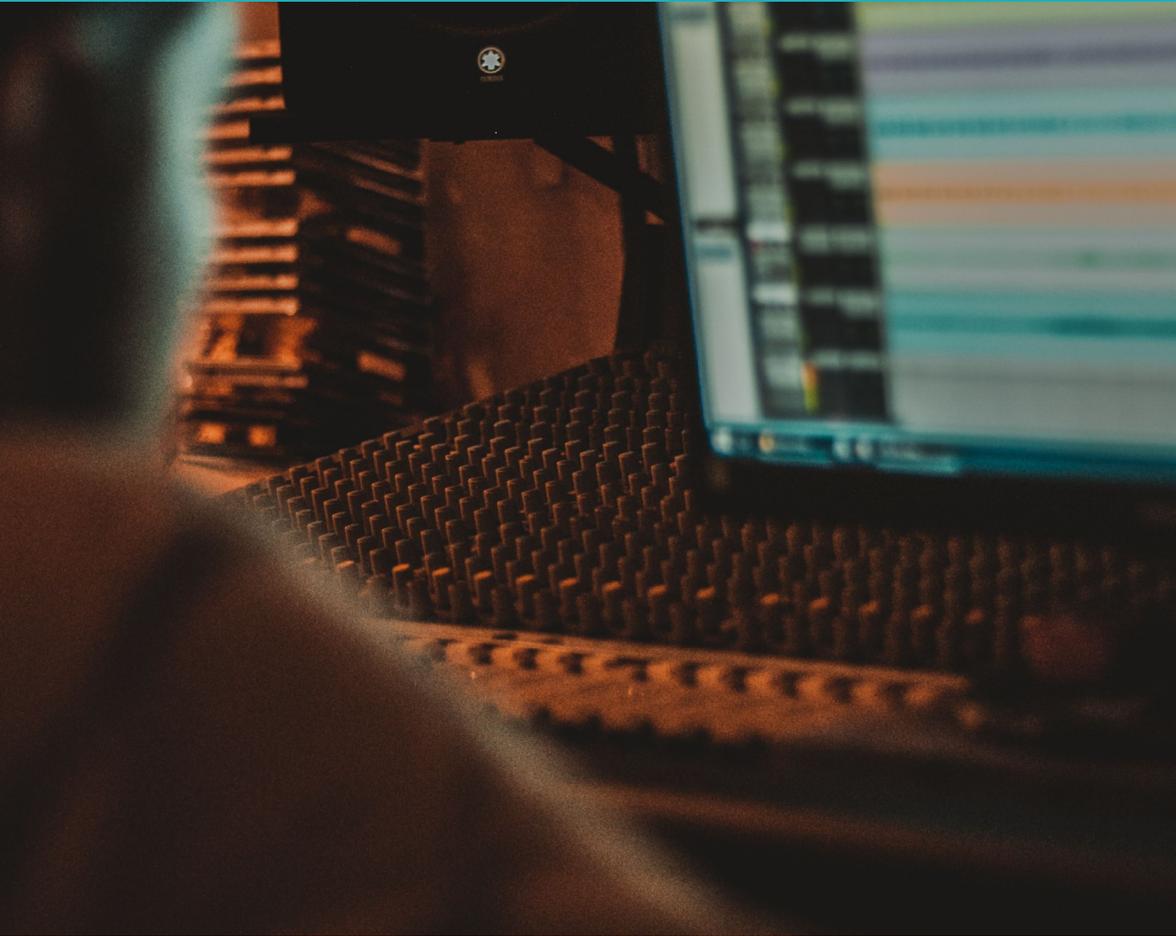


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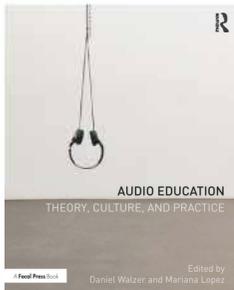
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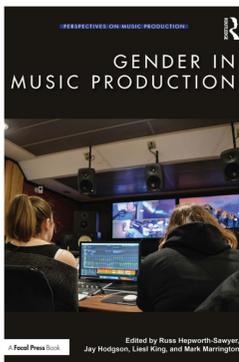
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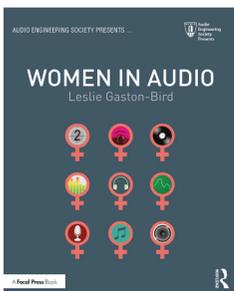
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Addressing the Gender Imbalance in the Theater Sound Industry

A Conservatoire Approach

Clare Hibberd

Introduction

In his recently published book *Sound Design for the Stage*, theater sound designer Gareth Fry acknowledges that while success in the industry involves ability and luck, middle-class, white males are more likely to succeed. He notes that acknowledgment of sexism, racism, and privilege in the industry is rare and that work is required to implement change (2019).

This chapter compares research into gender imbalance in theater with the growing research on gender imbalance in audio education. A distinctive subfield within audio education, theater sound in higher education in the UK is regularly taught alongside other theater disciplines. Undergraduates are often asked to make a choice of which of these disciplines (stage management, sound, lighting, technical stage) they wish to specialize in. Given that the education of theater sound is directed toward technology, sound production, and listening skills (Bennett 2019), it is clear that it demands a large array of abilities. Brown (2010) argues for theater sound to be understood as an art form, whereas Deiorio (2019) maintains that theater sound design is related to the people that collaborate together to create a production.

The undergraduate BA Production, Technology, Management course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland will be used to demonstrate the implementation of how institute-wide intervention is working to drive change in gender stereotypes. The work carried out on gender imbalance in theater by Michelle MacArthur (2015) for Canadian Equity in Theater can be likened to trends in the UK and US. Several smaller inquiries have been carried out in the UK and Scotland with comparable results. This will be explored in more detail later in the chapter. In response to an abundance of research into gender in relation to music education over the last 20 years, Dr. Elizabeth Dobson's focus on collaboration and creativity in the arts has recently led to her paper about all-female communities and the impact this has had on creativity in audio education. Digital Audio Ecofeminism (DA'EF) is described as the set of values that female collectives, networks, and organizations demonstrate in order to prioritize equality and reject capitalism

(Dobson 2018). This draws on the work of global audio groups, which will also be examined throughout the chapter.

The following review of literature will illustrate the complex nature of the issues that women in theater face, from a point of view of the context and the educational structures that ultimately serve those roles.

Gender Imbalance in Theater

Michelle MacArthur (2015), lead researcher for the Canadian Equity in Theatre (EIT) initiative, states that women occupy a significantly lower number of positions in creative theater roles.¹ Comparisons with this study can be made with an analysis of Scottish theater carried out by Christine Hamilton (2016), who found that between 2014 and 2015, women made up just 11% of sound designers and composers in Scottish publicly funded theaters. In further support to this, Elizabeth Freestone researching for *The Guardian* newspaper in 2012 found that of the top ten subsidized theaters in the UK, female sound designers made up only 5 of 436 employment opportunities in sound (Freestone 2012).

As part of MacArthur's *Best Practice Recommendations* (2015), she recommends that there should be an increase in the production of plays by women and other marginalized groups recognizing that intersectionality (how social categorizations of race, class, and gender overlap creating interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage) is prevailing throughout western society. Kimberlé Crenshaw, in her TED talk "The Urgency of Intersectionality" uses the case of DeGraffenreid vs General Motors in 1975 to explain this social injustice. DeGraffenreid sued General Motors for discrimination on the basis that black people were employed for one type of job, while women were employed for another (Crenshaw 2018). This is comparable to a theater environment where black women occupy even less roles in the workforce.

In support of this, Barnes (2015) fights to unravel barriers experienced by women, giving a voice to performers, directors, and choreographers in musical theater. Her account is raw and unapologetic in tone, calling out producers and directors. Despite the predominance of female audiences in musical theater, Barnes questions why shows are mainly produced by men. Interviewing performers such as Mel La Barrie,² the underrepresentation of women as part of the creative team is explored. The link between female characters being portrayed as victims and the place of women in society is explored with the suggestion that the authentic female voice is often overlooked in this genre, compared to other areas of the arts.

Kerbel (2017) also addresses discrimination issues in the workplace, offering advice through her experience in trying to achieve gender equality in theater, encouraging an open and caring approach that is inclusive of all creative input. As well as addressing unconscious bias, looking at artistic and administration roles and the theatrical process, part of Kerbel's guide includes practical ways to implement change. First, she recommends gathering a combination of qualitative and

quantitative data in order to gain evidence, both independently and as an organization. Second, listening to individual experiences and accepting the positive and negative impact of any action (such as outreach groups). Kerbel similarly clarifies that data collection can highlight unconscious bias and allow for interventions to take place. For example, she suggests making a list of all freelancers hired over a period of time in order to explore any gender gaps and addressing imbalances moving forward.

Gender Imbalance in Audio Education

To understand the clear lack of female representation in theater sound, it is useful to explore the pathway that university students undertake into the industry. Most students studying theater sound at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have a musical education background. Some have had opportunities to assist with school productions and some have shadowed friends or family in the professional theater industry. In all cases, students have engaged with music, whether that be in an academic setting or not. Although not a requisite on the *BA Production Technology Management* course, music is a desirable subject in order to demonstrate a student's listening, collaborative, and creative skills. Interestingly, research has shown that despite girls achieving highly in music compared to boys, this is unlikely to be mirrored in the numbers of women studying music technology in higher education (Born and Devine 2015).

Hallam et al. (2008) found that although female students perform better in school music exams, no consistent gender differences in musical skill can be found. In fact, data gathered in 1994 showed that boys were underrepresented in learning to play an instrument and 60% of students learning an instrument were girls. The reasons that were given for these statistics include stereotypical expectations (including those from parents), peer pressure, and boys preferring instruments that require less practice. The question that arises from these findings is that if girls are studying music at school, at what point does this translate to fewer females studying music technology in higher education?

A possible explanation is that boys demonstrate greater interest in music linked to technology compared to girls (Hallam et al. 2008). Armstrong (2003) suggests that the compositional process mediated by music technology is more conducive to the working styles of boys such as nonverbal communication. In interviews, girls communicated their dissatisfaction with the lack of encouragement to use live instruments to compose during lessons. Armstrong recommends that music teaching should allow for a pluralist approach, to include opportunities for all types of learner and to be flexible around creative output. Theater sound careers encompass a huge variety of skills including understanding complex technology, collaborating with other creatives, and artistic skill. No two theater sound engineers have taken the same path and this could be understood as critical in developing new ideas and productions.

Brilliance Bias

Brilliance bias, as conceived by Caroline Criado Perez, is a concept where an academic subject is culturally recognized by society to require a “brilliance” (p. 100) that can’t be easily learned. She suggests that culturally we don’t naturally assume women to be naturally talented. This includes areas such as maths, physics, music, and computer science—all of which can be attributed to audio education. All of these subjects are less likely to include women as a majority workforce (Criado Perez 2019). Her book, *Invisible Women*, goes further to suggest other reasons for obstructions to subjects that could be compared to the audio industry. Female students, are significantly less likely to receive funding or to be offered mentorship in higher education (Criado Perez 2019). Additionally, letters of recommendation for women are less likely to include stand-out adjectives such as “remarkable” or “outstanding” (p. 102).

The combination of factors described here would suggest that both the students and the educators are affected by cultural expectations, leading to the scenario of low numbers of female students and low numbers of female educators acting as role models in the field. As a female audio educator, I receive far less bias in teaching compared to working in the industry. As a theater sound engineer, a common greeting by visiting staff would be to ask where the “sound guy” was. As a lecturer these comments are rarely heard. I attribute this to the societal gender bias of having more women in teaching roles (so therefore more acceptable whatever the subject) and inclusive environment nurtured at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Gender Stereotypes

Susan McClary (1991) makes the link between musical elements and the cultural context from which they derive. Her work as a musicologist in interdisciplinary contexts examines the political, social, and cultural meaning of music conventions. Combining musicology with feminism, McClary makes a clear argument for the patriarchal characterizations of musical structure and performance. To put this into context, Thompson and Stevenson (2015) looked at perceptions of popular electronic musicians at UK higher education institutions, finding that formal music education has a significant impact on the development of musicians practice, suggesting that there is a need to develop a much more comprehensive music curricula that would address the needs of a far wider student population.

Lucy Green (1997) in her work on informal music making, suggests that musicians pick up skills and knowledge through watching and listening to other musicians, in a very similar way that theater sound practitioners pick up expertise. If the work of McClary and Green were both to be applied to theater sound, it could be argued that if the structure and performance of music is essentially “male” in form, the skills passed down from sound operator to operator are also “male”. In order to mix a piece of music, an understanding of musical structure is vital. Knowing when to push a solo instrument or allow a build to swell naturally is developed

through hours of practice, listening, and observing. This suggests an entirely different obstruction to success that female identifying theater sound practitioners could face, further from “mansplaining”, a term widely used since the publication of Rebecca Solnit’s pivotal essay, “Men Explain Things to Me”, where the author argues that abuse of power, be it online, in the home, or in the workplace should be addressed together by men and women (Solnit 2014).

