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Women's Bands in America: Performing Music and Gender. Edited by Jill M. Sullivan. Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2017.

Jill Sullivan's multi-authored collection *Women's Bands in America: Performing Music and Gender* provides a compelling overview of the wide-ranging networks and activities of instrumental bands active during over 140 years of music making in the Americas. Despite the collection's broad scope, most of the chapters focus upon music making occurring in the United States during the twentieth century. Although other studies have provided more focused ethnographies of particular professional women's groups active within popular music and jazz culture, few have explored the wide range of ensembles performing concert band, marching, and military music during the height of this music's presence in daily American life, the so-called "Golden Age of Bands."¹

Individual chapters highlight the role of prominent and pathbreaking women directors who provided unprecedented performing opportunities for women's concert bands and orchestras during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, the prodigious and entrepreneurial leadership skills of Helen May Butler and her Ladies' Military Band are illuminated in Brian Meyer's chapter, in which he compares Butler's exceptional band to the burgeoning male marching bands of the era, such as those of John Philip Sousa. Other chapters, such as Dawn Farmer and David Rickels's "Legacies of Leadership," highlight the fearless ambitions of women concert band directors, especially Lillian Williams Linsey and Gladys Stone Wright, who forged opportunities for female (and sometimes male or mixed) concert bands during a time when women were not often encouraged to lead such groups.

A secondary focus of the book is the relatively new school band programs emerging within normal schools, little-examined institutions that were increasingly attended by women seeking careers as teachers at the turn of the twentieth century. These programs provided some of the first professional opportunities for women to gain independence after leaving their homes, freeing them from the bonds of marriage or family. Decades later, these same programs developed into full-fledged state universities with highly developed music education programs. This book makes a case for recognizing these

¹ For important works which highlight women's roles in instrumental (popular) music and jazz of the last century see Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Limelight, 1984); Frank Driggs, "Women in Jazz, A Survey," in *Jazzwomen, A Feminist Retrospective* (New York: Stash Records, 1977); Leslie Gourse, *Madame Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981) and *The International Sweethearts of Rhythm* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1983); Kristin McGee, "The Feminization of Mass Culture and the Novelty of All-Girl Bands: The Case of the Ingenues," *Popular Music and Society* 31, no. 5 (2008): 629–62; Kristin McGee, *Some Liked It Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television, 1929–1959* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009); Sally Placksin, *Jazzwomen, 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives and Music* (London: Pluto Press, 1982); and Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: All-Girl Bands of the 1940s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

women's programs as important precursors to the current American university educational system, in which concert band music activities arose as community building vehicles for young students and their surrounding cities. In this light, these chapters provide essential context for understanding the critical relationship between American culture and the American music education system and the music education system's increasing reliance upon women musicians and directors within expanding educational programs. Further, these chapters foreground the link between the primary educational concert band system and the larger goals of community and national affiliations within both the professional and military worlds. By tracing the routes and responsibilities of women within these networks, we begin to recognize how instrumental music making profoundly enhanced community bonds, expanded patriotic loyalties, and, finally, led to the gradual incorporation of instrumental band "musicking" as a normalized activity within every day American culture.² Additionally, these essays highlight the role that professional women's networks, such as the Women Band Directors International, played in improving educational programs, especially as they increased the visibility of women in the concert band world.

Other chapters animate particular artists working in more mass-mediated contexts, such as the women's (or all-girl) concert bands and orchestras that performed on the expanding vaudeville circuits of the early twentieth century. Joanna Ross Hersey's chapter, in particular, highlights four decades of all-girl concert band activities in theatrical domains. In this chapter, Hersey discusses the representation of both class and gender as presented in various formats such as in sartorial presentations in promotional photos or discursive articulations in press reviews. She points to the ways that women's groups negotiated the anxieties surrounding the increased appearance of women musicians in professional domains still considered the privilege of men. However, Hersey overlooks relevant research on all-girl women's jazz groups active in vaudeville during the 1920s and 1930s, which would have provided insight on the pervasive promotion of such cultural preoccupations such as the concept of "novelty" within vaudeville, film, and radio or the emerging debates about the so-called "modern woman," two themes which are mentioned but appear undertheorized in this chapter.³

Additional contributions highlight marching and military bands active during war and peace time, such as Sullivan's "Parading Women" chapter on women's military bands active during World War II. This chapter compliments existing hypothesizing about gendered representations and strategies by women performing in the more popular swing and sweet orchestras and bands of the same era.⁴ Here, Sullivan argues that these bands commodified women's musical labor, feminine images, and material labor to further finance the war effort. This argument is relatively convincing, yet it lacks complexity as detailed in the specific cases provided.

