

Jazzwomen: Marian McPartland’s Unpublished Book on Women in Jazz

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In 1978, pianist Marian McPartland signed a contract with Oxford University Press to write a survey history on women in jazz. Titled *Jazzwomen*, the book was meant as a historical corrective. At the time, few women were considered influential enough to be mentioned in jazz literature, despite a long history of involvement in jazz and jazz-adjacent musical communities. McPartland was well suited for such a project; since 1949, she regularly published articles about jazz, including a 1957 article on Mary Lou Williams, and her insider perspective as a jazz musician would have provided a unique historical lens to *Jazzwomen*.¹ When McPartland signed her book contract, her professional life was very busy. She was performing, recording, broadcasting, writing, and helping with the inaugural Kansas City Women’s Jazz Festival.² Overwhelmed with commitments, *Jazzwomen* was continuously delayed. In 1987, almost ten years from the start of her contract, McPartland negotiated with Oxford University

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¹ Paul De Barros, *Shall We Play That One Together?: The Life and Art of Jazz Piano Legend Marian McPartland*, (St. Martin’s Press, 2012), 118-119; “Mary Lou: Marian McPartland Salutes One Pianist Who Remains Modern and Communicative,” box 6 folder 7, Marian McPartland Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, Sibley Music Library, Rochester, NY (hereafter McPartland Collection). A turning point for McPartland’s writing came in 1975 when *Esquire* published her article “You’ve Come a Long Way Baby.” In the article, McPartland applauded jazzwomen’s musicianship, articulated their professional struggles, and criticized the jazz community for its bias against women. “You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby,” box 6 folder 8, McPartland Collection.

² Carolyn Glenn Brewer, *Changing the Tune: The Kansas City Women’s Jazz Festival, 1978–1985* (University of North Texas Press, 2017).

Press to release a featured collection of her previously published articles titled *All in Good Time*, instead of *Jazzwomen*; *Jazzwomen* was never published.³

McPartland spent years acquiring grants, compiling resources, conducting interviews, and contextualizing data in preparation for *Jazzwomen*. She had to jump through hoops and overcome hurdles just to produce the material that she did; even unpublished, *Jazzwomen* was no small feat. Through a close examination of her grant proposals, research notes, transcribed interviews, book proposal, and extant drafts found in her archive, this essay traces how McPartland's research attempted to reconfigure the historical narrative of jazz and recover the enduring role women played.⁴

My interest in McPartland's work is informed by my own experiences as a gender minority in jazz. Early on in my educational journey, I experienced many gender inequities, including a lack of representation in jazz spaces. I wanted jazz to change, not just for myself, but for all the women and gender-diverse individuals who would follow in my footsteps. To pursue this project of advocacy, I began building a network of support through other musicians, classmates, musicologists, and jazz enthusiasts. McPartland's case study shows us that work on women and gender minorities in jazz inherently requires a community advocacy approach. Through the lens of advocacy, which involved collaboration across McPartland's self-created network, I demonstrate how *Jazzwomen* represents the many difficulties McPartland and other women faced to produce scholarship on their history. Advocacy is never a singular act and has never been done independently. Social movements require networks of support for success to be achieved and the process of building that network helps define the purpose. *Jazzwomen* highlights the challenges McPartland and other jazzwomen faced to break down barriers in jazz, both as scholars and professional musicians.⁵ Advocacy can be exhausting and is laden with its own

³ A chapter on the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, which was originally intended for *Jazzwomen*, drafts of which were found in McPartland's archives, was published in *All in Good Time* (Marian McPartland, *All In Good Time* (Oxford University Press, 1987)).

⁴ In this paper, I intentionally use the word recover, instead of reclaim, because of my utilization of bell hooks' framework of self-recovery, which I discuss later in this paper. The use of these two words is a common discourse in feminist studies; the term reclaim is often used to acknowledge feminist reclamation and the notion that history does not need to be "uncovered" but reclaimed from systems of power. bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

⁵ Throughout this paper, I use the word jazzwomen to refer to women in jazz. The commonly used phrase "women in jazz" distances a woman from her role as a musician, and her musicianship, centralizing her gender, while jazzwoman situates her identity as a jazz musician first. This concept is derived from disability studies discourse on the use of person-first vs identity-first language. The term men in jazz is never used to identify male jazz musicians

complexities. McPartland's advocacy was full of its own complications; as this case study will show, McPartland's intentions did not always align with the work she produced for *Jazzwomen*.