Studies that have explored the link between gender stereotypes and assumptions about expertise include Hollingshead and Fraidin (2003). They found that males and females showed similar gender-stereotyped behavior. Tasks at work could be directly linked to males or females, for example, women taking up organizational roles whereas men are more likely to be problem solvers. In a theatrical setting, this could be compared to the higher likelihood that males progress to A1 (Audio 1) positions faster and more readily than women. A2 (Audio 2) tasks tend to involve a greater amount of working with performers compared to sound desk operation that an A1 would perform. Although no data exists currently about these specific theater roles, this is a widely recognized occurrence in the UK. Julia Pascal, writing for *The Guardian*, after the male dominated Olivier Awards of 2018, calls for a quota system to be employed in British theater in order for equality to be taken seriously. She highlights that both the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company have never had a female artistic director and this lack of acknowledgment marginalizes women into a minority workforce (Pascal 2018).

The pedagogy of music technology has close links to theater sound design. Often the equipment is similar although the execution of production can involve far greater numbers in a theatrical environment. Collaboration is inevitable in theater, with sound designers often needing to work closely with all departments, including set, costume, and music to ensure that the needs of performers are met (Deiorio 2019). Studies into gender bias in music technology education have been carried out in the UK since the formation of the National Curriculum (for schools) in 1992. Born and Devine (2015) suggest that although music technology is now found extensively throughout higher education, little has changed to mobilize gender, class, or race stereotypes in the field. Music technology degrees are overwhelmingly male and lower in social class profiles compared to traditional music degrees. Following this pattern of comparison, music technology commands a 90% male dominance compared to 55% female dominance in the learning of traditional music. Furthermore, BME (Black and Ethnic Minority) students make up just 6% of students compared to the 11% across all degree subjects. Carola Boehm (2006) argues that changes need to be made to the way that music technology degrees in Britain are taught, allowing for more opportunities for interdisciplinary learning in an environment that does not need to adhere to strict methodology. Students should not be held back by the structure of how a subject is taught—instead universities should be encouraging students to build new knowledge through free experimentation. Boehm labels this concept a postmodernist approach, where fragmentational knowledge and self-organization are the foundations of the subject.

From the research, this collaborative and interdisciplinary approach should be an opening for greater opportunities for a wider demographic of students to enter

the profession. More data would be required to prove this and track any increase in female participation as music pedagogy at school level becomes more inclusive.

Audio Equity Pledge

Dobson's (2018) Audio Equity Pledge is a resource for people working in education and audio-related industry who are interested in social equality. Three actions are recommended to those wishing to pledge allegiance. The first focuses on collaboration. This involves supporting groups currently engaging with women and girls in sound, including understanding and addressing unconscious bias. The second action is about perspective, understanding intersectionality and how this affects women in sound. The final action of the pledge is to change environments to create learning spaces that are fit for purpose.

The following sections of this chapter examine the close links between the teaching of audio education within the BA Production Technology Management course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and collaborative work with local groups and individuals who share the principles of the Audio Equity Pledge. As Dobson (2018) makes clear in her research, the action on gender imbalance within the industry needs to be addressed on multiple levels. Support needs to be given to female groups already active. Unconscious bias should be checked and environments need to be welcoming to everyone. For each section of the Audio Equity Pledge—collaboration, perspective, and changing environment—references will be made to demonstrate what is being achieved.

Collaboration

Soundgirls is a US non-profit organization that provides a support network for women and nonbinary people working in professional audio.³ Opportunities are sought in order to inspire and empower young women in the field and to expand opportunities through cooperation, collaboration, and diversity. Chapters exist all over the world,⁴ including the UK. Soundgirls Glasgow has been in operation for just over a year and local support is steadily growing. The chapter meets regularly for drop-in sessions, and audio-based workshops have been held to promote new learning. As an educator, I find myself in a prime position to promote the work of Soundgirls and to lead drop-in sessions and workshops. Although currently in its early stages, plans are in process for a greater number of events to expand participation in the near future.

Stellar Quines is an award-winning Scottish Theater Company that promotes the diversity of women and girls by nurturing,⁵ empowering, and creating award-winning theater. The current "M****classes" organized by the company are specific artist development opportunities to support women in technical theater roles (Stellar Quines 2018). In May 2019, a free collaborative event between the Audio Engineering Society (AES), Soundgirls, and Stellar Quines took place at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Over 50 participants attended with workshop leaders

delivering four sessions based on theater sound. Positive feedback at the end of the sessions included comments that the opportunity to network with other women (especially those starting out in the industry) was highly useful, with established female audio specialists wanting to offer their support for future events.

In light of the #MeToo campaign, several theater societies published statements of support. The Federation of Scottish Theatre and Society of London Theatre both responded with a commitment to ensure that theater is a safe space for all. Theaters such as the Royal Court and the Young Vic have developed comprehensive staff training programs as well as workshops (#takeupspace) to support women in all aspects of creativity.

By setting a standard of safe collaboration in audio education, the platform is set for emerging professionals, with the hope that more positive outcomes will seep into the industry.

Perspective

As the only conservatoire in Scotland, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is in a unique position, receiving pedagogical direction and guidance from several perspectives. It is useful to understand why teaching practices have been adopted in audio education. The Equality Act of 2010 underpins education policy and law in Scotland. Nine protected characteristics⁶ ensure that equal access and protection for those groups are enforced by law. Under the specific chapter relating to higher education, The Equality Act states that institutions must not discriminate against a person in the arrangements it makes for deciding admissions, the terms on which admissions are offered or by not admitting a student. Many institutes in the UK use the definition of the nine characteristics to further inform their policies and practices beyond admission and actively seek ways of providing further support for these groups.

Further to this, education in Scotland is supported by Education Scotland, a Scottish government executive agency that funds quality and improvement. Operating independently from the government allows impartiality and accountability. The “Embedding Inclusion, Equity and Empowerment” program aims explicitly to promote inclusive practice within the education system drawing upon several legislative duties of local authorities. These include the Children and Young People Act, Additional Support for Learning Act, Equalities duties, the “Getting It Right for Every Child” (GIRFEC) policy, and Safeguarding (Embedding Inclusion, Equity and Empowerment 2018b).

Supporting children and young people’s learning is the key aim of a range of national policies, legislation, strategies, and frameworks, from early years to positive, sustained destinations, known as the Supporting Learners Framework. The framework addresses three types of support. First, *entitlement to support* states that every child and young person is entitled to support with their learning. Second, *universal support* ensures the responsibility of staff to promote well-being, inclusion, equality, and fairness by the creation of personal learning plans. This also includes the need to provide opportunities for students to discuss their learning and

development. Third, *targeted support* focuses on overcoming barriers to learning, whether these are long or short term, through staged intervention.

“Developing the Young Workforce” (DYW) is a strategy that aims to better prepare young people for the workplace and to reduce youth unemployment by 40% by 2021. Of ten key aims, one is directly relatable to impacting the number of females applying to courses. It states that opportunities and experiences for all learners will be improved, with a focus on reducing gender imbalance on course take-up (Developing the Young Workforce 2018a).

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is a non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government. It was established by the Further and Higher Education Act of 2005 and invests around £1.8 billion of public money each year with the ambition that Scotland will be the best place in the world to learn, educate, research, and innovate. Investment includes supporting research in Scottish universities and widening access to provide more people with more routes into learning and skills (Scottish Funding Council 2018). Aligning with the DYW strategy, the SFC created the Gender Action Plan (GAP). The GAP was created as a way to support institutions to address gender imbalance and inequality. The main ambition of the GAP is that no college or university subject will have a gender imbalance of greater than 75% of one gender.

Given the strong leadership currently offered by the Scottish government in meeting gender and diversity targets, it will be of great interest to witness the expected changes in education and the effect that this will have on the theater sound industry as a whole. Indeed, if targets are met, the gender diversity landscape of Scotland will become far more equal.

For audio education, this support at government level, should provide the impetus that is required for change to occur in institutions. Policy now dictates clear targets that need to be met, linked to funding. In other words, Scottish institutions that wish to continue to receive high levels of funding for their courses will need to comply. In theater sound this should see an increase of 20% of female students.

Changing Environments

As one of the four modules of the BA Production Technology Management course, *Personal and Professional Development* is emphasized as equally important to student development as stagecraft, management, and communication. Certainly, at the outset, students can find this weighting challenging and unusual compared to previous learning experiences. A female educator across several audio-based modules ensures that female sound designers and technicians are included in the teaching as mentors and workshop leaders. Activities are also designed to be inclusive to a variety of learning styles, giving the students the choice to decide how they work most effectively. There is no pressure on students to follow predetermined procedures or processes to reach their creative goal. A student who wants to compose music for a production is supported in their decision as much as a student who wants to concentrate on the system design. The RCS safe space policy goes some way to address this, citing that everyone in the room should have their opinions valued.

Personal reflection is carried out regularly by teaching staff, and fortnightly team meetings allow good practice to be shared between colleagues. Peer learning is an integral part of the learning process and delivered as part of all modules, including personal and professional development. All students by their third year are expected to lead other students, ensuring that no team members are left behind in their understanding. Where students are less confident, staff intervention is “on the job”. For example, a student struggling to communicate with a director about their sound design concept could be offered a tutorial to go through their ideas before they need to present their work. At all times students are encouraged to dig deep and find their own problem solving methods. This may appear harsh or unusual for an undergraduate course but the rigour that is demanded at this level is known by the staff to equate to the working world of theater audio.

Conclusion

It is evident that within Scotland there is currently a great emphasis from government to drive forwards gender equality. The liberal government setting in Scotland allows conservatoire-style teaching and learning to thrive and grow in the current challenging political environment. Programs implemented by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to address the Gender Action Plan have initially shown that the gender gap is slowly closing, evidenced by the most recent report (Caplan 2017). This has been achieved with no direct “female only” initiatives, but rather a comprehensive approach that addresses a multifaceted approach to inclusivity.

Summarizing, transferable teaching methods from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland approach to teaching theater sound draws two conclusions that can be demonstrated by the institute as a whole and the educator. From the point of view of the educator, every learning opportunity should be approached with the mindset that everyone present (staff and students) have a valid opinion. Learners should be involved in goal setting, content, and style of delivery and there should be a universal understanding that learning to complete a task or solve a problem is a key motivator for students. Above all, a pluralistic approach to teaching and learning needs to be adopted that is inclusive of all people.

Notes

1. Little progress has been made since reports carried out in the 1980s and then again in the early 2000s that indicated that women are accountable for a significantly lower number of positions (Macarthur 2015).
2. Mel La Barrie is a prolific UK musical theater performer. Credits include principal roles in *Wicked* (Universal Stage Productions), *Matilda* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *Les Miserables* (Cameron Mackintosh Ltd) and *Mary Poppins* (Cameron Mackintosh Ltd).
3. <https://soundgirls.org/>
4. A chapter is a geographically local group of members that are able to meet regularly for formal and informal meetings.

5. www.stellarquines.com/
6. The nine protected characteristics as identified by the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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Gender in Music Production

Perspective Through a Female and Feminine Lens

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INTRODUCTION

The majority of critical and scholarly discussions on gender and music production illustrate the gender inequalities and masculine dominance in music as an omnipresent feature. Paula Wolfe states that female producers are marked primarily for their absence in the field, and have been under-researched, along with analyses of their practice (Wolfe 2012). Feminist research in the field has found that the masculine-led music industry is largely ignorant in regards to women's productions, which has led to research on women's contributions to the field critiquing the inequalities in the workplace, rather than offering an analysis of the works and practices of female producers. Sally Macarthur explains that "Women's productions are not discussed in mainstream music production discourse or tediously analyzed in comparison to men's music, nor given the same attention as exemplified in performances and broadcasts" (Macarthur 2002: 2). This chapter is a step towards correcting this discursive trend, through reflection on the contributions of female producers in music production. This reflection includes explorations on gender performativity and gendered modalities of music production. This chapter takes a broad definition of the music producer, encompassing both the studio producer and the electronic music based artist/producer. As electronic music has become part of the wider popular music industry, this elucidation situates this chapter within the current music industry context, drawing on semi-structured ethnographic interviews with nine female producers from North America, Mexico, Australia, and The Netherlands. This chapter provides a trans-local perspective on the female producer and an examination of music production through a female lens. Through this we are able to gain a deeper understanding of the feminine culture of music production and the feminine aesthetic of music production, gaining a fuller understanding of women's participation in the field.

In line with the feminist ethic this research is undertaking, a suitably accommodating methodology has also been chosen. Ethnography is a qualitative research method originating from sociology with the study of values, beliefs, behaviors, or language within a distinct group in society.

Many feminist musicologists use this method of research, including Dr Jodie Taylor, Rebecca Farrunga, Magdalena Olszanowski, and Elle M Hisama (Taylor 2012; Farrugia 2012; Olszanowski 2011; Hisama 2014). This approach is useful as it validates the personal perspective from which I am starting this research. As my practice is music production, my immersion in the field aids in gaining an understanding of this culture from this female perspective. This method allows for free-flowing peer communication and qualifies narrative accounts. The ethnographic interviews, while semi-structured, seek to discover the gender performativity and gendered modalities of music production. The interviewees describe gender performativity and gendered modalities of music production in regards to their works and practice. This study concludes that while the experience of one's gender may be preconscious in a woman's approach to music production, the feminine manifests as a distinct aesthetic in all cases herein.

