

## State of the Field: Jazz and Gender *Letter from the Guest Editor*

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It's hard to know where to start this issue—the right tone, the right anecdote, the right representation of this moment in the field of jazz and gender studies.<sup>1</sup> Of course, I'm referring to the confusingly bifurcated experience of participating in this field within the context of U.S. politics in 2025. I could start with the recent attacks on arts organizations and academic and cultural institutions in terms of funding, staffing, intellectual contributions, and human value. That beginning might look like this:

### FIRST INTRODUCTION

In the early 2000s, Sherrie Tucker, one of the jazz and gender subfield's founding voices, was contracted by the National Parks Service (NPS) to complete a study of women in New Orleans.<sup>2</sup> The result was a 365 page document, with about 100 pages dedicated to describing the work's approach and a new historical overview of New Orleans jazz history—new because, contrary to most published works on New Orleans jazz, it included women. The remaining 263 pages offered extensive biographies, images, bibliographies, and discographies for twenty-nine women, and concluded with a list of forty-three other women Tucker encouraged future scholars to document. According to the WayBack machine, the study has been housed on the nps.gov website since at least 2016.

On January 7, 2025, I made a syllabus that included the link to this study. On February 18, when a student and I were checking the link for the study, which was due to be read the following week, we reached the following page:

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Eugenia Siegel Conte for her immense editing prowess on this introduction, and for her endless support and dedication to inclusion and care-ethics within and outside academia.

<sup>2</sup> Sherrie Tucker, "A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen," *New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park* (2004) (Accessed Jan. 7, 2025): [https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/upload/new\\_orleans\\_jazzwomen\\_rs-2.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/upload/new_orleans_jazzwomen_rs-2.pdf)

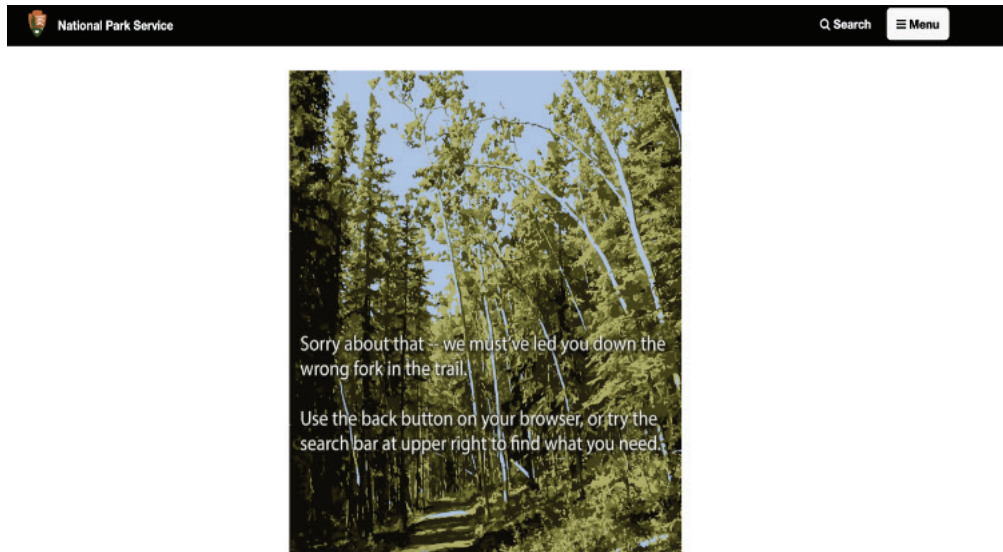


Figure 1. Screenshot of National Parks Service URL that used to host Tucker’s study on New Orleans Jazzwomen with text that reads “Sorry about that – we must’ve led you down the wrong fork in the trail. Use the back button on your browser, or try the search bar at the upper right to find what you need.”<sup>3</sup>

