
“Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?”

Gender and Musical Instruments

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When the young ladies of Madison Female College gave a concert in 1853, John Dwight of *Dwight's Journal of Music* was there to document the novel event. He took pianists, guitarists and harpists in stride, but expressed shock at “13 young lady violinists (!), 1 young lady violist (!!), 4 violoncellists (!!!) and 1 young lady contrabassist (!!!!).”¹ As the rising chorus of exclamation marks shows, Dwight's tolerance was inversely proportional to the size of the instrument. His reaction was characteristic of the time. The fact that the young ladies were playing music was not the problem — his discomfort arose because these women went beyond the narrow range of what was considered their proper musical place by playing instruments that contemporary audiences were unaccustomed to seeing played by women.

There is irony in the restrictive views of Dwight and his contemporaries about women performing music, since many nineteenth-century writers endowed music with the same qualities as those imputed to women. In the words of one late nineteenth-century author and critic, music was the “interpreter and the language of the emotions.... It inspires, ... saddens, cheers, and soothes the soul ... and performs its loftiest homage as the handmaid of religion.”² In much the same vein, the nineteenth-century woman was expected to be gentle and refined, “guardian of religion, inspiration to man, bestower of care and love.”³ The medical orthodoxy of the time enhanced this notion, asserting that in females the nervous system and emotions prevailed over rational faculties and that it was “inherent in their very being” to “display more affect than men.”⁴ Hence respectable opinion held that women had a special gift for music. But professional public performance of music required self-assertion, tight control of one's nerves, and pursuit of a career in a competitive milieu dominated by men — all qualities widely thought suspect in women. Countertenors notwithstanding, women were irreplaceable and therefore

widely accepted as vocal performers. Public instrumental performance, however, remained highly problematic and hedged about with restrictions.

At the time Dwight wrote, only certain musical instruments were considered socially acceptable for women, namely keyboard instruments, the guitar, the lute, and the harp. Their volume was relatively soft and delicate sounding, and the melody was in a high range, corresponding to the soprano voice.⁵ The posture the lady assumed while playing was natural and graceful; she did not have to sit awkwardly or distort her features. She could usually remain seated while playing and perform adequately without much physical exertion. And since these instruments provided both a melody and a harmony line, she could pursue music as a solitary pastime, without the need for an accompanist. Critic Philip Hale in 1900 asserted that playing instruments plucked by the fingers “enhanced a woman’s natural charms. They [the instruments] were held for the most part in her arms; they were fondled and caressed. She faced her hearer; and as he listened, he saw the whiteness of her hands, the soft curves of her arms; and, growing bolder, he looked into her melting eyes....” The “gentle notes” of the instrument “invited whispered confidences; they filled all lulls in conversation; they suggested hopes and favors....”⁶

When women played other instruments, they made themselves vulnerable to sarcasm and ridicule. As one critic noted in *Musical America* in 1906, “For the sake of the veneration in which all women should be held it is to be hoped that none of them will follow the suggestion of [Sidney] Lanier and take to playing the trombone, the French horn, or the gigantic Sousaphone for, as Byron once said: ‘Seeing the woman you love at table is apt to dispel all romance.’ And seeing a woman get red in the face blowing into a brass instrument is just as likely to prove an unpleasant shock....”⁷ It was important that women always appear delicate and decorative; to appear otherwise by playing a massive or seemingly awkward instrument challenged accepted notions of what was appropriately female.

Not surprisingly, the piano was the first instrument to be seen on the concert stage with a woman soloist. The sight of a woman playing a keyboard instrument was hardly startling; reviewers, however, were unaccustomed to seeing a woman display the strength and mastery required of a soloist and invariably compared the style and tone of her performance to those of a man. Men of course were believed to be stronger and more vigorous than women; they had greater respiratory and greater muscular power. According to one source, they were better able to “discipline their strength,” making their movements “more precise than those of women. Thus men make the best pianists.”⁸ An 1898 review of pianist Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler, who received almost universally positive notices, stated: “The wonder of the little woman is that she can be both woman and man in the illustration of her art.... The marvel of her playing is that she commands so much virtuoso strength with such an

abundance of feminine delicacy and subtlety of expression.”⁹ A 1906 review of a performance by pianist Minnie Coons remarked that “slight stages of virility in the fortissimo movement undoubtedly enhanced the refreshing delicacy of her pianissimo touch.”¹⁰ Pianist Olga Samaroff, who concertized extensively in Europe and America from 1905 to 1925, observed: “During all the years of my career as a woman pianist at least eighty percent of my press reviews either stated that I played like a man, or alluded to my playing like a woman. When the critic said I played like a woman, it meant that he did not like me at all.”¹¹