In order to clarify my use of the terms *feminist* and *feminine*, I adopt Grosz's definitions of these as referred to by Sally Macarthur: "According to Grosz the four criteria for a feminine text are the sex of the author; the content of the text; the sex of the reader; and the style of the text" (Macarthur 2002: 149–150). Grosz explains that "Feminine texts are those written from the perspective of a feminine experience or composed in a style culturally represented as feminine [while] feminist texts self-consciously challenge the methods, objects, goals, or principles of mainstream patriarchal canons" (Macarthur 2002: 149–150). Hélène Cixous further defines the term feminine in the binary system of cultural representation:

Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated with coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity. Philosophical discourse both orders and reproduces all thought. One notices that it is marked by an absolute constant, precisely this opposition activity/passivity. Moreover, woman is always associated with passivity in philosophy.
(Cixous 1997: 149)

Cixous uses examples of the binary opposites to define the cultural representations of masculine/feminine such as: sun/moon, culture/nature, father/mother, head/heart, intelligible/palpable. Cixous explains that

These sexual differences are not distributed on the basis of socially determined sexes [man or woman]. To avoid the confusion: man/masculine woman/feminine, for there are some men who do not repress their femininity, some women, who more or less, inscribe to their masculinity.

(Cixous 1997: 152)

It is then essential to recognize that not all women are feminine or feel comfortable expressing feminine behavior. Charlotte Greig affirms:

We can't talk about women as if we were a subgroup of humanity that speaks with one voice. We don't, and there's the same level of

diversity and conflicting points of view amongst women songwriters as you'd get anywhere else in music.

(Whitely. Ed. Greig 1997: 168)

This is the same in music production with a level of diversity and conflicting perspectives amongst female producers. It is important to acknowledge that not all of the female producers I interviewed feel their practices are feminine or see themselves as feminists. Some female producers do not acknowledge feminism as a cultural framework embedded in their music production, though I am viewing their discursive and material contributions through their embodied gender and a female lens. Many have the perspective that when you focus on gender it separates the female producer, trivializing their practice. I am making female producers the object of my study, invoking Magdalena Olszanowski's assertion as follows:

As a separate tradition is not isolationist; rather, it is a strategy in recovering them, in making them an object of discourse. Separation is a means of offering women visibility that they would not otherwise possess and enabling discussions that could not otherwise proceed.

(Olszanowski 2011: 10)

Sally Macarthur suggests that gendered divisions need to be drawn between the work of male and female producers because of the difference between men and women on the whole due to the different ways in which they have been socialized (Macarthur 2002: 2). Rebecca Farrugia indicates that social constructs of gender significantly impact the ways in which men or women may or may not seek out and find their voice in all creative fields (Farrugia 2012: 68); therefore, they additionally impact how women express and interact creatively with music production. Further research is needed to understand the female process and practice of music production to gain insights into combating the gender inequalities in the field; therefore, a discussion about this division is necessary.

GENDER PERFORMATIVITY IN MUSIC PRODUCTION

Susan McLary explains that music does not passively reflect society but serves as a public forum in which models of gender are "asserted, adopted, contested and negotiated" (McLary 1991: 8). Norma Coates refers to Teresa De Lauretis's analogy "that gender is the product of social technologies, including forms of popular culture, institutionalized discourses, critical practices and practices of daily life. Gender is at the same time constructed and always under construction" (Whitely. Ed. Coates 1997: 52). Coates further compares De Lauretis's analogy that these social practices construct, indicate, and secure a cultural form as associated with a particular gender. Judith Butler's belief is that the social practices also allude to and reinforce acts, gestures, enactments, and other signifiers, which express that gender or perform a particular gender. Coates explains that Butler's interpretation of the performance of gender is an expression,

a non-tangible fabrication, manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and discourse: “That the gendered body is per-formative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (Whitely. Ed. Coates 1997: 52). Coates compares the tangible embodied gender of female and male with the per-formative non-tangible fabrication of femininity and masculinity, denoting that gender can be performed. The following analysis uncovers this gender performativity in female producers’ works and practice.

Fieke Van Den Hurk¹ performs femininity in her practice by capturing the emotion in the production. She explains that her approach is by going with “a gut feeling” rather than constructing a mix from “a technical” mindset. She likes to capture the feeling in the production and then reflect on what she has composed or captured to know how to proceed with the production. Van Den Hurk feels that she contributes femininity to her artists’ projects with this approach of “capturing the emotional content,” though she always focuses on the “artists’ creative direction and intention” (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March). Sophie Botta² focuses on capturing the emotion in a recording, as songs aim to express a feeling. She says, “This is capturing the heart of the song”. Botta feels a certain responsibility to her clients, and she mentions “the importance of understanding what their expectations” are and what they want to convey “in a song, musically, emotionally and conceptually” (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March). Missy Thangs³ also follows her “gut instinct” in her practice instead of following the conventional methods. The “instruments” that she “chooses to put in the foreground of a mix” display her unconventional approach, illustrating her feminine performativity. She can be “quite playful with the board/console while she mixes”, often “dancing while mixing”. Thangs also has a feminine performativity in the way she talks about her approach to her practice. Thangs explains panning a guitar in terms of “sweeping a guitar to the left” (Missy Thangs 2019, interview communication, 31 March). Amelia Warren’s⁴ production style “doesn’t fit into a paradigm of someone else’s making.” Using her gut instinct, Warren describes capturing the emotion of a recording by “knowing when someone has put their heart and soul into a piece. The whole composition tells the story, not just the vocals” (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April).

Patty Preece⁵ from The Ironing Maidens is “creatively influenced by the state of the world” and comes from a political stance to her practice. There is feminist performativity in this approach, with the intention to “bring women to the forefront in the home and in the studio”. This celebration of women addresses the visibility of women in the workplace. The Ironing Maidens’ motivation for getting into the studio is the “inequality of women”. Their recent song ‘Pick you shit up’ was “inspired by the recent census results where women are still doing the majority of the housework and domestic duties within the home” (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). Feminist musicologist Sally Macarthur explains: “feminist texts self-consciously challenge the methods, objects, goals, or principles of mainstream patriarchal canons” (Macarthur 2002: 149–150),

due to the majority of discourse composed by men. The Ironing Maidens have made “electronic instruments and midi controllers out of irons” (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). The use of a household domestic device reconstructed into a music technology device is an example of feminist commentary and performativity in Preece’s practice.

I observe Catharine Wood⁶ as having a feminine performativity in her practice as she produces her personal productions with “a confessional singer songwriter” style. At times she writes music “just for her and may never be released or may not be released for some time after composition” (C Wood 2019, interview communication, 26 March). This style of composition and genre of writing is a more personal style and has been described as feminine by Greig: “Singer-songwriters, perhaps implied an arty, feminine kind of solipsism not present in the term folk singer” (Whitely. Ed. Greig 1997: 174). Wood illustrates feminine performativity in this approach to practice.

When working with artists, Karina Rivero⁷ concentrates on creating a welcoming, homely environment for the artists to perform in, showing a feminine performativity with this approach to practice. She brings a focus to “logistics and catering” for recording sessions unlike her male colleagues, and says “the males usually go in and hit record” (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). Van Den Hurk believes her gender influences her behavior with her artists. The difference that she can see between her and the male producers and engineers in the studio that she works alongside is that the male producers behave with a hierarchy over their artists and clients, behaving with a “bossy” personality in the studio. The males are more controlling of the sessions: “they don’t feel into what the artist is doing”, and they follow a conventional studio process. The males take less care of keeping the energy in a session: “they just go-go-go and at times you have to tell them to take a break” (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March). Botta finds if things aren’t working in the studio, she also “takes tea breaks” (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March). Preece says women create a “nicer vibe” when they are in charge in the studio. She mentions working with a student who had to record vocals for a song competition: “The guy that was receiving the tracks also came into the studio. He was given the brief that the female artist is sensitive so sit back in the studio and chip in when he needs to”. There was a young female student with Preece running the computer while she worked the console. She commented that, “The guy went on to take over the computer from the female student” along with communications with the artist, and that “he took over the whole session and made the artist uncomfortable by being really pushy with her”. Preece explains that, “He got a great sound but at the cost of making the artist uncomfortable, along with the student and teacher” (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). Feminine performativity is illustrated in the approach to practice with making the artist comfortable, taking regular breaks, and not behaving hierarchically with the artist. Arguably, this allows for a much more comfortable session, leading to a better performance and a better recording experience.

Feminine performativity in record production is evident in many female producers' works. Many female producers focus on the melody and melodic content of the production. Riveros's mixes often illuminate the higher frequencies, and she has had her productions described as "sometimes lacking in the lower end". She believes this is due to women's influences in the childhood and teenage years in regards to sound. Most females "play melodic instruments" and therefore, focus more on these areas (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). Warren also enacts this feminine performativity; the focus of her productions weighs on her melodic compositions (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April). As an artist in her personal productions Wood says she is "very particular with melody and has a unique sense of harmony with composing chord progressions". She mentions she is "firstly melody oriented then lyrically oriented". Lyrics take her a long time to write, and it is "the melodies in her music that connect them together as her works" (C Wood 2019, interview communication, 26 March). Missy Thangs' personal productions are feminine sounding in regards to the melodic content. She explains that these "melodies create a vibe that is really quite beautiful". Her songs "don't have a lot of dissonance and are usually written in the minor keys" (Missy Thangs 2019, interview communication, 31 March). Many believe minor keys are associated with the feminine, corresponding with theories on aesthetics in music. I would like to acknowledge that these theories are described in mainstream musical discourse, which like all mainstream discourse has produced and reproduced the feminine in a subordinate position to the masculine. Philip Stoltzfus explains that "musical expression can provide orientation for the entirety of the inner life", including the characteristics of gender, heard in the metaphors of the masculine and feminine in the major and minor keys (Stoltzfus 2006: 81). These metaphors come from different theories on sonata form, with the first theme denoting the masculine, written in a major key. The second theme portraying a feminine character is written in a minor key. Macarthur describes Karl Marx's concept on sonatas as one that depicts the first theme as masculine, "constructed decisively and completely with energy and vigor" in contrast to the second theme: "tender feminine themes, dependent and determined by the preceding masculine theme" (Macarthur 2002: 90). Most take for granted these aspects of musical practice as simple elements that structure his or her musical and social world, though McLary states:

They are perhaps the most powerful aspects of musical discourses, for they operate below the level of deliberate signification and are thus usually reproduced and transmitted without conscious intervention, for it is through these deeply engrained habits that gender and sexuality are most effectively and most problematically organised in music.
(McLary 1991: 16–17)

Preece says that The Ironing Maidens' music is "more groove-based with no aggressive synthesizer lines. The melodies are really beautiful with a prominent vocal" (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April).

These female producers interviewed describe a feminine performativity in their works by focusing on the melodic content, while other female producers focus on producing a smooth and sensual mix. A Hundred Drums⁸ performs her femininity when she is DJing her songs. She says she has a “smooth and sensual” approach to her mixes, “unlike a guy who may do a hard drop” (A Hundred Drums 2019, interview communication, 8 March). Ania Grzesik⁹ also has a similar approach to her works, with “no sharp edges” in her mixes and a “fluid” nature (A Grzesik 2019, interview communication, 15 March). Van Den Hurk likes it when things “stay organic and not so clearly defined”. She likes it when sounds have a fluid sonic quality (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March).

Feminine performativity in music production is embedded in the communication of the musical story and the delivery many female producers offer through their works. Van Den Hurk says her music “has a feminine sound and thinks it would be hard to escape, as she is a female writing it, expressing a female story” (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March). Rivero believes female producers express emotions and convey ideas or messages differently in a mix. She thinks that everything that defines her emotions as a woman is expressed through her arrangements, mixes, and sometimes even the mastering process. She explains that “If it’s your voice that’s being expressed and you’re a woman, it will come through” in your work (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). A Hundred Drums performs femininity in her record production in the way she encodes her energy into her productions; she says she is “transmitting” or communicating the story with the way she weaves musical elements and the choice of language used in the lyrics of her works. She thinks that many males may tell their story differently, possibly with the use of “dominating” or aggressive sounds (A Hundred Drums 2019, interview communication, 8 March). Botta performs femininity in her works by composing on “personal themes and experiences” (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March). Missy Thangs also has this approach to her works, composing from her “experiences and feelings about what’s going on around her”. Missy says that due “to being a female she is naturally going to bring” the feminine experience or “a feminine quality to her work” (Missy Thangs 2019, interview communication, 31 March). Wood also composes her personal productions on her own experiences. She comments on “craft versus being an artist”. When you’re thinking about yourself as an artist and you’re creating, “whether it’s painting, drawing, or music, the thread that goes between your works is you as the artist. Therefore that’s what people recognize in your work” (C Wood 2019, interview communication, 26 March). Warren finds that she composes music based on her “emotional experiences rather than what’s happening in the outside world”. She believes there are “unintentional nuances in her music that would express her gender. She is a female experiencing life as a female and composes music based on her experiences” and believes that “other females would decode these experiences when listening to her music and relate to them”. When she hears female productions, she can hear “the femininity in the recordings and productions”. Her older compositions

are “like diary entries” with her femininity expressed in the lyrics composed from the feminine perception. She says she likes to “sum up her emotional experiences; if she can’t do this with words then she knows she has to do it in a song” (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April). Botta composes from “her personal experience as a way to come to terms with events”, expressing how she feels as a way of processing. She believes “music works from the inside out”, and the connection to the composer or producer is unavoidable. Botta believes as female producers we express our personal experiences or emotions through the musical product, whether it’s a personal production or for a client. The composer’s/producer’s voice can be heard in the production; for example, “a chord progression or certain riff is chosen as it relates to the producer’s taste” and expression (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March).

