

CURATING DIVERSITY REPORT

Valentina Bertolani
Luisa Santacesaria

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MILAN 2018–2019 CHAMBER AND SYMPHONIC MUSIC



Please find more info at:

www.curatingdiversity.com



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INTRODUCTION

The Project

Curating Diversity is a project created by Valentina Bertolani and Luisa Santacesaria in 2019. Our goal is to share data and results of our investigations on the current state of the Italian musical scene with other researchers and interested parties.

With our work, we bring awareness to the challenges that women and minorities face within this specific industry. We collect data hoping to generate more thoughtful and informed debate about cultural and inclusivity policies within music.

We operate independently and free from any institutions. We look forward to collaborations with other researchers, journalists, and whoever is interested. Please do not hesitate to contact us at:

curatingdiversity[at]gmail[dot]com

Methodology

Institutions

For this article, we collected data about eight institutions in Milan and we analysed 234 concerts in total:

- La Società del Quartetto (22 events)
- I Pomeriggi Musicali (24 events)
- MiTo Settembre Musica (61 events)
- Milano Musica Festival (16 events)
- Teatro alla Scala (symphonic season, 8 events)
- Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi (32 events)
- Foundation La Società dei Concerti (28 events)
- Association Serate Musicali (43 events)

All these institutions are funded by public funds at the national level through the “FUS–Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo” [Unique fund for the performing arts] of the Mibac-Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali [Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities], regional level and/or municipal level. They also self-fund themselves through the revenues of their activity and they receive private donations. These institutions have been active for various decades and they can be considered the backbone of the canonical musical offering of the city of Milan.

Data Collection

Data were manually harvested from the institutions’ websites and are updated to 15 April 2019. In particular, we focussed our data collection on symphonic and chamber music programming and on the main subscription seasons. Thus, we avoided the opera and ballet seasons and the series of

recitals created by the Teatro alla Scala and all the off-season series (e.g.: museum series organized by La Società dei Concerti, Music and tennis and Music at the Museo Novecento organized by La Società del Quartetto...)¹ However, if institutions were having two parallel subscription seasons (such as the “Serie Rubino” [Ruby Series] and the “Serie Smeraldo” [Emerald Series], both organized by La Società dei Concerti and both with periodical concerts along the year) we included both. Some concerts of seasons or festivals have not been included, when the format was not reflecting directly that of the traditional concert (e.g.: the event Secret Public organized by Milano Musica or some more theatrical productions within MiTo and Milano Musica programming).

We considered:

- Composers
- Conductors (both orchestra and choir)
- Soloists

The artistic data we collected are: name of the artists, whether they are soloists, composers or conductors, gender (arbitrarily assigned by us as male/female), and ethnicity (arbitrarily assigned by us as white/non-white).

ARE YOU A MUSICIAN WHO PARTICIPATED TO THESE SEASONS AND FIND WE HAVE MISREPRESENTED YOU?

WE APOLOGIZE.
PLEASE CONTACT US AND ALLOW US TO FIX IT.

ARE YOU A MUSICIAN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THESE SEASONS AND WOULD LIKE TO HELP OUT?

Contact us and share how you identify. Working with identity data collected directly from musicians instead of data harvested arbitrarily by us will allow us to move beyond binary categories.

If artists were composers, we also listed whether they were dead or alive, and centuries of musical activity (notes on century assignation below). Composers played more than once in one concert are listed only once. Composers' identification is based on how they are presented by the institution they perform for: composers are anyone listed on the left of the title of the compositions; anonymous are not listed.

If the artists are soloists we also list their instrument (instruments abbreviations based on IMSLP abbreviations chart). Soloists are solo performers, duo, trio, quartets, solo voices in a choir or orchestra piece. Instead, medium ensembles (more than four members) that consistently play together (e.g. La Risonanza) are not listed as soloists even though sometimes each member has their name on the webpage.

¹ Similar reports have opted for the same selective choices. See for example the US report of Women's Philharmonic Advocacy <https://wophil.org/2019-2020-season-by-the-numbers/> (last accessed on 29 April 2019).

An important note about how we list gender and ethnic diversity:

Our list stresses a binary understanding of these categories (male/female, white/non white). Hence, it is important to note that the only reason why it is there it is not to describe the world, which would require a more nuanced and flexible vocabulary. It is here exclusively to draw attention to a problem (that of diversity and exclusivity) that we have no other means to show. Also, the assignments male/female, white/non white have been arbitrarily done by us. Thus it is not an objective assignment, rather an extremely localized perception of male/female and white/non white in Italy and by two random Italians.

We are actively working towards improving our data harvesting methodology or at least to problematize this issue in a specific publication. One action we started was to collect qualitative data as well, to better contextualize the choices of the curators. We are not reporting these data, but they are used in a chapter that will be published in the forthcoming months.

We would love to hear from you, if you have knowledge you would like to share on this topic.

A note about time century assignation:

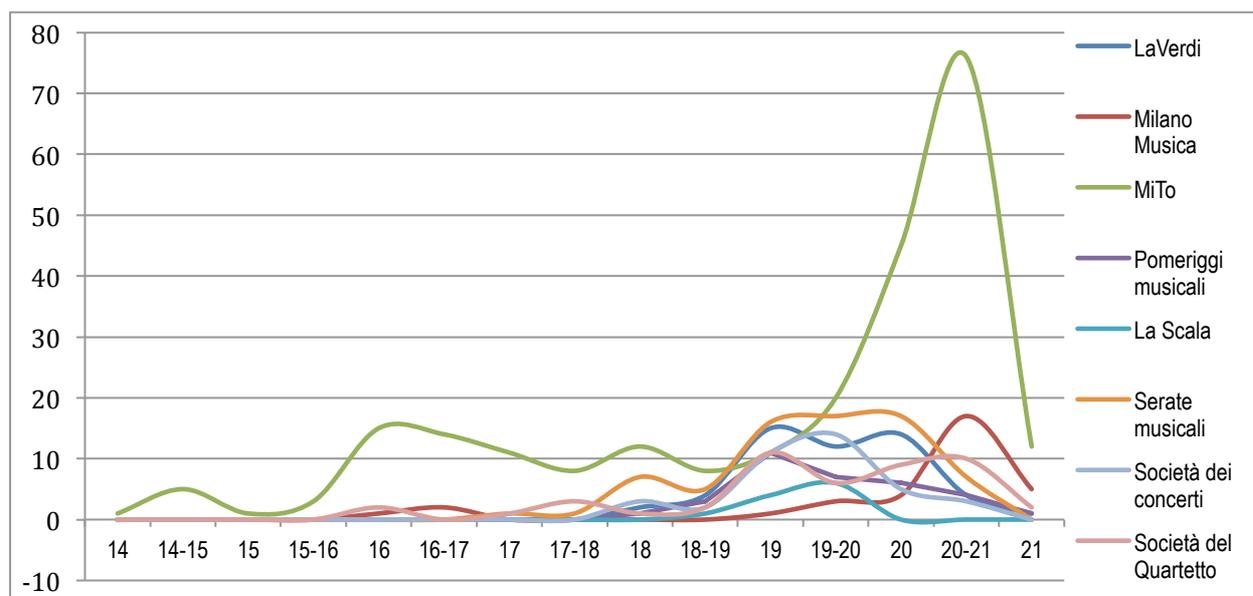
We decided to divide composers who worked mainly within a century, and composers whose output fell within two centuries. Assignation to a specific period is based on activity and not date of birth. If a composer is decidedly active in one century but has been active even for one year in the following century is listed between centuries (e.g.: Luciano Berio is 20th- 21st century). Dates were checked at the best of our abilities and decisions were made in the most consistent way possible. However, like everything, these decisions are arbitrarily made.

