

## Racism and Sexism

Cultural heritage and tradition are often associated with a particular race. However, this fact can also be used as a guise to hide blatant racism or sexism. One can think of these forms of discrimination as past events, but there are major manifestations not long ago – if not in present day. Does the size of the human hand affect the sound of a string instrument? Specifically, will an all-male string section sound different than one including females? Will a jazz group of all African American musicians sound different than one comprised of all White musicians? There have been examples where famous ensembles or organizations did indeed believe so, maintained a policy that many found racist or sexist, and some of these occurrences are not long ago.

*Hello Dolly* is an all-time American classic film featuring multi-Grammy winning vocalist Barbara Streisand. The film was released in 1969 – not during the lifetime of most students, but definitely during the lifetime of many professors. Streisand sings with Louis Armstrong. Notice the ethnicity of the cast and the band. Some background into the subject reveals that the musicians union was the most segregated in the American Federation of Labor for many years. Read about the Black Philadelphia Local of the American Federation of Musicians, the last segregated local of the organization. The Black Philadelphia Local in fact resisted consolidation both because they had been so successful under the segregated union and recognized “the value of the contribution they were making to American culture through the music”.

Earlier, various styles had evolved from the amalgamation of European and African cultures. Author Bob Thomas provides some insight into the development of Ragtime and later styles in “The Origins of Big Band Music.” The combination of five distinct styles into Rock and Roll are explained in “Black and White Separation in Music: Marketing or Racism” from *Controversies of the Music Industry*. These five styles were Rhythm and Blues, Country and Western, White Popular, Folk, and Jazz. Furthermore, the birth of Rap and Gansta Rap and their implications are addressed. Several important issues are discussed including how licensing structures affected radio airplay and some antisocial themes such as “gang warfare” and “violence directed at police” are commonly utilized in specific types of music.

Imagine an orchestra that excluded females and/or non-white musicians. What if an audition was held behind a screen, and a minority winner was not offered the position because of race or gender? The Vienna Philharmonic did in fact not have any female members until 1997 – almost the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Read “The Image of Purity” and examine several astonishing quotations that would surely be unacceptable in contemporary American society. Following, observe how the orchestra adopted some reforms under international pressure to allow female membership in the blog titled “The Special Characteristics of the Vienna Philharmonic’s Racial Ideology.” At last attire certainly influences the view of a musician and/or orchestra. Hear the different views of the Austrian people who comment in the news story “Women well-suited for the Vienna Philharmonic.” The orchestra’s female musicians were asked to wear suites in 2010, which seems particularly of note given the orchestra’s history and tradition.

With a large part of the male population called to duty, World War II provided many opportunities for women. Musicians were also needed to entertain troupes and build morale. At this time, all female big bands existed, and they were called Girl Bands. See and hear Thelma White and Her All Girl Orchestra and the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. Again, the bands were divided by race. These opportunities led women to become leading artists in subsequent decades through today. However, for a long time and even today, women have had great difficulty advancing to executive positions. Some accounts of Gender Stereotyping and Harassment in the Music Workplace are chronicled in “The Glass Ceiling: Women in the Music Industry”. Do you believe harassment and gender stereotyping have been greater in music than in other professions? If so, has the culture endorsing certain lyrics or themes been influential?