Given the infamous “fork in the road” emails sent first to employees of Twitter (in February 2022) and then to federal employees (sent January 28, 2025 with an initial deadline to respond by February 6), the image felt especially cruel.<sup>4</sup> While my student and I were able to find the document archived on the volunteer-run *npshistory.org* (which is not affiliated with the NPS), the nonsensical historical erasures that had been whirling since Inauguration Day hit peak perversity (peak cruelty is awarded to erasing “trans” from the Stonewall monument).<sup>5</sup> Of the many legally and ethically dubious decisions made and

<sup>3</sup> Taken Feb. 19, 2025

[https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/upload/new\\_orleans\\_jazzwomen\\_rs-2.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/upload/new_orleans_jazzwomen_rs-2.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Mary Yang, “Elon Musk gives Twitter employees an ultimatum: Stay or go by tomorrow,” *NPR* Nov. 16, 2022: <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/16/1137105935/twitter-elon-musk-ultimatum>; “Fork in the Road,” U.S. Office of Personnel Management (undated, accessed 4/4/2025): [https://www.opm.gov/fork?itid=lk\\_inline\\_enhanced-template](https://www.opm.gov/fork?itid=lk_inline_enhanced-template); Wailin Wong, Darian Woods, Angel Carreras, and Kate Concannon, “A ‘Fork in the Road’ for federal for federal employees,” *NPR* (Feb. 7, 2025): <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/07/1229744828/trump-doge-musk-federal-workers-fork-in-the-road>

<sup>5</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen,” *New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park* (2004) (Accessed Feb. 18, 2025): [npshistory.com/publications/jazz/tucker-2004.pdf](https://npshistory.com/publications/jazz/tucker-2004.pdf); Juliana Kim, “Park Service erases

enacted by the current administration, this may seem like fairly small potatoes. Still, this example encapsulates the wide-ranging and yet-to-be revealed ramifications of the administration's attack on history and those who bear its stories—the actual historical erasure happening at the hands of a tech manosphere writing algorithms to scrub websites and databases based on offensive keywords like “women,” “trans,” and “trauma.”<sup>6</sup> Tucker's piece is titled, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen,” making it easy fodder for such bots to find.

The impact of these erasures affects not just the histories already written, but those yet to be written. This is what often floods my brain these days: erasure, and worse, the futility to stop it, even when it's happening in my direct area of expertise. It leaves me terrifyingly speechless—it has taken me two months to be able to verbalize and analyze this one act of erasure of Tucker's work. It's not only that these New Orleans jazzwomen were forcibly ripped and vanished from the historical record (again), or that Tucker's work to restore them was no longer officially sanctioned, but that my ability to understand, and my ability to write and speak cogently about what was happening and why—my ability to express myself through my chosen medium (writing)—had likewise also been erased.

(DEEP BREATH) SECOND INTRODUCTION

Or, I could start from where I finally broke through that writing block—at the Washington Women in Jazz Festival (WWJF) on March 29, 2025, during an emerging artists set featuring women and gender queer artists from Howard University, the Peabody Institute, Georgetown University, and the Berklee School of Music.

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'transgender' on Stonewall website, uses the term 'LGB' movement," *NPR* Feb. 14, 2025: <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/14/g-s1-48923/stonewall-monument-transgender-park-service>  
<sup>6</sup> Brianna Scott, Ailsa Chang, and Jeannette Woods, “How AI could perpetuate racism, sexism and other biases in society,” *NPR* (July 19, 2023): <https://www.npr.org/2023/07/19/1188739764/how-ai-could-perpetuate-racism-sexism-and-other-biases-in-society>; Joseph Bernstein, “The ‘Manosphere’? It's Planet Earth,” *NYT* (Feb. 1, 2025): <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/01/style/trump-zuckerberg-masculinity.html>; Karen Yourish, Annie Daniel, Saurabh Datar, Isaac White, and Lazaro Gamio, “These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration,” *New York Times* (March 7, 2025): <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/07/us/trump-federal-agencies-websites-words-dei.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare&sgroup=c&pvid=226FCB8D-73A2-4990-841C-17C3A194A547>

WWJF has been held annually since 2011, and is organized and led by the effervescent pianist, vocalist, and composer Amy K Bornet.<sup>7</sup> Held in the National League of American Pen Women headquarters near DuPont Circle (a three story brick mansion—complete with a large turret! —that my partner now lovingly refers to as the jazz castle), performers and audience members crowd together in a salon, sitting on a mixture of plush (if worn) arm chairs and sofas, short black stools, and wooden folding chairs for a series of workshops, lectures, interviews, and performances by emerging and established women and gender queer artists.