² See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

³ See, in particular, discussions of the vaudeville-era instrumental bands the Ingenues and Ina Ray Hutton's the Melodears in McGee, "The Feminization of Mass Culture and the Novelty of All-Girl Bands: The Case of the Ingenues" and chapters 1–4 of McGee, *Some Liked It Hot*.

⁴ Among others, arguments about the gendering of instrumental swing groups are presented in Tucker, *Swing Shift*; McGee, *Some Liked It Hot*; Handy, *The International Sweethearts of Rhythm*.

Nevertheless, Sullivan offers compelling evidence of how the particular manner of promoting these women's performances aided in motivating Americans to buy war bonds to support the men fighting abroad, such as through war bond drives and tours and through the unique manner in which these women's feminine images were marketed. Further, she suggests that these images helped to remind friends, families, and loved ones of what these men were fighting for. She also highlights the contradictions presented by the women fondly remembering these tours as the most rewarding events of their lives, even as they were summarily disposed of after the war. Despite their positive memories, women recalled more negative experiences and challenges such as prevailing attitudes towards women musicians and the use of pejoratives like "prostitutes" or "manly women." Indeed, in this period, many still felt it was inappropriate for women to serve in military units.

Sullivan's chapter focuses mostly on the white units but provides a brief description of the black unit in the Army—the 404th Women's Army Corps band—which played to enthusiastic black and white audiences in Chicago. Despite the new historical information provided, which adds to existing literature on all-girl bands from these decades, her thesis remains a bit heavy handed without much analysis. For example, the metaphor of the pimp and the prostitute or the application of Marxist terminology such as "use value" are applied with little nuance or explanation.

Jeananne Nichols's chapter, "Into the Wild Blue Yonder," provides an overview of the history of the Women in the Air Force (WAF) band that began after World War II (1949) as an effort to recruit more women into the military. It drew its members from either prior military musicians or from younger recruits and experienced musicians of other commercial bands such as the Hormel Girls. The band toured extensively and built its ranks during over a decade. It was also the first military band to convey the rank of captain to its director Marybelle Nissly, a versatile arranger and conductor of various groups from the concert band to the dance band and bell choir. Nissly dramatically improved the reputation of the band, recruiting expert soloists from throughout the United States. She also successfully organized both national and international tours during her tenure. Unfortunately, this band was stymied by challenges of overt sexism, sexual bias, and diminishing funds for tours and civilian performances.

By the end of the 1950s, an outright witch hunt of suspected homosexual members by the Office of Special Investigations led to the band's demise, with more than two-thirds of the sixty members asked to leave or be dishonorably discharged in 1961. This unprecedented homophobic attack led to severely bitter feelings by many of the members. Further to their dismay, when former members began organizing the group's fifty-year reunion in the 1990s, the Air Force had not even heard of the division and claimed they never existed. Eventually members were able to convince the Air Force to include their historical records into the military's archives, but such disregard for the extended and dedicated service of these women was a shocking discovery after such a disrespectful end. It was not until 1973, after the end of the WAF band, that the first female musician was invited into the official (male) Air Force band stationed at Washington, D.C. During the 1990s, the band succeeded in reasserting ties to the USAF bands, only thirty-some years after their final performances. Considering the political climate and the nearly constant discrimination

against the LGBTQ community in the military, this chapter provides an important piece of historical evidence confirming the unfailing contributions of women musicians in the military despite the constant biases, aggressions, and attempts to exploit or undermine them.

