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AND

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PROSPECTS AND PROJECTS
IN NORTHERN EUROPE

EDITED BY

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Music, Research, and Activism

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Northern Europe**

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Kaj Ahlsved, and Sini Mononen**



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8.

Music Historians as Feminist Activists: Gender Mainstreaming in Contemporary Concert Repertoires

*Susanna Välimäki and
Nuppu Koivisto-Kaasik*

Susanna Välimäki is a musicologist who has during their later career become more and more occupied with issues around music, society and sustainability, and the possibilities of activist music research. Their areas of interest include feminist, queer, and transgender musicology; ecomusicology; music, war, and cultural trauma; inter-art studies; and applied musicology. In cooperation with musical and cultural institutes, Välimäki has developed audience development projects that combine artistic work, research, and education, and they produce research-based radio and television programmes for the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE). Välimäki is professor of art studies and Head of Musicology at the University of Helsinki, Finland, and a founding member of Research Association Suoni.

Dr Nuppu Koivisto-Kaasik is a cultural historian specialized in music and gender in northeastern Europe during the long nineteenth century. She gained her doctorate in women's orchestras in late nineteenth-century Finland in 2019 at the University of Helsinki. Recently, she has been working on historical Finnish women composers and musicians in the Daughters of Music project led by Susanna Välimäki. Currently, Koivisto-Kaasik works as an Academy of Finland Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of the Arts Helsinki, carrying out her project entitled *A Classroom of Her Own: Women Piano Teachers, Intersectionality, and the Gendered Power Structures of Musical Life in Helsinki and Tallinn, 1861–1924*. She also works as a music critic and cultural debater in the media. Koivisto-Kaasik comes from a family of classical musicians, and she has been a member of the Research Association *Suoni* since 2018.

We are two feminist music historians – Välimäki has a background in musicology, Koivisto-Kaasik in history – who have recently worked together on a joint research project entitled *Daughters of Music: Finnish women Composers from the 19th Century to the 20th Century* (2018–23). Having carried out extensive archive work with original sources, we have unearthed about one hundred fifty Finnish women composers born between the years 1784 and 1909 who were thus far almost completely neglected in the literature on Finnish music history. The main publication related to the project is a peer-reviewed music-historical encyclopaedia comprising the biographies and list of compositions of 126 composers. Moreover, the encyclopaedia includes extensive introductory and closing chapters discussing methodology and results (Välimäki and Koivisto-Kaasik 2023).

We have approached the project as *activist* research. Hence, the encyclopaedia and other peer-reviewed publications we have authored (e.g. Välimäki 2022) are only one part of it – although a fundamental one in generating profoundly new and scholarly justified historical knowledge. We call this the *archive-oriented* dimension of the project. The other part, which we call the *action-oriented* dimension, reflects our efforts to apply our new knowledge and thereby transform gender-biased and discriminatory music-cultural practices, the programming of classical music concerts

in particular, so as to advance gender equality. Our aim is to bring these historical women composers and their music into the literature on music history, the concert culture, radio and television broadcasting, the sheet music and recording industry, music education, cultural heritage, and public consciousness. For this purpose, we have collaborated with musicians, organizers of concerts and music festivals, symphony orchestras, music magazines, publishers of sheet music, music archives and museums, media actors, music organizations, and cultural institutions. We have also worked with several other feminist music researchers and activists, and currently, we are witnessing a feminist movement and feminist networking within the culture of classical music in Finland, reflecting broader international trends (cf. *Equity in Composing* 2019; Kvist 2023a; Ramstedt 2022; Rantanen et al. 2023).

