

Women Cellists Wanted

Addressing Gender Equity Issues in Archival Representation

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Special Collections Reflects Institutional History



- College for women from 1892-1963
- College founded to produce teachers
- To this day, curricular strengths include areas commonly associated with women (teaching, nursing, counseling...)

Image: Woman's College students expressing a lack of enthusiasm for the transition to co-education and UNCG while holding a UNCG sweatshirt, c. 1963. (UNCG Archives)

The Bastion of Masculinity in a Woman-Focused Archive

Woman's College History
(UNCG Archives)

Women's Collection
Rare Books

Girls' Books in Series
Collection

Women Veterans
Historical Collection

Women's Physical Education
Collection

American Women Detective
Fiction Collection

Home Economic Pamphlet
Collection

Early Juvenile
Literature Collection



Cello Music Collection
(18 men and 5 woman as of 2022)

Archival Silence

Archival silence refers to a lack of historic documentation of a particular community or organization. The lack of collecting and preserving documentation, whether it is inadvertent or an intentionally used tool of oppression. When documentation of a population's way of life and struggles are lacking, the historical narrative cannot reflect their contributions, making them appear historically inconsequential.

This may not be a problem we created,
but it is our responsibility to address it.

How Did We Get Here?

Questioning How We Collect

- We need to understand if our collection development policy is excluding women.
- We need to examine if collecting methods and donor networks are leading to an underrepresentation of women.
- We need to understand how women navigate the cello music world.

Is it how we collect, or is it the environment in which women have to navigate as cellists?

How Did We Get Here?

Acquisition Trends

1963-1969: First collection purchased (1 man)

1970-1979: 1 collection donated (1 woman)

1980-1989: 2 collections donated (2 men)

1990-1999: 1 collection donated (1 man)

2000-2009: 4 collections donated (4 men)

2010-2019: 10 collections donated (8 men; 2 women)

2020-2022: 5 collections donated (2 men; 2 women; 1 organization)

How Did We Get Here?

Cellist by Type

Performance

- Janos Scholz
- Bernard Greenhouse
- Laszlo Varga
- Marion Davies
- Ennio Bolognini
- Paul Tobias
- Janos Starker
- Lynn Harrell

Teaching

- Luigi Silva
- Rudolf Matz
- Maurice Eisenberg
- Fritz Magg
- Lev Aronson
- Lubomir Georgiev
- Margaret Rowell
- Nicholas Anderson
- Martha Gerschefski

Other

- Elizabeth Cowling
(music historian)
- Douglas B. Moore
(arranger/publisher)
- Geoffrey Dean
(Bulgarian composers)
- David Anton
(Alexanian material)
- Chaim Zemach
(Bulgarian cellist)
- Janet Horvath
(performance/health expert)

How Did We Get Here?