NEW HISTORIOGRAPHIC METHODS

In 1978, three significant events occurred that affected McPartland's advocacy work. First, McPartland signed a publishing contract with Oxford University Press for *Jazzwomen* with a preliminary deadline of 1980.⁶ Shortly after this, on March 17th, the inaugural Kansas City Women's Jazz Festival occurred.⁷ In a letter addressed to a "Dear Bill," McPartland reflected on her time at the festival, writing that she was proud of both being booked to perform and having supported the organizers. She explained, "I don't know if it will be a sell-out, but I know that it's really a mark in jazz history that this jazz festival is being held at all."⁸ A few months later in October 1978, she recorded the first session of her NPR program *Piano Jazz* with Mary Lou Williams.⁹ McPartland's choice to record with Williams first reflected her intention to uplift jazzwomen, using a national public radio broadcast to advance a woman's career.¹⁰ Additionally, an

because their gender is never considered when understanding their musicianship. The phrase jazzmen is used by scholars, critics, and musicians, but men are usually referred to simply as jazz musicians (which indexically creates the image of a man, not a woman). Utilizing jazzwomen and jazzmen on equal footing will help normalize women's involvement in jazz. Conversations are also developing over a gender-neutral term, such as jazzfolk or jazzfolx, which would create space to talk about gender expansive jazz musicians. My use of the term "jazzwomen" is also an homage to McPartland's intended book title.

⁶ De Barros, *Shall We Play That One Together*, 307.

⁷ The festival happened in Kansas City, Missouri (Brewer, *Changing the Tune*).

⁸ "First Women's Jazz Festival, Crown Center Hotel, Kansas City," box 7 folder 2, McPartland Collection.

⁹ *Piano Jazz* was NPR's longest running radio broadcast hosted by McPartland. McPartland interviewed prominent jazz musicians, many of whom were pianists, through a hybrid performance and conversation format. Mary Lou Williams' episode was the first recorded, but not the first to be broadcasted; the first episode with Billy Taylor was aired on April 1, 1979. Many of McPartland's later sessions from the 1970s and 1980s were also recorded with jazzwomen. McPartland interacted with her women interviewees in the same manner as her male interviewees; only in certain sessions, such as one with Dorothy Donegan, did any commentary about being a woman-in-jazz arise. David Lyon, "Billy Taylor on Piano Jazz's Debut Episode," NPR, April 10, 2009, <https://www.npr.org/2009/04/10/102941429/billy-taylor-on-piano-jazzs-debut-episode>.

¹⁰ McPartland was recommended as a successor to host the radio show *American Popular Song with Alec Wilder and Friends* by Alec Wilder who recommended her to Dick Phipps, the producer. The show, upon McPartland's hire, was renamed *Piano Jazz*. Williams was jealous of McPartland for being picked as the show's host, which contributed to a tension between

unpublished cut from the session housed in the NYPL Rodger and Hammerstein Archive of Recorded Sound features a conversation between McPartland and Williams about the book. Williams, who rarely spoke about her gender experience in jazz, urged McPartland to finish the book quickly:

MLW: "Better hurry up and get it done before it dies... everything goes fast you know... you need to get that out right away."

MM: "I know I do... there's all kinds of crappy charlatans... there's all kinds of shit being written already."

MLW: "It's lies."¹¹

Both women recognized the urgency of *Jazzwomen*, and McPartland was taking steps to write the book while also enacting immediate visible change through *Piano Jazz* and the Kansas City Women's Jazz Festival. By the end of 1978, *Jazzwomen* was fully in motion.