Gayle Murchison's excellent chapter provides a detailed study of Mary Lou Williams's late-1940s Girl Stars recordings and performances (variously with the white musicians guitarist Mary Osborne, vibraphonist and drummer Marjorie Hyams, bassist June Rotenberg, and drummer and vibraphonist Bridget O'Flynn). In this chapter, she provides an analysis of both the dozens of recordings of these various groups (trio, quartet, and quintet) and of the intersectional politics of these engagements in a moment when bebop was displacing swing and big band music as the most relevant and challenging jazz performance style. Murchison eloquently argues Williams's ability to artfully navigate the various racial and gendered milieus of New York's musical scenes from Harlem to Greenwich Village's downtown bohemianism and to Midtown's 52nd Street, the center of upcoming bebop and modern jazz (175). Further, she argues that the utterances of both Williams and those promoting her reveal how her early bebop piano style emerged in a moment of growing civil rights activity and consciousness building. A compelling part of Murchison's argument are her analyses of William's versatile yet uneven musical recordings, which reflect her diverse musical skills from classical music and boogie-woogie to her explicitly named preference for "playing like a man." Despite the limitations of these performances, Murchison argues that they reveal her talents as a bandleader and as a versatile player of stride, boogie, *and* bebop (171). Ultimately, these recordings betray the double bind of women musicians from this era—either they were discriminated against and prohibited from playing and recording the music they wanted to play or they were exploited in marketing campaigns that emphasized feminine physical attributes or the novelty of being a women musician (171–72).

Although the bulk of this volume concentrates upon American concert and military bands (an important and logical focus), a few chapters diverge from this theme, such as Schmalenberger and Minette's chapter on women rock bands in the twin cities and Castillo Silva's chapter on the unique contributions of the Banda Sinfónica de Marina Armada de México within the context of Mexico's patrilineal male concert, military, and community bands. Both offer interesting and unique perspectives on little investigated contexts and communities outside of the North American concert band world.

In its totality, this volume makes a strong case for incorporating the wide-ranging activities and contributions of women's bands into larger historical accounts of instrumental music making in the last century. Further, it challenges us to consider the various motivations for excluding these groups, recordings, and networks from existing scholarship. Taken collectively, this collection makes clear the unprecedented bias that women faced during their performative lives from rampant homophobia in the military to sexism and the gendered exploitation of their bodies and material labor in commercial bands. Finally, it allows us to further complicate our assumptions about women instrumentalists in a variety of contexts from prevailing notions about gendered instruments (which apparently didn't arise until bands

became desegregated by sex after World War II) to the intersectional challenges of star jazz instrumentalists such as Mary Lou Williams and to the commercial exploits of parading bands such as the Hormel girls in mid-century America. Such a text should provide a welcome addition to courses on American history or on American music. When added to existing studies, this collection further diversifies our understanding of the sheer persistence and versatility of women musicians active since the onset of instrumental music in a variety of contexts from educational band programs to military groups to commercial and popular vaudeville bands and orchestras. In short, this compilation makes clear women's continued and essential contributions to the history of instrumental music making in American culture.

Kristin McGee

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Klezmer: Music, History, and Memory. By Walter Zev Feldman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Klezmer scholarship is not prolific. The pioneering research of Ukrainian ethnomusicologist Moyshe Beregovski—who in the 1930s already feared the music's imminent disappearance—has been supplemented more recently by Mark Slobin's excellent work on the US klezmer revival, Joel Rubin's studies of early twentieth-century performance style, and a small body of scholarship exploring the ideological complexities of the contemporary European scene.¹ But the music's current joyful internationalism and multi-ethnic constituency stand in increasingly sharp contrast to the lack of a truly comprehensive study of klezmer's Eastern European Jewish history. Musician and scholar Walter Zev Feldman's book fills this gap as the first full-length analysis of the historical relationship of prewar klezmer music to its wider sociocultural Jewish environment.

Feldman marks out his territory early. This is a study closely focused on Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe, so “issues of essential or hybrid Jewish identities in other geographic areas and in earlier historical periods are only marginally relevant” (5). Such specificity is welcome: approaches to contemporary klezmer have inevitably tended to grapple with the subjective slipperiness of modern Jewish identities, and Feldman does well to steer clear of these debates. This is a work that

¹ Mark Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Essays in Mark Slobin, ed., *American Klezmer: Its Roots and Offshoots* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Joel Rubin, “The Art of the Klezmer” (Ph.D. diss., City University London, 2001). Joel Rubin, “Music without Borders in the New Germany: Giora Feidman and the Klezmer-influenced New Old Europe Sound,” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 24, no. 2 (2015): 204–29. Magdalena Waligórska, *Klezmer's Afterlife: An Ethnography of the Jewish Music Revival in Poland and Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).