Collection Development Policy

Collection Development Policy: Cello Music Collection

Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives

University Libraries, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

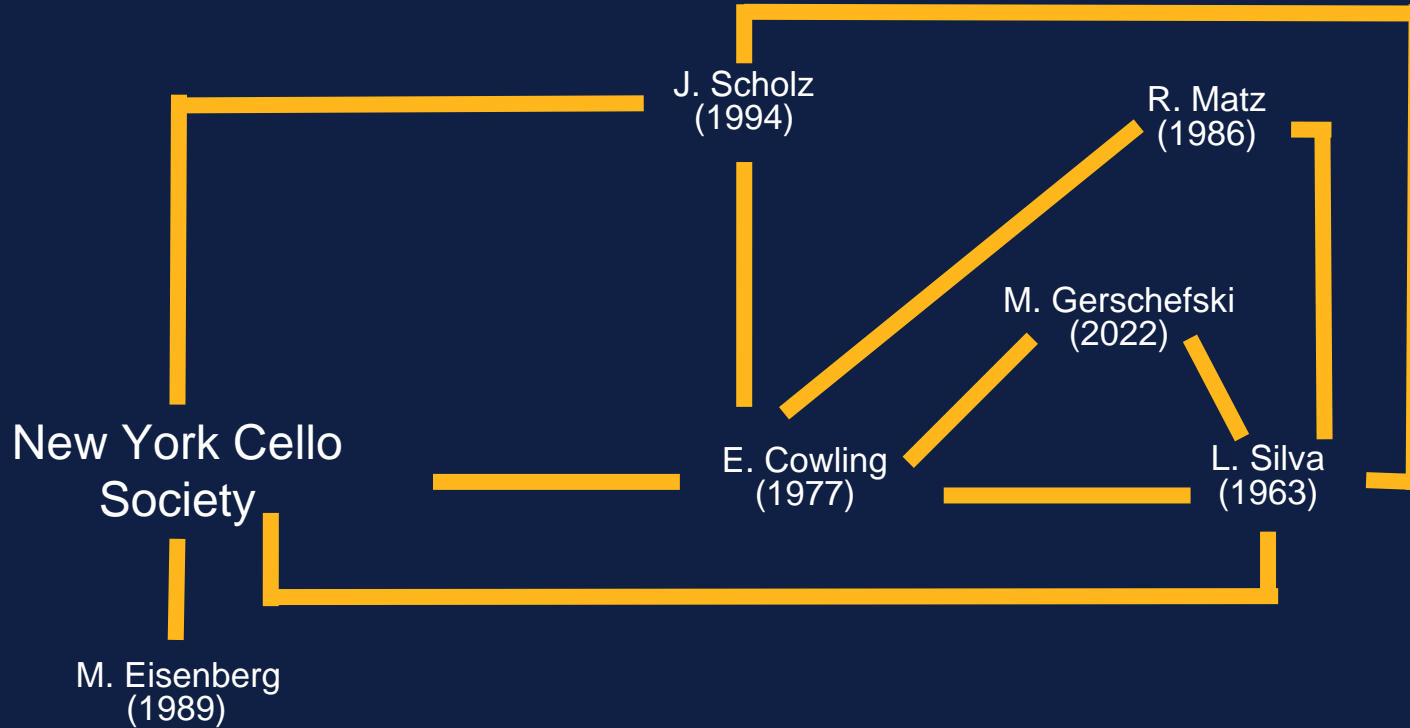
Purpose:

The Cello Music Collection supports educational requirements of the College of Visual and Performing Arts curricula at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Additionally, the collection serves as a centralized archive for the study of cello research and musicology to scholars worldwide. The UNC Greensboro Cello Music Collection enhances the University's research and cultural mission by actively collecting and providing access to the musical collections of cellists noted for their distinguished contributions in the areas of composition, performance, pedagogy, and scholarship.

Description of Collection and Arrangement:

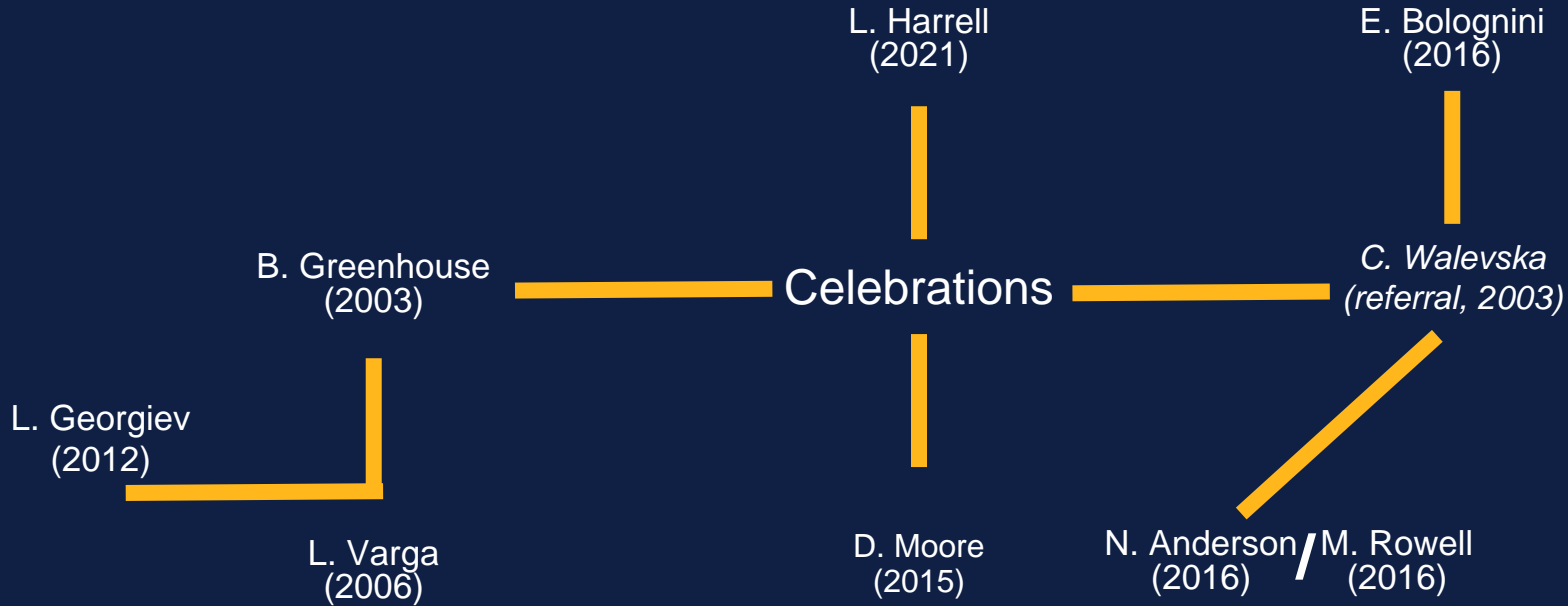
The UNC Greensboro Cello Music Collection contains unbound scores (manuscript and published), monographs, serials, audio-video recordings, personal papers, and artifacts. The unbound score collections, constituting the largest body of materials, are arranged according to the cellist for whom each collection is associated in order to facilitate historical and biographical research on the musician. Personal paper collections are arranged in accordance with archival standards. Bound scores and monographs are arranged according to the Library of Congress classification system.