Another gender-based theme that emerges from contemporary reviews is the extent to which certain composers, such as Beethoven or Grieg, impressed critics as being particularly masculine, and therefore more difficult for a woman to interpret. At the turn of the century the concept of “manliness” was being challenged both at home and in the workplace, and men — as well as women — felt threatened by proposed reforms.¹² In this context the idea of a woman musician interpreting the work of a male composer was a particular concern, especially when the music of the composer expressed massiveness and strength. A 1900 observer was typical: “Last Saturday’s performance of the [Grieg] Concerto by Mrs. Bloomfield-Zeisler was indeed a wonder! Strange too, in one way, for Grieg was one of the most ... masculine of men, and Mrs. Bloomfield-Zeisler pushes femininity of conception and feeling to extremes; she is not only a woman all through, but seems tacitly to acknowledge and glory in it; she never attempts to ape virility. But herein lay the rare perfection of the situation; in the singular capacity of the very feminine woman of Southern blood for doing full justice to the work of the entirely masculine Northern man....”¹³ Music by other composers, most notably Chopin, was commonly said to be more delicate sounding and thus considered to express more feminine emotions; reviewers did not comment in a similar way, however, when a man performed a piece by Chopin.

The other solo instrument that gradually became acceptable for women to perform with publicly was the violin. In addition to its physical virtues — it was light in weight, had a high range, and did not require distortion of facial features — two other factors contributed to its emergence. First, several young violin prodigies began performing in America and paved the way for female soloists. The most publicized was Camilla Urso, who toured parts of North America in 1853 when she was 11 years old. Reviews of her performances were uniformly positive, and her visibility did much to establish the appropriateness of the violin as an instrument for females.¹⁴ Maud Powell, a noted American violinist who concertized in the early 1900s, said that she knew she wanted to be a violinist after she saw Camilla Urso play.¹⁵ A second source of support for female violinists was the enlightened attitude of Julius Eichberg, the violinist and teacher who founded the Boston Conservatory of Music in 1867. The conservatory allowed both sexes to study violin, and sources of that era

frequently comment on successful performances by female violinists who studied there.¹⁶

The visibility of prodigies such as Urso and of the Boston Conservatory students who then became performers and teachers made it possible for the public to see violin performances by females. Even so, some early reviews of female violinists questioned the appropriateness of the instrument. An 1878 reviewer, for example, complained: "A violin seems an awkward instrument for a woman, whose well-formed chin was designed by nature for other purposes than to pinch down this instrument into position."¹⁷ As with accounts of piano recitals, reviewers almost invariably used gender-related stereotypes to describe the performances, assuming strength, energy and dignity to be masculine virtues and expressing surprise to find them in a woman performer. Maud Powell's style was "full of masculine power and of superb spirit; ... her entire handling of the movement was devoid of anything tentative or timid."¹⁸ Florence Austin's "most marked characteristic is a certain reserve force, a strength and dignity that are masculine rather than feminine. Nevertheless she possesses all the grace and delicacy that are so distinctly a part of the successful woman violinist, but she combines with these a dignity and repose that could never mistake hysteria for temperament or an emotional spasm for abandon...."¹⁹ An early twentieth-century publicity poster for violinist Maud Powell announces: "The arm of a man; the heart of a woman; the head of an artist."²⁰ The successful woman performer was one who could play like a man ... but not appear unfeminine.