Jazzwomen was never solely McPartland's work, but a collaboration with fellow writer and historian James T. Maher.¹² McPartland's relationship with Maher is a fundamental example of her self-built network, which I discuss in the last section. At multiple points throughout the planning and writing of *Jazzwomen*, Maher challenged McPartland's ignorance about some Black women musicians. Maher was able to identify McPartland's faults, which might have been shaped by her own positionality as a white woman, and address them for the betterment of *Jazzwomen*.¹³

Williams and McPartland during *Piano Jazz*'s first recording. Institutional racism and sexism prevented someone like Williams from being considered. Kara Attrep, "Toward A Feminist Understanding of Jazz Curatorship," in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender*, edited by James Reddan, Monika Herzig, and Michael Kahr (Routledge, 2023), 94-98; Tammy Kernoodle, *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams* (University of Illinois Press, 2004); Barros, *Shall We Play That One Together?*, 295-6.

¹¹ Recorded audio of extra material from a *Piano Jazz* recording between Marian McPartland and Mary Lou Williams, LDC 41197, Marian McPartland's piano jazz [sound recording], Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, The New York Public Library, New York, NY.

¹² James T. Maher (1917-2007), a cultural critic on American popular music, is well-known for editing and writing the introduction to the first edition of Alex Wilder's *American Popular Song: 1900-1950* (1974). Maher also contributed to the Ken Burn's PBS documentary series *Jazz*. "James T. Maher," Ohio Authors, Home, Cleveland Public Library, accessed June 11, 2025, <https://cpl.org/ohio-author/james-t-maher/>.

¹³ Based on a contractual agreement between McPartland and Maher, it is likely that most of the post-contractual material was written by Maher with the intellectual input of McPartland. From this point on, unless otherwise indicated, the work will be referred to as McPartland's.

In McPartland's attempts to reconfigure the way jazz history was discussed, she used her research to reveal an established community of diverse individuals who contributed to the collective cause of uplifting women in jazz. In an early prospectus of *Jazzwomen*, McPartland described the lens she planned to use:

Because the study will break new ground in American cultural history, it will be open-minded. That is, no unified theory—musicological, sociological, or other—will re-strict its research. Nor will the findings be used selectively to serve or “prove” a doctrine. Thus, it will be a comprehensive study rather than a typical one (i.e., one centered upon selected prototypical or archetypal figures).¹⁴

This is radical thinking: McPartland understood how prescribed historical tools limited the capacity for the established jazz canon to include the narratives of women in jazz. To recover and amplify the lost narratives of jazzwomen and create a space for their histories in the larger context of jazz history, McPartland needed to take an alternative approach to her research. This framework allowed McPartland to study a larger group of women musicians who did not necessarily fit into the standard jazz canon. Jazz scholar Sherrie Tucker, whose work is foundational to the field of gender and jazz, explains how powerful hegemonic ideologies regarding gender, such as “the masculinist focus of jazz and swing histories,” have allowed for the elimination of women's narratives.¹⁵ Additionally, Eric Porter expands on the confines of the idea of “jazz” arguing that historians should look at musical spheres that interacted with jazz but were not always defined by “jazz culture.”¹⁶ Many women musicians worked in jazz-adjacent spaces and have been erased from jazz history because of this, and they still are today. McPartland's study worked to incorporate this broader context from the outset.

In the earliest outline for *Jazzwomen*, McPartland created nine chapter divisions, her first attempt to expand the margins of jazz history. One of her first steps was to devote chapters to specific jazzwomen who had made significant musical impacts, such as Lillian (Lil) Hardin Armstrong and Mary Lou Williams. Along with the individual chapter profiles, this early outline is the first instance where McPartland began to integrate the list of women she originally included in her first proposal. Two of the defined chapters, “The

¹⁴ “Extended Prospectus,” box 7 folder 11, McPartland Collection.

¹⁵ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s* (Duke University Press, 2000), 20, 25.

¹⁶ Eric Porter, “Incorporation and Distinction in Jazz History and Jazz Historiography” in *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and its Boundaries*, edited by David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark, (University of California Press, 2012), 25.

Thirties: The Swing Era” and “The War Years and the Early Bop Era,” group women musicians into stylistic periods, from the all-girls swing bands of the late 1930s and 1940s to solo performers across the country. In December of 1979, McPartland created a new outline. This one expanded on the original chapter divisions into sixteen sections.

