

Women Leading Music



Maestra Judith Somogi (1937-1988) Conductor, New York City Opera

- Joked that opera was the “ideal medium for a woman conductor because she was hidden in the orchestra pit”



Judith Somogi (1937-1988)

“When I take my bow at a New York City Opera Performance, and the audience realizes that a woman is conducting, there’s a kind of “Yeah, team” response from men and women alike. Of course, part of that reaction is because the idea of a woman conducting is still so new to most people. What we need now is a whole army of women pursuing conducting careers.”

Aaron Copland on Women in Composition

“...There have been great women musical interpreters, but thus far—and I emphasize, thus far—no examples of women composers of the first rank. This is a touchy subject, no doubt, but . . . It appears to indicate that the conception and shaping of abstract ideas in extended forms mark a clear boundary between the creative and interpretive mind”

Aaron Copland on Nadia Boulanger as a composer



“...in so far as she composed at all she must of necessity be listed in that unenviable category of women composer. Everyone knows that the high achievement of women musicians as vocalists and instrumentalists has no counterpart in the field of musical composition. This historically poor showing has puzzled more than one observer. It is even more inexplicable when one considers the reputation of women novelists and poets, of painters and designers. Is it possible that there is a mysterious element in the nature of musical creativity that runs counter to the nature of the feminine mind?”

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- Orchestras respond better to male conductors because men “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.”
- “When women have families it is difficult to be as dedicated as is required in this business.”

--Vasily Petrenko, conductor, Oslo Philharmonic