Although the message attesting to the importance of listening to women's voices has been present in feminist research on music history for several decades (e.g. Babbe and Timmermann 2016; Bowers and Tick 1987; Citron 1993; Hoffmann 1998; Mathias 2022; McClary 1991; Moisala and Valkeila 1994; Rieger 1988; Pendle 1991; Wollenberg 2022), it is only during the past few years that mainstream institutions in Finland (and elsewhere), such as symphony orchestras, major music festivals, music publishers, radio broadcasting companies, and other media actors, have started to reflect gender equality in concert repertoires and programming (Kvist 2023a, 2023b; cf. also, Ramstedt 2022). Perhaps this became possible only in the aftermath of the #metoo movement, the so-called fourth-wave feminism, and the official policy of mainstreaming gender in all social sectors in Finland (and many other societies). Indeed, *gender mainstreaming* denotes a wide-range political concept and transformative approach, which precisely refers to the implementation of gender equality on all levels of decision-, strategy-, and policy-making in a given society (e.g. European Commission 2020; Lomazzi and Crespi 2019: 1; United Nations 2022). Our aim in this essay is to reflect on some aspects of our research-based activist engagement in the gender mainstreaming of concert repertoires in the Finnish classical music scene, related to our project focusing on historical Finnish women composers. Here gender mainstreaming simply means promoting music composed by (assumed) women in such a way that women's music gradually becomes a natural

and self-evident part of the orchestras' standard repertoires and programming practices. The question we address is: How can we display and establish in mainstream classical music and in the concert culture the works and the stories of historical Finnish women composers who until now have been completely ignored in concert repertoires and in music history writing?

We should point out here that, from the feminist-activist point of view, it is not enough simply to add women composers to the canons of music history, including concert and pedagogical repertoires. Research must go deeper, and critically scrutinize established modes of writing music history, planning concert programmes, and teaching music (cf. Bowers and Tick 1987; Wollenberg 2022). In accordance with the critical practices of feminist music history and activist research, our project is not limited (1) to unearthing the contributions of Finnish historical women composers: the aims also include (2) revealing the patriarchally formed ideological foundations of Finnish music history that have kept and continue to keep women composers away; (3) substituting these ideological foundations so as to comply with the critical understanding of gender systems and to advance gender-equal practices; and (4) initiating a *reform* in thinking about and working with classical music that is more inclusive and more truthful to the diversity among people making and listening to music in the world, currently and in the past (Välimäki and Koivisto-Kaasik 2023). Only a profound change in thinking that guides music-cultural practices such as concert programming and the presentation of music history will guarantee gender-political progress. This is a major challenge, which in practice requires music-cultural organizations to educate their employees in gender equality and feminist working methods, and, more broadly, in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Feminist and activist music research

Activist music research in this essay refers to the conducting of research that (1) addresses issues of social justice; (2) aims to transform socially unjust, discriminatory, and unsustainable musical practices so as to advance social justice, equity and sustainability; (3) is openly committed to its (socio)political mission; and (4) is carried out in co-operation with an

organization, institution, actor, or an organized group of people involved in the musical practice in question (Välimäki et al. 2018: 7–8; see also Ramstedt and Välimäki in this volume). Much activist research is action-oriented, often resulting in the researcher also taking on other roles. This is true of our project, in which we have worked as researchers and as debaters in the media, music critics, audience developers, concert organizers and hosts, public speakers, radio journalists, educators, and editors of sheet music.

Feminist research has a strong activist tradition, and it has developed influential models for a variety of activist approaches. Indeed, it has often been considered activist in its very starting point, given its change-oriented goal of dismantling gender (and other) discrimination in the world (e.g. hooks 2000; McLaren 2019; Naples 2003). Nevertheless, we feel we should identify our research broadly as *activist music research*, and not only as feminist music research or feminist (and applied) music history. There are several motivations behind this choice. Primarily, we would like to emphasize the need for renewal in musicology¹ (see Ramstedt and Välimäki in this volume) in the current age of global eco-social crises and a world at risk (cf. Beck 2007), of crises in science and scholarship in the neo-liberal university (cf. e.g. Troiani and Dutson 2021), and of emergent activist methodologies in humanities, social sciences, and environmental studies. Moreover, although we are focusing on the very limited problem of a specific musical practice at a certain time and place, we also wish to highlight the similarities in methodological questions in different branches of activist music research, as well as the interconnectedness of different social problems in music cultures such as gender discrimination and environmental irresponsibility. Activist music research also offers fresh and dynamic opportunities to rethink the relationship between theory and practice, between research and teaching, and between academia and the (rest of) society. In the end, all the various ways of practising activist music research are unique attempts to answer the question of what musicology (or a branch of musicology, such as music history) can do when confronted with the challenges of inequality, inequity, and ecocide (cf. Torvinen in this volume).