DATA ANALYSIS – CANON

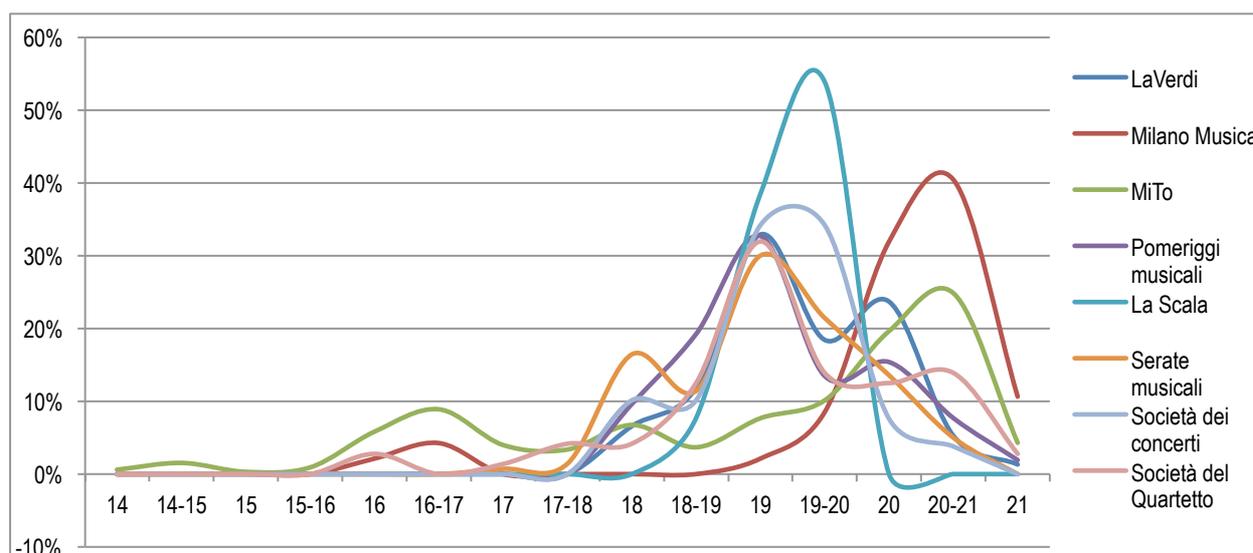
Overview of institutions and relationship with musical canon

Core programming

The line graph below shows the distribution of composers by century in each season and festival analysed.



The line graph below shows the percentage the percentage of concerts containing music by century:



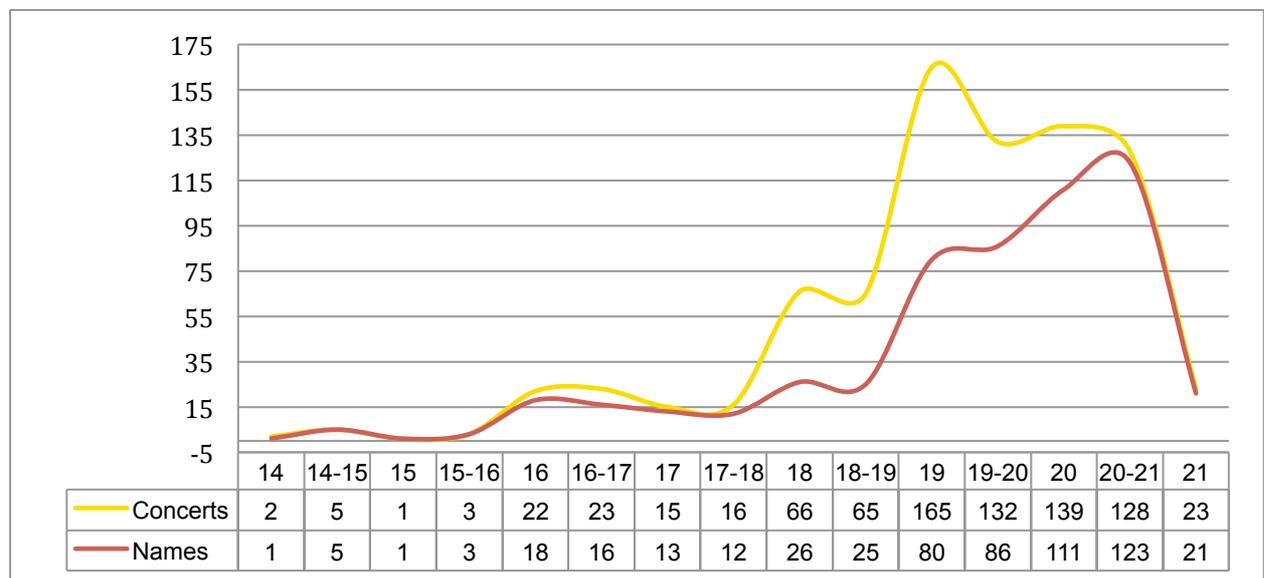
These data show that for all institutions the core programming features composers from late 18th century to the early 20th century. MiTo and Milano Musica, dedicated to more contemporary music have their core programming more oriented towards the late 20th century. Quite

surprisingly, Società del Quartetto also features many composers working in the second half of the 20th century.