Preece also performs gender in the communication of the music, producing female stories with her duo The Ironing Maidens. The Ironing Maidens’ songs express the female domestic duties in the house to address the gender inequalities of females in the home and in the field of music. They “use repetitive lyrics” in the song ‘The Dangers of Ironing’ to “express the repetitive monotony of housework”. The “narrative of the song communicates that the character/protagonist of the story dealing with mental problems, due to this monotony”. They express these feminist stories in music with the ultimate goal of addressing the gender inequalities of females in the domestic sphere. They are trying to “address issues of sharing the load in the home with housework, and male privilege socially and culturally”. The Ironing Maidens “perform on stage with ironing boards, and electronic instruments and synthesizers made out of irons” (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April), showing another aspect of feminine performativity in their works with the use of a domestic object coded as traditionally female and used in the performance of their music. Female producers who perform their music on stage have to take their personal presentation into consideration, unlike male producers who can perform in a T-shirt and jeans. This is largely because women are judged not only on their music but also on how they look. Preece and her partner are “conscious of not playing into traditional assigned gender roles”. As Preece is “more masculine and her partner is more feminine”, Preece wears pink and her partner wears blue to complicate the way in which they portray gender (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). Warren’s on-stage presence illuminates her gender when she performs, as she likes to “wear a dress and makeup, and [she] curls her hair” (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April). A Hundred Drums likes to dress up and “set a vibe” when she plays live. The way she “moves when she is DJing her music onstage” also expresses her femininity due to the fact that the female body moves differently from a male’s (A Hundred Drums 2019, interview communication, 8 March).

Feminine and feminist performativity in music production is evident in many female producers’ practice with: following their gut instinct instead of conventional methods of constructing a mix; focusing on capturing the emotion in a recording; having a socio-political creative influence;

utilizing household domestic devices in the production of music; drawing on a confessional singer-songwriter style of composition; and by making the artist comfortable and not behaving hierarchically with the artist. Arguably, feminine and feminist performativity can be enacted in many female producers' works through their melodic content, their production of a smooth and sensual mix, their personal/political lyrics, and their physical performances on stage. The following analysis focuses on the gendered modalities of music production with the aim of offering a further understanding of the female producer and her practice.

GENDERED MODALITIES OF MUSIC PRODUCTION

Gendered modalities of music production define the modes of music production that exist and are experienced and expressed by many female producers. These modalities of music production are from a tangible, embodied perspective, in correspondence with a person's ontological gender: for example, female, male, or intersex, unlike gender performativity, which is from a non-tangible perspective irrelative to a person's embodied gender: for example, a female can have a masculine performance and vice versa. Consequently, a tension exists with using the terms feminine and feminist to enable a discussion of embodied experiences. Sally Macarthur constructs this embodied perspective as an "autonomous human subject that is variously labelled male or female in order to ground what is being spoken about" (Macarthur 2002: 18). Macarthur comments on the perspective of gender as embodied due to its tangible and social construction:

For all the slipperiness entailed in the notion of a feminist style, it is also imperative to conceive of feminist aesthetics as being grounded and embodied . . . As notions of transcendence, composer, feminists, women, feminine principle, and so on are all constructions of a real, material, social world.

(Macarthur 2002: 20)

Gendered modalities are a tangible social construction, so to analyze these from an embodied perspective is imperative. Eva Riegers' notion is that gender is one of the most important constructs of human behavior. Therefore, gender will influence the way in which men and women produce music (Macarthur 2002: 13). Macarthur states: "Rieger, Citron, and McLary want to claim a space for their women subjects, to suggest that even while working with inherited paradigms and stylistic norms, women compose music differently than men do" (Macarthur 2002: 19). The following analysis discusses the gendered modalities of music production in relation to the practice and works of female producers. Not all female producers feel their practices are feminine though I am exploring the way in which feminine behavior is something celebrated and reclaimed by many women interviewed.

The majority of music production practice is done in recording studios, a sterile space. Though many female producers' approach to practice starts

with making this space an environment to inspire creativity. Riveros's approach to the recording sessions is by concentrating on creating a "welcoming homely space" for her artists (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). Botta has a studio attached to her flat with its own entrance, though at times she hires another studio for clients to work in as well. She also keeps a homely environment in the studio with plants and ornaments, though she says "it's a mess with guitars everywhere" (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March). Van Den Hurk works from her own professional, acoustically built studio within her apartment where she records many bands and artists. Her studio has a "cozy homely atmosphere. It is light filled with a big window and a plant across the window still with a beautiful view of the garden outside the window". She says, "it's quite different to most male producers' studios or man caves" that she's been in. She "put a lot of thought into how she wanted her studio to look" when she was building it and really cared about the "aesthetic" of the studio (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March). Wood, like Van Den Hurk, also has this approach to practice and likes to work in a "light filled environment, not a dark room or cave". Her creative environment is her own studio, which has been "professionally built with acoustic treatments" (C Wood 2019, interview communication, 26 March). Missy Thangs doesn't like working in a sterile environment as it "puts a damper on her creativity". She cares deeply about creating a vibe in the studio and uses "incense and lighting to set the space" for her artists (Missy Thangs 2019, interview communication, 31 March). Preece produces music for her duo The Ironing Maidens from her home studio, which is "a light filled space surrounded by nature with coconut palms and passion fruits growing outside. It is a creative space for jamming and production with a pop theme created with large colorful Lego bricks" (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). A Hundred Drums feels that "colors and visualization help invoke her creativity". Her studio is within her home. The environment is "filled with visual art, instruments and is royal purple to stimulate her mind and creativity". She has an "altar in her studio with candles, animal bones, and crystals" to further stimulate her environment and creativity. Her studio is more than just a music studio; it is her "creative space", the one room where she is "100% raw and in full empowerment of her self-expression". When she enters this space, "the valve to her creativity vessel in her brain completely opens" (A Hundred Drums 2019, interview communication, 8 March). For many, the female producer's practice starts with making the studio an environment to inspire creativity, setting a comfortable space with use of color, ornaments, and nature. The prominent characteristic to the female producers' studio practice is having the studio in the environment of their domestic homes, a feminine space, which has significantly contributed to their development of production skills. Mary Celeste Kearney believes this is due to the fact that "the power and control associated with the producer (Bayton 1998: 6) appears undiminished, even in the digital age (Wikstrom 2009), the ability to avoid such 'grappling' via self-production, therefore, is welcomed by the women here" (Whitley. Ed. Kearney 1997: 218).

Another female mode of music production in practice is related to cleanliness and organization to create a pleasing and calming atmosphere in the studio. Rivero notices that many female producers that she has worked with “are gentler with the equipment and have a cleaner studio environment” (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). Grzesiks’ practice is to prepare for her creativity by “ensuring that all the technical aspects” are ready so she can enter her creative space. This “allows for her process to flow without getting caught up in the technical elements”. The female modality of her music production is evident in her practice with more mindfulness, attention to detail, and organization (A Grzesik 2019, interview communication, 15 March). Van Den Hurk’s studio is very clean and organized. She has “a system for everything” and her studio set up in a particular way for efficiency, suiting her workflow. Van Den Hurk has had someone comment that, “you can clearly see it is a woman’s studio”. She notices that “the studio gets messier sooner when there’s a male engineer” in there (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March). I’d like to acknowledge that not all men are messy and not all women are tidy, though for many women, creating an aesthetically comfortable, pleasing, and calming atmosphere is conducive to productive music-making.

Botta’s approach to practice is to help her clients be comfortable and prepared for the recording sessions so that they capture the desired emotion in the recording. She does this by allowing her artists to rehearse to “get used to using microphones and the studio environment before hitting record” (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March). Van Den Hurk uses her intuition in the studio when working with an artist or client to “pick up on their emotions and stresses” and make them comfortable. When the artist is comfortable, it makes a better recording and session. She does this not only in her actions, but also with how she chooses the “process to flow”. She is conscious of how she communicates with clients. She says, “some clients perform better when you are warm and with others you need to be strict”. She sets the studio space to suit her client by “dimming the lights or lighting candles to make the artist more comfortable” (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March). Preece is more intuitive in the studio. She thinks about every session in the studio as an experience: “It doesn’t matter if you don’t get what you set out to achieve the first time, as each time you can reflect on what happened and go back and change what’s needed. This helps artists to grow and learn their own processes” (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). Warren also feels as a female producer her approach to practice can be “more accommodating in the studio than her male counterparts” (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April). Missy Thangs believes as a female producer she is “very adaptable and can mold to suit” her artist’s style, and connect with the artists. She’s “very malleable and soft, nurturing” and personal to get to the heart and capture the emotional intention of the music, though she can “be a hard ass if need be”. She works with her intuition and “finds out the artist’s intention” for the music and works with this. She likes to “hear what they are doing and find opportunities” in their music to inspire her further with the production (Missy Thangs

2019, interview communication, 31 March). Another female modality of music production in practice is the way that Botta thinks and feels about creating music for someone. Botta feels that most of her clients want to create music that is “really personal to them, songs about breakups” and current life events. She thinks “as a producer they have entrusted their baby to you. It’s special, it’s precious to them and the producer is the one that has to breathe life into it” (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March). Angela McRobbie attests that “[t]he role of the music producer within the popular music industry has been recognized as a profession strongly associated with notions of power and control” (McRobbie 1978: 66–96). These women show that in a female modality of music production, the power and control lie with capturing a great performance. Some of them do this with what might be called a feminine approach to their practice, by making the clients comfortable with a gentle manner, and by using their intuition to read the client’s needs, intentions, and processes.

Gendered modalities of music production can be seen in many female producers’ practice with their workflow. Rivero believes women have different workflows in the studio “as females think differently to males” (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). A Hundred Drums believes females convey things or communicate musically, “due to thinking differently” than men (A Hundred Drums 2019, interview communication, 8 March). Missy Thangs believes that her “interface” of practice is very “effeminate due to women thinking differently to men” (Missy Thangs 2019, interview communication, 31 March). Warren has a unique workflow with the way she “arranges music, as she doesn’t write linear”. She doesn’t start at the intro and work forward (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April).

The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to practice is another female modality of music production. Warren uses DIY in her practice with use of “a USB microphone in a closet with blankets to deaden the room”. She also uses methods of self-teaching with certain gear, though she prefers to have someone walk her through something rather than to read a manual. She enjoys gaining knowledge from video tutorials and gets “more benefit” from these than a manual (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April). Grzesik also uses DIY in her practice with methods of “self-teaching” (A Grzesik 2019, interview communication, 15 March). Preece uses a DIY approach in her production by “fixing our audio gear and making our own cables, instruments, synthesizers and controllers”. The Ironing Maidens also “make their own website and do their own marketing”. Preece also uses methods of self-teaching for learning new gear and techniques (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). Kearney defines the history of DIY as an “anti-corporatist ideology, which grounded various leftist movements, committed to creating non-alienated forms of labor and social relations” (Whitely. Ed. Kearney 1997: 215). Further explaining, feminist DIY has been a major access point for women to create music by providing “safe women-only spaces for the learning of skills as well as rehearsal and performance, challenging ingrained technophobia and giving women the confidence to believe that, like the boys,

they can be music-makers rather than simply music fans” (Whitely. Ed. Kearney 1997: 216).

Feminine modalities of music production are evident in the gentle approach that female producers have to their works. Preece’s feminine modalities of music production are notable in The Ironing Maidens’ music as it is “less aggressive and more about the story in the lyric and political message” that they are sharing. Preece has a gentle approach to processing, including refraining from over-compressing the drums. She explains, “All the production in our music supports our message of the social inequalities of women in the home and in music production” (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). Van Den Hurk doesn’t like to overly compress her sounds and likes them to be more “natural and organic,” compared to some men’s productions which are polished and heavily compressed and “shape the sound heavily, harsh and squeezed into shape” (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March). Warren also has these feminine modalities of production in her works, with gentle processing on the drums, and she regularly uses a wet reverb. She also has a gentle approach to her arranging style and is “not aggressive with muting things” in the mix (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April). Rivero explained that another feminine modality of music production is having less aggression or a gentle touch with the faders. “Women have a different touch on the fader, it’s not aggressive” (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). Grzesik says that typically, males may have an aggressive approach to production and their studio processing, whereas “women may have a lighter touch” when it comes to this. She also adds: “Then how much of this has to do with the fact that men can get away with more”. She gives the example of times when she has gone out on a limb and taken chances with being more aggressive with her processing and “guys have been like, yeah, I don’t think this works here”. She says, “Who knows if a guy tried this same thing he could have gotten away with it”. Although this is of course speculative thinking, this appears to make her think that women’s approaches have less to do with our gendered natures and potentially more to do with our timidity as female producers. We have a subordinate position in the field and studio environment, which impacts our creativity due to “wanting to fit in, be hired again, and please people” (A Grzesik 2019, interview communication, 15 March). A Hundred Drums says she has “some songs that are feminine sounding and others that aren’t feminine at all”. She doesn’t believe that the process of music production is a gendered process, or that she does anything different in the studio compared to males. She has collaborated with male dub-step producers and recognizes similarities that can be explained as “genre-based processing”. Though by contrast, she believes her female modalities of production are subtle in the finer detail of her productions, what she calls “the essence of it” (A Hundred Drums 2019, interview communication, 8 March).