In conventional academic language, our archive-oriented and action-oriented perspectives could be understood as a division

between basic and applied research. Yet, we have adopted a somewhat different orientation in our project. First, we also consider action-oriented research to be basic research (cf. Hale 2008a), because it produces new knowledge (and theorization) about musical practices such as hindrances and ways of promoting gender equality in concert programming. Naturally, this requires us to write some of our research publications with these aspects in mind (e.g. in the mode of action research, developmental work research, ethnography, or autoethnography). Moreover, we believe that research results could include not only written arguments in peer-reviewed publications, but also performed actions, artefacts, and events (e.g. radio series, audio recordings, sheet-music editions, memorial plaques on walls, concert series, and co-operative networks among people, actors, and institutions) – and more or less permanent changes in specific music-cultural practices. These actions produce new knowledge and theorization that would otherwise remain undiscovered and are often the result of teamwork among academic and non-academic partners.

Second, and related to the above, we understand that the production of knowledge happens in active dialogue between researchers and co-operative partners in the music field and elsewhere outside academia. This is most evident in action research when partners could be understood not so much as informants but as experts and co-researchers (even if they are not academics and are not used to writing research publications) (Ryynänen and Rannikko 2021: 14, 19–21). The dialogue between academia and musical and other cultural institutions and actors affects all our research, including the archive-oriented and theoretical work, as is typical in any field work or action research.

The archive- and action-oriented dimensions of the project overlap, and archive-oriented history writing could also be considered action-oriented research: the reform in thinking could not happen without feminist critical knowledge, which is a prerequisite for bringing about lasting change in musical practice. The concept of *counter-story* – theorized extensively in feminist studies as well as in critical race theory (e.g. hooks 1989; Solórzano and Yosso 2002) – sheds further light on this intertwining between music-historical research and research on contemporary music culture, and between theorization and action. Indeed,

archive-oriented history writing could be considered activist research in its aim to create counter-stories (e.g. Delgado Bergal 1998).

Creating counter-stories

The main publication of the *Daughters of Music* project, the encyclopaedia is based on arduous archive work with original sources such as music manuscripts, historical music publications, manifold biographical and institutional documents, and historical newspapers. The open-access and peer-reviewed, feminist multi-biography is meant to be a powerful counter-story to the traditional, patriarchal, and erroneous master narrative according to which, with a few exceptions, there have been no women composers in the history of Finnish music. As feminist philosopher Hilde Lindemann defines its purpose, a counter-story opposes a master narrative in society or in a certain culture that subjugates a particular social group (such as women). The master narrative damages the identity of the group and of the people who belong to it, preventing them from participating in what is on offer in society or in a certain culture (such as being a composer or accessing music composed by women) (Lindemann 2020: 286–88, 2001; cf. also Delgado Bergal 1998; Delgado and Stenfancic 2013; Solórzano and Yosso 2002).

Dismantling the discriminatory structures of patriarchal writing on music history and bringing out the reparative narratives of past women composers with their dynamic agencies create space for women's (and gender-nonconformists') composerhood and music, both historically and currently. Complementing their research value, these counter-stories influence musical life, the concert and festival culture, music journalism, music education, and music publishing – especially if the researchers are actively operating in these fields. They offer women composers and musicians, women in general, 'other others', and people on the whole the opportunity to work on their identity on the basis of and supported by women (or gender-nonconforming) role models and their historical continuum and legacy (cf. Ahmed 2017; Bakash and Harcourt 2015; Lindemann 2001; Thurman 2021; Ege 2020).

