

The Lost Music of Women - ECSTATIC ENSEMBLE

Sofia Niklasson *soprano* - **Jeanette Köhn** *soprano* -**Malena Ernman** *alto*
Leif Aruhn-Solén *tenor* - **David Risberg** *baritone* - **Gustav Nordlander** *bass*

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anonymous (c. 1400 BC)

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All arrangements by Malena Ernman

PREFACE

I have chosen these women from among thousands, all equally worthy of being celebrated. Through music, we get to hear the stories that were never told. For millennia, society has tried to silence women. Intelligence, imagination, and inspiration were considered masculine, while women were erased from history books. In the year 300, a law was even introduced that prohibited women from making music. Women were seen as the reason evil entered paradise.

Despite all the resistance, women have still created music, art, and poetry. Some found a way through entering convents, others by becoming courtesans – prostituted women who were trained in music, singing, and dance to please men. Some were fortunate enough to be born into families without brothers and with an influential father, while others were able to create and write after becoming widows or when the men went off to war. But when these women passed away, their music often died with them.

With this collection, we have the opportunity to listen to their works. I hope you will love this music as much as I do!

Malena Ernman



ECSTATIC ENSEMBLE
David Risberg ~ Leif Aruhn-Solén ~ Gustav Nordlander
Malena Ernman ~ Sofia Niklasson ~ Jeanette Köhn

SOFIA NIKLASSON

Sofia Niklasson, soprano, is particularly devoted to Baroque music and is frequently engaged for major sacred works such as Bach's Christmas Oratorio, the Passions, and Handel's Messiah, while also performing contemporary art music. She has appeared with orchestras including the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, and Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra. In the spring of 2026, she was a guest artist at the Orphei Drängar spring concert in Uppsala and in December she is engaged as a soloist with the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon. Sofia is also a dedicated ensemble singer and is employed as a soprano in the Swedish Radio Choir, as well as a member of Ecstatic Ensemble.



JEANETTE KÖHN

Jeanette Köhn is one of Sweden's most versatile sopranos and is an established concert and opera singer with engagements worldwide. She was a soloist at the Royal Wedding of Crown Princess Victoria and Daniel Westling, as well as at King Carl XVI Gustaf's sixtieth birthday celebrations, and has appeared at the Nobel Prize Banquet. International appearances include a Villa-Lobos recital at Lincoln Center in New York and performances with Westdeutscher Rundfunk, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Jeanette received the Guldmasken award for her portrayal of Roxanne at Oscarsteatern in Stockholm and has appeared as a soloist on more than 40 CD recordings.



MALENA ERNMAN

Malena Ernman is a celebrated Swedish mezzo-soprano acclaimed for her crossover career, performing opera, especially Baroque repertoire, as well as cabaret, jazz, and musicals worldwide. She has appeared in leading roles and concerts with conductors such as William Christie, Jean-Christophe Spinosi, René Jacobs, Daniel Barenboim, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Herbert Blomstedt, Sir Simon Rattle, and Philippe Herreweghe. Malena represented Sweden in the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest and is a Royal Court Singer. Her discography includes more than 60 CDs, most recently Terra Mater with L'Arpeggiata under the direction of Christina Pluhar.



LEIF ARUHN-SOLÉN

Leif Aruhn-Solén has been an internationally sought-after tenor for more than 25 years, specializing in music of the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly the music of Bach and Handel. He has performed in over 30 countries and appears regularly with leading Baroque ensembles and symphony orchestras worldwide. Career highlights include Handel's Messiah with the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Singapore Symphony Orchestra, as well as acclaimed performances in the title role of Monteverdi's L'Orfeo and as Gandhi in Philip Glass' Satyagraha.

His recordings include Bach: Tenor Arias, Vols. 1 & 2 with Göteborg Baroque, Handel Arias with New Trinity Baroque, and Gandhi's Final Aria.



DAVID RISBERG

Swedish baritone David Risberg, graduated from the University College of Opera in Stockholm in 2021 and has since established himself on several of Sweden's leading opera stages, including Royal Swedish Opera, Malmö Opera and Norrlandsoperan. He was named Classical Artist in P2 by Swedish Radio for the 2024/25 season, an honour presented in collaboration with Berwaldhallen that included performances with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Swedish Radio Choir. Recent engagements include Guglielmo in Così fan tutte, Mr Darcy in Nelson's Pride and Prejudice, and Demetrius in Britten's A Midsummer Night's Dream.