As new professions opened to women, fresh theories appeared as to why the feminine mind and nature were innately suited to the tasks. Teaching allowed women to nurture children; social work and nursing gave women opportunities to express their inborn capacity for sympathy and compassion.²¹ So it was with violin playing — as women violinists became more common, reviewers began to describe playing the instrument as not only an acceptable but even an appropriate and noble pursuit for women. Critics emphasized the emotive qualities of the violin, with the implication that females, as emotional creatures, might be among its finest interpreters: "The instrument [is] justly considered to be most preeminently suited to woman because [of] its lightness, its form, the natural grace required in its treatment, but, above all, because of the deep poetry of its tones, its emotional qualities and its sympathetic appeals."²²

Once the violin became acceptable, the door was open for other stringed instruments as well. At the turn of the century the cello was just beginning to evolve as a solo instrument in its own right and no longer merely the bass line for other melodic instruments. Composers such as David Popper and George Goltermann wrote showy pieces for the cello; and new performers, most notably Pablo Casals, who made his first tour of North America in 1901–02, demonstrated



Publicity poster of Maud Powell, designed by her husband and manager Godfrey Turner. (Maud Powell Society, Arlington, Virginia.)

its technical and emotional capabilities. The obvious impediment to its acceptance for women was physical: anything held between the legs — whether horse, bicycle, or cello — engendered discussion as to its suitability for women. Before the mid-1800s, viols and cellos were held steady between the knees or calves. Around 1860, however, the end-pin (a sharp, pointed rod extending from the bottom of the instrument) became standard equipment on the cello. While this did not occur in response to women's concerns, the result made the cello more acceptable for women, since anchoring it to the floor enabled a woman to play side-saddle. One cello methods book, published in 1898, describes the side-saddle position in great detail. Yet even this restriction faded fairly quickly as more active pastimes became acceptable for women, and new styles of dress evolved which allowed more freedom of movement.²³ The third edition of the same book, published in 1915, states that by then almost all women were playing the instrument between their knees because that position "brings the instrument under more complete control. The other methods, which were considered more graceful, have become almost obsolete on account of the obvious disadvantages."²⁴

Since the cello did not have a long history as a man's solo instrument, public acceptance of women soloists was almost immediate. Turn-of-the-century music periodicals describe the solo performances of a number of young women cellists. Leontine Gaertner, Elsa Reugger, A. Laura Tolman, and others performed regularly for an appreciative public. There were occasional derisive references, such as a 1902 *Boston Eagle* review which described Reugger as "a winsome lass" who played with an artistic expression and grace "not often commanded by women who have to hold a baritone violin with their knees,"²⁵ but such comments were definitely the exception.

Largely because of the absence of facial contortion, for a long time the flute was the only blown instrument considered socially acceptable for women. The flute embouchure (the way the lips make contact with the mouthpiece) allows the player to form a pout and blow much as one would make a sound by blowing into the mouth of a soft-drink bottle. This is very different from the process of forcing air through the thin reed of the clarinet, oboe or bassoon, which results in tightly pursed lips and possibly a flushed face. It also differs significantly from blowing into the mouthpiece of a brass instrument, which necessitates pressing the cup-like mouthpiece directly against the partially open mouth. As a reviewer in the *American Art Journal* commented approvingly in 1880, "The unusual sight of a lady playing such an instrument did not strike people as strange as we thought it would be. She ... avoids the ugly contortions of the lips.... Thus managed, the flute is decidedly not an unfeminine instrument."²⁶ As with the violin, once women began to perform publicly on the flute, some observers found reasons to declare female superiority on the instrument. "On the flute," the American poet and musician Sidney Lanier wrote in 1898, "a certain combination of delicacy with the flexibility in the lips is absolutely necessary to bring fully out that passionate yet velvety tone ... and many male players ... will be forever debarred from attaining it by reason of the intractable, rough lips, which will give nothing but a correspondingly intractable, rough tone."²⁷

If a woman somehow achieved prominence on another wind instrument, problems remained. Saxophonist Elisa Hall (also known as Mrs. Richard J. Hall) studied at the Paris Conservatory and was the first amateur to play with the Boston Symphony. Hall commissioned Debussy to write a piece for her; but even though she had already paid him, he postponed writing it. According to one account, "He thought it ridiculous when he had seen her in a pink frock playing such an ungainly instrument, and he was not at all anxious that his work should provide a similar spectacle."²⁸ In a more contemporary context, Matt Groening, creator of the popular television show *The Simpsons*, says that he chose to have Lisa Simpson play the saxophone because he thought it would be more amusing to have an eight-year-old girl play such an incongruous instrument.²⁹