Gendered modalities of music production were revealed in many female producers’ works through their gentle approach to processing, and were evident in many female producers’ practices. Their feminized approaches were demonstrated through the creation of homely spaces to create in,

cleanliness, organization, a unique workflow in the studio, and the use of DIY culture. The approach to practice these women have shown with their clients in regards to using their intuition to read what the client wants and needs, and their softer personality styles as producers, are arguably gendered modalities of music production.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that while the experience of one's gender may not be conscious in an approach to music production, the feminine manifests as a distinct aesthetic throughout this analysis. Many participants found it hard to think about music as gendered. Wood remarked that "music is math and emotion" and doesn't believe in the cultural anthropological perspectives to music theory. She thinks "of herself as human" and found it hard to judge the femininity in her practice (C Wood 2019, interview communication, 26 March). This demonstrates the fact that women's approaches to music production are diverse and that not all female producers will or will seek to express femininity through their practice. Farrugia notes the disadvantages that female electronic music producers face when their music is categorized as women's music, which results in harsher criticism and potentially distances male fans and lessens the amount of airplay as electronic music is mostly consumed by and generated through male DJs (Farrugia 2012: 68). Macarthur explains that some believe the label 'women's music' illustrates the perspective that it is separate from men's music, illuminating the perspective that men's music is simply music (Macarthur 2002: 2). Many women want to gain recognition for their music production practice, but they want it to happen without reference to their gender, with the belief that relating gender to practice diminishes the impact of their work. Like myself, Macarthur was also aware of demonstrating the difference of the feminine aesthetic to celebrate validity in the practice of females. She says: "It becomes obvious that I want to demonstrate its difference in order to celebrate its worth. On the other hand, it is apparent that I am painfully aware of the deficiencies involved in such an argument" (Macarthur 2002: 3). I believe these deficiencies will dissolve along with the gender inequalities in music production with further research and representation of the female producer and her practice. Celebrating the feminine aesthetics of music production and focusing on the representation of females in the environment of music production will eliminate the sense of devaluation that female producers feel with the intersection of their gender and practice. By acknowledging that women, just like men, bring a range of skills into the process of music production, those of us who feel passionate about this subject will help balance the female-to-male producer ratio and generate more awareness of women's productions.

Many believe the representation of music production in the media leads to the belief that production is a male domain. In the majority of discourse around the subject and on social media, the representation of a producer is male, with images of "a male behind the console or with a boom mic" (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February). There is a lack

of articles written about female producers, and even the high-achieving female producer lacks publicity in the media. Botta noticed that articles on the male producer of the year are prevalent in the media and feels “there is a natural gravitation to write about male producers” (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March). Lieb comments on how important media representations of the female are to be interpreted as a reality for the audience:

Historically, women have been underrepresented in the music industry and in society (e.g., women only got the right to vote in 1920 – less than 100 years ago). This makes the few representations of women that we see all the more important from a social influence standpoint.
(Lieb 2013: 163)

Preece believes “as an educator that research into the female producer and her practice needs to be researched and published in the academic world,” leading to a larger representation of females in the field. That will “benefit the culture of music production with assets to everyone in the industry, males included” (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April). Grzesik feels “the more that we see women involved in this industry, the more women will feel comfortable joining the industry” (A Grzesik 2019, interview communication, 15 March). Providing the dominant ideology and identity of a music producer as a male not only marginalizes over half of society, but it can also lead to issues in regards to the creation of identities for female producers in the industry and those wanting to access the industry. Marian Wright Edelman explained: “You can’t be what you can’t see” (Marian Wright Edelman; Spelman College 1959). We need more female role models of music producers to be represented in the media and in music production discourse. This will address the gendered assumptions and “inspire more women to the field” (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February), giving aspiring women producers someone to identify with.

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NOTES

1. Fieke Van Den Hurk is a studio producer/engineer from Graveland, a small village half an hour from Amsterdam, in The Netherlands. She has a Masters of Music degree and has worked for Wisseloord Studios since 2012 as an engineer.

She also has her own studio called Dearworld Studio. Van Den Hurk has worked with many known artists including Ozark Henry, Candy Dulfer, Eivør, Anna Rune, Kingfisher Sky, and the Rembrandt Frerichs Trio (F Van Den Hurk 2019, interview communication, 27 March).

2. Sophie Botta is an artist/producer and studio producer/engineer from Sydney, Australia. Having graduated from a Bachelor of Music with a major in Audio Engineering, Botta has worked across the live and studio scene on a variety of projects in a diversity of genres including jazz, pop, and world music (S Botta 2019, interview communication, 17 March).
3. Missy Thangs is a studio producer from North Carolina, USA. With a degree in Recording Arts, she started out working on her own productions, and then went on to writing and performing with No One Mind and Birds of Avalon. Thangs currently works at Fidelitorium studio as a producer and engineer and has worked with many renowned artists including Ian McLagan, Ex Hex (Merge Records), Avett Brothers, Birds of Avalon, Las Rosas (Burger Records), Pie Face Girls, Jenny Besestzt, The Tills, and Skemäta (Missy Thangs 2019, interview communication, 31 March).
4. Amelia Warren is an artist/producer/DJ from Austin, Texas, USA. Amelia produces her own productions, along with working with clients to produce their works. She works as a freelance engineer and producer at Dub Academy Studio and South by Southwest Studio. She has a Bachelor degree in Songwriting and a Masters of production, technology, and innovation, which was completed at the University of California, Berkeley (A Warren 2019, interview communication, 12 April).
5. Patty Preece is a studio artist/producer/DJ from Cairns, Australia, producing in a duo called The Ironing Maidens. An award-winning electronic duo, The Ironing Maidens are putting domestic labor, technology, and the history of women in electronic music center stage with their live electronic performance art piece. Preece is also a lecturer at Southern Cross University in Cairns, Australia in the music tech field. She entered the field of music production through the health field and played drums in a band. She has completed a Diploma of music production and a Bachelor Degree of Audio Production (P Preece 2019, interview communication, 2 April).
6. Catharine Wood is a studio producer/composer/engineer from Los Angeles, USA. Beginning her career in audio in 2005, she has worked in audio post-production for commercials, engineering on the first Apple iPhone commercial, and as a mix/mastering engineer, engineering over 500 commercially released songs. Her company, Planetwood Studios, specializes in producing singer-songwriters and providing engineering, production, and composition services to the TV and film industries. Wood is also a Grammy Voting Member and Producers and Engineers Wing member (C Wood 2019, interview communication, 26 March).
7. Karina Rivero is a producer and a recording, post-production, and mastering engineer, from Mexico City, Mexico. She has worked in a recording studio/post facility for the last four years and has a Bachelor and Honors of Music Production (K Rivero 2019, interview communication, 7 February).
8. A Hundred Drums is an artist/producer/DJ from Grass Valley, Nevada, USA. She has been producing electronic music for the past five years. A Hundred Drums is a self-taught producer, though many mentors have helped guide and

support her along with further developing her self-taught skills. She has performed at many renowned events including Coachella, Lucidity, Enchanted Forest, and Bamboo Bass Festivals (A Hundred Drums 2019, interview communication, 8 March).

9. Ania Grzesik is a studio producer practicing in the New York City Metropolitan area, USA. With over 17 years of professional experience, her current practice is focused on freelance podcast production and sound design, though she has previously worked in recording studios and live sound in theatres and music events (A Grzesik 2019, interview communication, 15 March).

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Outreach: Organizations and Current Initiatives

■ Pull

In her book, *Pull*, Dr. Pamela Laird describes how throughout history, the concept of “social capital” has determined the upward mobility of American citizens. She dispels the notion of the “self-made man,” showing that famous figures such as Ben Franklin and Andrew Carnegie each had help from networks that enabled them. “By the late 1980s,” she writes, “it became clear that nobody can penetrate a workplace ceiling without pull from above. That pull requires social capital” (Laird).

“Terms such as ‘glass ceiling,’ ‘networking,’ ‘mentor,’ ‘gatekeeper,’ ‘keeper,’ and ‘role model’ have become buzz words in the social capital lexicon over the past four decades,” she writes. As mentioned in the preface to this book, there seems to be a “women’s version” of every modern professional society. Characteristic of these groups is the mission of “fostering their own members’ business success,” as distinct from the goal of merely furthering study in a given occupation (Ibid.).

For example, in 1915 the Medical Women’s National Association (now known as the American Medical Women’s Association) stated its purpose was “to bring Medical Women into communication with each other for their mutual advantage” and engaged making post-graduate training opportunities available as well as publicizing internships (Ibid.). Laird gives several such examples from the early twentieth century.

In the pages that follow, we see that the trend has continued today. The advent of social media has made possible all of the essential ingredients for “Pull”: networks, mentoring, and role models (Ibid.). Just a few of the organizations engaged in this work are profiled in this book; altogether there are now more than 60 groups working to elevate the visibility of and resources available to women in audio (see Appendix 2: Women’s Audio Organizations).

■ Digital Audio Eco Feminism

Researcher **Dr. Liz Dobson** contributed a chapter to the book, *Creativities in Arts Education, Research and Practice* called “Digital Audio Eco Feminism (DA’EF): The Glocal¹ Impact of All-Female Communities on Learning and Sound Creativities” (Leon et al., 2018).

The goal of the study was to examine the emergence of woman-centered, music technology-focused organizations and how they were engaging with and creating change within this traditionally male-dominated space.

Dobson traveled to the USA and engaged in a qualitative research study with Beats By Girlz, Women’s Audio Mission, The Seraphine Collective, The Girls Rock Camp Alliance,

and the Society of Women in TeCHnology. The conversations led to three observed “themes” that emerged:

- how the minority centers the marginalized,
- DA’EF learning and creativities, and
- the challenging economics of DA’EF organizing (Dobson, 2018).

Dobson heard that the “identity and presence a few women can draw attention to the absence of many (the marginalized).” In response to this marginalization, women’s music technology groups have created social capital (see: “Pull” earlier in this chapter) as well as cultural, economic, and social capital. They have done this by creating spaces, programs, and social activism (Ibid.).

With respect to “learning and creativities,” Dobson documented the natural emergence of “interthinking situations, where people with diverse experiences and backgrounds are thinking together, solving problems and developing knowledge jointly through dialogue” (Ibid.). Another name for this might be peer-learning.

Finally, the economics of organizing: **Terri Winston** confides that “[people] don’t realize . . . what it’s taking for us to do this. It’s taking the concentrated efforts of five staff members and 18 board members and all of the people that support Women’s Audio Mission which is lot of people. So, it’s 1300–1500 pages of grants every year. It’s an incredible amount of energy” (Ibid.).

Dobson concludes, in part, that women bear the great burden of trying to increase the participation of women in the field, but that “as a global society we need to find better ways of taking collective responsibility for gender inequalities, and to develop strategies that do not further deplete potential contributions of women who are sound, digital audio and music experts.”

■ Erin Barra and Beats By Girlz (USA)

Erin Barra didn’t like being called “The Ableton Lady,” but after talking with her publicist, decided to surrender to it. “If that’s what people want and that’s where the traction is . . . I’ll go for it” (Barra). Since starting her work with Ableton in 2012, she still freelances with them. She is currently an associate professor at Berklee College of Music and Berklee Online, and one of the primary authors of the 2018 study, “Women in the U.S. Music Industry” (see Chapter 1).

Barra is one of the pioneering electronic singer/songwriters using digital technology on stage. “There was always Imogen Heap and Björk . . . but it was almost esoteric in a way, especially the way the technologies were being presented, and I feel like what I ended up doing was extremely digestible to a lot of people. It was pretty stripped-down live looping, live sampling, playing instruments, singing songs, but in a context that people gravitated towards. And I made a lot of videos. It’s interesting, because now you see lots of women creating videos in their bedrooms of their songs using laptops or digital technologies. When I started, there really wasn’t anyone else doing it. So, I think I had a lot of impact on other female singer/songwriters getting into technology. I think the massive impact was 2010–2013; I was hitting it hard as an artist, and now I’m on the backend of that, helping other artists to do what I was doing” (Barra).



Erin Barra, founder of Beats by Girlz

“I use a lot of MIDI controllers and synthesizers. Things have changed so much. At first, I used a Wurlitzer A200 that would break all the time,” she recalls. “I also used the Virus T1, the APC 40, and a Melodica, then shifted to working more ‘in the box.’” Now she uses Ableton Push, a lot of Akai products (like the LPK 25 and LPD 8), the Novation launch pad, Launch Key, Roli Seaboard, and Roli Blocks. “That’s just the hardware,” she says (Ibid.).

In her previous work, she was using digital tech and doing well, but people were more interested in how she was making music as opposed to the music itself. “That’s when I started to let go of the artist identity and started to become who I am” (Ibid.).

Beats by Girlz was founded in 2013. “We are making a huge difference,” she says. “You can tell in the response we get: there are three people a month wanting to start chapters in their communities. We license everything for free as long as they are offering seats in the classroom” (Ibid.).

The curriculum, designed by Barra, is Ableton-based with options to study the Ableton Push or not. “It is written so people have fun right away,” she explains. “It is application-based, rather than describing how mechanisms work. We get people excited” (Ibid.).

There are different Beats By Girlz communities based on locale. “Each community is different and they provide the community with what they need: support, hardware, curriculum, resources, etc. Minneapolis is extremely vibrant! They have really run with it and they have a great group of women spearheading it. And we help” (Ibid.).