We deliberately question and transgress various conformist, patriarchal modes of writing music history in the encyclopaedia. In the lists of compositions that follow each composer's biography,

for example, we have rejected the conventional value hierarchy presenting works from the largest ('greatest') to the smallest forms of music, such as from orchestral and large-scale stage works to chamber music, songs, and solo pieces. Pedagogical music, children's music, religious hymns, incidental theatre and dance music, and various other forms of 'Gebrauchsmusik' are low down on this conventional hierarchy, thereby considered of less value and rather insignificant. Instead, we respect each composer's unique profile, starting from the forms of music they favoured personally, were proficient in, or considered most important. If a composer excelled in children's or gymnastic music, for example (as many women did), we put that on top of the list above other forms of composing. Naturally, this has led to a critical examination of concepts such as composition and composer, and to a new understanding (cf. Bowers and Tick 1987; Citron 1993; Moisala and Valkeila 1994; Rieger 1988). Composing music was, in fact, a far more common and diverse everyday activity in the long nineteenth century – especially among musically inclined women – than the canonical image of a 'genius' in an ivory tower implies.

We have taken seriously female educational institutions such as girls' schools and women's institutes offering high-quality music education, classifying them as alternative music academies: these significant sites of often professional-level music education have not been mentioned in previous, male-centred presentations of Finnish music history. Correspondingly, when we write about relatives, colleagues, collaborators, and other significant people in the lives of composers we highlight women (e.g. we mention the mother before the father), to underline their legacy as active agents in cultural life and history.

Our approach to 'Finnishness' is open and inclusive. We include in the encyclopaedia all composers active in the (historical) area of Finland or with some Finnish roots or background.² The different linguistic and national identities are not mutually exclusive, and we try to avoid projecting any straightforwardly fixed ideas on them, especially in a historical context (cf. Golianek 2018: 16). Writing about multi-lingual and transnational music history challenges nationalist stereotypes about Finnish culture and heritage even today. Our approach to the concept of 'woman' is similarly open and inclusive. The composers under study were all gendered as women in the context of the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, but some of them expressed their gender identity in non-conforming ways, which could be considered from a transgender or non-binary perspective. The choice to talk about women is thus not unproblematic, but it is political (as opposed to the norm of cisgender men). Nevertheless, we aim to leave space for gender diversity in our interpretation of historical materials.

One influential medium through which our project disseminates the counter-story of Finnish music history to the general public is the *National Biography of Finland*, edited and published by The Biographical Centre of the Finnish Literature Society. This collection contains the biographies of 6500 ‘significant’ people from the area of Finland or who have ‘influenced its history in a significant way’ (NBC 2022). Its focus in 2020 was on producing new biographies of people involved in classical music, and one of us (Välimäki) was on the editorial board that year. For the first time in its history, a whole group of (historical) Finnish women composers was added to the databank en masse. The resulting thirteen open-access articles have received a lot of attention, and their mere existence in the venerable *National Biography of Finland* mainstreams the existence of women composers in the history of Finnish music. Moreover, given that only 13 per cent of all the articles in this database concern women (NBC 2022), these kinds of feminist actions are important to the database in general too.

