

# A SURVEY OF WOMEN COMPOSERS

*A great host of women bring the glad tidings. ~Psalm 68:11b*

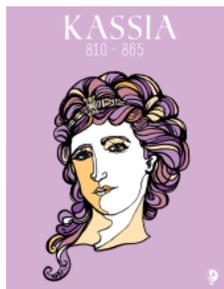


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A GREAT HOST  
OF COMPOSERS

[www.greathostcomposers.org](http://www.greathostcomposers.org)

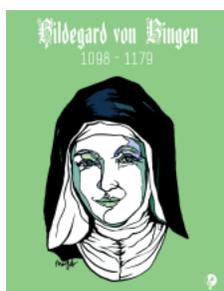
## A SURVEY OF COMPOSERS: A HIGHLIGHT ON WOMEN COMPOSERS



### **Kassia (c. 810-867)**

*Augustus the Monarch; Now the Voice of Isaiah the Prophet*

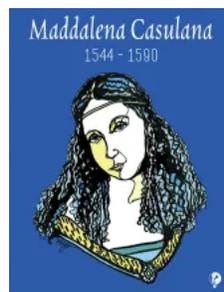
Kassia was a founding abbess living in Constantinople, present-day Istanbul, Turkey. She wrote more than fifty musical works, the earliest extant compositions by a woman. The ancient Greek texts are from Kassia's pen. Her most well-known work is *The Fallen Woman*, a penitential hymn on Maria Magdalena, considered in part to be autobiographical because she felt she had fallen in heart to the emperor who visited her, though her quick wit had once caused him to pass her over as his bride.



### **Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)**

*Kyrie; Caritas abundat; O virtus sapientiae*

Composer, poetess, and mystic, Hildegard was the founder and first abbess of the Benedictine community at Bingen, located in present-day Germany. Hildegard corresponded with popes, emperors, kings, and archbishops. In the unique compositional style of her chant Hildegard abandoned the formal patterns of Gregorian chant, noting that her style better suited a women's voice.



### **Maddalena Casulana (1544-1590)**

*Vagh'amorosi augelli*

Maddalena Casulana was an Italian composer, lutenist and singer of the late Renaissance. She is the first woman composer to have a complete book of music printed and published, a book of madrigals for four voices entitled *Il primo libro di madrigali* (1568) that was dedicated to Isabella de' Medici.



### **Raphaella Aleotti (1570-1646)**

*Miserere mei, Deus (Psalm 57:1)*

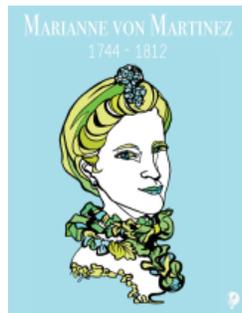
One of five daughters of the Ferrarese court architect Giovanni Battista Aleotti, the Italian composer and organist Raphaella Aleotti was prioress of the musically renowned Augustinian convent of San Vito, Ferrara, from 1636 to 1639. A 1621 guide to Ferrara's churches describes her as 'most knowledgeable about music' and alludes to her well-received 1593 publication of motets and madrigals. Her motets show a thorough mastery of contrapuntal technique, rhythmic vitality and sensitivity to the meaning of the texts. She mostly composed under the male pseudonym "Rafaele." Under her direction, the nuns of San Vito sang for Pope Clement VIII and Margaret of Austria. She was a contemporary of Gregorio Allegri (1582-1652), composer of a much more well-known *Miserere mei, Deus* (Psalm 50) sung annually at the Sistine Chapel, Rome over the centuries during Holy Week.



### **Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)**

*O Maria*

Barbara Strozzi was an Italian composer and singer of the Baroque Period. She published eight volumes of her own music and had more secular music in print than any other composer of the era.



### **Marianne von Martinez (1744-1812)**

*Allegro (Sonata in E Major)*

Marianne von Martinez was a composer, keyboardist, and singer of the classical period, based in Vienna, Austria. She studied keyboard with Haydn. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed piano duets to play with Marianne. Her *oeuvre* includes 2 oratorios; 4 masses; 6 motets; psalm cantatas; secular cantatas; 3 keyboard sonatas, 3 keyboard concertos; and 1 symphony.