Originally the concept was funded by the Lower East Side Girls Club in New York. Now Beats by Girlz have fundraisers, donations, silent auctions, and raffles, which keep the overhead very low. But Barra says, “No matter how you do it, it’s hard” (Ibid.).

The students share their content, and the student profiles are online at www.beatsbygirlz.com/student-features. “It’s less about the tools and more about letting women have an experience. It informs who they believe themselves to be. Maybe they become coders or game programmers. It is a gateway” (Ibid.).

“The takeaway is *role support*. The sheer fact of having someone to look at who is representative of people who aren’t represented enough makes more of an impact. When I came to Berklee, I was the only woman teaching this class (Ableton). But now 14 out of 15 people in my class are women and there is role support and they are excited. That is the latest pathway to raising visibility. Perception is more important than skills” (Ibid.) (Barra).

To learn more, visit BeatsByGirlz.org.

Fun Facts: Ableton Live and Ableton Push

Simply put, Ableton Live (released in 2001) is software that allows users to create music. Its interface has revolutionized music-making, production, and live performance. Ableton’s interface is relatively intuitive. A user can begin making music by watching videos and completing tutorials in the program. However, there is an opportunity to go much, much deeper by linking controls and parameters together within the program. Ableton Live for Max also allows users to interface with Cycling 74’s Max/MSP and use MIDI commands to control just about anything you can imagine. The Ableton Push is a hardware controller that allows users to create sequences and interact with Ableton on the fly.

Ableton has become an industry giant, hosting the annual Loop conference and offering the highly sought after “Ableton Certified Trainer” title. They even offer refurbished units of the Ableton Push to high school music programs, offering children – who in some cases have no access to acoustic instruments – an opportunity to learn music and technology (Slater, 2017).

■ Phebean Adedamola Oluwagbemi (Nigeria)

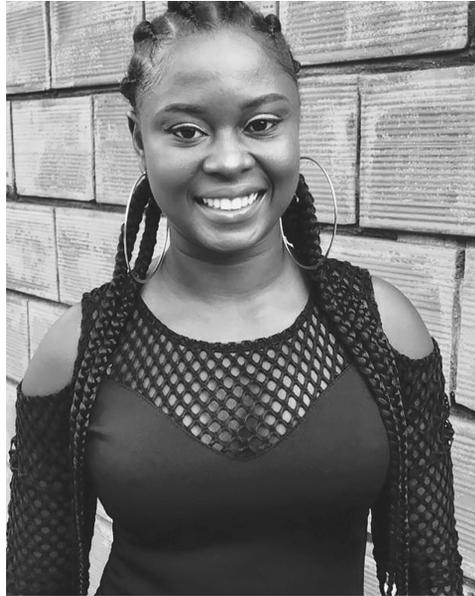
Phebean Adedamola Oluwagbemi is one of the few women doing audio engineering in Nigeria, specifically live sound. She would guess there are less than 10 in the entire country.

Febe first got an internship to train with Edward Sunday at Azusa Productions and has done many large- and small-scale productions. “When it comes to concert production, that is my strength,” she says. “I also do studio recording and mastering but mostly handle rehearsals and recording sessions at Azusa.”

She currently plans to further her studies and pursue a degree in sound design for film. “I’m looking at traveling to do that,” she explains. “Traveling would afford more opportunities, and I could network with people who are already doing this. We do not have enough people in Nigeria who do sound design for film on a professional level, but we do have music producers who do sound design on the side. This is one area that is really lacking” (Gaston).

■ Audio Girl Africa (Nigeria)

“I started Audio Girl Africa when I discovered the gender gap/disparity in the field,” recalls **Phebean Adedamola Oluwagbemi**. “I started reaching out and discovered that we didn’t even make up one percent in any field to do with audio production. That’s for Africa in general.” She tried Ghana and South Africa and found there were maybe one in a 100 or one in 50. “And they didn’t know each other,” she continues. “So, Audio Girl Africa empowers



Phebean Adedamola Oluwagbemi (Febe), founder of Audio Girl Africa



Phebean Adedamola at work

African women who would like to take up careers in audio production and engineering. We are committed to increasing the level of involvement of African women in audio technology by providing the necessary resources and right support system, regardless of your gender, as long as you have a passion for it” (Adedamola),³⁴



(L-R): Audrey Aramide Bada, Phebean (Febe) Oluwagbemi, Mercy Kisusa, Joy Elumezie, Folusho Ogunjob

Audio Girl Africa has so far run two successful workshops in Lagos and Ibadan for 60 girls in total. At the workshop, they used a Behringer X32 mixer and taught the girls audio signal flow. Girls as young as 12 attended the one-day workshop. They also offered a music production class with FL Studio and PreSonus Studio One software (Ibid.).

Just as importantly, the experience continued after the workshop. Participants were given access to an online platform to do more audio work and to have weekly chats with girls in the field. They are developing a mentoring program where mentors can be anywhere in the world, but it is also important for the girls to have Black women in Africa as role models (Ibid.).

Febe is now looking at how to support the girls with school and internship opportunities and help them become certified. Now they are looking at a site for girls from different countries to come together, creating opportunities to study, get placements, and get to know the industry better. “In four to five years we want to create an institute where girls can get certified” (Ibid.).

You can learn more about Audio Girl Africa at www.audiogirlafrica.com.

■ Female Frequency (USA)



According to their website, “Female Frequency is a community dedicated to empowering female, transgender & non-binary artists through the creation of music that is entirely female generated” (Frequency, c. 2019).

“We keep everything open to everybody no matter how you identify. We try to keep everything that we put out there friendly in that way . . . so nobody feels like they’re not welcome,” says founder **Dani Mari**. “I realize we’re in a new time where we’re all trying to figure out what pronoun to use and how to properly communicate that. I think it’s still a little bit gray. I’ve also noticed some of the pronouns that are used on the East Coast are different than the West Coast, and I’m sure it’s different when you go to different countries as well. If we ever had a situation where somebody felt like the direction of the workshop or anything we said made them feel like they weren’t included, we would definitely be open to any kind of feedback to make sure that we’re be making everybody feel comfortable” (Mari).

Female Frequency is based in New York and Los Angeles and hosts workshops for women in audio. For example, one of their early events featured Psychic Twin (Erin Fein and Rosana Cabán). “They came in and talked about their live setup and recording process and then they played a live set. Afterwards, they let people come up and try out the different instruments and vocal pedals. They also had a SoundGirl running sound for the workshop. We found that model [for workshops] to be really great, because no matter what their level or experience, the participants can get something out of it: whether they’re a musician and they want to know more about how to use the equipment live on stage, or if it’s somebody that’s working on a recording and wants to know more about a certain DAW, or someone that is a fan of the music and wants to hear a live show. We also have been hosting workshops about how to do a live sound check. We did that recently here in Brooklyn with SoundGirls and Tom Tom Magazine” (Ibid.).

Female Frequency has workshops in Brooklyn and in Los Angeles. For more information, visit www.femalefrequency.com.

Dani Mari (USA)

In a project reminiscent of the 1970s project *The Changer and the Changed* (see Chapter 1), **Dani Mari** wanted to make an album featuring all women. “I reached out to Women In Music back in the day to find a female producer to work with. **Julie Kathryn** (I Am Snow Angel) reached back out to me. We met up for coffee and when we talked about making an album together we said, ‘Hey, why don’t we make an album made entirely by women?’ So from that we invited Claire London to help out, and the three of us created Female Frequency – initially with the mission of creating an album made entirely by women. Through that experience, we met **Karrie Keyes** from SoundGirls who introduced us to some of the engineers that we worked with on the album.” **Jett Galindo** is one of the engineers, along with Kerry Pompeo, Dara Hirsch, Steph Durwin, and Kimberly Thompson. Maria Rice was the mastering engineer.

“I always kind of saw myself as a singer-songwriter like Carole King,” says Mari, “but I never thought of myself as being a producer or running sound or being behind the soundboard because I wasn’t exposed to seeing women in that position at that time. After the experience of working with Female Frequency it opened my eyes to all different women in audio that have been doing it for a long time that I really respect and admire. From that experience



Dani Mari, cofounder of Female Frequency

Source: Photo credit Angelys Ocana

I co-produced an album with Rosana Cabán who was the drummer for Psychic Twin, and have gained the confidence to produce music on my own. My latest project is called ‘Primitive Heart’” (Mari).

Female Frequency has been influential not only for other women, but for Mari as well.

“I’ve held myself back in the past with not doing things that I didn’t think I could, or I didn’t see other people like me doing that.” When asked what young and novice readers should know, she replies that you should not be afraid to try things. “There is a strong network of women out there that can help you with finding resources, or education and mentoring, or whatever you want to be able to reach your goals – whatever you want to be involved in audio.”

As an example, she points again to **Karrie Keyes** as an amazing resource. “I’m so inspired by her, she’s been really helpful. When we first started Female Frequency we didn’t really know what direction we wanted to go, and we were still figuring things out. She was just really helpful with that. She has been a great supporter of us and a lot of other women’s organizations” (Ibid.).



I Am Snow Angel (Julie Kathryn), cofounder of Female Frequency

Source: Photo credit Julia Drummond

I Am Snow Angel (USA)

Julie Kathryn from northern New York goes by the stage name I Am Snow Angel. She received a BA in Psychology from Cornell University and an MS in social work. She wasn't trained as an engineer; rather she "stumbled into production," she says. "I was always musical but also nerdy," she says, mentioning her love of AP (Advanced Placement) Calculus. "So, it was creativity plus OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) mathematical precision." She played gigs and open mics but admits she struggled with the vocabulary and with speaking up. She took songwriting lessons with Tony Conniff, who taught her how to use GarageBand. She started using the synths within the software to make demos at home and fell in love with it. "I was *activated*," she recalls. "I stayed up all night" (Kathryn).

She estimates that her progression from experimentation to proficiency took about four years, at which time she became a full-service producer and sound designer. During that time Conniff taught her Logic Pro, and she met and worked with producer-engineer Jason Cummings. She also worked with **Erin Barra**, learning how to use Ableton Live in the fall of 2013. "It felt like an even playing field," she says of meeting Barra. "I thought, 'Hey, I can do this.'" Mike Doughty (of the avant-garde group Soul Coughing) had a remix contest, which she won. Her brother offered her some inspiring words. "I have faith in you. I think you're going to claw your way in," recalls Kathryn (Ibid.).

She cofounded **Female Frequency** with **Dani Mari**, who was looking for a female producer to create an album with female artwork, songwriting, engineering, and producing.

"I was good at math and computers, but when I had to learn GarageBand, I thought, 'Nah, that's not for me.' Why did I think that? It's a combination of not seeing women doing

it. It feeds on itself. So many subtle cues come from outside and reinforce themselves. So when I show up with my gear people ask, ‘who programs your set for you?’ It gets patronizing. There’s an assumption that femaleness is not attached to engineering” (Ibid.).

The mission of Female Frequency is to raise the visibility of female, transgender, and nonbinary artists and engineers. Producers create their own music. “I now have more female clients than I can take. We make all the music ourselves,” says Kathryn.

■ Women in Sound Zine and Madeleine Campbell (USA)

“Music has always been part of my life,” says **Madeleine Campbell**, author and publisher of *Women in Sound*, a magazine featuring interviews with women in the field. “I grew up always playing in school orchestras . . . I studied piano and cello. I auditioned at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, and took cello all 4 years and took audio classes, and that got the ball rolling. Between that and recording friends for fun, once I left school I continued to do studio work” (Campbell).

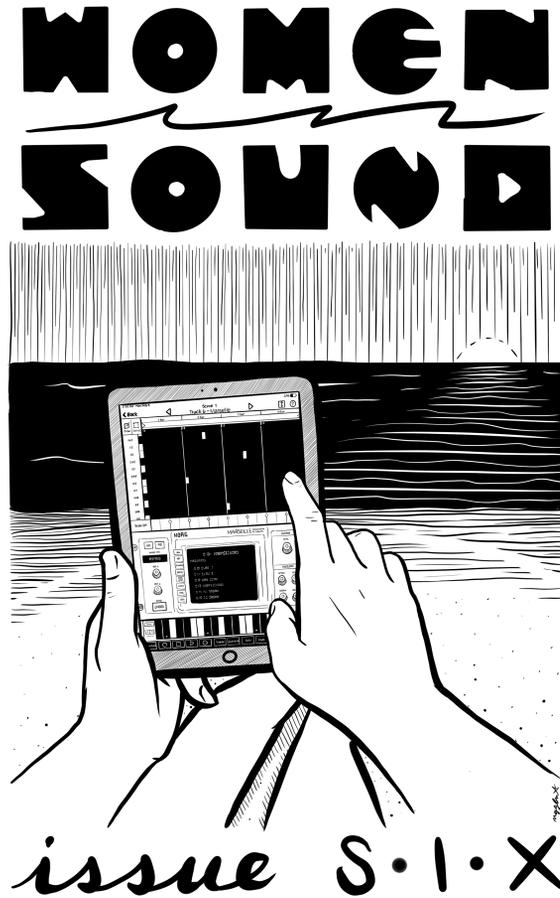
Eventually she found a venue called Brillobox. “The bartender tapped me on the shoulder and said, ‘Hey, you work in sound, don’t you? We need another sound tech.’ I told him I’d done recording but not live, but the engineer was so gracious and showed me how to use a digital board, since I had only used analog boards to that point.” Then she got a call from Hebra Kadry, who had heard she was doing front of house and introduced her to a band that needed an engineer (Ibid.).