How Did We Get Here? Donor Networks



Cowling - New York Violoncello Society Network

How Did We Get Here? Donor Networks



How Did We Get Here? Donor Networks



Social Media Network

How Did We Get Here? Donor Networks

L. Aronson
(2008)

F. Magg
(2002)

C. Zemach
(2020)

D. Anton
(2018)

M. Davies
(2014)

Outliers

Conclusion of Donor Network Examination

- Donor networks have the potential to produce donations decades after their initial development.
- There is the potential for bias in each donor network, but not enough to account for the lack of representation in our collection.
- We need a better understanding of how women navigate classical music culture.
- We need to understand the difference between the career trajectories of women and men cellists.

The Classical Music Environment and Women Cellists

The Literature of Gender and Music: Early Landmarks

McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings Music: Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, MN and London: Minnesota University Press, 1992).

Citron, Marcia. *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Solie, Ruth A. (ed.). *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Kallberg, Jeffrey. "Gender," *Grove Music Online*.

Zara Nelsova (1918-2002) & Raya Garbousova (1909-1997)

“My, she [Zara] plays
like a man!” –Mac’s
Pop (ca. 1972)

“Women don’t play
the cello.” –Raya’s
Pop (ca. 1914)



A Note from
Raya
Garbousova
to János
Scholz

New York Times critic Olin Downes on Garbousova (December 4, 1934)

“She has a wonderful wrist and bow arm, and a left hand of the most exceptional fleetness and virtuosity. Miss Garbousova’s technique is the vehicle of a contagious temperament, musicianship, and taste. The crowning fact is the distinction of her style.”

Downes on Garbousova Nine Years Later (December 21, 1943)

“The wonderful ‘cello sonata of Valentini...which she played with infallible taste, if not invariable precision...recreated the style of its composer and its epoch. Delightful music, charmingly discoursed, by *the one woman ‘cellist of whom we know who has a sovereign right to her mastery of this music.’*”

The Careers of Garbousova and Nelsova

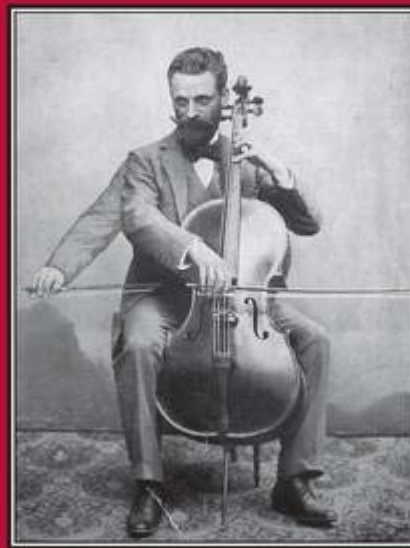


“An assertion of the cello’s masculinity is...not best seen as a scientifically falsifiable statement, but rather as an assertion of cultural values that determines how the instrument is heard—part of the reception process. The cello only enacts masculinity or femininity (if at all) at the moment when it is being played. Masculinity is also ‘performed’ when the critic discusses the concert or the composition using those terms that themselves only acquire meaning as an aggregate of innumerable individual performances.” (p. 174)

An Ashgate Book

Playing the Cello, 1780–1930

GEORGE KENNAWAY



Routledge

The Manly Cello: Musical Patriarchy

“The division of musical production into separate spheres: a male, public, professional sphere; and a female, private, amateur one.”