1. Mary Lou Williams	9. “Showmanship” In Jazz
2. Lillian Hardin Armstrong	10. The Bands
3. Those who didn’t quite make it: [the problem children]	11. International Sweethearts of Rhythm
4. The Hickory House Girls: [John Popkin]	12. “The Great Groups”
5. The “Queen” at the Embers	13. Group SideMusicians
6. Other Instruments	14. Composer and Arrangers
7. “The First Pro”: Mary Osbourne	15. The Watershed Years: World War II
8. Women In The Bands	16. The Movement & Jazzwomen ¹⁷

Table 1. *Jazzwomen*, Original Chapter Outline

Jazz history is often taught by the division of historically significant periods, geographies, and developments in style (e.g., Kansas City Jazz, Hard Bop, etc.). Chapters such as “The Hickory House Girls,” “The First Pro,” and “Showmanship” in Jazz” define unique historical spaces in which these women existed.¹⁸ In other words, McPartland suggests a framework for studying jazzwomen that prevents their narratives from being “shaped and determined solely by the condition of domination” (i.e. the periods already defined by male historians).¹⁹ In her book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, bell hooks theorizes self-recovery as a collective act that rejects the ways in which “domination and colonization attempt to destroy our capacity to know the self, to know who we are.” Instead, she suggests we “oppose this violation, this dehumanization, when we seek self-recovery, when we work to reunite

¹⁷ “NEW Book Outline. First (rough) draft. Monday. December 3, 1979,” box 7 folder 11, McPartland Collection. Brackets were in the original document.

¹⁸ It is interesting that McPartland does not devote a chapter to Café Society. Hairston’s article “Gender, Jazz, and the Popular Front” discusses how Café Society was the starting place for many jazzwomen and a performance venue for many boogie-woogie women performers (Monica Hairston, “Gender, Jazz, and the Popular Front,” in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, edited by Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (Duke University Press, 2008)).

¹⁹ bell hooks, *Talking Back*, 31.

fragments of being, to recover our history.”²⁰ These chapter divisions are examples of McPartland’s journey through self-recovery—of her reuniting lost fragments of jazzwomen’s histories.

The expanded list of names and chapter titles demonstrated McPartland’s progress in her research. What started as a generalized idea of content had, by December 1979, narrowed in on specific women whose roles in jazz would help narrate her history. A list of the women, along with their assigned chapters, mentioned in “NEW Book Outline” are show in table 2 below:

Name	Chapter
Mary Lou Williams	Individual chapter, The Hickory House Girls, Women in the Bands, Composers and Arrangers, The Watershed Years: World War II, “The Great Groups”
Lillian Hardin Armstrong	Individual chapter, “Showmanship” In Jazz, The Bands, Composers and Arrangers, The Watershed Years: World War II
Dorothy Donegan	Those Who Didn’t Quite Make It, “Showmanship In Jazz
Pati Brown	Those Who Didn’t Quite Make It
Adele Girard	The Hickory House Girls, “The Great Groups,” Group SideMusicians
Mary Osbourne	The Hickory House Girls, “The First Pro,” The Watershed Years: World War II
Marian McPartland	The Hickory House Girls, Composers and Arrangers, The Watershed Years: World War II
Pat Moran	The Hickory House Girls
Pia Beck	The Hickory House Girls
Toshiko Akiyoshi	The Hickory House Girls
Jutta Hipp	The Hickory House Girls, “The Great Groups”
Barbara Carroll	The “Queen” at The Embers, “The Great Groups”, Composers and Arrangers
Beryl Booker	The “Queen at The Embers
Vi Redd	Other Instruments, Group SideMusicians
Dottie Dodgion	Other Instruments, Group SideMusicians
Melba Liston	Other Instruments, Composers and Arrangers, Women in the Bands

²⁰hooks, *Talking Back*, 31.