“I didn’t set out to make a zine. I just wanted to connect with more women in the field,” she says. “And where I was, I was the only woman in the studio where I interned and didn’t



Women in Sound, Issue 1

Source: Artwork by Elly Dallas



Women in Sound, Issue 6

Source: Artwork by Maggie Negrete

know women in the field. I started scouring liner notes and found quite an incredible community.” Campbell was interning at Treelady Studios in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She started working on the zine in 2014 and released the first issue in October 2015 (Ibid.).

Her latest issue, number six, has already sold out. “I’ll do a reprint soon. It’s hard to keep up, especially when I leave for a couple of months at a time” (Gaston). Issue number seven is in pre-production. Over the course of the zine’s five-year history, she has done interviews with over 72 studio and mastering engineers, live engineers, and artists/producers (Ibid.).

You can learn more about the Women in Sound zine at www.womeninsound.com.

■ Gender Amplified (USA)

In 2006, **Ebonie Smith** proposed a thesis focused on hip-hop music production for her undergraduate degree in Africana Studies at Barnard College, Columbia University. Upon

doing research about the field and finding a dearth of female producers, she talked to her thesis advisor, Kim Hall, about setting up a conference called “Gender Amplified: Women and Technological Innovation in Hip Hop” (Smith, 2013).

With support from the Barnard Center for Research on Women, the Africana Studies Program, and Dean Vivian Taylor, she had a support system that made the conference a success. On April 14, 2007, the event launched. Highlights of the day included a networking brunch, keynote, a screening of “Lady Beat Makers, Volume 1” by Feminixx.com founder Tachelle Wilks, a conversation with DJ Spinderella (of Salt N’ Pepa), and a panel discussion. The evening ended with performances by DJ Rheka, DJ Sparkles, and DJ Ayana Soyini (Ibid.).

Energized by the event, Smith established Gender Amplified as “a non-profit organization that aims to celebrate women in music production, raise their visibility and develop a pipeline for girls and young women to get involved behind the scenes as music producers.”

In 2017, Gender Amplified joined Art Girl Army to get girls into music production and audio engineering, co-hosting a hands-on workshop followed by a conversation with artist/activist Genesis Be on “how to combine production techniques and political activism in powerful ways” (Gaston-Bird, 2017a).

More recently, Gender Amplified had a landmark year in 2019 with the creation of a music production camp initiative called the CTRL ROOM series in partnership with Atlantic Records and the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at NYU. They brought together top artists, aspiring student musicians, and established music producers from the Gender Amplified community. Prominent artists who participated included Elle Varner, Spencer Ludwig, and Coco & Breezy (Mengesha, 2019).

You can learn more about Gender Amplified at www.genderamplified.org.



Ebonie Smith, founder and president of Gender Amplified, in 2019

■ Ebonie Smith (USA)

When **Ebonie Smith** was four years old, her mother bought her an album, *Blacks' Magic* by Salt-N-Pepa. “That album set the tone for who I would become as a woman and as a human being,” she says. “Also, I adored listening to the radio in the car. It always had to be on. As a kid I developed a very emotional relationship to music and to sound” (Gaston-Bird, 2017a).

She also played basketball and wanted to go to the WNBA, but instead she chose to go to Barnard College and got a campus job as an audio/visual technician. “It exposed me to the world of audio recording, and I have never looked back.” She went on to earn a master’s degree in Music Technology from New York University and now works as an audio engineer and producer for Atlantic Records (Ibid.).

In 2016, Smith received a Grammy certificate for her work as assistant engineer on *Hamilton, the Original Broadway Cast Album*. When anyone asks her about the obstacles she encountered, she says she doesn’t know how to answer them. “There is always this assumption that I have struggled because I am a woman. Music is the most enjoyable thing I do in life, and my career has been pretty smooth. Nevertheless, I would never negate the fact that there is gender-based inequality in the world or deny that women face challenges in all professional areas. However, questions about challenges and obstacles shouldn’t overshadow the other myriad points I could address about audio and music production” (Ibid.).

Her commitment to supporting women and girls in music production led her to found **Gender Amplified, Inc.**



Ebonie Smith, founder and president of Gender Amplified

Source: Photo credit Xavier Li

The Creator's Suite (USA)

"I want **The Creator's Suite** to be a prominent force in the movement to bring gender equity to the music industry." **Abhita Austin**, founder of The Creator's Suite, has found her calling, to play her role in being a catalyst for change for women in the industry. "I'm not about sitting back and talking about it. To me it's about creating opportunities for us to flourish." On The Creator's Suite's Instagram page, she doesn't use the hashtag #women in her posts. "I don't hashtag 'women' anything. I want to normalize our presence so when you think 'music production' you think 'women and men.' You can find everything I'm doing with women in music production under #thecreatorssuite" (Austin).

But something interesting happened with the audience of her newly created Instagram page. "It was 65% male and 35% female," she recalls. "And it was interesting to watch how men just thought it looked cool and followed the page, but they slowly started to realize this is a space for women. Now it's 35% male. What I'm trying to do is bring more visibility to the musical and technical excellence of women in music production. These women have been here. I'm just putting a spotlight on them" (Ibid.).

The Creator's Suite's social media presence features profiles and live Instagram chats with female producers. Their signature event, "Input < > Output," takes place in New York and is an opportunity to watch some of the most talented women producers perform their music live and then break down their creative process (Ibid.).

To support the endeavor, Austin has moved into the corporate audio-visual sector and closed her boutique recording studio Hidden Chapel Studios. Instead she says, "the goal now is to put my energy into The Creator's Suite and build this much-needed platform for women in music production. And the feedback that I've been getting is crazy! There were 200-plus



An event held by The Creator's Suite

Source: Photo by Kevin Vallejos, courtesy of The Digilogue

women at our annual Celebration of Women In Music Production this past March. One woman who attended said that she was crying during the beat cypher portion of the program. Another woman said she was on our page for 30 minutes and told me, ‘this is the most amazing experience, I can’t believe this’ . . . I mean this is incredible. It’s really fulfilling, but it screams that this type of space for women to see themselves is desperately needed. The end goal is to create an online education platform for women in music production, by women in music production.” You can find out more about The Creator’s Suite at www.thecreatorssuite.com (Ibid.).

■ Abhita Austin (USA)

During high school, **Abhita Austin** was a drummer and a visual artist and enjoyed running track. Gradually she became interested in music production. She started at New York University with an undeclared major. “It was kind of a blur because these concepts of audio production were new to me. Even when I first started assisting, I was still figuring things out, because it’s different when you get in a room with a client” (Austin).

Austin received a bachelor of music in music technology at NYU. While still attending NYU, she got her opportunity to work in the industry when she scored an internship at Quad Recording Studios. “They tested you to see if you were ready to be an audio assistant. There was such an influx of interns at the time. So I passed that test, but you’re still figuring out a lot of things.”

After interning and graduating to an assistant engineer at Quad, she went to the Cutting Room. “They paid me, like, a dollar more,” recalls Austin. “And I was just hopping



Abhita Austin, founder of The Creator’s Suite

Source: Photo by Claudia Hayden



Austin during her time at NYU

around, assisting; I worked at Kampo which was across the street. During this time, I was drumming in an all female band, and someone in the band got connected with the VP of the A&R department at Warner Brothers Records, and he was working at Chung King. He was so interested in our band, that he let us use the room that he had a long-term rental on – ‘the Purple Room’. That VP found out I was an engineer and started putting me on sessions. That was around 2000 when tape machines were going out of the studios and they were bringing in Pro Tools rigs.”

Austin began engineering on bigger name sessions, with popular celebrities like Da Brat, Anthony Hamilton, and Common. Over time, however, freelancing and the audio engineer’s lifestyle became draining. “I got burned out. I didn’t know that becoming an audio engineer meant you were signing up to be an entrepreneur. I was tired of being paid after 90 days and chasing record companies for my checks. I got spiritually drained, so I stopped” (Ibid.).

She started working a nine-to-five job for a few years, but she began to miss being in the studio. Eventually she moved back to Long Island, New York, and worked for Sabella Recording Studios. “It was cool because it was all live instruments and rock bands. I was used to drum programming with MPC’s and vocal miking, so I had to start as an assistant again.

“But it was great because I learned how to properly tune and track drums. The studio’s clientele was mostly rock, but had a strong jazz and classical community of musicians that booked sessions. There were also a lot of Haitian artists recording konpa and zook records.”

During her time at Sabella Recording Studios, from 2004 to 2009, Austin learned how to run a recording studio. “I was calling record companies, creating studio tours; I learned Photoshop, I was promoting the studio. That’s where I started to put together advertisements and learn about marketing” (Ibid.).

Before long, she decided to go into business for herself and created Hidden Chapel Studios. “My dad planted that in my head. He said ‘there’s a cap on your success if you’re working for somebody else,’ she recalls (Ibid.).

Austin would soon discover that diversifying and putting all of her talents to use would have tremendous payoff. “I had a client I was recording audio for, and I happened to have a USB flip camera,” she says. “I put it on a tripod and recorded the session to give them an extra perk. I edited the video and added ‘lower third’ titles in iMovie, and the client said, ‘Oh my God, this is amazing! So they hired me to do 32 more videos. And I thought, ‘This could be a thing!’” That’s when she fell in love with the fusion of audio and video (Ibid.).

Around 2013, she met **Ebonie Smith**. She began volunteering with **Gender Amplified**, first as an instructor and then doing videography and social media work for them. Austin also became involved with the Pushing Buttons Collective, an inclusive space for men and women interested in beatmaking. Recently in 2018 Austin was accepted to NEW INC – The New Museum’s incubator for creatives working at the intersection of art, design, and technology. She currently freelances with American Express and Simon & Schuster Audio as she continues to support a global community of women in music production through The Creator’s Suite.

■ Yorkshire Sound Women Network (England)

“In order to learn,” says **Dr. Liz Dobson**, “We have to be in an environment which is lower risk, which – in this case – means not being the only woman in a world which associates masculinity and technology; to remove that risk to be in a community of peers; and to have a chance to put your hands on and use equipment. To make mistakes and learn from that” (Dobson).

Dobson studied child psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who showed “how language is a tool for higher mental development” (Ibid.). Together with the study of social/cultural capital and her previous research in the social psychology of collaboration and creative output in music technology situations, Dobson was inspired to invite women to join her for the first meeting of the **Yorkshire Sound Women Network** in Huddersfield, England, in 2015.

Further inspiration for the project came from The Women’s Institute, the largest voluntary women’s organization in the UK, where women come together and empower each other (Institutes).

The first challenge in defining their long-term goals was to reconcile the range of articulated desires of a diverse group. Some were good project managers who wanted to shape

long-term change, others with a more immediate wish to *do* and *create*. “There’s a feeling that it’s sort of an emergency,” she says, and a fear of not getting things right the first time. “I believe that all of this is important, in a sense, but it’s not an emergency because if we think of it that way we are going to burn out. We have to pace ourselves and we have to be sustainable.” She also reiterates that there are multiple organizations dedicated to the cause of encouraging women in music technology. “We don’t have to do things the same way, all of these things are complementary” (Dobson).

One key development for YSWN was obtaining funding from the University of Huddersfield for a project manager, who has since brought in multiple grants. They now deliver a massive portfolio according to the agreed-upon YSWN business plan, which includes strategic priorities around education, community, and advocacy to industry. “For example, with our Youth Music fund we have been funded to deliver 20 workshops in schools, create two new music tech clubs for girls and some new industry internships. Also, when organizations with little or no funding approach us looking for women to hire, we reiterate that [budget-less] approach is detrimental to women’s success and encourage the organizations work harder at finding the funds, which they ultimately do. It means we are making a difference,” says Dobson.

In their first three years, they held 80 workshops. Their activities also involved mentoring, skill-sharing, musical performances, and creative events throughout the region of Yorkshire (where Huddersfield is located). You can find out more about Yorkshire Sound Women at yorkshiresoundwomen.com.

■ International Women Working in Film

“The idea for International Women Working in Film began 3 days before the 2018 Oscars. That was the year of Francis McDormand’s now-famous **inclusion rider** speech.

“I was running out of patience with male cries of ‘reverse discrimination’ whenever someone posted on social media asking specifically for a woman production sound mixer for a job. I felt it was a knee-jerk reaction from men. They weren’t asking *why* a woman might be wanted for that job and it was absurd that we ended up being labeled as difficult and discriminatory” (Dovi).

Lori Dovi is a union production sound mixer based in Los Angeles who has seen much discrimination in her field for the past 25 years. “The backlash was unbelievable,” she recalls. But there are legitimate reasons for seeking out a woman. “You might be working with kids, women who are rape and incest survivors might need to be miked by a sound woman because of wardrobe and privacy issues. I’m in a union with 500 sound mixers and there are only 5 women at the top. And this was during the #metoo movement” (Ibid.).

Dovi set out to create a networking tool for women. “We need our own space where we can find jobs as well as a safe space where we support each other not just nationally but internationally, too. That was how the IWWF Facebook page started. The international scope came to me because the issue is global. There are so many ‘above the line’ initiatives now, that I felt that also including women in a ‘below the line’ initiative made the most equitable sense.

“We have to create mentorship programs so we can get women in higher end shows for a proper standard of living,” Dovi says emphatically. But she also is concerned that some well-known women directors and producers don’t seem to be engaged. “Are they really paying it forward? Are they hiring women? I’m not always convinced” (Ibid.).

