

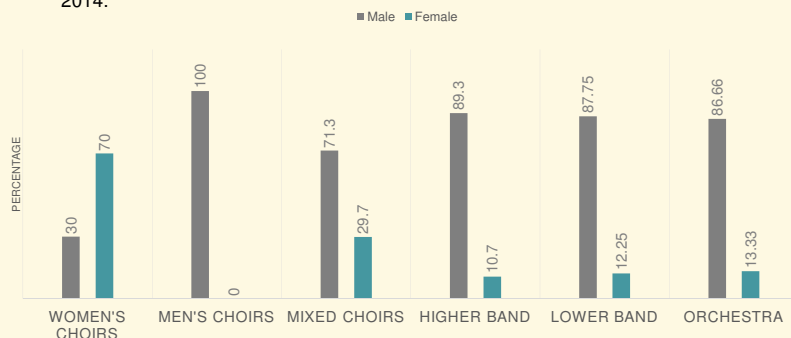
Gender Inequality in Conducting

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Collegiate Ensemble Conductors in Wisconsin

- ❖ I gathered data from all of the National Association of Schools of Music accredited post-secondary institutions in Wisconsin that had at least one large ensemble comprised of solely student membership (defined as concert band, orchestra, or a large choir) and the gender of the conductors of each ensemble for the present academic school year, 2013-2014.



Analysis of Findings

- ❖ Following a trend seen in the professional world, the majority of female conductors in Wisconsin conduct choral ensembles, with the largest portion conducting women's choirs.
- ❖ Historically, there have been more amateur choirs than amateur bands or orchestras. Choirs do not require much equipment outside of possible accompanying instruments, allowing choirs to exist with minimal to no funding.
- ❖ There are no men's choirs conducted by females in Wisconsin colleges, though thirty percent of women's choirs are conducted by males.
- ❖ The small amount of female band conductors might also be traced to the ensemble's origin. Since bands are rooted in the military, originally an all-male institution, women were not included from the beginning, slowly becoming part of the band field.

Female Conductors at UWEC

- ❖ UWEC started as the Eau Claire State Normal School in 1916. Since then, the school has gone through various transformations, including a music department with many female faculty shifting to a male dominated department in 1947. Following the shift in gender in music department faculty, there has been a small group of females who have conducted a music ensemble at UWEC. Note: Student conductors were not included in these numbers.
- ❖ A total of 12 women have conducted one of the major ensembles that exist in the UWEC music program after 1947. The 12 conductors span from 1966-2014.
- ❖ Of these 12, 11 of the conductors were choral conductors. Women's choirs were 10 of the ensembles. One woman has conducted the men's choir (the Singing Statesmen) at UWEC.
- ❖ The University Chamber Orchestra is the only instrumental ensemble to be conducted by a female since 1947.
- ❖ Only two of the women conducted an ensemble at UWEC for more than one academic year post-1947, showing that while women have conducted ensembles at UWEC, the positions they hold are frequently less permanent than the positions held by male conductors. This results in fewer women being tenured conductors.

Sexism at the Professional Level

- ❖ "When the Oslo-based newspaper *Aftenposten* asked why there aren't more female conductors... Vasily Petrenko, responded that male conductors 'often have less sexual energy and can focus more on the music. **A sweet girl on the podium can make one's thoughts drift towards something else.**'" (Woolfe 2013)
- ❖ "The essence of the conductor's profession is strength. **The essence of a woman is weakness.**" –Yuri Temirkanov, Russian conductor, 2012
- ❖ Unfortunately, these quotes are only a few amongst many things said about the (in)ability of women to be successful professional conductors. Criticisms of female conductors most often come down to forms of objectification and/or essentializing.

Women's Experiences in Conducting

- ❖ Boards of directors often associate female conductors with risk, even if their talent is equal to another male conductor, as Sarah Ioannides, current music director of El Paso Symphony Orchestra and Spartanburg Symphony Orchestra found out when she was next in line for a job, but it was not offered to her. She "was told that **the executive director felt it was "too important" a year to work with a woman**, as the orchestra was celebrating its 75th anniversary." (Johnston 2007)
- ❖ "Critics used to comment on my hairstyle and what I wore," says JoAnn Falletta, music director of Buffalo Symphony Orchestra. **"They would never refer to me by my last name only,** as they would Rattle or Boulez. Things have definitely improved, but boards of directors are often drawn from the most conservative sections of communities and corporate sponsors can see a woman music director as a risk. Can a woman have the same authority? **Women can still face resistance by women at management level.**" (Johnston 2007)
- ❖ There are many women who pursue conducting as a career. The inequality lies in talented, qualified women being kept from reaching the higher level of conducting jobs due to their gender.



Marin Alsop, Music Director of São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Cabrillo Festival. Alsop is one of the most successful professional female conductors. (Photo by Grant Leighton) www.marinalsop.com/media/images/

Conclusions

- ❖ Many assume gender equality has been reached. From the lack of female conductors both at the collegiate and professional level, and with the evidence that there are equally talented female conductors, it is evident that gender discrimination exists.
- ❖ In order for more women to make it to the podium, audiences, musicians, and boards of directors need to recognize the problem and act to fix the inequality.

A Year of Inclusivity

- ❖ Members of the Music and Theatre Arts Department at UW-EC, including both faculty and students, have created a project entitled "A Year of Inclusivity," which will highlight the contributions of underrepresented composers and other musicians in the programming and curriculum of the department. The term "underrepresented" has been selected because of its inclusive nature which is open to interpretation, raising such issues as gender, racial or cultural background, and sexual orientation. This project is part of the "Year of Inclusivity," as it addresses the underrepresentation of women in the field of conducting.

Bibliography

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Woolfe, Zachary. "Missing from Podiums: Women." *New York Times*. December 22, 2013.

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