Action in the music field

Complementing our peer-reviewed research publications, we have written popularizing article series in music magazines (e.g. Välimäki and Koivisto 2019), debate contributions, music reviews in newspapers and other media outlets, as well as liner notes accompanying CDs, in concert programmes and festival brochures, and texts in sheet-music collections presenting composers and their compositions. We have delivered pre-concert lectures, given public talks at cultural events and training sessions for those in the music industry, and we have acted as concert hosts and radio journalists. In connection with this project, we have collaborated with musicians, orchestras, organizers of festivals and other concerts, museums, publishers of sheet music, media companies, and professional organizations

in the music business. Currently, we are planning a radio/television/multimedia series for the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE), based on our research project and combined with the large-scale production of studio recordings of historical compositions by women; these studio recordings are currently in the making (the producer is Timo Asikainen). We have prioritized these jobs, in which we act on and engage with the grassroots level in the music field. We have reworked these conventional formats of communication from a feminist-activist perspective to ensure the effective dissemination of the counter-story of Finnish music history and to advance gender equality in the music field. Likewise, we have acted as consultants to many musicians, concert and festival organizers, orchestras, music publishers, and professional music organizations on issues related to gender-equal concert programming and the repertoires of Finnish women composers.

During the past couple of years, we have witnessed how these actions have activated and advanced gender-equal practices in Finland's classical-music scene, and in concert programming in particular. This has been easy to notice, because for a long time no historical women composers were represented in the programmes of Finnish symphony orchestras, for instance, which is why even small changes were discernible. We have also witnessed how feminist activism has broadened to involve many other people – researchers, musicians, and administrative workers in the music field – and how it has spread in new directions and initiatives, especially among younger generations. This has resulted in the establishment of influential networks promoting feminist activism in the field of classical music.

As a more detailed example of our activities, we would like to mention the editing of sheet music, which is of critical importance for gender mainstreaming in classical music and concert repertoires. Here we are collaborating with the Finnish Musical Heritage Society, a non-profit organization tasked with editing Finnish historical music, and with Fennica Gehrman, the biggest publisher of classical sheet music in Finland. A fundamental aim of our project in this respect is to make the music of historical Finnish women composers available to performers, and thereby to have an impact on concert and pedagogical repertoires. We are sharing our knowledge about Finnish women composers, their compositions

and archival sources with Fennica Gehrman for publishing purposes, and we are writing composer bios and presenting works in commercial publications of sheet music, including solo and chamber music as well as materials for symphony orchestras. Moreover, we are involved as co-editors in two critical editions: *Nocturnal Madonna: Solo Songs by Finnish Women from the 1840s to the 1940s* (Välimäki et al. 2024), and *Moods: Works for Piano by Finnish Women Composers from the 1850s to the 1950s* (Ramstedt et al. 2025). Our important collaborator in these editions is music philologist Timo Virtanen from the Finnish Musical Heritage Society.³ Violinist Mirka Malmi and pianist Tiina Karakorpi, our long-term musician collaborators, have recently edited a collection of violin music entitled *Other Finnish Works for Violin: Works for Violin and Piano by Finnish Women Composers 1886–1936* (Malmi and Karakorpi 2021), to which we have contributed with our knowledge of historical archive materials (music and photographs), and with texts introducing the composers and compositions. Together these editions form a three-volume publication series entitled *Daughters of Music* (Volumes 1–3), as planned by Jari Eskola, the previous publishing manager at Fennica Gehrman.

The collaborators involved in these editions of sheet music include a number of musicologists, musicians, music editors, music engravers, and administrators engaged in music publishing. This has provided us with new insights into and experiences of activist, communal, and non-hierarchical co-working practices in the field of music culture, combining research with other areas of expertise in the profession. At the same time, it has shaped our positions and stretched our roles as academics and activists in new directions that transgress the barriers separating academia and cultural life. We feel that we are more involved in, belong to, and are responsible for a shared music culture and a collective effort to achieve gender-political sustainability. Our aim in these activities is not to disseminate knowledge ‘top-down’. It is rather to engage in a meaningful conversation within the field of classical music about the importance of feminist music history both in Finland and abroad, to challenge our own prejudices and misconceptions about grassroots musical life, and to critically re-examine our own arguments and developmental work on this dialogical basis.