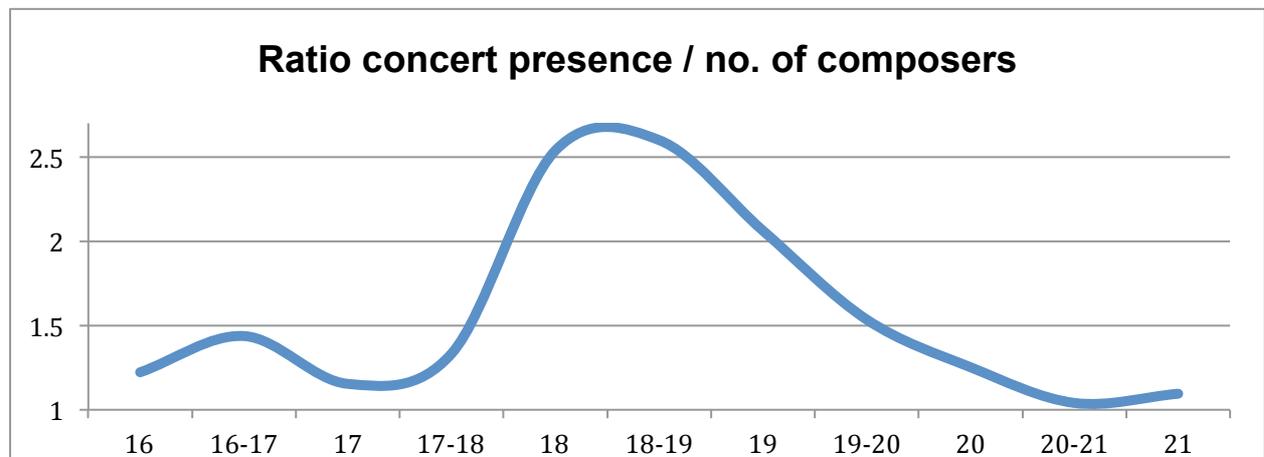
Normativity of the canon and its damages to the study of the classic and romantic era:

Without even considering gender and ethnical diversity, it is worth to explore how normative the canon is by period.

The diagram below shows how many concerts feature composers of a certain period (yellow line) and how many individual composers are featured from that same period (red line). Just looking at the 19th-20th century, for example: we can see that music from this period is featured in 132 concerts, but the composers featured are only 86. Similarly the period 20th-21st century is presented in concert a similar number of times (128, only 4 less than 19th-20th century), but it features 123 composers, that is 37 more.



This diagram below represents how variety there is in the names. The closer to 1 the line is the most variety and vice versa.

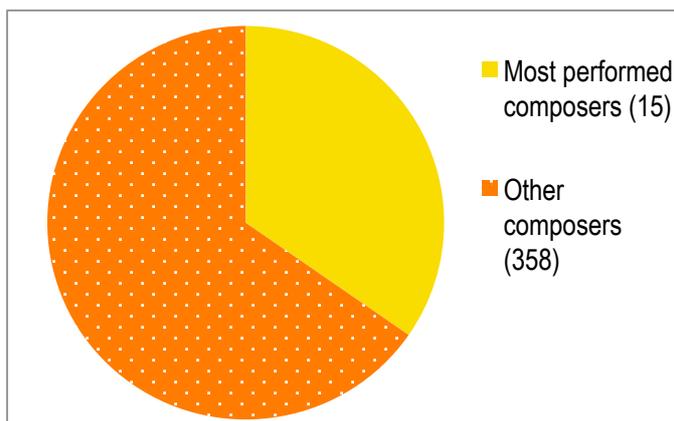


Both these line graphs show that, while the music composed around the 19th century is the most performed, the canon represented is the narrowest, if compared to other periods.

This observation is an important one in order to build an argument on the objective and undeniable negative effects of a narrow canon. While the music of the Classical and Romantic era is played so often, the audience is deprived from the experience of variety and discovery.

Most played	Composer	No. concerts
#1	Ludwig van Beethoven	43
#2	Johannes Brahms	29
#2	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	29
#4	Robert Schumann	22
#5	Johann Sebastian Bach	18
#5	Pëtr Il'ič Čaikovskij	18
#7	Maurice Ravel	17
#7	Franz Schubert	17
#9	Frédéric Chopin	14
#10	Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy	14
#10	Sergeij Rachmaninov	14
#12	György Kurtág ²	13
#12	Igor Stravinski	13
#14	Béla Bartók	9
#14	Franz Joseph Haydn	9

Exposure capital of the 15 composers in the table above:



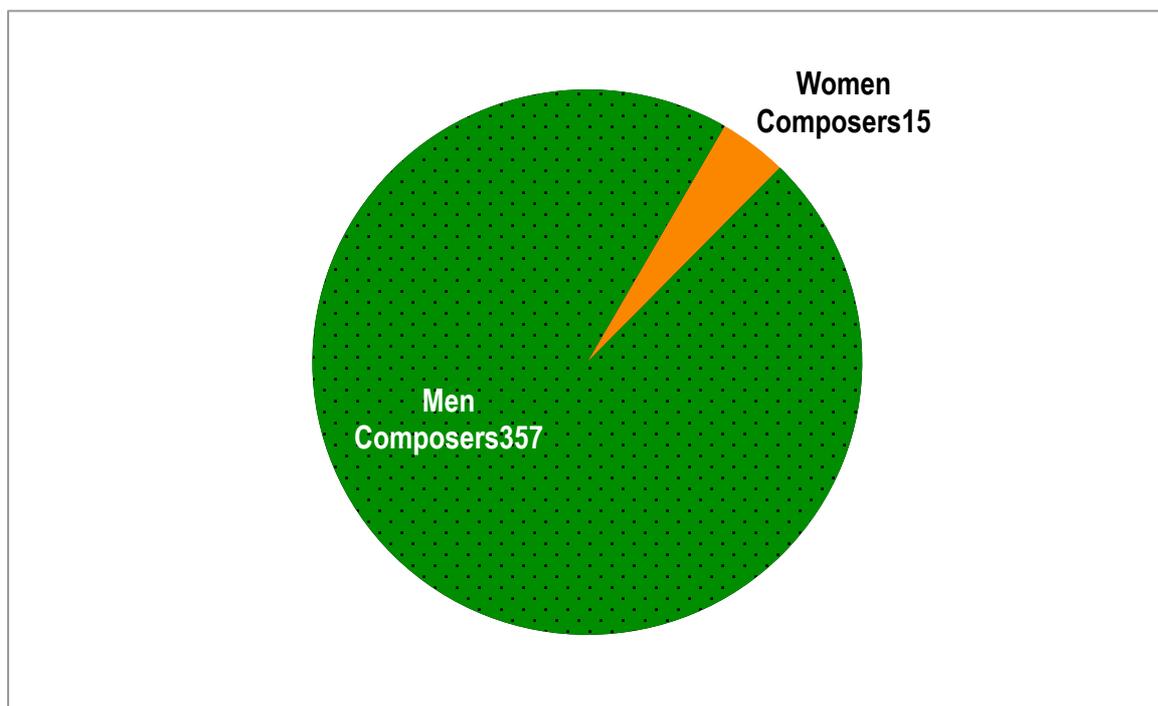
While periods others than the 19th century have more variety of names for the same amount of exposure and their music is produced in the same period of many social struggles towards equality,

² Milano Musica is a festival that centers its annual programming around one composer. The 2018 Festival was centred around György Kurtág. 11 concerts out of 13 were indeed presented at Milano Musica.

unfortunately this does not mean that there is more diversity. Following, we will detail more data specifically on diversity.