Relatively few musicians, male or female, could have careers as instrumental soloists; ensemble playing was the obvious performing option. But few women could join ensembles, both because men resisted admitting women into all-male groups and because attitudes persisted regarding the appropriateness of particular instruments on the basis of gender. Sexual segregation already prevailed within most work settings. The issue of morality was a frequently cited concern. "Wherever the sexes work indiscriminately together," argued the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1911, "great laxity obtains." Intermingling of the sexes was "thought to threaten the virtue of even the most well-

intentioned young women." "There is such an obvious impropriety in the mixing of the sexes within the walls of a public office," declared Robert McClelland, President Pierce's Secretary of the Interior, "that I am determined to arrest the practice."³⁰ Wives supposedly feared that career women could lead their husbands astray, while husbands might feel threatened if their wives competed in the workplace.³¹ One observer expressed concern that the mere presence of women in orchestras would distract the men: "You shouldn't expect a man to keep his eyes divided between the music on his stand and the stick of his conductor when his sweetheart is a member of the organization, and is seated somewhere across the room."³² Tour managers were also reluctant to deal with the complications of sharing accommodations, a difficult task "when womanhood must be protected."³³

Invariably in discussions of women's ability to function as orchestral musicians the issue of stamina arose. An article in an 1895 issue of *Scientific American* stated unequivocally that a woman did not have the stamina to be an orchestral musician: "Her physical incapacity to endure the strain of four or five hours a day rehearsal, followed by the prolonged tax of public performances, will bar her against possible competition with male performers."³⁴ In a 1908 U.S. Supreme Court case involving the number of hours allowed in a woman's workday, the authors of the winning brief stated that "women are fundamentally weaker than men in all that makes for endurance: in muscular strength, in nervous energy, in the powers of persistent attention and application"³⁵; certainly all qualities necessary for an orchestral musician.

The idea of women in orchestras had occasional supporters, but their opinions did not change hiring patterns. Sidney Lanier wrote in 1898 that woman's "patience, fervor and fidelity, combined with deftness of hand and quick intuitiveness of soul" were desirable qualities in a perfect orchestral player. And Leopold Stokowski, in 1916, described the exclusion of women from symphony orchestras as an "incomprehensible blunder."³⁶ It was a blunder he did not and possibly could not correct: Stokowski conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1912 to 1935, yet in the 1934–35 season the orchestra included only three women — two harpists and one cellist.³⁷

When critics and observers commented on the occasional woman member of a predominantly male ensemble, they were unable to suppress their snideness and innuendo. A 1935 editorial in the *New York Sun* responded to a reader who expressed "astonishment" that the reviewer of a Philadelphia Orchestra performance had not noted that "a woman was seen operating a cello at the last desk, which she faced in solitary devotion." The music reviewer generously observed that he saw no good reason why women should not be employed in orchestras. "Are there female performers on all kinds of instruments? Certainly." But he proceeded to question the "soul" of the woman who takes up the timpani. "What is the outlook for the female bassoonist?" he continued.

"Does anyone wish to see a woman playing a bass drum or an E flat tuba? ... And a forgiving heaven has often looked down on the puffings of the lady cornet soloist."³⁸

Women responded to exclusion from orchestras by forming their own.³⁹ The existence of early all-women's orchestras has been described by Judith Tick and Carol Neuls-Bates.⁴⁰ While Tick believes that the reason for women's exclusion was primarily economic (if a woman got the job, a man was denied one), gender stereotypes also played major roles in fostering and shaping these all-women's groups, affecting both their early instrumentation and the public perception of them as oddities and novelties.⁴¹