Dorothy Ashby	Other Instruments, Group SideMusicians
Terry Pollard	Other Instruments
Margie Hyams	Other Instruments, Group SideMusicians
Jane Seger	"The First Pro"
Vi Burnside	Women in the Bands
Bobbie Brown	Women in the Bands
Valida Snow	"Showmanship" In Jazz
Blanche Calloway	"Showmanship" In Jazz
Anna Mae Winburn	"Showmanship" In Jazz
Ina Ray Huton	"Showmanship" in Jazz, The Bands
Ada Leonard	"Showmanship" in Jazz, The Bands
Lovie Austin	Individual chapter, "Showmanship" in Jazz, The Watershed Years: World War II
Hazel Scott	"Showmanship" in Jazz
Nellie Lutcher	"Showmanship" in Jazz
Julia Lee	"Showmanship" in Jazz
International Sweethearts of Rhythm	The Bands
Ivy Benson	The Bands
Eddie Durham & His All-Girl Orchestra	The Bands
Carol Britto	"The Great Groups"
Kathy Stobart	"The Great Groups"
Alice Coltrane	"The Great Groups"
Bonnie Wetzal	Group SideMusicians
Elaine Leighton	Group SideMusicians
Una Mae Carlisle	Composers and Arrangers
Marge Gibson	Composers and Arrangers
Carline Ray	The Watershed Years: World War II
Joanne Brackeen	The Movement & Jazzwomen
Janice Robinson	The Movement & Jazzwomen

Sharon Freeman	The Movement & Jazzwomen
Barbara Merjan	The Movement & Jazzwomen
Jane Fair	The Movement & Jazzwomen
Cathy Moses	The Movement & Jazzwomen
Willene Barton	The Movement & Jazzwomen
Jane Bloom	The Movement & Jazzwomen

Table 2. McPartland's revised book outline, dated Dec. 3, 1979.²¹

The list of jazzwomen in her last outline only brushed the surface, and McPartland intended to include dozens more throughout the chapters.²²

A CONSTANT PULL TOWARDS PATRIARCHY

For financial support, McPartland received two grants in addition to her advance from Oxford University Press: the National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship for 1979-1980 and the Guggenheim Foundation fellowship for 1980-1981.²³ In her application proposals, McPartland outlined the structure and foundational concept for *Jazzwomen*. She described it as a “pioneer project,” stating that,

The study will focus on the professional and personal experiences of women in jazz, exploring the social, racial, cultural, and financial ramifications of living and working in the so-called “jazz world,” where women musicians have had to cope with many kinds of stress, both social and psychological, as they have sought to become accepted in this almost exclusively male province.²⁴

²¹ NEW Book Outline. First (rough) draft. Monday. December 3, 1979,” box 7 folder 11, McPartland Collection.

²² Discussion of the members of the various all-girls swing bands would expand this list tenfold. McPartland had devoted significant time to interviewing members of the International Sweethearts of Rhythm (SOR), which was the bulk of archival material for *Jazzwomen*. There is evidence that McPartland tried to directly confront racial inequities faced by jazzwomen of color in her interviews with SOR members, however that analysis exceeds the abilities of this essay.

²³ Application for fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, box 7 folder 1, McPartland Collection; Materials pertaining to National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship, box 7 folder 1, McPartland Collection.

²⁴ “Description of Proposed Study,” box 7 folder 1, McPartland Collection. For further scholarship on jazzmen and jazz critics situating themselves as saviors for jazzwomen, see Kelsey

This statement was the core of McPartland's research. It demonstrated how she sought to reconcile the disparity between musicians' identities as jazz women and as minorities. Despite the intended progressive framework, McPartland specifically used the word "pioneer" to describe her project. Pioneer evokes colonial and patriarchal connotations and potentially positions McPartland as a savior for women-in-jazz narratives, identical to many white male jazz critics' strategies. John Gennari explains how jazz criticism—and by default jazz history—has historically been written by white men who have positioned themselves as jazz missionaries, men whose intent to uplift jazz became entangled in their need to be identified as integral figures in jazz's growth.²⁵ With this history of jazz criticism, it is necessary to consider McPartland's research within the frame of white feminism, a critique commonly levied against the 1970s women's movement. Rafia Zakaria explains how white feminism "refuses to consider the role that whiteness and the racial privilege attached to it have played and continue to play in universalizing white feminist concerns, agendas, and beliefs as being those of all of feminism and all of feminists."²⁶ Zakaria goes on to explain how a white feminist may understand the idea of intersectionality, but fail to fully understand and address the extent intersectional identities alter experiences. Although McPartland did not identify as a feminist, *Jazzwomen*, and much of McPartland's other work, was explicitly feminist. However, as demonstrated by the use of the word pioneer and evident in many examples throughout her work on *Jazzwomen*, McPartland failed to recognize how her privileged position as a white British woman affected her research and perspective.