<https://cellomuseum.org/the-unladylike-instrument-thoughts-about-cello-playing-and-gender/>

On Music As a “complex and ambivalent mixture of gender tropes...”

“The cello is not only masculine in the simple analogical or mimetic sense that it is quite large, low-pitched and serious. It also maintains order in the instrumental ensemble, counterbalancing the violin’s more unpredictable flights of fancy, and controlling the emotions...” (Kennaway, 178)

From a Cello Method Review (1882)

“The violoncello is rapidly becoming a favourite amongst those cultivated amateurs who devote themselves more to the performance of classical chamber music than to that of orchestral works; and the use of the instrument in the domestic circle is likely to be still further increased when the first and second violins in quartets become more entrusted to the ladies of a family.” (Quoted in Kennaway, 180)

Where Do the Women Come In?

Lisa Cristiani (1827-53)

- A Parisienne of considerable charm who was an elegant and sympathetic but small-toned player.
- *Chamber Virtuosa* (conferred by the King of Denmark)
- Dedicatée of Mendelssohn's *Song Without Words* Op. 109



An Astonished Writer on Cristiani's 1844 Paris Debut

“It is said that a female cellist (!!!) is appearing in a Paris salon, with the name Christiani-Berbier, admittedly to great applause. – These are the fruits of female emancipation!” (Quoted in Kennaway, 186)

The Physical Impediment

“The obvious impediment to [the cello’s] acceptance for women was physical: anything held between the legs—whether horse, bicycle or cello—engendered discussion as to its suitability for women.” (Beth Macleod quoted in Kennaway, 188)



The Inelegant Male Posture: Possible Solutions

A rare photograph of Helene de Katow, one of four women taught by Francois Servais (1807-1866), known as “the Paganini of the Cello.” Katow won her first prize in 1861, after which she toured Europe and the United States.



May Mukle (1880-1963)

Regarded as the “true pioneer of women cellists in Britain,” she was the first to gain international status as a concert artist. In Vienna. Max Kalbeck called her “the female Casals.” Mukle was well known for supporting the work of contemporary composers such as Holst, Vaughan Williams, Ravel, and Kodaly. Historian Margaret Campbell notes that “she knew her pioneering had paved the way for women to take up the cello and enjoyed their successes.” (*The Great Cellists*, 202)



Guilhermina Suggia (1885-1950)

“She was known for the nobility of her phrasing and ‘tone of masculine power seldom heard from a lady violoncellist’” (Margaret Campbell quoting Edmund Van der Straeten, 204)

The famous 1923 portrait by Augustus John (Tate Gallery)