Figure 2. Image of the doors of the National League of American Pen Women headquarters (aka the jazz castle) during the Washington Women in Jazz Festival (image taken by the author).

It was clear from the outset that everyone in attendance was aware of the stakes of the moment. (At only five blocks away from the White House, it was hard not to be.) The news of the executive order targeting the Smithsonian Institution had only recently broken, and speakers and attendees alike wondered about the impact on the Institution's significant jazz holdings and

<sup>7</sup> "Washington Women in Jazz Festival," Strange Woman Records (Accessed April 4, 2025): <https://www.strangewomanrecords.com/wwjf-main>

programming.<sup>8</sup> But, as I walked into the jazz castle, that feeling of isolated and isolating fear dissipated. At least for that day I could marvel at the not-so-simple wonder of being in community with those around me—the joy of being together and of being seen. As the musicians shifted seamlessly from jazz standards like “Sophisticated Lady” and “My Funny Valentine” and their own original compositions, I felt like I, too, was coming back to myself through this community of women who were at once strangers to me *and* comrades in arms.

#### STATE OF THE FIELD

These two sites—of fear and of joy—feel miles apart, and as a field we are caught in the constant tug of war between them. The last few years (months, days) have visited punishing retribution for the small gains made by and for women and gender marginalized folks in the immediate aftermath of the post-#metoo, post-women’s march landscape. In higher education, instead of robust policies protecting women and prohibiting sexual abuse, harassment, and discrimination, we got Title IX guidance that allowed survivors to be cross-examined by those they accused of assault.<sup>9</sup> Outside of higher education, instead of increased support around family planning and childcare, reproductive freedom was banned or imperiled.<sup>10</sup>

Still, cultural industries have worked toward gender equality. True, some white men clung to power and often maintained their hold. But the backlash against others affirmed the changing tides that demanded accountability from women.<sup>11</sup> Even as political dramas re-affirming the embeddedness of whiteness

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<sup>8</sup> “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History,” Presidential Actions (March 27, 2025):: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/>

<sup>9</sup> Johanna Alonso, “Department of Education Reverts to Trump’s Title IX Rule,” *Insider Higher Ed* (Feb. 3, 2025): <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2025/02/03/departement-education-reverts-trumps-title-ix-rule>

<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Kohler, “Three Months After Missouri Voted to Make Abortion Legal, Access Is Still Being Blocked,” *ProPublica* (Feb. 5, 2025): <https://www.propublica.org/article/missouri-abortion-ban-amendment-planned-parenthood-lawsuit>; Audrey Dutton, “Idaho Banned Abortion. Then It Turned Down Supports for Pregnancies and Births,” *ProPublica* (Oct. 3, 2023): <https://www.propublica.org/article/idaho-banned-abortion-support-pregnancies-families>; Ziva Branstetter, “How Abortion Bans Are Impacting Pregnant Patients Across the Country,” *ProPublica* (Mar. 23, 2023).