GUSTAV NORDLANDER

Gustav Nordlander began his musical career in St Jacob's Boys' Choir in Stockholm, where he appeared as a soloist alongside artists such as Edita Gruberová and Cindy Peters. During these formative years, he developed a lasting passion for Renaissance music and vocal ensemble singing, interests that have remained central to his musical life ever since. He is a frequent guest with Sweden's leading professional choirs, including the Swedish Radio Choir and the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, while St Jacob's Chamber Choir has been his musical home since 1998. Alongside his musical activities, he holds a Master of Science in Physics and works at DeLaval International.



1. Hurrian hymn

anonymous (c. 1400 BC)

The Hurrian songs are a collection of musical works from around 1400 BC, discovered in Ugarit in modern-day Syria. Among them, a hymn to the fertility goddess Nikkal is particularly significant as the world's oldest known musical notation, written in cuneiform. The hymn includes text in Hurrian about offering to Nikkal, and instructions for accompaniment on a stringed instrument.

Enheduanna (c. 2285–2250 BC) was a Sumerian priestess and poet, daughter of King Sargon of Akkad. She is not related to the Hurrian hymn to Nikkal, but is recognized as the earliest known author with a known identity and wrote hymns to the gods Nanna and Inanna.

2. Wedding song

Sappho of Lesbos (c. 630–570 BC)

Sappho (c. 630–570 BC) was a Greek lyric poet from the island of Lesbos and is considered one of the earliest known female poets. Her works, of which only a few complete poems have survived, are characterized by themes of love and female companionship, as in this case: a wedding song. According to Greek sources, she led a thiasos, a group of young women gathered for religious and cultural activities. Sappho is credited with developing the Sapphic stanza, a verse form later used by poets such as Catullus and Horace. Her poetry has had a significant influence on Western literature and culture.

We're going to a wedding – you know this.
Send the girls away, as fast as you can.
Dear gods! Girls!
Sing of love all night long,
of your violet-soft bride.
Wake up now, bring the young men!
We will sleep even less than the nightingale.

3. Hymn of the fallen woman

Kassia (c. 810–865 AD)

The Hymn of Kassiani, or The Hymn of the Fallen Woman, is a penitential hymn sung during Holy Week in the Orthodox Church. It tells the story of a sinful woman who anoints Jesus' feet and expresses repentance. The hymn was composed by the Byzantine abbess Kassia (c. 810–865 AD), widely known for her beauty. The text intertwines themes of repentance and a plea for forgiveness with references to Eve in paradise.

The woman had fallen into many sins, O Lord,
yet when she perceived Your divinity,
she joined the ranks of the Myrrhbearing Women.
In tears she brought You myrrh before Your burial.
She cried, Woe is me!
For I live in the night of licentiousness,
shrouded in the dark and moonless love of sin.
But accept the fountain of my tears,
O You Who gathered the waters of the sea into clouds.
Bow down Your ear to the sighing of my heart,
O You Who bowed the heavens in Your ineffable condescension.
Once Eve heard Your footstep in Paradise
in the cool of the day,
and in fear she ran and hid herself.
But now I will tenderly embrace those pure feet,
and wipe them with the hair of my head.
Who can measure the multitude of my sins,
or the depth of Your judgments, O Savior of my soul?
Do not despise Your servant in Your immeasurable mercy.

4. The Werewolf
anonymous (c. 900 AD)

The Werewolf is a Swedish medieval ballad from the genre of nature-mythical songs, known in thirteen versions among Swedish medieval hymns. It tells the story of a pregnant maiden who encounters a werewolf in the forest. Despite her attempts to escape and offer gifts, she is killed by the werewolf before her beloved can save her. The ballad also exists in Denmark and Norway, reflecting a Nordic tradition.

5. Sendibitr
Battle of King Harald Fairhair of Norway
Jorunn Skaldemö (c. 900 AD)
music: Malena Ernman

Jórunn skáldmær was a Norwegian poet active in the early 10th century during King Harald Fairhair's reign. She is not the composer of The Werewolf, but her epithet Skáldmær (poet-maiden) suggests she gained early fame as a poet. Only two stanzas and three half-stanzas of her poem Sendibítr have been preserved, which address conflicts within the royal family and praise the skald Guttorm sindri for mediating peace.

Bragning reð i bloði, beið herr konungs reiði.
Hús lutu opt fyr eisum, ópjóðar slog rjóða.
Hárald frák: Halfdan spyrja herrðibrogð,
en logðis synisk svart-leitr reyni sjó bragr,
inn hárfagra!
Pvit rikr konungr rekka reyr undlagar
dreyra morðs pas merkja porðu magnendr;
bjósk at fagna!