Because patriarchal and hegemonic ideologies dominated jazz narratives and critiques during this period, they also influenced the way language was used to describe musicians. As another example, McPartland reverted to masculinist language to describe Mary Lou Williams. In an early outline, she wrote that Williams was

The ultimate jazzwoman, she is the ultimate individualistic. Her position in jazz history is unique. Very few jazz musicians whose careers began before the swing era have made any effort to keep apace the bench-mark

Klotz's article "Leonard Feather and the Gender Ignorant Language of Jazz Mastery." Kelsey Klotz, "Leonard Feather and the Gender Ignorant Language of Jazz Mastery," in *Journal of the Society for American Music* 19, no 2 (2025): 106-27.

²⁵ John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), 38-41.

²⁶ Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2021), ix.

changes in jazz. Coleman Hawkins. Red Norvo. Mary Lou Williams. The list is short—her’s is an honored position as a compelling innovator through four decades of jazz evolution.²⁷

Even with this inclusion, McPartland’s comments, such as her use of the word “individualistic,” embody the same type of masculinist narrative identified by Tucker.²⁸ Masculinist language often includes words that emphasize authority, individuality, and directness, traits that are associated with men and masculinity. Monica Hairston notes how Williams has always been described as exceptional via masculinization, such as when critics compared her to a list of other great men.²⁹ McPartland reaffirms this notion despite claiming in her prospectus that she would steer clear of patriarchal historiographic tools. This suggests that, despite her intent to craft a narrative that responded to jazzwomen’s issues, McPartland’s history may have at times perpetuated the masculine approach dominant in jazz writing. On the other hand, using this language may have worked to appeal to a large male reader base, but the results are still the same.

In this same working document, McPartland introduced two other successful jazzwomen, guitarist Mary Osbourne and pianist Hazel Scott, explaining how both women’s careers sat on the edge of the jazz world. She described Osbourne as perhaps “the example *ne plus ultra* of the gifted jazzwomen for whom there was no ‘place.’”³⁰ Of Hazel Scott, she wrote, “If Mary Lou Williams represented the virtuoso jazzwoman at her authentic best, then Hazel Scott represented the ‘jazz entertainer’ to coin a phrase—that is, the musician who adapts jazz to musical showmanship.”³¹ Although McPartland includes Scott in her outlines, her label of jazz entertainer is complicated. Jazz critics and historians often ignored Scott due to her more commercial success and feminine presentation; however, this narrative is perpetuated by historians and obscures Scott’s virtuosity.³² McPartland also reaffirms Osbourne’s alienation by describing her as a performer with no place. Despite the possible complications of McPartland’s descriptions continuing a similar negative framework, these statements indicate

²⁷ “Memo: Jazzwomen: Editorial Structure of the Book [Preliminary],” box 7 folder 11, McPartland Collection.

²⁸ Tucker, *Swing Shift*, 20, 25.

²⁹ Hairston, “Gender, Jazz, and the Popular Front,” 79–80; Kimberley Hannon Teal, “Mary Lou Williams as Apology: Jazz, History, and Institutional Sexism in the Twenty-First Century.” *Jazz and Culture* 2 (2019): 1–26.

³⁰ “Memo: Jazzwomen: Editorial Structure of the Book [Preliminary],” box 7 folder 11, McPartland Collection.

³¹ “Memo: Jazzwomen: Editorial Structure of the Book [Preliminary],” box 7 folder 11, McPartland Collection.

³² Hairston, “Gender, Jazz, and the Popular Front,” 76, 81–84.

McPartland's intent in *Jazzwomen* to look outside the boundary of canonical jazz to other musical spaces that are considered jazz adjacent.