<sup>11</sup> Joe Coscarelli, “Grammys President Faces Backlash After Saying Women Need to ‘Step Up,’” *New York Times* (Jan. 30, 2018): <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/30/arts/music/grammys-step-up-neil-portnow-backlash.html>; Ben Sisario, “Jann Wenner’s Rock Hall Reign Lasted Years. It Ended in 20 Minutes,” *New York Times* (Sept. 19, 2023):

and maleness in systems of power unfolded (such as Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s Supreme Court confirmation hearing and *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022)), women crafted stories and worlds that were record-breakingly popular (if often still undeniably rooted in whiteness).<sup>12</sup> Directors and authors built women-centered worlds on our screens and pages—like Greta Gerwig’s *Little Women* (2019) and *Barbie* (2023), and Sally Rooney’s novels *Normal People* (2020) and *Conversations with Friends* (2022), which became hit television series. The rebirth of romcoms helmed by Camila Mendes (*Upgraded* (2024)), Lucy Hale (*The Hating Game* (2021), *Which Brings Me to You* (2024)), Anne Hathaway (*The Idea of You* (2024)) and others was complimented by a boom in the Romantasy genre, featuring Sarah J. Maas’s *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (2015- ) and Rebecca Yarros’s *Empyrean Series* (2023- ) as well as the Regency-inspired “Bridgerton” universe penned by Julia Quinn and reimaged for television by Shonda Rhimes’ Shondaland production company with a focus on non-white protagonists. Films directed and/or written by women based on true stories like *Woman of the Hour* (2023), *She Said* (2022), and *Women Talking* (2022), work by comedians like Ali Wong, Issa Rae, and Jessica Williams, and fiction like *Woman King* (2022), *Past Lives* (2023), *True Detective: Night Country* (2024), *Turning Red* (2022), *Hacks* (2021- ), *Insecure* (2016–2021), *Prey* (2022), *Abbott Elementary* (2021- ), *The Diplomat* (2023- ) and *Tár* (2022)—go to show that the diversity of women’s stories has hit a fever pitch in the last several years. And while perhaps as a music scholar I may be biased, it has seemed like music has been the space in which women have most compellingly occupied center stage. The most recent two years of Grammy nominations alone suggest women’s dominance over many genres of popular music as artists, if not as songwriters or producers.<sup>13</sup> Along with *Barbie*, Taylor Swift and Beyoncé kicked off what NPR called the Year of the Girl in 2023—and it continued into 2024 with artists like Olivia Rodrigo, Charli XCX, Doechii, Sabrina Carpenter,

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/19/arts/music/jann-wenner-rock-and-roll-hall-of-fame.html>

<sup>12</sup> Many thanks to my partner, Zachary Klotz, who, in addition to being guided by inclusion and equity, is so often our household’s keeper of popular culture.

<sup>13</sup> Stacy L. Smith, Katherine Pieper, Karla Hernandez, and Sam Wheeler, “Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters & Producers Across 1,200 Popular songs from 2012 to 2023,” USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (January 2024): <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-recording-studio-20240130.pdf>; Stacy L. Smith, Katherine Pieper, Karla Hernandez, and Sam Wheeler, “Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters & Producers Across 1,200 Popular songs from 2012 to 2024,” USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (January 2025): <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-recording-studio-2025-01-29-2.pdf>

Chappell Roan, Selena Gomez, Megan Thee Stallion, and more, and with the blockbuster hit *Wicked* (2024) featuring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande.<sup>14</sup>

Each of these artists joyfully, irreverently offered many expressions of girl- and woman-hood open to explore. These women crafted worlds and welcomed communities who felt (and were) unheard, and by and large, these artists helped give us a voice and a language when many of us felt most ignored post-*Dobbs* (2022). In short, post-#metoo has increased and diversified representations of what women can be, do, and make. Reading the “cultural tea leaves,” which increasingly seemed to promote stories by and about women as complicated figures, then, suggested that a world was being built that refuted the political realities of another Trump administration or the legal realities post-*Dobbs*, even if many of the women I’ve named above and in footnotes has had to deal with violent sexist threats.<sup>15</sup>