The action-oriented dimension of our project has also prompted people to contact us with information about private archives and music manuscripts (and also about various issues regarding gender discrimination in classical music and musicology). Consequently, we have discovered new sources (including new compositions), and we have ensured their preservation in public archives. This is a significant step in feminist historical projects, in that public archives have discriminated against women's literary remains (e.g. Allen 1986), resulting in the disappearance of lots of music manuscripts, for instance. Moreover, few historical women composers were members of royalty organizations, which is why we have used social media in our search for descendants and assignees related to some of the composers and to copyright issues.

Collaboration with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra

Another example of our activist engagement within the music field is our collaborative project with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra entitled *History's Unheard Orchestral Music – HUOM* (see HPO 2022; Kvist 2023a). The general manager of the orchestra Aleksi Malmberg and its then chief conductor Susanna Mälkki planned the project, in collaboration with one of us (Välimäki), who in addition to our *Daughters of Music* project is also representing the Department of Musicology at the University of Helsinki and the Research Association for Activist Music Research, Suoni (2024). The orchestra and its intendant are organizing the project, and they took the initiative in establishing our collaboration. Several co-partners and experts are involved in addition to the administrative and artistic workers attached to the orchestra and the two of us as music researchers: they include music publishers (e.g. Fennica Gehrman), music-related trade associations and organizations (e.g. Music Finland, the Association of Finnish Symphony Orchestras), archives and cultural-heritage-related organizations (e.g. the National Library of Finland, the Sibelius Museum, the Finnish Literature Society), as well as academic organizations and providers of music education (e.g. the University of the Arts Helsinki, including the Sibelius Academy) (see HPO 2022).

The main aim of the *HUOM* project is to make Finland's historical women composers visible and to bring their orchestral music to the ears of the general public via the activities of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. At the same time, the purpose is to introduce this music and to make it available to other orchestras, as well as music researchers, music journalists, music professionals, and music organizations. Selected compositions that we have located in archives are roughly edited from manuscript sources or historical editions to produce orchestral sheet music in a playable format (score and instrumental parts). The Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra plays these materials in so-called 'reading sessions', which are organized once or twice a year and are recorded for the purposes of concert programming, research, and archival use. Some of the works are then included in the regular concerts of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, complemented with audience-development events, and the concerts are streamed online and broadcast on radio, which makes them available for everyone. Some of the works are edited more carefully for publishing purposes. The long-term aim is to integrate this practice into the orchestra's regular work, not just as a one-off project (HPO 2022).

The focus thus far has been on historical Finnish women composers, but the perspective will be broadened in the future to include other forgotten or marginalized composers and their music. The project was launched in March 2021, and the first reading sessions took place in the following September, including orchestral music by Ida Moberg (1859–1947), Ingeborg von Bronsart (1840–1913), and Heidi Sundblad-Halme (1903–73). It was an overwhelmingly emotional experience for us and the other people involved to listen to orchestral music by these women composers played live by a major symphony orchestra: some of these works had never been performed, at least not for about one hundred years. In the second and third reading sessions, compositions by Bronsart, Laura Netzel (1839–1927), Agnes Tschetschulin (1859–1942), Greta Dahlström (1887–1978), and Ann-Elise Hannikainen (1946–2012) were played. Several works by these composers have later been performed in regular concerts by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and other orchestras.

Historical orchestral music is particularly challenging in a gender-equality project: given the prevailing gender system,