By December of 1979 McPartland had begun drafting preliminary chapters and receiving feedback from Maher. In a letter to McPartland, Maher sent a sixteen-page document with edits for the pre-jazz and early jazz chapters, the bulk of which was information about Lil Hardin Armstrong and Lovie Austin. Maher suggested that Lovie Austin should have a designated chapter like Lil Hardin and Williams. He stated that,

She is too important, both in and of herself as a jazzwoman and as a rare early example of the complete musician: pianist, composer, accompanist (of blues singers, etc.), vaudevillian, theatre conductor, jazz band leader, recording artist, arranger/orchestrator, producer, and recording executive. She was born almost fifteen years before Lil Hardin, and outlived her about a year. Her's will not be a long chapter, but it will make a strong case.³³

Maher recognized Austin's significance. Though some may have positioned Austin in the category of popular or mainstream, he believed she should not have been overlooked.

In addition to indicating the need for a devoted chapter for Austin, Maher included various names of early female jazz musicians who were scarcely known, and few of whom were mentioned in the first published comprehensive books on women in jazz *American Women in Jazz* (1982) and *Stormy Weather* (1984).³⁴ These women's names are listed in table 3 below:

³³ Correspondence between James T. Maher to McPartland with accompanying documents about pre-jazz and early jazz chapters, folder 10 box 10, McPartland Collection.

³⁴ Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (Limelight Editions, [1984] 1992); Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz* (Wideview Books, 1982). These books were the first devoted histories to women in jazz. D. Antoinette Handy also published two books during this time; both included jazzwomen histories but were not comprehensive in the same capacity. *Jazzwomen*, if published within its original timeline, would have been the first of its kind; however, McPartland never published, and these became the first histories.

Ragtime, Proto-Jazz, Early Jazz

<i>Wilhelmina "Willa" Bart</i>	<i>Margaret Kimball</i>
<i>Wilhelmina Booth</i>	<i>Edna Mitchell</i>
<i>Beatrice Stewart Davis</i>	<i>Billie Pierce</i>
<i>Mercedes Gorman Fields</i>	<i>Ida Rose</i>
<i>Sadie Goodson/Gootson</i>	<i>Murial Pollock</i>
<i>Jamesetta Humphrey</i>	<i>"Big Mama"</i>
<i>Lillian Humphrey</i>	<i>Alberta Simmons</i>
<i>Jeanette Kimball</i>	<i>Leora Henderson</i>

Table 3. Additional pre- and early jazzwomens' names, listed by James T. Maher.³⁵

The inclusion of these names is important for a variety of reasons. Earlier in this document Maher suggested to McPartland that she needed to be more historically focused. Maher wrote to her that,

I know that you do not want to get involved in any historical detail; however, I think the basic list of highlights in the abovementioned pages will give you some notion of the Afro-American materials that went into the making of jazz. You should have this historical background of American Negro music in mind as you write.³⁶

Maher called attention to McPartland's lack of knowledge and consideration of early Black American music makers, such as the ragtime/protojazz/early jazz musicians in table 3. In a critique of the history of popular music, Daphne A. Brooks identifies this pattern of exclusion perpetuated by white historians. Brooks writes,

No surprise to most that this school of criticism has long marginalized African American women's role in popular music history, resulting in a grossly skewed understanding of their place at the center of modern music innovation. Obscuring or misreading the depths of their importance in this regard amounts to nothing short of a crisis in our collective cultural memory.³⁷

From one perspective, Maher's point to McPartland echoes Brooks's words. If McPartland wanted to accurately write *Jazzwomen*, then she needed to be

³⁵ Correspondence between James T Maher to McPartland with accompanying documents about pre-jazz and early jazz chapters, box 10 folder 10, McPartland Collection.

³⁶ Correspondence between James T. Maher to McPartland with accompanying documents about pre-jazz and early jazz chapters, box 10 folder 10, McPartland Collection.