### **Fanny Hensel (1805-1847)**

*Lobgesang; Ave Maria; Das Jahr for piano; Vier Lieder for piano, Op. 6; Wedding Organ Pieces; Piano Quartet; Piano Trio*

Fanny Hensel was a composer of tremendous musical talent and skill like her famous younger brother, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847). While Fanny's works were heard in *Sonntagsmusiken* (Sunday musicales) that she hosted at the Hensel home in Berlin, Felix's reached international audiences. She was born Fanny Mendelssohn, but in 1816 her parents arranged a Christian baptism for all four of their children and gave them the surname Bartholdy, Fanny's full name becoming Fanny Cäcilie Mendelssohn Bartholdy. After her marriage to the artist Wilhelm Hensel in October 1829, she signed her name either as Fanny Hensel; Fanny Hensel, *geboren* Mendelssohn Bartholdy; or simply as F, in her many familiar correspondences. She first published under her own name in 1846, and most of her works were left unpublished at the time of her death.

Among Fanny Hensel's works heard in *Sonntagsmusiken* at her home in Berlin is the cantata *Lobgesang* (Song of Praise). Composed in 1831 for chorus, soprano and alto soloists, and orchestra, the cantata *Lobgesang* was published for the first time in 2002. While Felix's *Lobgesang* of 1840 is still frequently performed, Fanny's is not well known. It was dedicated to the first birthday of her only child, Felix Ludwig Sebastian Hensel – named after her brother Felix, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Johann Sebastian Bach, the cantata hearkening to the Baroque style of the third composer. The *Schlusschor*, or final chorus, *Ich will von Gottes Güte*, sets a poem by the German pastor Johann Mentzer (1658-1734), *Loblied*, the chorus quoting motives from a familiar German chorale on Mentzer's text by Johann Balthasar König (1691-1758).



**Florence Price (1887-1953)**

*Suite No. 1 for Organ; Sonata No. 1 in d minor for Organ*  
*Peter, go ring dem bells for solo voice;*  
*Organ Variations on a Folksong (Peter, go ring dem bells)*

Florence Price is regarded as America’s first significant black woman composer. The premiere of her *Symphony in E minor* by the Chicago Symphony in 1933 marked the first performance of a large-scale work by a black woman by a major American orchestra. She received her first musical training from her mother, gave a first



public recital at age 4, and at age 11 sold a composition to a publisher. She studied at the New England Conservatory earning diplomas in both organ and piano. She composed over 300 works, was sought after as a teacher, and worked both as a church organist and as a theater organist.



**Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)**

*Psalm 24; Cortège for piano*

In 1913, Lili Boulanger became the first woman to be awarded the prestigious *Grand Prix de Rome* for composition. She was the younger sister of the French pedagogue and conductor Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979). Nadia taught many famous American composers (including Aaron Copland) from her Paris apartment and was the first woman to conduct the NY Philharmonic. Both sisters studied at the Paris Conservatoire. In addition to composing, Lili was a singer and played organ, violin, cello, and harp. After her early death, Nadia worked tirelessly to promote her sister’s compositions.



**Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)**

*Come down, Angels; Is there anybody here that loves my Jesus?; We shall walk through the valley of peace; Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord; Bound for Canaan’s Land; I believe this is Jesus; Christmas Alleluia; Variations on Nettleton*

The granddaughter of slaves, Undine Smith Moore persisted through many obstacles of life in 20<sup>th</sup>-century United States in her pursuit of a vocation as a musician to become known as the “Dean of Black Women Composers.” Undine studied at Fisk and Columbia University and taught at Virginia State University and Carleton College. She delivered the keynote address at the first



National Congress on Women in Music at New York University in March 1981. While she composed over 100 works, including spiritual arrangements, art songs, chamber music and major works for choir and orchestra, only 26 were published during her lifetime. Undine Smith Moore was an accomplished classical pianist and improviser, these talents reflected in her compositional style.



**Zenobia Powell Perry (1914-2004)**

*Hommage for piano (based on the Spiritual "I've been 'buked")*

Born in Oklahoma, pianist Zenobia Powell Perry studied at the Tuskegee Institute of Alabama from 1935 to 1938 where she assisted choral composer and director William Dawson (1855-1990). *Hommage* was written for Dawson on one of his favorite spirituals for his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1990. Perry taught at Central State University, Ohio from 1955-1982. In addition to piano works, she composed a mass, an opera, and chamber, band and orchestral works.



**Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)**

*Spiritual Suite for piano (Dry Bones, Troubled Water, Bells); He's got the whole world; You can tell the world; No man has seen his face; Ballad of the Brown King*

Chicago composer Margaret Bonds studied at Northwestern University and with composers Florence Price and William Dawson. She was the first black person to be a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Her compositions reflect her brilliance at the piano as a concert artist and improviser.