Because women were less likely to have learned larger instruments or winds and brasses, many early women's orchestras had gaps in instrumentation. The Vienna Lady Orchestra, which performed in New York in 1871, lacked horns, trumpets, trombones, clarinets, oboes, and bassoons.⁴² The Women's Philharmonic Society of New York, performing in 1899, had a double bass, several flutes, clarinets and cornets, but no "heavy brass." The same was true of a women's orchestra which performed in Salt Lake City in 1915.⁴³ Reviewers sometimes expressed surprise: "The orchestra turns out to be only half an orchestra," declared an indignant reviewer of the Vienna group in the *New York Sun*.⁴⁴ There were two solutions to this problem. Some early groups supplied the missing parts on other instruments considered more suitably female. The missing brass parts in the Women's Philharmonic Society orchestra were played on the piano; the missing wind parts in the Salt Lake City orchestra were played on an organ.⁴⁵ When such substitutions were made in public performances, however, reviewers frequently complained about the thin sound of the group as a whole and the inappropriateness of the substitute instruments as permanent fixtures in the orchestra.⁴⁶

As women's orchestras sought recognition as serious groups on par with their male counterparts, they tried a second solution: if a suitable woman could not be found to play a particular instrument, they used a man instead. An account of a performance by the Chicago Woman's Symphony in 1927 indicates that male players filled in to play oboe, French horn, bassoon, tuba, and double bass, "because it is impossible to secure women players of these instruments in Chicago."⁴⁷ Three years later the orchestra's conductor, Ebba Sundstrom, still expressed concern over the lack of women players of oboe, French horn, and double bass: "It has been one of our greatest troubles, for we want the personnel to be 100 per cent feminine."⁴⁸

It is difficult to gauge audience response, since most reviewers comment on the audience only if its response is highly unusual. Audiences appear for the most part to have received performances by women's orchestras favorably. Reviewers, however, were simply not ready to accept without qualification a first-class performance by an orchestra of women. A description of Ethel Leginska's New York conducting debut with the National Women's Symphony Orchestra in 1932 declares, "Where Miss Leginska found them all can only be conjectured.... [She] had eight double basses, all women, and evidently no novices. Only one of them used an Italian bow; the other seven went at it full-fisted.... Where, when and why do women take up horn? ... [Where] do you get a female tuba player? And whence comes the lady tympanist? No matter. There they all were...."⁴⁹

One of the principal reasons for the popularity of some early women's orchestras was their oddity, an oddity derived from the perceived incongruity of women playing instruments usually reserved for men.⁵⁰ Much of the heyday of the women's orchestras, from about 1880 to 1930, was also the height of the vaudeville era, and some early women's ensembles sought acceptance by embracing features of vaudeville — notably the effort of performers to appear unusual or otherwise distinctive.

An early example of women in masculine musical roles was the popular vaudeville troupe known as the British Blondes, which toured the U.S. in 1868. "The assumption of masculinity permeated their performances; ... they did clog dances and played banjos and trumpets."⁵¹ Douglas Gilbert lists many vaudeville acts prominent from 1880 to 1930. It is not possible to determine the sex of many performers, since acts were frequently known by their last names, such as Adams and LeRoy. But many were novelty items that featured women in stereotypically masculine roles — lady cornetists, trombonists, and baritones are listed alongside the lady fencers, boxers, and strongwomen.⁵² Caroline Nichols' Fadettes Orchestra, which was formed in 1888 and performed regularly throughout the country until 1918, used a more sophisticated version of this strategy of playing upon mixed gender roles. The women musicians wore shimmery feminine gowns while playing the whole range of musical instruments.⁵³ This juxtaposition provided the kind of incongruity that vaudeville audiences found entertaining.

Publicity for smaller instrumental ensembles of women playing nontraditional instruments particularly stressed entertainment rather than artistic distinction. One group of four women, a saxophone quartet called the Saxonians, pose on an advertising flyer from 1918. Billed as "Four Young Women Who Entertain Delightfully," they stand in a row wearing frilly dresses, smiling flirtatiously, and holding their saxophones.⁵⁴

While performance remained problematic, it might be assumed that public-school teaching — generally conceded to be a female domain — would have been one area in which women could excel as teachers of instrumental music. This was not the case. Before 1900, when music in the public schools was exclusively vocal, songs were taught and led by the classroom teacher, who was usually female. With the introduction of instrumental music around 1900, the job of music instruction in the public schools grew larger. School officials now

wanted a “music supervisor”—someone who could organize the program, teach the various instruments, and then conduct the school band and orchestra. Joseph Maddy, a noted music educator and author of the standard book on how to begin an instrumental music program in the public schools, wrote in 1926, “The development of the instrumental side of school music demands training for a new and difficult profession. Musicians there are in plenty who know one or two instruments, but to be supremely successful in this work one must know them all.”⁵⁵ This expectation that the music supervisor have some ability to play the whole range of band instruments effectively barred women from the job.