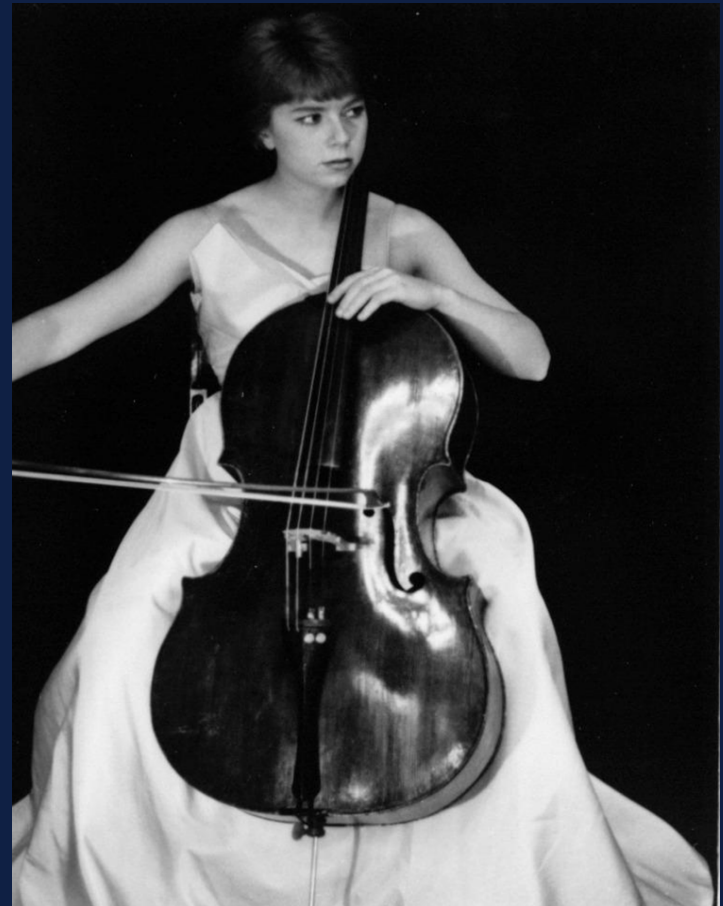


Beatrice Harrison (1892-1965)



Marion Davies Bottler: Most eye-fetching of the Houston Symphony's 88 musicians (and its principal cellist), she is now taking her first vacation from music to take chemistry at the University of Houston because she must have chemistry to get a psychology degree.

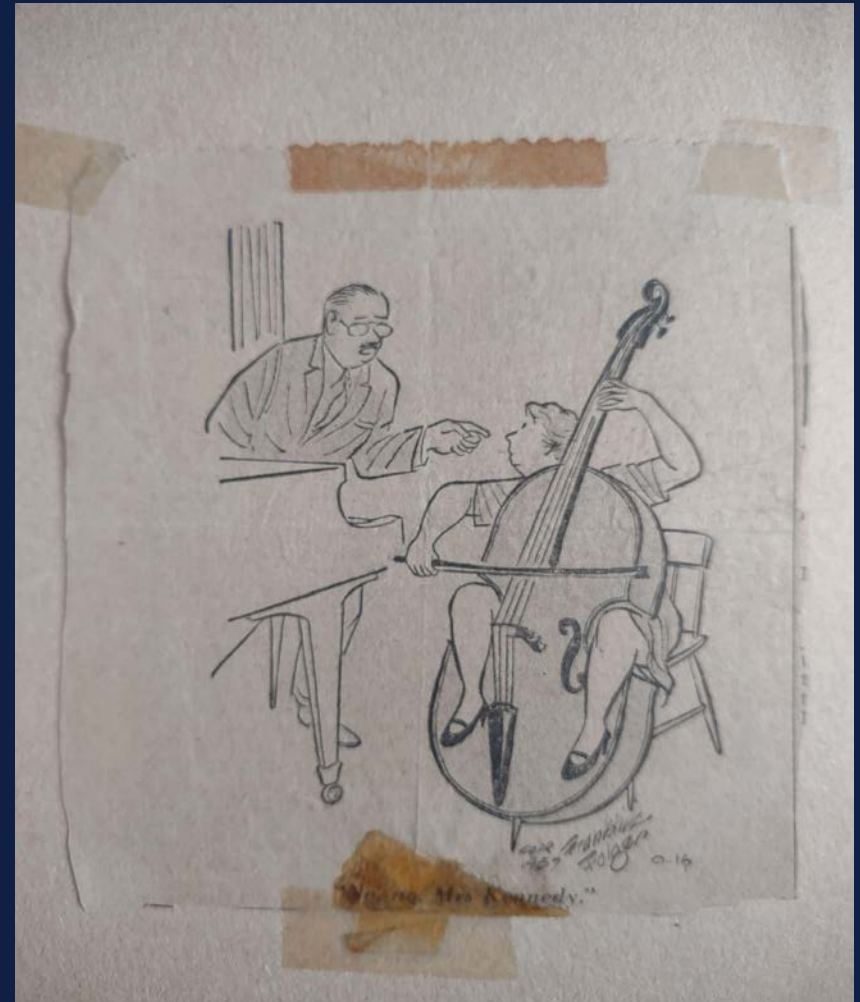
Martha Gerschevski (b.1941)



Inelegant Posture?

A cartoon from the Martha Gerschevski Archive

(Caption, "Wrong, Mrs. Kennedy.")



Elizabeth Cowling (1910-1997)

A cartoon from Dr. Cowling's archival materials. If only we had her commentary on this.

How Do We Make Certain Women Are Represented?

- Listen to women performers when they speak about the challenges in their career.
- We look beyond performers: “cellists noted for their distinguished contributions in the areas of composition, performance, pedagogy, and scholarship.”
- Women’s performance careers sometimes peak early, then they transition to other paths.
- We are the central archive for cello music research. It is our job to address the archival silence of women cellists in the historic record through actively seeking documentation.