**Betty Jackson King (1928-1994)**

*Four Seasonal Sketches (1955), including Spring Intermezzo & Summer Interlude*

Born in Chicago, Betty Jackson King studied there at Roosevelt University, and taught music throughout her life in the Wildwood, New Jersey public schools. A prolific composer, she was President of the National Association of Negro Musicians from 1979 to 1984.



**Lena McLin (b. 1928)**

*Eucharist of the Soul*

The widely published composer Lena McLin lives in Chicago where she has served as a Baptist minister and a high school teacher.



**Patricia Van Ness (b. 1951)**

*A Great Host (2020); Cor meum est templum sacrum; Have mercy upon me (Psalm 51); I bless you, with all that is within me (Psalm 103)*

In Fall 2019, Maine musician Patricia Van Ness began as St. Paul’s composer-in-residence. Composer, violinist, and poet, she draws upon elements of Medieval and Renaissance music and has been dubbed a modern-day Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179). Her music has been sung throughout the world, including by Chanticleer (USA) and The King’s Singers (UK). Her music and poetry explore glimpsing the divine through beauty. Patricia Van Ness’s most well-known choral work is *Cor meum est templum sacrum* (My heart is a holy place), for which she wrote the English text and then had it translated into Latin for her musical setting. This mesmerizing work reflects on how the way of God, the way of life, may be found within our hearts.

Her ongoing project is to set all 150 Psalms to music. The Choir of St. Paul’s has premiered five of her psalm settings including *A Great Host (Psalm 68;11b)*, composed for the choir for International Women’s Day, March 8, 2020, the last service held inside the church before the pandemic lockdown.



**Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951)**

*I know that my Redeemer liveth; Celestial Fire; A Prayer of St. Columba*

English composer Cecilia McDowall is composer-in-residence at Dulwich College, London, and a composer for Oxford University Press. She has been commissioned by the BBC Singers, King’s College Cambridge, and Roderick Williams.



**Judith Weir (b. 1954)**

*I love all beauteous things; Tree of Peace for organ*

In 2014, Judith Weir became the first woman to be named Master of the Queen’s Music. She composed the anthem *I love all beauteous things* in 2016 for the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Her Majesty the Queen. Weir sets a poem of Robert Bridge (1844-1930), poet laureate in the year Queen Elizabeth II was born. Weir notes: “This short, fast-tempo setting aims to emulate the swift, fleet-footed rhythm and metre of the two-verse poem, with its unobtrusive but telling reference to ‘man in his hasty days.’”





**Eleanor Daley (b. 1955)**

*Upon your heart; Requiem; Open thou mine eyes; Come, renew us*

Toronto composer and church musician Eleanor Daley has served as Director of Music at Fairlawn Heights United Church in Toronto since 1982. She has created a thriving choral program there for which much of her choral music has been composed.



**Melanie DeMore (b. 1955)**

*Blessed Be!*

Born in the Bronx, raised in Anchorage, and after some time living in Texas and New Mexico, Melanie DeMore came to Oakland, California where she has found a home from which to tell the world of her exuberance for her vocation as a vocal activist. She worked at the St. Paul's Episcopal School in Oakland for 21 years, and now focuses on performing, composing, and giving choral workshops throughout the country, from *Stick Pounding* and *Sound Awareness* to *From the Page to the Stage*.

**Sarah MacDonald (b. 1968)**

*Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in A-flat Major; Anglican Chant, Crux fidelis; Quarantine Psalm; Sing, my soul, his wondrous love*

Canadian Sarah MacDonald is Cambridge University Organist, Director of the Girls' Choir at Ely Cathedral and Director of Music at Selwyn College, Cambridge. She is the first woman to hold a director of music position in an Oxbridge school.



**Joanna Forbes L'Estrange (b. 1971)**

*Magnificat and Nunc dimittis (King's College Service); Give us grace; An Irish blessing; The Chorister's Prayer; The Three Wise Women*

The English soprano and composer Joanna Forbes L'Estrange has been immersed in the English choral tradition, singing as a child in her village church choir, with Schola Cantorum of Oxford as an undergraduate and, as a professional, with the chamber choir Tenebrae. She has been commissioned by The King's Singers, the Royal School of Church Music, and King's Voices in Cambridge. In both her compositions and performances, she is known for her stylistic versatility, and recently recorded for the soundtrack of Wes Anderson's movie *A French Dispatch*.