DATA ANALYSIS – DIVERSITY

Composers overview



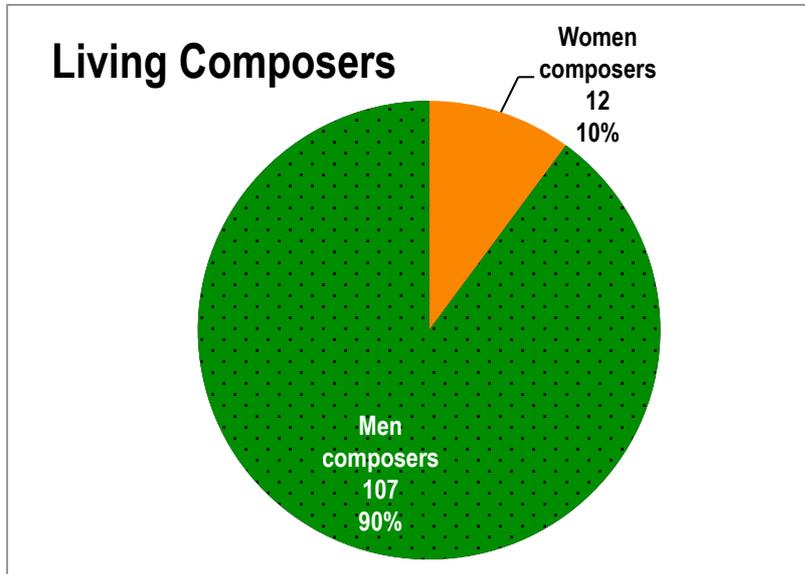
Women composers featured in Milan in 2018–19.

- Keiko Abe
- Laura Abela
- Laurie Anderson
- Rachel Beja
- Maria Vincenza Cabizza
- Clara Schumann
- Graciela Gibelli
- Evelyn Glennie
- Konono N°1³
- Isabella Leonarda
- Fanny Mendelsshon
- Olga Neuwirth
- Moira Smiley
- Dobrinka Tabakova
- Tadeja Vulc

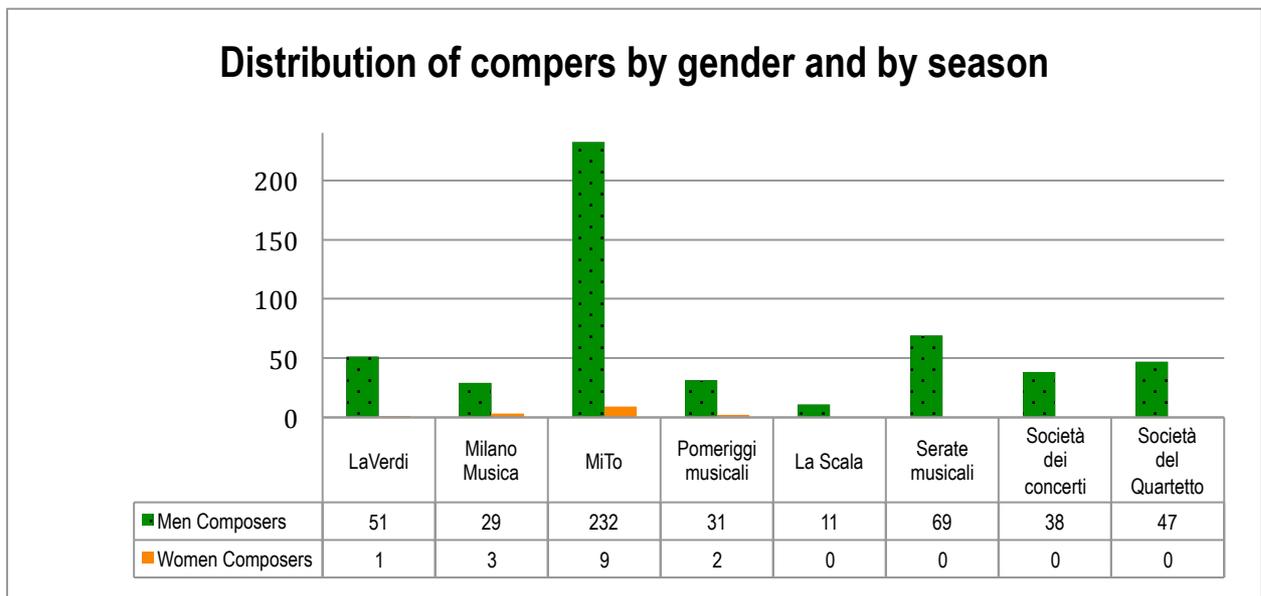
³ Konono no.1 is featured as author (at the left of the title) in a concert of transcriptions for quartets performed by the Kronos Quartet. One of the members of Konono no.1 is Pauline Mbuka Nsiala.

All women composers are featured only once during the season.

One might think that women presence among living composers is definitely higher. Unfortunately, this is not true: there are only 12 living women composers featured in the seasons, barely reaching the 10% of contemporary programming.