I’ve focused primarily outside of jazz because very few of our worlds can be defined only by what happens in our field—the field is never out of conversation with the broader world that surrounds it, for better and for worse. Jazz studies has not sat this gender moment out: In response to both the pain and possibility of this cultural moment, jazz studies folks around the world have likewise reached a fever pitch of activity, insisting that women and gender marginalized people and issues not only matter, but deserve, at long last, a central place in the study of jazz. Building on the work of first Linda Dahl, Sally Placksin, Val Wilmer, and Antoinette Handy, and then Sherrie Tucker, Angela Davis, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Tammy Kernodle, Nichole Rustin, Tracy McMullen, Lara Pellegrinelli, Christi Jay Wells, Guthrie Ramsey, David Ake, and more,<sup>16</sup> these

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<sup>14</sup> Emma Klein, Sarah Handel, Juana Summers, “Why 2023 Was the Year of the Girl,” *NPR* (Jan. 1, 2024): <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/01/1222405952/why-2023-was-the-year-of-the-girl>; Bilal Qureshi, “How three female artists lead this summer’s billion-dollar pop culture revival,” *NPR* (Aug. 14, 2023): <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/11/1193283472/barbie-taylor-swift-beyonce>

<sup>15</sup> It’s not at all surprising that nearly every artist I’ve mentioned gave some sort of support (whether tepid or full-throated) to Kamala Harris’s 2024 presidential campaign. And there were more: Mickey Guyton, Patti LaBelle, The Chicks, Lizzo, Jennifer Lopez, Cher, Gracie Abrams, Cardi B, Lady Gaga, Andra Day, Jazmine Sullivan, Christina Aguilera, Katy Perry, Dionne Warwick, Ariana Grande, Barbra Streisand, Billie Eilish, Carole King, Demi Lovato, Kesha, Linda Ronstadt, Madonna, P!nk, Stevie Nicks, and others (and yes, Harris was also supported by an overwhelming number of male musicians).

<sup>16</sup> Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazz Women* (Limelight, 1989); Linda Dahl, *Morning Glory: A Biography of Mary Lou Williams* (University of California Press, 1999); Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present* (Seaview Books, 1982); Val Wilmer, *As Serious As Your Life: Black Music and the Free Jazz Revolution* (Mast Books, 1977); Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1981)

include special issues from the *Journal of Popular Music History* (2022), *Women & Music* (2023), the volume *Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender* (2023), and, of course, the founding of the Berklee Institute for Jazz and Gender Justice (2018) by founder and artistic director Terri Lyne Carrington and managing director Aja Burrell Wood.<sup>17</sup> Importantly, while many of these works do focus on women and gender marginalized folks in jazz, Tucker and others have worked to move the conversation toward considering gender and its constructions more broadly, refusing the implication that men do not have or perform gender. Still, we do often focus on women—but more out of a desire to see their stories (our stories) told at last, than out of a belief that gender and women mean the same thing.

And then, in the 2024 election, just over half of voting Americans chose a convicted felon who has been held liable for sexual abuse, who is “practically and morally responsible for provoking the events” of January 6, 2021, who regularly assesses women for their bodies and usefulness to him (which often seem to be

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Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: 'All-Girl' Bands of the 1940s* (Duke University Press, 2000); Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker, eds, *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Duke University Press, 2008); Kristin McGee, *Some Liked it Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television* (Wesleyan University Press, 2009); Lisa Barg, Tammy Kernodle, Dianthe Spencer, Sherrie Tucker, Maxine Gordon, Emmett G. Price III, Monica Hairston O'Connell, Special Issue on Melba Liston, *Black Music Research Journal* 34(1) (Spring 2014); Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (Penguin Random House, 1998); Farah Jasmine Griffin, *If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday* (Penguin Random House, 2002); Tammy Kernodle, *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (University of Illinois Press, 2020); Nichole Rustin-Paschal, *The Kind of Man I Am: Jazzmasculinity and the World of Charles Mingus Jr.* (Wesleyan University Press, 2017); Tracy McMullen, “The College Jazz Program as Tradition Making: Establishing a New Lineage in Jazz,” *Women and Music* (2023), 32-50; Tracy McMullen, “Jazz Education after 2017: The Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and the Pedagogical Lineage,” *Jazz & Culture* 4(2) (Fall/Winter 2021): 27-55; Christi Jay Wells, “‘A Dreadful Bit of Silliness’: Feminine Frivolity and Ella Fitzgerald’s Early Critical Reception,” *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* (2017): 43-65; Lara Pellegrinelli, et. al “Equal At Last? Women in Jazz, By the Numbers,” *NPR* (Jan. 12, 2021): <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/12/953964352/equal-at-last-women-in-jazz-by-the-numbers>; Guthrie Ramsey, *The Amazing Bud Powell: Black Genius, Jazz History, and the Challenge of Bebop* (University of California Press, 2013); David Ake, “Regendering Jazz: Ornette Coleman and the New York Scene in the Late 1950s,” in *Jazz Cultures* (University of California Press, 2019), 62-82.

