



Sounds and Sweet Airs: The Forgotten Women of Classical Music

Anna Beer

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Francesca Caccini. Barbara Strozzi. Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre. Marianna Martines. Fanny Hensel. Clara Schumann. Lili Boulanger. Elizabeth Maconchy.

Great composers all, but their musical legacy is still rarely acknowledged.

Since the birth of classical music, those women who dared to compose have been patronised, had their sex lives scrutinised and the veracity of their authorship questioned. They worked within a musical culture where beliefs about what women could and could not do determined their every move. Yet, time and again there emerged individuals who would evade, confront and ignore the rules that sought to exclude them from the world of composition.

Taking the reader on a journey from seventeenth-century Medici Florence to London in the Blitz, and beyond, Anna Beer reveals the hidden histories of eight remarkable women, explores the special communities that enabled them to compose their music, and asks tough questions about why we still don't hear their masterpieces performed.

A long-overdue celebration of neglected virtuosos, *Sounds and Sweet Airs* presents a complex and inspirational picture of artistic endeavour and achievement that deserves to be part of our cultural heritage.

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