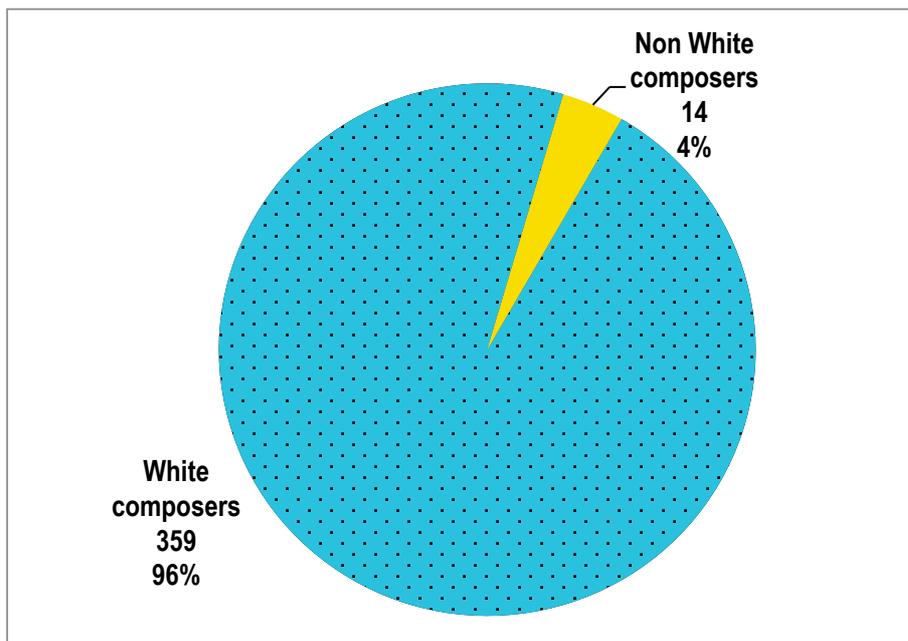


The distribution of women composers across the seasons:



50% of the seasons do not present music by women composers.

When it comes to ethnicity, data are similarly worrisome.

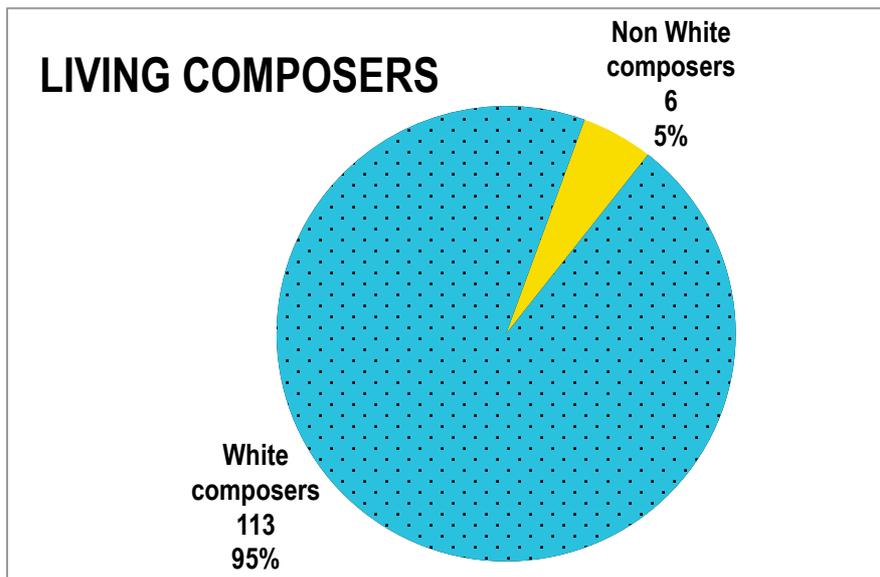


Non-White composers featured in the 2018-19 seasons in Milan:

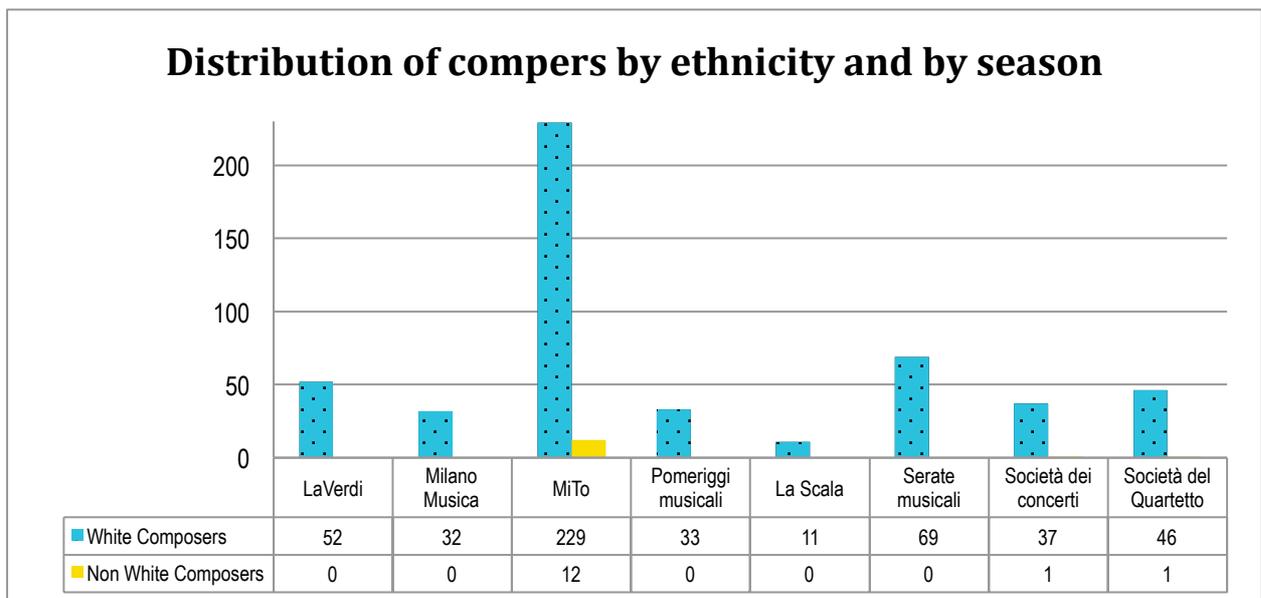
- Keiko Abe
- William L. Dawson
- Lionel Hampton
- Maki Ishii
- Islam Chipsey
- Scott Joplin
- Konono N°1
- Fodé Lassana Diabaté
- Artie Matthews
- Thelonious Monk
- Jelly Roll Morton
- James Sylvester Scott
- Omar Souleyman
- Takashi Yoshimatsu

All these composers are featured only once during the season.

One might think that presence of composers of colour among living composers is definitely higher. Unfortunately, this is not true: there are only 6 living composers of colour featured in the seasons, barely reaching the 5% of contemporary programming.