The ruler reddened his weapons with the blood of evil men; the army suffered from the king's anger; houses often collapsed in fires.
Halfdan, I have learned that Harald Fairhair has heard of your fierce deeds and that poem seems grim to the tester of the sword.
The powerful king of warriors prepared to rejoice (when the quickeners of slaughter dared to redden the reed of the wound-sea with blood)

6. O quam mirabilis
Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179)

O Quam Mirabilis is a hymn of praise to God's wonders by the German abbess, mystic, scientist, and composer Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179). She founded monasteries, wrote extensive theological and medical works, and is known for her visions, which she described in her writings. Hildegard is considered one of the most influential women of the Middle Ages and was canonized by the Catholic Church in 2012.

How wonderful it is
that the foreknowing heart divine
has first known everything created!
For when God looked upon the human face
that he had formed,
he gazed upon his ev'ry work,
reflected whole within that human form.
How wondrous is that breath
that roused humanity to life!

7. A chantar m'er
Beatritz de Dia (1140–1212)

Beatritz de Dia (1140–1212) was a French troubadour, known for her songs about love and sorrow. A chantar m'er is a canso, a form of lyrical poetry often centered on love, and is one of the few preserved works by female troubadours. The lyrics express longing and lament over unrequited love for the young man Raimbaut d'Orange. Beatritz de Dia was one of the few women in the French troubadour tradition, and her music has been preserved through medieval manuscripts.

I must sing of what I do not want,
I am so angry with the one whom I love,
Because I love him more than anything:
Mercy nor courtesy moves him,
Neither does my beauty, nor my worthiness,
nor my good sense,
For I am deceived and betrayed
As much as I should be, if I were ugly.

I take comfort because I never did anything wrong,
Friend, towards you in anything,
Rather I love you more than Seguin did Valensa,
And I am greatly pleased that I conquered you in love,
My friend, because you are the most worthy;
You are arrogant to me in words and appearance,
And yet you are so friendly towards everyone else.

I wonder at how you have become so proud,
Friend, towards me, and I have reason to lament;
It is not right that another love take you away from me
No matter what is said or granted to you.
And remember how it was at the beginning

Of our love! May Lord God never wish
That it was my fault for our separation.

The great prowess that dwells in you
And your noble worth retain me,
For I do not know of any woman, far or near,
Who, if she wants to love, would not incline to you;
But you, friend, have such understanding
That you can tell the best,
And I remind you of our sharing.

My worth and my nobility should help me,
My beauty and my fine heart;
Therefore, I send this song down to you
So that it would be my messenger.
I want to know, my fair and noble friend,
Why you are so cruel and savage to me;
I don't know if it is arrogance or ill will.

But I especially want you, messenger, to tell him
That many people suffer for having too much pride.

8. Frog went a-courting
anonymous (c. 1500)

The Frog and the Mouse is an English medieval ballad, also known as Froggie Went A-Courtin'. It tells the story of a frog who courts a mouse, humorously depicting their romantic encounter. The ballad exists in many variations and dates back to at least the 16th century, with connections to similar folk tales across Europe. Since writing at this time was a male-dominated activity, it is possible that many songs passed down by ear in fact were composed by women. In modern times, The Frog and the Mouse has become a popular children's song in English-speaking countries.

9. O Death Rock Me Asleep
Anne Boleyn (c. 1501/1507–1536)
music: Malena Ernman

O Death Rock Me Asleep is a Tudor-era poem traditionally attributed to Anne Boleyn, believed to have been composed shortly before her execution in 1536. The poem conveys her suffering during her final days, reflecting on the inevitability of death as a release from her torment.

Anne Boleyn (c. 1501/1507–1536) was the Queen of England from 1533 to 1536 as the second wife of King Henry VIII. Her marriage to Henry and subsequent execution made her a central figure in the political and religious upheavals that marked the beginning of the English Reformation. She was the mother of Elizabeth I.

10. Son de la Ma Teodora
Teodora Ginés (1530–1598)

Son de la Má Teodora is one of the oldest known examples of Cuban music and is attributed to the Afro-Cuban musician and composer Teodora Ginés (1530–1598). Teodora and her sister Micaela grew up as slaves in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic, but were later freed. The sisters were both prominent musicians who played a significant role in the development of the Cuban musical tradition. Son de la Má Teodora is said to have laid the foundation for the son music style, which has become a defining element of Cuban music.

Where on earth is Má Teodora?
She's out gathering wood.
With her stick and dark skin?
She's out gathering wood.
Where is she? I can't see her
She's out gathering wood.
She's out gathering wood.
She's out gathering wood.
She's out gathering wood.

