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Women Composers Vols. 1–3

by *Eleanor Gummer*

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I was so excited to receive the new collection of Woman Composers: Three Centuries of Keyboard Works in the mail to review! I knew it was coming, and quite frankly, I was watching every delivery of the mail to our house in anticipation of it coming. I have not been disappointed— this is a must-have collection to add to your personal library and to your teaching shelf.

Eleanor Gummer has compiled three volumes of keyboard works that span the Baroque to the Contemporary eras. Her preface to Volume I states that this was “a labor of love and one of great discovery.” Truly, this collection WAS a labor of love. It is unique in that it offers a variety of works written exclusively by women composers. Each volume features works by known and lesser-known women composers. Pieces by more recognized composers include Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, Cecile Chaminade and Amy Beach. You will find lesser-known composers such as Elizabeth Turner, Marie Jaell, Francisca Gonzaga and Elfrida Andree, to name a few.

In each volume, several early-era pieces for harpsichord are included. Each volume presents pieces from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Contemporary periods. In addition, the three volumes offer up an immense variety of pieces: such as minuets, romances, rondos, preludes, etudes, intermezzi and sonatinas. Many miscellaneous works are included as well. I played several of the pieces, and they are inviting to the performer and the listener. The level of pieces for Volume I is elementary to the intermediate level; Volume II, intermediate to early-advanced; and Volume III, more advanced pieces.

The editing is very clean, and Gummer has made sure to offer editorial markings where applicable. A nice caveat is that the composer biographies are included at the end of each volume. These pieces can be taught and played by anyone and deserve due recognition of their musical merit.

—Adrienne Wiley, Midland, Michigan