In an era when leading educators often lamented the purported feminization of the schools,⁵⁶ writers also expressed concern that music not be stigmatized as a sissified activity. One way to combat this perception was to have men teach the new subject in the public schools. “Might it not have a wholesome influence if at this most impressionable age the boys could receive their first associations with music through a man—and a real man at that, one who could show them in the only way an average boy can understand, i.e., by illustration, that music is as much a man’s job as a woman’s....”⁵⁷ Ironically, despite the association of artistic appreciation with women and the prominence of women in elementary and even secondary teaching, the teaching of instrumental music became a predominantly male specialty.⁵⁸

In a broader context, this phenomenon is consistent with what has been termed “the ascendancy of the male expert,” the most notable example being the replacement of the birth attendant or midwife of the late nineteenth century with the male gynecologist.⁵⁹ Similar patterns have been noted in the professions of social work, teaching, and librarianship, where control was “removed from the hands of largely female practitioners to become the nearly exclusive preserve of male bureaucrats.”⁶⁰

The expectation that the music supervisor would conduct the band and orchestra was a significant factor in women’s exclusion. Of all the areas in music, the one in which it has been most difficult for women to gain acceptance has been conducting, for the obvious reason that it connotes the ultimate in forcefulness, leadership, and control. Early twentieth-century women conductors met the same scorn and derision as players of “unusual” instruments. A 1925 review of a Boston concert conducted by Ethel Leginska, one of very few women who tried to succeed in this endeavor, acknowledged that the public was “handicapped by an unexplainable distaste for women as orchestral leaders.”⁶¹ A 1932 review of one of her New York performances referred to “the reluctance of the superior male in the command of a slip of a woman.”⁶²

Public-school music educators professed commitment to providing boys and girls equal opportunities in their study of music. Adam Lesinsky, an Indiana music educator, observed: “Now that instrumental music in the public

schools is recognized by all progressive educators as a part of the regular curriculum ... there should be no discrimination made between boys and girls.”⁶³ But even within the relatively egalitarian public-school context, there were different standards for boy and girl instrumentalists. When 147 Chicago school-boys competed in a solo competition for band instruments in 1929, girls were excluded. Instead, 59 girls were allowed to compete in a separate contest. An observer commented merely that “the girls do not compete against the boys, not that they aren’t willing to—or able, but because it isn’t believed to be the thing to do.” When the awards were given out, the boys received eleven gold medals, twenty-one silver, and thirteen bronze. But instead of gold medals, the twelve first-place girls received only bronze ones.⁶⁴

Though girls did play a variety of instruments in school bands and orchestras, the extent of their participation in the band aroused male concern. One reason for continuing gender distinctions was the desire of school band directors to recruit boys. Early literature describing the formation of a school band invariably drifted to discussions of the needs of preadolescent boys and the adult desire to control them. Writers touted band membership as an antidote to juvenile delinquency and gang membership. They claimed that the exercise of playing wind and brass instruments would change the frail boy into a “deep-chested, sturdy youth.” Such writers were consequently eager to make bands appear masculine, believing that boys would be attracted through their desire for uniforms and their “inherent love for the military.”⁶⁵

It was the marching band in particular that made directors especially anxious about girls’ participation. Adam Lesinsky listed the reasons his colleagues gave for the exclusion of girls. One said he simply couldn’t be bothered; another said girls would ruin the appearance of the band; a third said girls could not learn wind instruments as well as boys; and a fourth expressed doubts that girls would be interested in playing the larger instruments. There was also the usual speculation that girls lacked the necessary stamina.⁶⁶ Band directors in the 1930s and 1940s solved the perceived dilemma of girls in the marching band by forming separate all-girl bands, especially in high schools large enough to support two groups. One educator observed that such an arrangement would be comparable to what is done in “athletics, glee clubs and industrial subjects.” “The main reason for having a girls’ band in Benton Harbor, Michigan, is merely to segregate boys and girls,” explained one director.⁶⁷