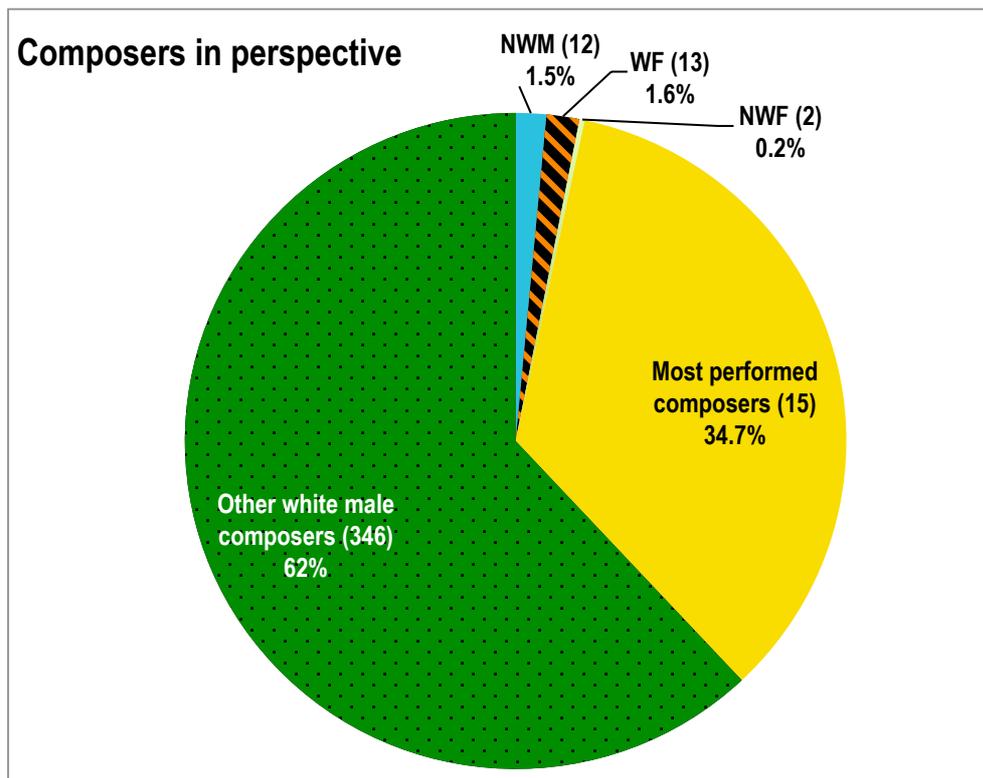


Distribution of composers of colour by season:



63% (5 out of 8) seasons do not present music by composers of colour.

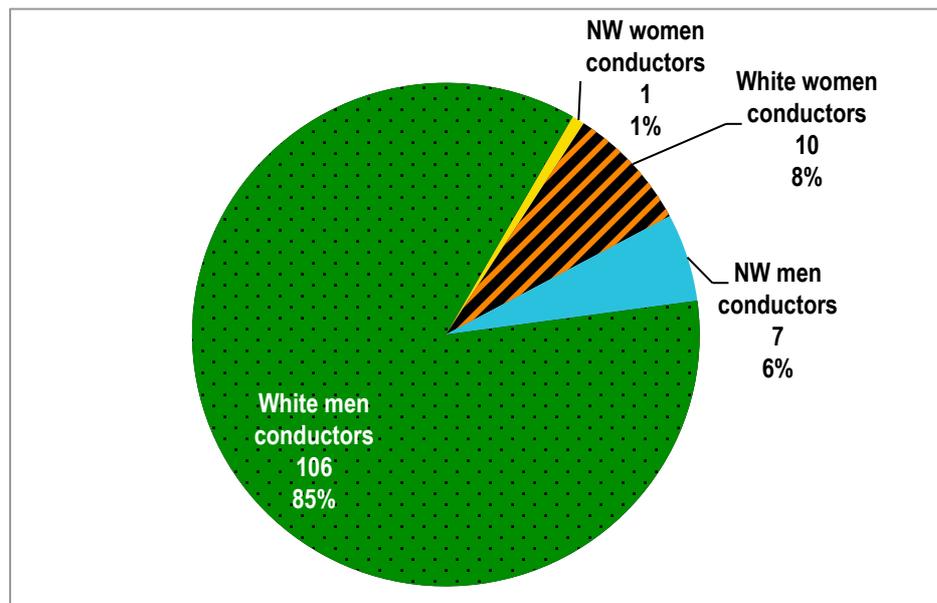
Here one final graph that summarises the situation for what concerns composers:



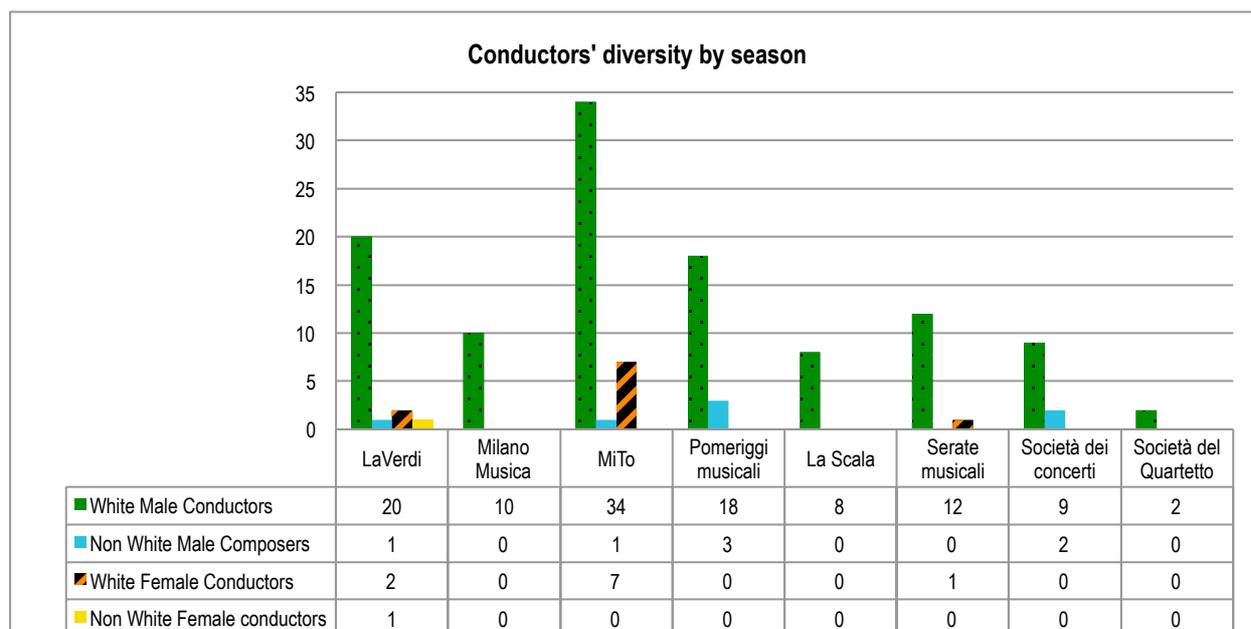
Conductors – Overview

La Verdi distinguishes itself in this context, thanks to its multiple appointments of women conductors. Indeed, the Chinese conductor Zhang Xiang was the first appointed female orchestra conductor in Italy, working with the orchestra Verdi from 2009 to 2016. Since then, she regularly comes back to La Verdi as guest conductor. La Verdi also has Erina Gambarini conducting the choir and M. Teresa Tramontin as conductor of the professional kids' choir.