³⁷ Daphne Brooks, *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound* (Harvard University Press, 2023), 5.

cognizant of early Black women artists and their contributions. However, one must also consider Maher's positionality in relation to McPartland. Maher's privilege as a white man (and an award-winning music writer) held a degree of power over McPartland.³⁸ Additionally, as a non-musician, his critiques ignored McPartland's experience as a musician interacting with the very women she was writing about. Maher considered his outsider perspective as a historian more important than McPartland's insider perspective as an active musician. His comments hold her accountable for her blind spots and fallacies, while simultaneously asserting a white patriarchal dominance. Maher's position as McPartland's research assistant does not excuse any assertions of male intellectual superiority, in the same way McPartland's identity as a woman does not excuse her inability to identify her whiteness. While there is no doubt that McPartland's white feminist perspective negatively affected her research, Maher's collaboration adds another complex layer of privilege that must be considered. Even with this in mind, their collaboration is reflective of the "we" hooks identified as necessary for self-recovery; Maher, as a member of McPartland's network, affected McPartland's thinking which in turn would affect the way jazzwomen's history, and especially Black jazzwomen's history, would be represented.

CONCLUSION

Although never published, *Jazzwomen* is a snapshot of a pivotal moment of jazz history. With the rise of the neoclassicist and traditionalist movements and continued institutionalization of jazz, the 1970s and 1980s are commonly perceived as less significant to developing canonical jazz styles. But for women and gender minorities in jazz, these decades represent an essential moment in their collective narrative. The 1970s and 1980s brought the first all-women jazz festivals, such as the Kansas City Women in Jazz Festival and the Universal Jazz Coalition's Salute to Women in Jazz Festival in 1978, and the first books on women in jazz.³⁹ The 1980s and 1990s saw a growth in new communities of jazzwomen, such as the revival of all women big bands like the DIVA jazz orchestra.⁴⁰ In 1998 the Jazz Education Network created the "Sisters in Jazz"

³⁸ Maher edited and wrote the introduction to composer Alec Wilder's *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950* (1972), which won the ASCAP Foundation's Deems Taylor Award in 1975 and was a finalist for the 1973 National Book Award.

³⁹ Brewer, *Changing the Tune*.

⁴⁰ "Meet DIVA," DIVA Jazz Orchestra, accessed January 24, 2025, <https://divajazz.com/about/diva/>.

collegiate combo competition.⁴¹ The 2017 #MeToo movement further encouraged jazzwomen to speak out about sexual harassment and assault within jazz academia and workspaces. Also in 2017, saxophonist Roxy Coss started the Women in Jazz Organization's (WIJO) mentee-mentor program.⁴² In 2018, the Berklee School of Music opened its Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, a program dedicated to modeling a jazz without patriarchy.⁴³ And in 2022 drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, released *New Standards: 101 Lead Sheets by Women Composers*, the first collection of compositions by historical and current jazzwomen.⁴⁴ These represent only a few of the many monumental changes that have improved the lives of women and gender minorities in jazz since work such as *Jazzwomen* began. *Jazzwomen* demonstrates a moment in history that must be studied to understand the complex relationship women and gender minorities have within jazz history.

Change has occurred, but it is not enough. I am writing this paper from the perspective of a queer trans jazz musician and scholar. I and many others are still experiencing gender discrimination within jazz. To be a woman or gender minority in jazz is to be an advocate. We must never stop fighting for change. *Jazzwomen* demonstrates the challenges and complications that exist in constructing an inclusive and equitable jazz history and community. If we continue to study McPartland's work and the historical relevance of the period it developed in, then *we* can create exponential change for women and gender minorities in jazz.

⁴¹ "Sisters in Jazz," Jazz Education Network, accessed January 24, 2025, [https://jazzednet.org/sisters-in-jazz/#:~:text=The%20Jazz%20Education%20Network%20\(JEN\)%2C%20founded%20in%202008%2C,in%20Jazz%20Collegiate%20Combo%20Competition.](https://jazzednet.org/sisters-in-jazz/#:~:text=The%20Jazz%20Education%20Network%20(JEN)%2C%20founded%20in%202008%2C,in%20Jazz%20Collegiate%20Combo%20Competition.)

⁴² "About," WIJO: Women in Jazz Organization, accessed January 24, 2025, <https://wearewijo.org/about/>

⁴³ "Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice," accessed January 24, 2025, <https://college.berklee.edu/jazz-gender-justice.>

⁴⁴ Terri Lyne Carrington, *New Standards: 101 Lead Sheets by Women Composers* (Berklee Press, 2022).

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