

Trumpeting Women: What happened to women trumpeters during the 318 years between 1655 and 1973 is worthy of note. Also worthy of note is no anatomical gender difference exists to allow male and prevent female trumpeting. Still, trumpet opportunities historically excluded females as they promoted males. Not until 1973 did a major orchestra hire its first female principle trumpeter.

It is chronicled that Johanna Von Hoff was a Viennese trumpeter in the 1655 court of Emperor Leopold I and that J. Heneage Carter had an all-girl brass band in the 1860's in New England.

Child prodigy Edna White had her first trumpet solo performance at Carnegie Hall in 1902. She was 9 and promptly recruited to study at the newly founded Institute of Musical Art (now Julliard). At her commencement in 1907, she was the only graduate to perform a solo and the only graduate not to receive a degree for which she was deemed too young.

Due to the rarity of female trumpeting engagements in which to perform for wages, many women of the time created their own groups and employed other women. Edna formed her first all-woman trumpet quartet in 1910. But despite her talent, Julliard training, and rave reviews, few would hire all-women groups. After two years Edna returned to Indianapolis and married.

Her husband disapproved her trumpet playing and Edna disapproved his disapproval. However, when his foreign bank accounts were frozen due to WW I he did not object when she formed her second all-woman trumpet quartet and became the family source of income. After a pregnant pause in her career, Edna left her husband one year after the birth of their son. To support herself and Douglas she formed the Edna White Brass Quartet, and toured the vaudeville circuit throughout the 1920s.

Olivia Manetta Douroux and her husband Louis were trumpeters in Louisiana in the early 1900s. Louis played in a brass band but codes of feminine respectability restricted Olivia from playing in public. She could perform only at private parties where it is written she played stunningly difficult trumpet duets with Louis.

Their 13-year-old daughter Dolly professionally played piano at Lulu White's Mahogany Hall. Creoles of color such as Douroux who was Sicilian, French and African could work in Storyville, but not be customers. Although Dolly could play the trumpet, bass, drums, and guitar, it was as a pianist that she could perform publicly in 1917 to earn wages, but only for a while.

In 1922 Dolly married Placide Adams who preferred his wife stay home. She did and bore him 7 children. When the family faced financial hardship during the Depression, however, Placide "allowed" his wife to resume her career.

Valaida Snow was a jazz trumpeter in the 1920s and 30s. Her mother had taught her cello, bass, violin, banjo, mandolin, harp, accordion, clarinet, saxophone, and trumpet. At 15, she was developing as a professional singer and trumpet player. Her talented hot jazz trumpet style so much like Louis Armstrong, earned her the nickname "Little Louis." Armstrong himself called her the world's second best jazz trumpet player.

She played trumpet with Greats such as Count Basie and acted on Broadway with other Greats such as Ethel Waters in "Rhapsody In Black" in New York. She also performed in Europe and Asia and was a savvy businesswoman who spoke seven languages. She too could have been one of the 'Great' trumpet players but her trumpeting career bowed to a singing and acting career that blossomed albeit it trumped her trumpeting talents.

Orchestra jobs for female trumpeters were scarce, as well. The few women orchestras were beginning to hire were string players. Women addressed this employment exclusion by forming female orchestras. Expert trumpet player Mable Swint Ewer of Boston organized one of the first female orchestras in the United States in 1921. But even Ewer, when she began her early musical education at the New England conservatory, needed permission from her father before she could become a female trumpet player.

Clora Bryant's love for the trumpet began as a teen in 1941 when her brother was drafted into the army and left behind his trumpet that she picked up. Job opportunities for women did increase during the war years, but the female musicians were demeaningly called "Swing Shift Masies," a slang term indicating they were "substitutes" for the "real" male musicians who were away at war. Still, Bryant's career path began to break into the male-dominated brass bastion.

She was the first woman to play publicly with Charlie Parker. She recorded with Dizzy Gillespie and played with other Greats as Louis Armstrong, Carl Perkins, and Dexter Gordon. In the 1940s she toured with the all-female Black Queens of Swing, and with Billie Holiday. Her album 'Gal with a Horn'

was released in 1957 and later she performed jazz in the Soviet Union upon invitation of Mikhail Gorbachev.

In 1964 Marie Speziale was the first female trumpet player hired in a major orchestra (Cincinnati Symphony) and in 1973, Susan Slaughter became the first female principal trumpet to be hired by a major orchestra (St. Louis Symphony) 318 years after Johanna trumpeted for Leopold in 1655.

Sources: Swing Shift: All-Girl Bands of the 1940s, Sherrie Tukcker

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