<sup>17</sup> Aleisha Ward, ed., “Jazz and Gender: Are We There Yet?” *Popular Music History* 15(2-3) (2022); Terri Lyne Carrington, Aja Burrell Wood, and Tracy McMullen, ed. *Women and Music* 27 (2023); James Reddan, Monika Herzig, and Michael Kahr, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender* (Routledge, 2022).

one and the same), all for supposedly lower taxes, tariffs, and mass deportation.<sup>18</sup> The result? The disturbing realization that what many of us in culture and academic work had imagined to be living and what we are actually living are further apart—much further apart—than we thought. And that reality is clung to overwhelmingly by men of most races and in every age group and a majority of white women.<sup>19</sup> If 2016 was the election that revealed the lie of a post-racial America, 2024 will likely be seen as the election that revealed any lie of a post-gender America. (A truth further substantiated by Trump’s Day One executive order recognizing only two sexes and the June 2025 Supreme Court decision in *US. vs. Skrametti*, which upheld state bans on gender affirming care for minors.)

Make no mistake: we are living in the backlash to the power of representation, in which men (especially young and especially old) increasingly feel left behind, culturally lost, and ultimately not special, and in which white women traded a belief in gender equality for the security of their white privilege. That backlash is increasingly meted out by policymakers in governmental positions.

It is clearer than ever before: *Representation matters, but it is not and cannot be the end goal.* Seeing women on screen and on the page, witnessing their stories, hearing them, and seeing them in decision-making roles and positions of power has not yet changed fundamental beliefs about what women are capable of and what powers they should be entrusted with. Despite the obvious power and impact representation often has on future generations, it only offers hope of vague systemic change, maybe, somewhere, for some later generation down the line.

Of course, people like Tucker, Kernodle, Davis, Carrington, and others have been telling us this for decades: The representation of women, trans, and queer jazz musicians in history books, on stages, and in classrooms is important, but

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<sup>18</sup> Mitch McConnell, qtd. in Tom Dreisbach, “Donald Trump calls Jan. 6 a ‘day of love.’ Here are the facts.” *NPR* (Oct. 29, 2024): <https://www.npr.org/2024/10/29/nx-s1-5159868/2024-election-trump-harris-capitol-riot> Notably, I wrote this line on November 8, 2024. As of edits on April 6, 2025, tariffs have caused a stock market plunge of 10%; as of edits on May 7, 2025, Trump walked back some tariffs, suggested other new tariffs, and in response to the uncertainty, the Federal Reserve decided to keep interest rates the same amid inflation fears. Further, the State Department has implemented (and in some cases, as a result of immense legal pressure, revoked) a vindictive, haphazard, and legally dubious approach to deportation. Tax cuts, however, have not been implemented.