Since its formation, Dovi has welcomed over 5,000 women to her network on Facebook, which is for women working in all occupations of film around the world. There is also a directory of professional women where you can choose to join for free or pay for various tiers of increased visibility. You can find more about International Women Working in Film at womenworkinginfilm.com.

■ Sound Women (United Kingdom)

Maria Williams established Sound Women in 2011 to “encourage, promote and support women in UK radio.” Although it is now defunct, the website still offers its podcast series as a legacy item. All of the assets can still be listened to at audioboom.com/channel/soundwomen.

Journalist Miranda Sawyer remembers the impetus for the group’s formation. “The trigger, as I recall, was the 2011 Sony awards, a celebration of radio where almost every woman who got on stage was there to present, rather than receive an award; where each of those women’s looks were commented upon by the host; where TalkSport won Station of the Year – a station which, at the time, featured an online quiz that rewarded correct answers with a video of a ‘lovely’ removing her clothes. Gah” (Sawyer, 2016).

Williams put a more positive spin on the group’s accomplishments during its active phase. “It runs an annual mentoring scheme in partnership with the BBC Academy and Skillset, has many active regional groups, and releases original research. It also holds regular networking events and training workshops, and 2013 saw the first Sound Women festival” (Williams, 2013).

In the report, Sound Women discovered:

- One in five solo voices on the radio is female.
- That figure is one in eight during peak-time breakfast and drive hours.
- In a cohosted show, you are nearly ten times as likely to hear two-plus male presenters as you are to hear two-plus female presenters.
- Solo women are more likely to be on air at weekends than during the week (Women, 2013).

Ann Charles, who worked with Williams and now organizes RadioTechCon, continues to seek opportunities to get women training in radio. She comments that although Sound Women is no longer operating, there are still efforts to do training for women, but it’s difficult to find funding. “We need to stop talking about diversity and start paying for it, and not leaving it to women on the ground. . . . It’s this seesaw: running a small business and wanting accessible pricing, but [we] have to be paid or [we] can’t do this at all” (Charles, 2019).

SOUND WOMEN 2011-2016 FIVE AMAZING YEARS ONE EXTRAORDINARY LEGACY

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



RESEARCH

Sound Women commissioned research to explore the role and influence of women in the radio and audio industry.



“ Having women’s voices on-air is hugely important, both to female radio audiences and to aspiring female presenters.
Maria Williams, Sound Women Founder

“ Sound Women leaves a proud legacy which the whole industry must build on.
Helen Boaden, BBC Radio

“ Sound Women has been a force for positive change and had a huge influence in shaping the debate around diversity.
Steve Ackerman, Somethin' Else



PARTNERS



PODCASTS

MORE THAN 30 PODCASTS
TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOWNLOADS

Sound Women was set up to help women get more out of working in radio and to help the radio industry get more from the talents of women. Gender equality in the radio and audio industry is no longer just Sound Women's business, it's everyone's business!

RUN BY VOLUNTEERS

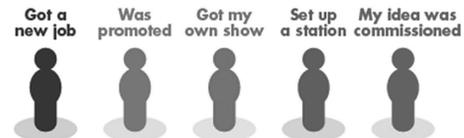


TRAINING AND EVENTS



MENTORING

Building confidence and opening doors, six Sound Women mentoring schemes have supported a total of 115 women.



SOCIAL MEDIA



PATRONS



Sound Women's summary infographic

Terri Winston and Women's Audio Mission (USA)

“If I had spent money, time, and energy on research, that would have been 15,000 women and girls who would not have been trained,” says **Terri Winston**, founder and executive director of Women's Audio Mission (Winston).

During their 17-year history, Women's Audio Mission has been continuously designing and retooling classes they knew were helping to “change the face of sound,” as their motto says. “We didn't need a study, we could see from the convention floor that there were no women in the industry,” she explains, referring to the visible lack of women at audio conferences and conventions. “We are not responding to studies, but Silicon Valley is responding to us. Intel funded us to open up and serve a few more schools in East San Jose which is adjacent to Silicon Valley, where poverty exists next to extreme wealth. We've had investments from Google, Cisco, Adobe, Dolby. The tech community is responding to how we're approaching and connecting at-risk girls to STEM” (Ibid.).

From their first AES booth over ten years ago that brought in \$10,000 of audio gear, to their arsenal of three studios – two in San Francisco and one in Oakland – 17 years of hard work and dedication have gone into making WAM what it is today, a powerhouse of training, opportunity, and inspiration for young girls and women. They are the “only professional recording studios in the world built and run by women,” providing “hands-on training, work experience, career counseling and job placement to over 2,000 women and girls every year in creative technology for music, radio, film, television and the internet” (womensaudio mission.org).

As a result, there have been over 750 placements: students have gone on to paid employment with Skywalker Sound, Andra Day, National Geographic, Alanis Morissette, Google, Dolby Laboratories, and Pixar, among others (Dobson, 2018).

Placement is only part of the answer; retention is the other. Winston and her group engage in dialog with companies from Dolby to iZotope to festivals like Outside Lands, all of whom have approached her to help improve the working climate, thus taking an active role in creating environments more suitable for women (Ibid.).



Terri Winston, founder and executive director, Women's Audio Mission

The premise of having a space only for women and girls is at the core of their success. Co-ed spaces are simply not the ideal for the workshops and training they do. “The social norms are confining at school. When I went home or to my dad’s lab, [it] was freedom; but when I went to school, suddenly ‘I’m not supposed to be doing that stuff’” (Gaston-Bird, 2017b).

Winston’s father is a research scientist and mechanical engineer, so from a young age, “his lab was my playpen, and he was always fixing things: the car, the television, the radio, so that was all big fun for me. Trips to the hardware store, one of my favorite places in the world, were all big influences on me. I was also a songwriter/musician from early on so audio was a natural way to combine both of these loves of mine. I definitely have my 10,000+ hours with tape recorders of all varieties from my childhood” (Ibid.).

“My earliest experience was recording myself playing guitars and singing, back and forth on two cassette tape boom boxes, probably in middle school,” Winston recalls. “Then in college, I was studying electrical engineering, and I started recording the bands I was in on various analog 4 tracks, bouncing a ton of tracks. We did a lot of overdubs. I am a guitar player so I was always tinkering with amplifiers, biasing tubes. We eventually were signed to Polygram, toured a bunch with the Pixies and Throwing Muses, and that’s when I ended up working in proper recording studios. My biggest influence during that time was working with Lenny Kaye (Patti Smith Group). That’s how I got the engineering bug and learned what it meant to be a producer” (Ibid.).

Trying to pick out landmark achievements for WAM isn’t easy. There was never an “*a-ha!*” moment. Instead, there are so many successes to list, but when pressed to highlight one, Winston talks about an experience centered around young, African-American women. “One of the most memorable projects was a project with ESPN. I went to speak at a school in Michigan [at the request of] a student who arranged the speaking engagement. A few years later she had graduated and ended up at ESPN. They were doing a piece on Black women athletes and they wanted an anthem to be created and recorded, and she convinced her boss to have Women’s Audio Mission do it. They paid for us to get an all African-American engineering crew from our people, so we picked a local Bay Area artist (Rayana Jay), we had a Disney songwriter come out, we had an entire AA crew and everybody just. . . . It was an emotional recording session, you could see how happy everyone was. They cried. Incredible experience. The single got picked up by Hollywood Records and was seen on *The View*, *Good Morning America*, the music video was on ABC, NBC; super young engineers got that credit on that project and the traction helped them launch their freelance careers. It was an intentional choice that everybody made and had a big ripple effect” (Winston).

WAM started a conference series called WAMCon in Boston at iZotope in 2017, which has since expanded to include Nashville, Los Angeles, and New York, connecting 500-plus women across the country to training and mentorship with the best engineers and producers in the industry, from Grammy-winning mastering engineer **Emily Lazar** (David Bowie and Foo Fighters) to Grammy-nominated producer/songwriter Linda Perry (P!nk and Dolly Parton). Their internship placements include Alanis Morissette and Tracey Chapman.

“We don’t spend money on public relations; we spend it on getting in the classroom. We overhauled two entire school districts, and we are looking at a third. We were the first to be at the table and provide training programs specifically tailored to women and girls. That’s the pith of Women’s Audio Mission” (Winston).

You can learn more about WAM at womensaudiomission.org.

■ SoundGirls.org



In October 2012 at the 133rd AES Convention in San Francisco, **Terri Winston** moderated a panel called “The Women of Professional Concert Sound.” The invited speakers included **Karrie Keyes** and **Michelle Sabolchick Pettinato**, as well as Claudia Engelhart, Deanne Franklin, and Jeri Palumbo (AES, 2012).

“We had all been in the business for 20 years or more,” states SoundGirls’ website, “yet most of us had never met before that day, and within minutes we bonded like long-lost sisters. We were struck by how similar our experiences, work ethics and passions were and wondered why our paths had never crossed and how our careers would have been different had we been there to support each other through the years. We were empowered” (SoundGirls.org, 2019).

In an article published by *Pro Sound News* in 2013, Keyes recalls how she felt after the event. “I left the AES panel with the feeling that none of us wanted the conversation to end. . . . My idea was that we could do something to find the women working in this industry and create a way to communicate with each other” (Welch, 2013).

In 2013, they began operating under the fiscal sponsorship of a nonprofit called the Northern California Women’s Music Festival, and in March of that year, they established their website, SoundGirls.org. The site began by highlighting profiles of women working in live sound, and over time their efforts grew to include articles from “Sexism and dealing with it in the work place” to “Understanding RF”; links to instructional articles such as “How to design a stage plot”; invitations to volunteer on live shows and learn new skills; and links to sign up for pro sound workshops.

But perhaps the most exciting goal SoundGirls accomplished was the establishment of live sound camps for young girls in 2016. The group did extensive fundraising to make the one-week experience possible. The funds provided scholarships for any girl who wanted to attend. Ultimately, over 100 girls (70 percent of whom received scholarships) attended four camps across the USA. There were numerous volunteers and sponsors who invested time and money into the course, which was promoted as “a one-week camp for young girls & women ages 12–18 (all genders and non-binary people welcome) who want to learn about live music production.” Altogether, there were 16 girls and a few boys who attended the course, which focused on live event safety, terminology, signal flow, microphones, and working a real show.

“By the end of the week [the students] were all able to read a stage plot, make an input list, wire the stage, line check and were able troubleshoot a few problems (phantom power and a monitor amp that was not on), without our assistance,” reported Keyes. “We are already getting inquiries from people who wish to bring it to their communities” (Keyes, 2017).

At the camp, author Joy Lanzendorfer asked 17-year-old camper Mary Vogel for some insights. Vogel responded, “You’re creating something live right in front of you. . . . You’re making it richer. You’re taking out the little buzzes and snaps and things you just don’t want to hear because it takes away from the performance” (Lanzendorfer, 2017).

I asked Keyes how the atmosphere or vibe changes when women get together in crews or for workshops. “Women working together is powerful,” she replies. “For some women, it’s the first time to be surrounded by women versus men. We are finally with our peers. No

one dominates the conversation. When men attend our workshops, many comment on how refreshing it was that the dynamic was completely different, and everyone is learning and working towards a common goal. They also comment that they have never been the only guy in a room – ever in their lives. They comment that for the first time they understand what women face every day. All people are welcome to attend our workshops and seminars, most of the time there are only a few men who attend” (Keyes, 2019).

SoundGirls has hosted several workshops with manufacturers DiGiCo, SSL, Allen & Heath, d&b audiotechnik, VUE audiotechnik, QSC, Sennheiser, Meyer Sound, Shure, DPA, and Klang, encouraging women to become trained and certified in the operation of live audio equipment (Ibid.).

Most recently, Spotify has sponsored SoundGirls’ database of women in audio, the EQL Directory. The goal was to get rid of the excuse that organizers of conferences, programs, events, and recording sessions “can’t find any women.” Initially the database was on a WordPress site where women could enter their own information, but with Spotify the resource now has a sleek look and is called “The EQL Directory: A Database for Women and Gender Non-Conforming Audio Professionals” which can be accessed at makeiteql.com. A press release published by Spotify in 2018 reads, “Powered by SoundGirls, made possible by Spotify, this is your resource to make putting together an inclusive team that much easier. Search the directory or add your profile to the community of women changing the face of audio” (Introducing The EQL Directory: A Database for Women and Gender Non-Conforming Audio Professionals, 2018).

The year after Keyes received her She Rocks award, she organized women from SoundGirls.org to take care of all of the sound for the She Rocks awards ceremony.



The sound crew for the She Rocks Awards ceremony (2018)

The group has since expanded and includes 17 chapters in the United States, as well as chapters in Australia, Canada, Scotland, and England. Some notable alumni include Zionya Nolan, who now works at 8th Day Sound, and Kate Lee, who is now at Rat Sound Systems. Others have gone on to work with Sennheiser.

You can find more information at SoundGirls.org.

Note

1. DA'EF work is viewed from a **glocal** perspective, in the sense that 'people are neither wholly global or wholly local – they are **glocal**' (Eriksen, 2010, p. 318) cited in Dobson 2018. Digital Audio Eco Feminism (DA'EF): The Glocal Impact of All-Female Communities on Learning and Sound Creativities. *Creativities in Arts Education, Research and Practice*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Sense.

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