11. Che si può fare / What Can I Do?
Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)

Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677) was an Italian Baroque composer and singer from Venice. She was the daughter of the poet Giulio Strozzi and his servant Isabella Garzoni. Despite lacking support from the Church or noble patrons, she published eight collections of her own music, more than any other secular vocal composer of her time. Her works consist primarily of madrigals, arias, and cantatas, and she is regarded today as one of the most prominent female composers of the 17th century. In order to support her three children and her parents, Strozzi also worked as a courtesan, a fact that likely contributed to her exclusion from the ecclesiastical music sphere.

Che si può fare?
Le stelle ribelle non hanno pietà;
se 'l cielo non dà un influsso
di pace al mio penare,
che si può fare?

Che si può dire?
Dagl'astri disastri mi piovano ognor;
se perfido amor un respiro diniega
al mio martire,
che si può dire?

What can I do?
The stars have no pity and work against me;
If heaven will give me no gesture
Of peace for my pain,
What can I do?

What can I say?
The heavens are raining disasters on me;
If Love will not grant me a moment of breath,
to relieve all my suffering,
What can I say?

Translation: Chris DiMatteo

12. Un'aura amorosa
Nannerl Mozart (1751–1829)
co music: Malena Ernman

Maria Anna Mozart (1751–1829), known as »Nannerl,« was an Austrian musician and the older sister of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Born in 1751 in Salzburg, she displayed exceptional musical talent from an early age. As a child, she toured Europe with her brother and their father, Leopold, gaining attention as a virtuoso harpsichordist. Despite her abilities, her opportunities were limited by the gender norms of the time. When she reached marriageable age, she was no longer allowed to tour and was confined to teaching and playing piano at home. After Wolfgang's death in 1791, Nannerl helped support his family financially. The only published work under her name is a piano book for children, although recent research suggests that Nannerl not only copied but also completed parts of Wolfgang's early compositions, further underscoring her musicianship and historical significance.

Ferrando
Un'aura amorosa
Del nostro tesoro
Un dolce ristoro
Al cor porgerà;

Al cor che, nudrito
Da speme, da amore,
Di un'esca migliore
Bisogno non ha.

Author:
Lorenzo Da Ponte

Ferrando
A breath of love
From our treasures
Will afford our hearts
Sweet sustenance.

A heart nourished
On the hope of love
Has no need
Of greater inducement.

13. Italien
Fanny Mendelssohn (1805–1847)

Fanny Hensel Mendelssohn (1805–1847) grew up in an intellectual, multicultural Jewish family in Berlin. She and her younger brother Felix were very close and played music together daily throughout their childhood.

Fanny showed early promise as a composer, but unlike Felix, who gained widespread acclaim in Europe, especially in England, she was expected to lead a quiet domestic life. She was not allowed to publish under her own name, and several of her works were released under Felix's name, as it was the only way to have them published at the time. She married painter Wilhelm Hensel and had a son.

Fanny mainly performed in private salons. One of her pieces, often referred to as Italy, became Queen Victoria's favorite – believing it was composed by Felix. Fanny died of a stroke at age 42. Her brother, devastated, died only a few months later.

Schöner und schöner
Schmückt sich der Plan,
Schmeichelnde Winde
Wehen mich an;

Fort aus der Prosa
Lasten und Müh,
Flieg ich zum Lande
Der Poesie;

Goldner die Sonne,
Blauer die Luft,
Grüner die Grüne,
Würzger der Duft.

Dort an dem Maishalm,
Schwellend von Saft,
Sträubt sich der Aloe
Störrische Kraft.

Ölbaum, Cypresse,
Blond du, du braun,
Nickt ihr wie zierliche,
Grüßende Fraun?

Was glänzt im Laube,
Funkelnd wie Gold?
Ha, Pomeranze,
Birgst du dich hold!

Trotzger Poseidon,
Warest du dies,
Der unten scherzt und
Murmelt so süß?

Und dies halb Wiese, halb
Äther zu schaun,
Es war des Meeres
Furchtbares Graun?

Hier will ich wohnen!
Göttliche du,
Bringst du, Parthenope,
Wogen zur Ruh?

Nun dann versuch es,
Eden der Lust,
Ebne die Wogen
Auch dieser Brust!