women composers born in the long nineteenth century were far less likely to focus on orchestral than on many other forms of music. Orchestral music composed by women tended not to be published, and because women's estates were seldom preserved in public archives many of their works have disappeared. As a result, the symphonies composed by Moberg and Betzy Holmberg Deis (1860–1900), for instance, have disappeared even though they were performed during their lives in Finland and Germany. Moreover, women who composed orchestral music tended to produce shorter, popular-style pieces and incidental music, thus using styles and forms that did not meet the conformist (patriarchal) expectations of many contemporary orchestras (cf. large symphonic works). We researchers believe that it is of utmost significance that the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra is ready to play any form of music unearthed from the archives in their reading sessions and regular concerts, being not too picky or cautious as to whether or not the style fits its customary profile. By being openly curious about the various historical forms, styles, and aesthetic ideologies, the project allows the archive materials to shape our and the public's understanding of history and conceptions concerning what orchestral music is worth playing in public. This hopefully makes the world view ultimately supported in all concert programmes more inclusive, involving more diverse people and stories. This is yet another example of when it is not enough to add works composed by women to established repertoires. There is a more profound need for a change of thinking – in terms of aesthetic ideologies and artistic principles – in concert programming.

In terms of our collaboration with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, we should therefore not be content with the repertoires of historical Finnish women composers, but should simultaneously support gender equality and diversity work in its concert programming in general. For this reason, we have been giving the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra lists of available (for hire) material comprising orchestral works by historical women composers with diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds from the Nordic and Baltic countries, Europe, and the Americas.⁴ Nevertheless, we realize that giving repertoire lists is not enough, and that gender-equal programming requires fundamental changes in accustomed practices of concert programming and thinking about music. This

could be most effectively pursued if an activist researcher would commit to work with the orchestra full time for a longer period, practising their action research and developmental work in concert programming and audience development at the orchestra instead of their office at the university. The Swedish Association of Women Composers, for instance, has developed certain principles and methods for gender-equal concert programming by drawing on feminist research (see e.g. KVAŠT 2022a). For example, orchestras could systematically ask each potential guest director and soloist whether they would be willing to perform a composition by a woman. It could also mean positing a composition by a woman as the starting point of the concert and building the rest of the programme around it, rather than the other way around (i.e. a composition by a woman added as an ‘extra’ in a male-centred programme) (Fronczak 2019).

Systemic changes are extremely slow in orchestras, opera houses, and other large-scale mainstream institutions of classical music, which hold on to their age-old, patriarchally formed ideologies and conceptions about ‘absolute music’, ‘good music’, ‘quality’, and ‘artistic values’ (see e.g. Bull 2019; Scharff 2017; Yoshihara 2008). These ideas favour privileged and discriminatory concert repertoires, understood as ‘abstract art’ without any social, political, and ethical aspects or consequences. There is no place for such conceptions of music in the twenty-first century when the challenges of eco-social transition pertain to all social and cultural sectors, including symphony orchestras. New forms of collaborative development work between activist music researchers and symphony orchestras and other actors in the culture of classical music could be developed on this basis. It would mean working more purposefully in terms of intersectional feminism, especially concerning issues of gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Together we could learn, apply, and develop new, critical feminist and anti-racist principles and methods for concert programming that advance not only gender equality but also equity, inclusion, and diversity in general.

Notes

1. Feminist music research was a crucial part of the new musicological reform in the 1980s and 1990s. New musicology’s reformatory ideas,

influenced by feminist, gender, and queer studies, cultural and postcolonial studies, critical theory, and new historiographical trends, among other things, had become mainstream by the turn of the twenty-first century in conceptions of music as socio-cultural and thus ideological construction. Although new musicology and its follow-up cultural musicology acknowledge their relatedness to politics (e.g. identity politics), neither the challenges of global crises nor political action research have been included in their basic premises. Action and applied research have been increasingly developed in (applied) ethnomusicology, although perhaps not so much as openly political activist research (see e.g. Pettan and Titon 2015).

2. Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire from 1809 until its independence in 1917. The country's eastern border changed after the Second World War, when some areas, such as the Karelian Isthmus, were lost to the Soviet Union.
3. Virtanen is the editor-in-chief of the *Jean Sibelius Works (JSW)* project at the National Library of Finland.
4. Here we used existing catalogues and concert repertoire projects focusing on women composers (e.g. ForumMusikDiversität 2013; KVASt 2022b; Savo Music Society 2022).