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Honoring Creative Women: Minerva Teichert Award Winner 2021

Ally Christiansen

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Honoring Creative Women

Minerva Teichert Award Winner 2021

LAST YEAR I TOOK THE FINAL UNDERGRADUATE MUSIC history course. The previous semesters had included very few pieces by women, so I was excited to study contemporary music when women were finally allowed a space on the floor. Examining the semester's syllabus, I was disappointed that out of the twenty-eight composers we studied, only two were women. Later that semester I spoke with a faculty member about music's representation of race and gender, and brought up this concern. I decided to start changing the narrative through my senior recital.

I designed my recital to showcase music created by women. I dug deep to find songs by women from past centuries as well as modern works. My recital program became a miniature music history course, using music and poetry by women to tell the story.

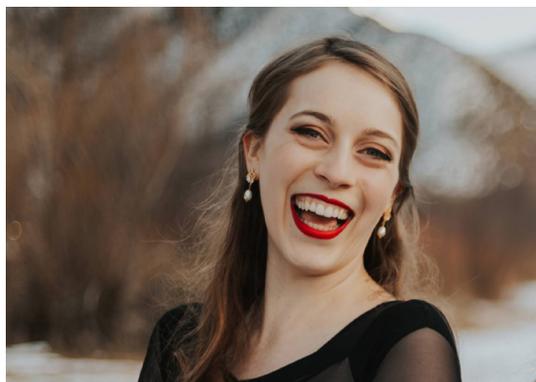
I dedicated this performance to my grandmother. She was a creative woman without opportunities—but she paved the way for me. I had made the exciting, but scary, choice to pursue a career in music. While looking for my path, I was discouraged to see so few examples of women being celebrated as great musicians. I realized that the stories we're told shape our reality, and that I could shape my own narrative by learning about great female musicians.

My recital covered western repertoire from 1200 to the present day. Of the twenty pieces, thirteen had texts or music written by women, including songs set to poetry by Emily Dickinson. I discovered three notable early pieces. "A chantar" is the earliest known piece of music written by a woman, Comtessa de Dia. I transcribed and notated the guitar accompaniment and met with a French professor to learn Occitan dialect. "Amante Loquace" is by Barbara Strozzi, a renowned seventeenth century performer and composer. I transposed and transcribed a scan of the original music into modern notation. The aria "Per la più vaga e bella" is

from the first opera written by a woman, Francesca Caccini, and the first opera to be produced outside of Italy, commissioned for a Medici family wedding. All of this repertoire has merit, not simply as compositions by women, but for being well-composed, serious music.

I experience performance anxiety when I sing, but I was so excited about honoring female artists that for this recital my anxiety fell away. I'm happy with my performance and proud of the work that I did. I feel inspired to continue this exploration.

Today we see strong support for women in the arts. However, I think we must look into the past at who was revered and why. There is a long tradition of women's creative work hiding behind the works of men, and women receiving fewer opportunities for education and advancement. Even in 1869, philosopher John Stuart Mill recognized that “[The nature of women] is a subject on which nothing final can be known,” since historically, women were not allowed to choose their own path. For so long I had thought the musical museum was full of male composers due to lack of women composing; this research showed me that there were many more female composers than most people realize. Only when we have realized our foundation of creative women can we then step up and reach even higher today.



Watch Ally's Recital:

Scan the QR codes or click on the links below to view Ally's performances.



Italian Set A

<https://youtu.be/7iuutnbaytM>



Italian Set B

<https://youtu.be/2wywNPeaOc>



German Set

<https://youtu.be/LfFeo8Eusbw>



English, Emily Dickinson Set

<https://youtu.be/kFYeQqpmq-E>