But how do Milanese seasons fare in general, concerning diversity on the podium? Unsurprisingly, not well.



The bar chart below breaks the data down by institution:



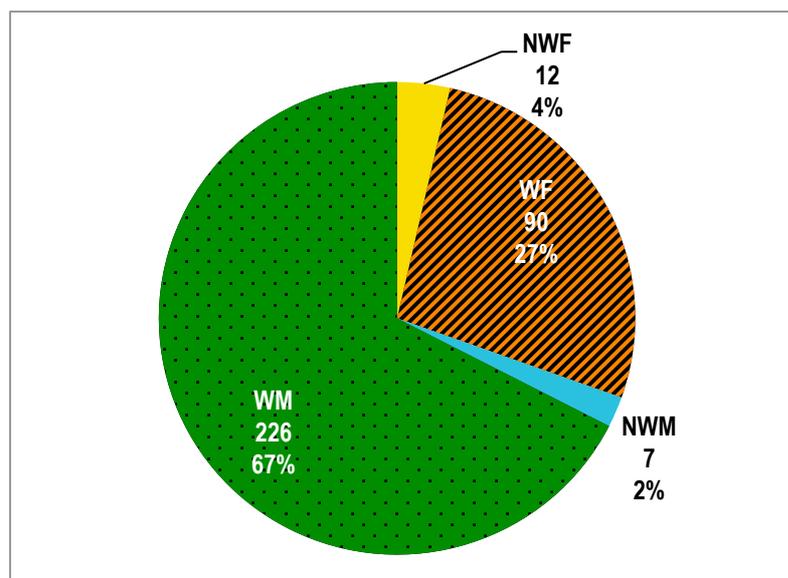
Soloists – Overview

The investigation on soloists and performers of small ensembles is crucial for us and it represents a litmus test for the data on conductors and composers. In fact, often times we hear that both composers and conductors are careers without a strong tradition of women (a statement which is in itself debatable). Yet, soloists careers have a much longer and solid history among women musicians. Notwithstanding the strong bias about women inability to tackle a “superior” art like music, a fair number of women piano virtuose hit the stage.⁴ Thus, things should have improved more quickly than for composers and conductors.

Moreover, unlikely the traditional Western canon, based on the past and on living conditions and freedoms that were not comparable to those we experience today, soloists are musicians living in the contemporary world. Thus, there should be more equal representation.

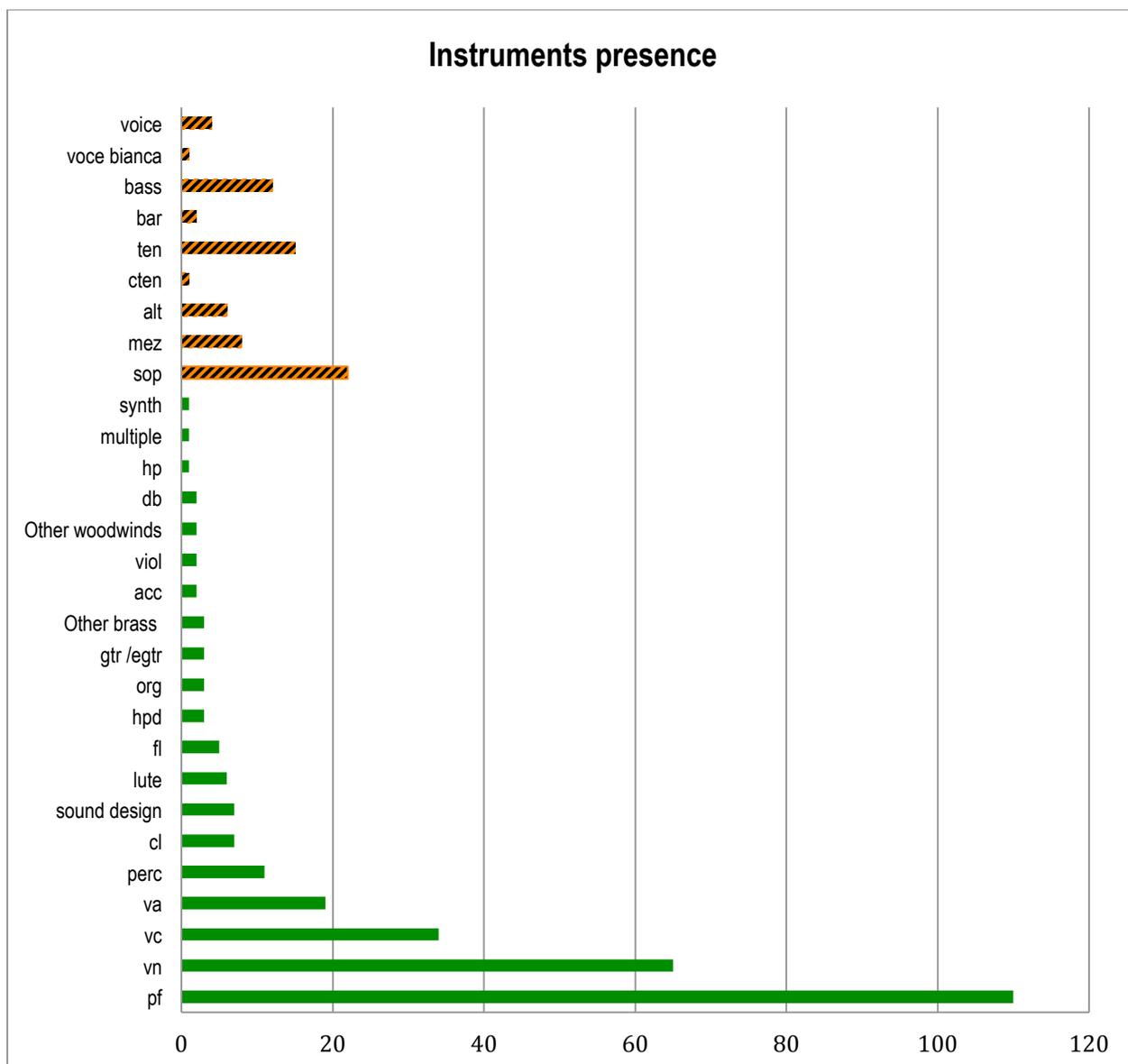
Yet this is not the case. **Even though the gap between genders is mildly improved (but far from resolved!), ethnic gaps are still very alarming.**

