, Munich is colorful; it is a cosmopolitan city with heart; Munich glows. You have heard all of these slogans. Munich could also be a beacon and have the effect of being a beacon as the first city in Germany to implement all of the items I have listed.

Deeds instead of words!

Thank you!

¹⁶

<https://www.muenchen.de/rathaus/Stadtverwaltung/Kulturreferat/Stadtgeschichte/ThemenGeschichtsPfade.html> (retrieval date: April 26, 2018).