Another way in which band directors dealt with their discomfort over girls in the marching band was to develop other ways for girls to perform on the playing field. Joe Berryman, director of the school band in Fort Stockton, Texas, extolled the virtues of the “Bugle-Lyra,” a set of bells especially designed for marching which would substitute for the bugles normally used. This would counter any objections that the bugle would “alter the shape of the girls’ lips.... The Bugle-Lyra are easily played and a group of girls can be taught several

'bell-tunes' in even so short a time as a week.... This new instrument is not heavy, has a very attractive appearance, and in every way fills a long-felt need."⁶⁸ More common substitutes abandoned musical performance altogether in favor of decorative display. During the 1930s and 1940s baton-twirling grew increasingly popular, and "pretty girls with flashing batons" decorated the playing fields. Flag-waving — the swinging of decorative flags to music — was another alternative. To accompany the girls, the boys in the band usually played a familiar waltz, "the ideal type of music for flag twirling. The combination is most effective and beautiful."⁶⁹ Activities such as baton-twirling and flag-waving flourished because of the discomfort music educators felt with girls playing and marching with brass and wind instruments.

Even those who got to play a band instrument won approval as much for appearance as for performance. In school music magazines, captions on photographs of female instrumentalists almost invariably commented on physical attractiveness as well as performing ability. According to the caption writer, the Brownsville, Tennessee, high-school drum corps was "widely known for the beautiful girls ... not, of course that pulchritude is particularly essential to the success of your drum corps." A line of female tuba players from Lawton, Oklahoma, won praise as "a background pretty enough for any band."⁷⁰ A high-school director advised his colleagues who conducted all-girl bands: "Buy the members of such a band pretty uniforms and their appearance will even surpass that of the boys." Most telling of all were photographs of the winners of a national solo contest in 1934. The boys' photo was labeled "Lads of the Third Division" while the page of girl winners bore the heading "Beauty Plus."⁷¹

Thus twentieth-century public education, while professedly egalitarian, was less so in practice. In orchestras, meanwhile, although official rhetoric declared that opportunities for women were increasing, unofficial restrictions regarding women's choice of instruments remained unchanged. In 1952 Raymond Paige, music director of the Radio City Music Hall orchestra, assured readers of *Etude Magazine*, the foremost publication for music teachers, that the girl who desired a position in a symphony orchestra would be judged on "musicianship and character and not at all the fact of her being a girl." While he urged teachers to tell the girls to play whatever instrument they liked best, he also noted that "instruments requiring physical force are a dubious choice, partly because women lack the strength for them, partly because the spectacle of a girl engaging in such physical exertions is not attractive. There are women who play the heavier brasses, the contrabass, the big drum, but their employment chances are slimmer. The orchestral manager, thinking in terms of full audience enjoyment, is reluctant to hire a player whose appearance at her instrument gives off a feeling of forcing or incongruity. In general, women who want orchestral work do better to avoid anything heavier than the cello, the clarinet and the French horn. On the other hand, their natural delicacy gives

them an advantage with the violin, the viola, the flute and the oboe."⁷² In other words, any instrument was all right, but appearance would ultimately determine success.

Gender-based perceptions of musical instruments created a paradox for middle- and upper-class white women. On the one hand they were expected to be proficient in music, the "language of emotions"; on the other hand this proficiency was unquestioningly accepted only when women stayed within the bounds of what was traditionally female. A woman could play an instrument, but only if she looked attractive; she could play in an orchestra or conduct, but it was best if the organization consisted only of women; she could be an educator, but rarely hold a supervisory position; she could march on the playing field, but preferably as a decorative object rather than as a musical performer. The "debilitating aspects of gender stereotyping"⁷³ altered or stunted women's musical growth, forcing some to develop their talents in different ways and others to abandon music altogether.