**Melissa Dunphy (b. 1980)**

*Magnificat and Nunc dimittis for St. Paul's Burlingame (2021); A new heart; O Oriens; The Day of Resurrection; Work*

Born in Australia, to a Chinese mother and a Greek father, Melissa Dunphy moved to the United States in 2003, and specializes in vocal, political, and theatrical music. She holds a Ph.D. in music composition from the University of Pennsylvania and teaches composition at Rutgers University.

Melissa will be present for the English premiere of her *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* at the 5:15pm Evensong on Friday, July 22 at Wells Cathedral. These evening canticles were commissioned by the Choir of St. Paul's Burlingame for the July 2022 Wells Residency, and in celebration of the life of Marcia McCowin.



**Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)**

*How can I keep from singing?*

Canadian composer Sarah Quartel's work as an educator in Ontario and as a clinician for youth choirs internationally is reflected in her choral works, such as in her engaging arrangement of *How can I keep from singing?* in which she pairs the soaring melody for treble voices with a rhythmic vocal accompaniment for lower voices (alto, tenor, and bass).



**Elizabeth Kimble (b. 1986)**



*Mass for St. Paul's (Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei); Preces & Responses for St. Paul's*

Elizabeth Kimble is a San Francisco Bay Area composer and former soprano section leader of the Choir of St. Paul's. From June 2020 through August 2021, she was the audio and video engineer for the music ministry at St. Paul's.

**Elizabeth Coxhead (b. 1987)**

*My eyes for beauty pine*

Elizabeth and her brother Thomas composed *My eyes for beauty pine* for the wedding of friends in Wales in August 2014. The Coxhead's musical setting offers a new window into this poem by England's poet laureate Robert Bridges (1844-1930), most often heard in a 1925 setting by Herbert Howells (1892-1983).

*I'm delighted you are coming to the UK and that you've chosen to include "My eyes" in your tour music list! How splendid!! My brother and I send our very best wishes to the choir and hope you have a marvelous time in beautiful Wells! ~ Lizzie*



**Dale Trumbore (b. 1987)**

*As it is in Heaven*

In the anthem *As it is in Heaven* (2016), southern Californian composer Dale Trumbore alternates an original hymn-like setting of *The Lord's Prayer* with a meditation on the prayer by Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) from his 1901 essay "On Reason, Faith and Prayer." Written by Tolstoy in a period of spiritual awakening that followed the publication of his well-known novels *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1878), this essay reflects on lines of *The Lord's Prayer* through a provocative juxtaposition of other scripture and his own personal musings. This anthem will be sung at the Sunday Holy Eucharist on July 24<sup>th</sup> at Wells Cathedral, England, when the appointed Gospel quotes *The Lord's Prayer*.

**Margaret Burk (b. 1990)**

*Preces and Responses, Anglican Chant; I lift up my eyes*

Maggie recently completed a DMA in Choral Conducting from the University of Michigan, and in the Fall 2022 begins as Assistant Professor/Director of Choral Activities at Carthage College, Wisconsin. She and her twin sister (composer and organist Katherine Burk Webb) grew up as girl choristers singing in their father's choir at Grace Episcopal Church, Topeka, Kansas and attending the annual RSCM King's College Summer Training Course in Pennsylvania.



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*The Heart of a Woman, The Life and Music of Florence B. Price.* Rae Linda Brown, University of Illinois Press, 2020.

*Multitude of Voices, Anthology of Sacred Music by Women Composers, 3 Volumes,* 2019.

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*Where are all the Black Female Composers? The Ultimate Fun Facts Guide.* Nathan Holder, Holders Hill Publishing, 2020.

*Who is Florence Price? Young musicians tell the story of a girl and her music.* Students of the Special Music School at Kaufman Music Center, NYC, Schirmer Trade Books, 2021.

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*Women Composers of Classical Music.* Mary F. McVicker, McFarland & Co., 2011.

*Women Making Music.* Edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, University of Illinois Press, 1987.

## HELPFUL LINKS

[www.greathostcomposers.org](http://www.greathostcomposers.org)

*Database of sacred choral music by women composers listed according to the church year*

[www.youtube.com/SusanJaneMatthews](http://www.youtube.com/SusanJaneMatthews)

*Recordings by women composers from St. Paul's*

[www.stpaulsburlingame.org](http://www.stpaulsburlingame.org)