Here the gender and ethnic gaps among performers:



It is useful to understand the politics of soloist instruments. Similarly to the data on the canon, there is a canon of most invited soloist instruments that seems hard to challenge:

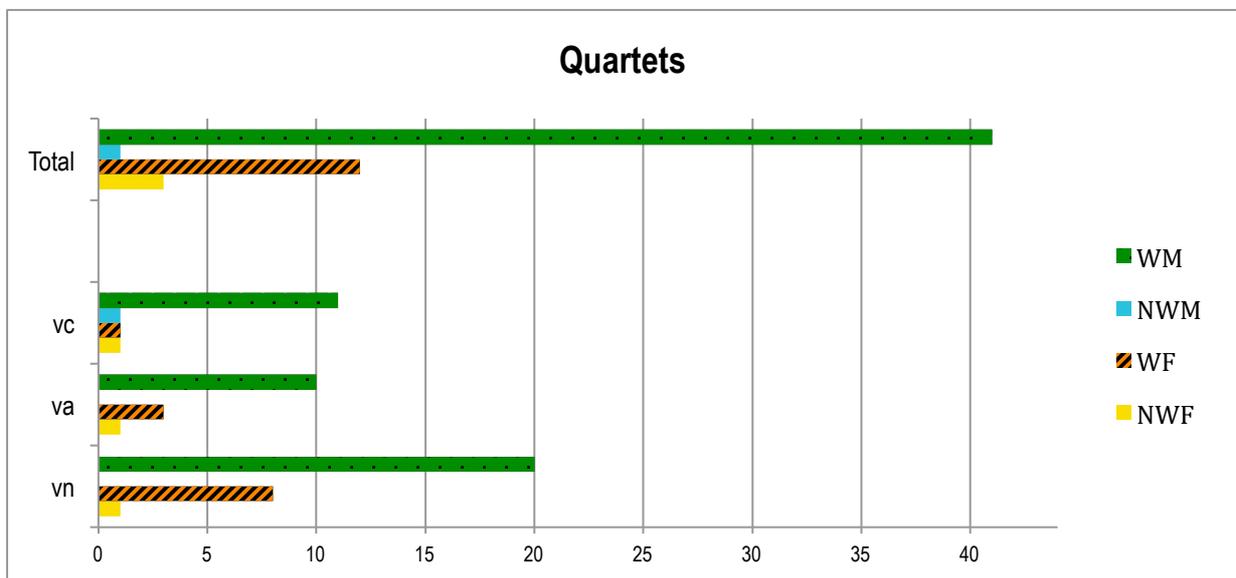
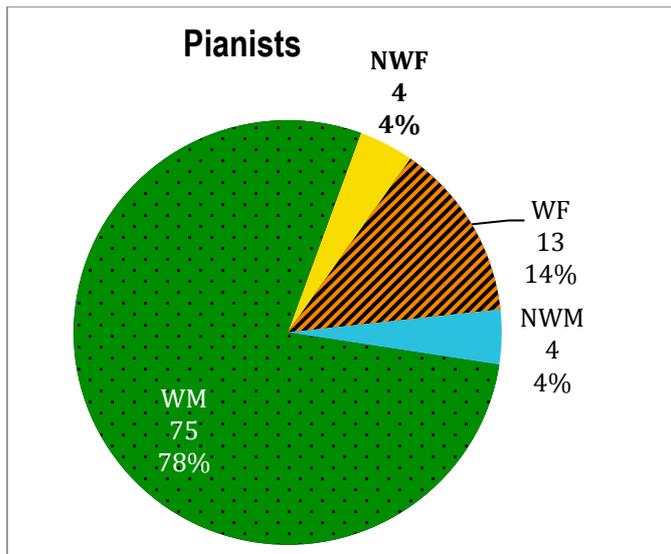
⁴ Katharine Ellis, “Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50/2-3 (1997): 353–385; Lemy Lim, “The Female Body and Reviews of Women Pianists in 1950s London,” *Women: A Cultural Review* 23/2 (2012): 163-181.



Among instruments, the clear favourite is the piano, the Romantic instrument par excellence. Among voice performers, higher voices are significantly favoured as historically it has been so. Thus, the uncritical favouring of the Western 19th-century canon has drastic consequences on the job market for soloists.

This is evident if we analyze the gender and ethnic diversity present in the two most present groups of performers: piano performers and quartet players.

As one can notice, in the pie chart below pianists of colour do not even reach the 10% and women pianists do not reach the 20% of the total. Similar negative ratios are shown in the bar chart below, concerning quartet players.



Without certain data on enrollment, graduation and concourse results, we cannot explain the reasons that bring white men to be so predominant and we cannot say where the exclusion of other categories begin. More importantly, we cannot say whether the exclusion of women is determined by the same causes as the exclusion of people of colour.

It is worth say that an in many other music fields, for example in education, the gender gaps are not that important. For example, in the Conservatory of Milan, out of 21 professors teaching piano, 10 are women. Similarly, out of the 32 professors teaching piano-related subjects (accompaniment, score reading, etc.) 16 are women. These comparisons between data on soloists and teachers hint towards the fact that the 19th century bias towards women not being able to compete against their male colleagues seems still in place, either openly or hidden.

CONCLUSIONS

Further data to collect and next steps

Artistic directors ultimately create the seasons and their choices weigh enormously in the attempt to make the musical industry so diverse. This is why most of data collection focused on programming. However, the musical industry is an ecosystem and artistic directors are not the only one who should be scrutinized.

In future we plan to collect data on management agencies, conservatories and concourses.

Similarly, the chamber and symphonic seasons have been scrutinized extensively in the last 3 years. We plan to start exploring and collect data on the experimental scene and off-seasons soon. This will allow us to determine whether the systemic discrimination we presented in these data is a phenomenon that happens across musical genres or is it accentuated in specific environments.

Discrimination and resources to prevent it

The data we presented in this report, as well as the many other reports that have been published so far, show that major seasons of symphonic and chamber music worldwide have an undeniable problem with discrimination. We list here a selection of resources that can help plan a more inclusive season:

- Institute for Composers Diversity <https://www.composerdiversity.com>
- International Alliance for Women Composers: <https://www.iawm.org>
- The Boulanger Initiative: <https://www.boulangerinitiative.org>
- Music by Black Composers: <https://www.musicbyblackcomposers.org>
- The Daffodil Perspective: <https://thedaffodilperspective.com>

While we find these resources useful, the ultimate way to prevent discrimination is to realize that there is discrimination and put in place intentional policies to stop it because that is the right thing to do.