<sup>19</sup> Linley Sanders, “How 5 key demographic groups voted in 2024: AP VoteCast,” *AP* (Nov. 7, 2024): <https://apnews.com/article/election-harris-trump-women-latinos-black-voters-0f3fbda3362f3dcfe41aa6b858f22d12>; “Gender Differences in 2024 Vote Choice Are Similar to Most Recent Presidential Elections,” *Center for American Women and Politics*, Rutgers-New Brunswick Eagleton Institute of Politics (Dec. 28, 2024): <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/blog/gender-differences-2024-presidential-vote>

will only very gradually lead to them being understood as full humans worthy of the same considerations, rights, and privileges as men. We also need to rethink policies that govern musicians' hiring, firing, and work conditions (like the We Have Voice Collective's push for performance institutions to adopt a code of conduct for safe(r) workplaces).<sup>20</sup> We must develop opportunities for women and gender marginalized composers to have their works published, such as Annie Booth and Alan Baylock's Brava Jazz Publishing, and Carrington's *New Standards: 101 Lead Sheets by Women Composers*. Support of efforts like the Jazz Education Network's Sisters in Jazz is essential to encourage young musicians to develop jazz communities. And we must continue to interrogate how gender is embedded in sound, who and what gets valued in jazz history and its scholarship, and who is represented, respected, and welcomed in the jazz community.

As educators, students, performers, writers, historians, and invested fans of jazz, we must commit to seeking, preserving, knowing, and sharing our histories in order to advance the field of jazz knowledge and to maintain the importance of critical education over erasure. Erasures like Tucker's, the Stonewall plaque, and countless others across government websites and quite possibly in physical archives, threaten the possibility of accurately and fully representing the historical record.<sup>21</sup> We know that accuracy is not the end goal; these acts of erasure are committed in desperate but powerful attempts to "rectify" history in a perverse "Judgement Day" for critical thinking. But those of us who value education—the kind that teaches students (broadly defined) to think for themselves and not simply be guided by whoever currently has their attention—understand that more information and more access (not 404 Not Found errors) are the keys to the kind of knowledge that is badly needed in the pursuit of justice, equality, and liberty, as well as representation. Fundamentally, this field and the humanities writ large needs its experts and its students to continue to think and write critically, and to continue to develop new methods and approaches in order to continue creating broadly inclusive histories unburdened by gendered expectations (among others). This is precisely what the authors in this special issue set out to do.

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<sup>20</sup> "Code of Conduct," We Have Voice (Accessed April 4, 2025): <https://toomanyorg.wordpress.com/who-we-are-2/>

<sup>21</sup> Huo Jingnan and Quil Lawrence, "Here are All the Ways People are Disappearing from Government Websites," *NPR* (Mar. 19, 2025): <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/19/nx-s1-5317567/federal-websites-lgbtq-diversity-erased>

## THE ISSUES

This is the first of a double issue titled “State of the Field: Jazz and Gender” aimed at just such an interrogation across the span of jazz history. From the beginning of our conversations about this special issue, Sean Lorre, Steph Doktor, and I made a commitment to advocate for inclusivity not only in the content of the work we sought, but in our process of working with authors. In practice, this feminist-derived, mentorship-oriented approach looked like:

- a call for proposals that specifically invited early career scholars and students to submit, and only required an abstract (a lower bar especially for those contingencies)
- an inclusive acceptance model, meaning we accepted ideas rather than pre-formed written products, and when we received a number of exciting proposals, we expanded the formats of pieces we would publish (not only full articles, but a roundtable that connected similar topics and our case studies as shorter format pieces)
- a different approach to the anonymous peer review process, which included: 1) in some cases, edits before anonymous peer review; 2) language in the request for a peer review that emphasized a care-oriented and mentorship-forward approach to comments, while acknowledging the work that goes into such a request; 3) in some cases, deconstructing peer reviewers’ comments for authors to emphasize the productivity of certain criticisms; and 4) when needed, rounds of edits after peer review.

For us, this process came closer than most to achieving our goals for a more compassionate review and publication process. (We would have loved to have incorporated a more robust peer-review process among the issues’ authors.)