German lyrics:
Franz Grillparzer

14. Warum willst du and're fragen
Clara Schumann (1819–1896)

Clara Schumann (1819–1896) was a German pianist, composer, and teacher, and one of the most significant musical figures of the 19th century. From an early age, she displayed exceptional musical talent and toured as a pianist throughout Europe, where she won great admiration for her virtuosity and musicality. She married the composer Robert Schumann and became the mother of eight children. Despite the expectations placed on women at the time, Clara continued to compose, teach, and perform, although her creative work was often overshadowed by her roles as a mother, housekeeper, and later caretaker for her mentally ill husband. A young Johannes Brahms became a close friend of the family and helped care for the children during the most difficult years. After Robert's death in 1856, Clara and Johannes maintained a lifelong friendship. Clara composed works for piano, chamber music, and songs, and her influence on the piano repertoire and the performance practice of Romantic music cannot be overstated. She taught for many years at Dr. Hoch's Conservatory in Frankfurt and was a central figure in Romantic musical culture.

Warum willst du and're fragen,
Die's nicht meinen treu mit dir?
Glaube nicht, als was dir sagen
Diese beiden Augen hier!

Glaube nicht den fremden Leuten,
Glaube nicht dem eignen Wahn;
Nicht mein Tun auch sollst du deuten,
Sondern sieh die Augen an!

Schweigt die Lippe deinen Fragen,
Oder zeugt sie gegen mich?
Was auch meine Lippen sagen,
Sieh mein Aug', ich liebe dich!

German lyrics: Friedrich Rückert

15. March of the Women
Ethel Smyth (1858–1944)

Ethel Smyth (1858–1944) was a British composer and committed suffragette, best known for her opera The Wreckers and the suffragette anthem The March of the Women. She was the first female composer to be awarded a damehood for her contributions to music and activism. Openly lesbian, Smyth faced criticism for composing music that was deemed masculine, yet she boldly challenged societal norms and passionately fought for women's rights. She was a close friend of the writer Virginia Woolf. A famous story recounts that Smyth conducted The March of the Women from behind prison bars using a toothbrush as her baton during her activism for women's suffrage.

Shout, shout, up with your song!
Cry with the wind for the dawn is breaking;
March, march, swing you along,
Wide blows our banner and hope is waking.
Song with its story, dreams with their glory,
Lo! they call, and glad is their word!
Loud and louder it swells,
Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord!

Long, long, we in the past,
Cowered in dread from the light of heaven.
Strong, strong, stand we at last,
Fearless in faith and with sight new-given.
Strength with its beauty, Life with its duty,
(Hear the voice, oh hear and obey!)
These, these, beckon us on,
open your eyes to the blaze of day.

Comrades, ye who have dared,
First in the battle to strive and sorrow,
Scorned, spurned, nought have ye cared.
Raising your eyes to a wider morrow.
Ways that are weary, days that are dreary,
Toil and pain by faith ye have borne;
Hail, hail, victors ye stand,
Wearing the wreath that the brave have worn!

Life, strife, these two are one,
Nought can ye win but by faith and daring:
On, on that ye have done,
But for the work of today preparing.
Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,
(Laugh in hope, for sure is the end)
March, march, many as one.
Shoulder to Shoulder and friend to friend.

16. Because
Florence Price (1887–1953)

Florence Beatrice Price (1887–1953) was an American classical composer, pianist, organist, and music teacher. She was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, and studied at the New England Conservatory of Music. From 1927 until her death, she was active in Chicago. At the premiere of her First Symphony with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, members of the Ku Klux Klan were seated in the front row – a stark reflection of the racist climate of the time. Despite this, she became the first African American woman to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. After her death, her music fell into near obscurity, but in 2009, hundreds of her compositions – including two violin concertos – were rediscovered in a small cottage in St. Anne, Illinois. Since then, her work has experienced a renaissance, and an annual Price Festival is now held in the United States to honor her musical legacy.

Because I had loved so deeply,
Because I had loved so long,
God in His great compassion
Gave me the gift of song.

Because I have loved so vainly,
And sung with such faltering breath,
The Master in infinite mercy
Offers the boon of Death.

Music: Florence Price
Text: Paul Laurence Dunbar

17. Remember me
Malena Ernman (1970)

In the beginning there were voices

Viljan til endring (a will for change) Ser libre (to be free) Non ducor, duco (I'm not being led, I lead) ad maiora (to greater things) My body my soul Voglio essere accettata (I want to be accepted) In the beginning there were voices, they traveled far. It was divine and human.

Gesehen werden (to be seen)
Meine Gedanken, meine Worte, meine Liebe, meine Musik (my thoughts, my words, my love, my music) Ne obliviscaris me (don't forget me) In principium vocum (in the beginning there were voices) Equal before universe and equal before people Remember me.

Nous étions jamais seules (we were never alone) We will break new ground
Detta är för dem som gick före (this is for those who came before us)
Remember me

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