This issue features articles by Emmalouise St. Amand, Kari Anne Lindquist, Eduardo López-Dabdoub, and Kristin McGee. The articles each offer different methods by which to consider historical analyses of gender. For St. Amand and Lindquist, we head to archives that many jazz scholars have not spent time with to understand the role mid-century jazz played for girls and young women. Rooting her analysis within the pages of teen magazines like *Seventeen* and *Confessions* and in high school yearbooks, St. Amand centers the lives of girls who listened to jazz, as she argues that for many U.S. girls in the 1950s, jazz was not only not subversive, but could often reinforce typical gendered stereotypes of the roles of girls. Lindquist scours university archives for evidence of the women who accompanied their university jazz bands on 1960s and 1970s state department tours, whose efforts have been undocumented before now.

Meanwhile, López-Dabdoub offers an intersectional performance analysis of Rahsaan Roland Kirk in the 1960s and 1970s, deftly demonstrating how Kirk at once conformed to his audiences' gendered and sexualized expectations of Black masculinity as a way to refute the notion that disabled people are weak—all while playing the flute. McGee heads into the twenty-first century with a much needed interrogation of the nascent genre “viral jazz.” Using saxophonist Grace Kelly and vocalist and composer Laufey as case studies, McGee examines the tension between the critical opportunities afforded to women online, even as many platforms remain havens of hyper-masculinity and male domination. The issue concludes with a roundtable on gender and jazz education, featuring an introduction by Rebeca Muñoz Garcia and articles by Beatriz Nunes, Dave Wilson, and Ulagh Williams and Nishlyn Ramanna. While the articles in the roundtable are written from perspectives outside the United States (Portugal, New Zealand, and South Africa), each invite readers to consider similar approaches across musical institutions.

The second issue (Fall 2025) features articles by Jenna Przybysz, Theresa Chen, and Marcus Grant. Using online ethnography, Przybysz examines the popular discourse of the political category “*gender-and-jazz*” that emerged between 2017 and 2019, and what it means for non-male jazz musicians to be considered through this category. Chen uses Leonard Feather’s infamous “three strikes” for Marian McPartland (white, British, and a woman) to contextualize the experiences of Asian and Asian American jazzwomen; significantly, her work is based primarily on interviews with contemporary jazz musicians. Finally, Grant provides a media analysis on Abbey Lincoln’s performance on *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* for *Jazzprisma* in 1964; he argues that while Lincoln’s decisions (vocally, through her wardrobe, and in interviews) demonstrated her support of Black nationalism, the camera instead produces a reductive and hyper-sexualized lens of her performance. The second issue concludes with several “case studies”—short pieces of varying topics and methods intended for undergraduate readers as a pathway to further exploration of a given topic on jazz and gender. As a teaser, you can expect pieces by Lael Dratfield on Marian McPartland’s archive at the Eastman School of Music, Meghan Gilhespy on the erasure of June Tyson, AJ Kluth on recent feminist interventions in jazz ecologies, Krina Cayabyab on jazzwomen in the post-colonial Philippines (1946-1976), and Judith Tick with an analysis of Ella Fitzgerald’s recordings of “Lady Be Good.” These pieces offer a range of topics and methods, and their accessibility for undergraduate readers is intended to serve as models for critical thinking in classroom projects.

We need our community more than ever, and in addition to our wonderful authors, of whose work I am immensely proud, I am so gratified by the army of

support we had behind the scenes from anonymous reviewers (who I wish I could name and credit). Most of all, I need to thank the editorial team of editor-in-chief Vincent Pelote, editor/managing editor Sean Lorre and associate editors Steph Doktor and Darren Mueller: never has there been such a supportive team of editors who, even when I said I wanted to engage in a review process that prioritized mentorship over rejection and all of the extra work that entails, always asked, “yes, and?” and generously gave of their time, knowledge, and creativity in a period of immense stress. The work behind these issues is as much theirs as it is mine. The state of the field is strong, and it is because of these wonderful people and their care and attention—their care for the work, each other, and for you, our readers. One of our goals was to add to the growing number of accessible jazz and gender analyses, particularly for classroom settings, and we have packed these issues absolutely full with wonderful pieces I hope will find a home in your classes and future scholarship.

We have important work to do. Let’s get to it.