



EQUAL ARTS

*A discussion paper prepared by Jan Browning
Victorian Women's Trust
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FOREWORD

A year or so ago, we heard anecdotally that women composers in Australia found it much more difficult than men to get their work commissioned and played by the major orchestras of the country. Is this really the case we thought?

It so happened that Jan Browning had started with us at the Victorian Women's Trust as a volunteer. Jan is a former secondary school teacher with a passion for the arts and classical music especially. In determining what she might do which value-added to our work as well as to Jan, it seemed the perfect fit - why not take the opportunity to visit and assess the question of gender equity in the arts in Australia.

Jan set out to explore this critical question. In the first instance, she went back and re-visited a major research report conducted in 1984 by the Arts Council of Australia. Jan also spoke at length with a number of experienced and high-level arts administrators and academics and a range of practising musicians from different genres; classical, jazz and folk. She also looked at material concerning the visual arts and women writers and how they are faring in Australia today.

The findings are a mixed bag. On the one hand women are finding positions in all areas of the arts that were previously almost exclusively male. The make-up of the major Australian symphony orchestras is a case in point as there is now either gender balance or close to it in all orchestras, perhaps largely due to the screened auditions that now occur.

The Stella Prize for literature has raised the profile of women writers. We are seeing some stronger roles for women in Australian drama, female visual artists are making their mark and there is now orchestral music by a handful of women, being performed. Women also occupy senior roles in many prestigious arts organisations and educational faculties and the boards of all the arts bodies that were investigated, included women in their number.

However, the flipside is that women are still not occupying the top decision-making positions in the arts world; they are still not working in the arts in the same numbers as men despite outnumbering them in arts courses; and are still not earning as much money as men from their art work.

Whilst women are present on all boards, there are very few boards that have equal numbers and even less that are chaired by women.

Thanks to Jan's thoughtful effort and commitment to task, we can now publish this document as a Discussion Paper. Like all good Discussion Papers, it raises questions that need careful and honest reflection, community discussion and practical and effective responses.

It is our hope that this Discussion Paper can serve a useful purpose. It is not meant to be a definitive treatment of women in the Arts. It does, however, bring key facts, figures, assertions and arguments into the open.

May constructive discussion, debate and strategic responses now flow!

Mary Crooks AO
Executive Director
The Victorian Women's Trust



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INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Women's Trust is used to all sorts of commentary flowing into its office. It might be something about pay inequity, abortion rights being infringed, or problems with social housing. A year or so ago, we heard anecdotally a particular and different lament - that women composers found it much more difficult than men to get their work commissioned and played by the major orchestras of the country.

At first blush, it was thought that this might simply be due to the fact that orchestras are more likely to be playing famous works by men from eras past, with little new work being commissioned and performed by any Australian composer, male or female. On second consideration, and after taking some soundings from various people, it was decided it was worth doing some further investigation with a view to exploring how women were faring in the world of music and indeed, in the arts more widely.

The death of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, in October 2014, caused people to reflect on the importance of the arts in Australian society and on Whitlam's strong championing of them through both his advocacy and public policy commitments. He saw the arts as occupying a central place in any civilised community:

*"All other objectives of a Labor government ... have as their goal the creation of a society in which the arts and the appreciation of spiritual and intellectual values can flourish. Our other objectives are all means to an end. The enjoyment of the arts is an end in itself."*¹

Whitlam was an avowed feminist. In his vision of the arts in society, he would have no doubt assumed that gender would be immaterial, with talent the only criterion in the execution of work, the gaining of commissions, the publicity and reviewing of work, in the management structures of the various arts bodies and in the staffing of educational institutes delivering arts education to students.

Could it be possible, we wondered, that in 2016, this would not be the case? Surely the arts world that reflects and criticises our society, that challenges our beliefs, that moves us with words and music and dance and sculpture and painting, that in all ways seeks to elevate the human condition, that preaches inclusivity and points out injustice, would in itself be above reproach?

This research sets out to explore these two critical questions. In the first instance, we wanted to establish a comparative time frame - so we went back and revisited a major research report conducted in 1984 by the Arts Council of Australia and then assessed this by compiling facts and other relevant data that gave us a contemporary snapshot. In testing this comparative material, we also spoke at length with a number of experienced and high-level arts administrators and academics.

1984: BRAVE NEW ARTS WORLD?

One of the arts achievements of the Whitlam period was the creation of the Australia Council in 1975. It was charged with the responsibility for funding arts projects around Australia and for formulating & implementing policies to foster and promote the arts in Australia.

In 1983, the Australia Council reported on women and the arts. The report exposed some serious inequities. Women faced far more difficulties in establishing a career in the arts; earned significantly less than their male counterparts; were more likely to be working in allied art areas rather than directly in the arts; their qualifications & educational levels were above those of males but they were not accessing the upper echelons of the academic world of those same institutions that educated them; were much more likely to be responsible for domestic and childcare duties and had little voice on the boards and managing bodies of the arts organisations. In response, the Australia Council then released in 1984, a Strategy for Action, offering a variety of proposals that explored and addressed these inequities. Closer reading of these two reports gives us an important overview of the situation for women working in the arts in 1983-84.²

NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN ARTS WORK

It was estimated that women formed a minority in arts work overall with women making up just 37% of full or part-time artists in Australia (Table 1). Of that 37% there were imbalances in their representation in the various art forms, with the majority of women clustering in the areas of crafts, acting, dance and singing, followed by writers, visual artists and designers.

Table 1: Sex Composition of Artist Categories 1983

Artist Category	Women
Writers	45%
Craftspeople	61%
Visual Artists	38%
Directors/Designers	31%
Actors	46%
Dancers/Choreographers	59%
Musicians	15%(a)
Singers	50%
Composers	9%
Community Artists	3%
All Artists	37%

(a) women form a much higher percentage of classical musicians, perhaps 50%

Source: Individual Artists Enquiry, Committee of Enquiry, *The Artist in Australia Today* (Sydney: Australia Council, 1983) cited in - *a strategy for action*, 1984

The percentage of artists working full time was around 18% for both men and women although the number of men was much greater. The interesting difference however, was how the part-timers spent the time that they were not working as artists in their chosen field. According to the report, about 40% of men worked at income earning, non-arts occupations, as against 20% of women, while about 50% of women were involved in domestic duties compared to 18% of men.

It was also suggested in the report that apart from those women working in the arts, a greater number worked in art areas as 'artworkers' where they were not directly engaged in the exercise of artistic skills, but rather in ancillary roles, in the hope that this would give them an entree to an artistic career. The Strategy for Action report went on to state that:

*'All evidence suggeststhat women face much greater obstacles than men do in moving out of (artworker) jobs and establishing career paths. We have found that in the arts, as in the general workforce, women cluster in occupations which are lower in status than 'men's' occupations, and their mobility is restricted.'*³

The world of broadcasting was used as an example of this situation, which showed the highest percentage of women working in this world were employed in clerical support whilst less than 20% were in managerial, creative or technical positions.

This sort of demarcation of roles was found to exist in many arts organisations.

Women were in a distinct minority in executive and technical jobs with the Australian Ballet and leading, 'progressive' theatres such as the Nimrod in Sydney which suggested that the situation in less progressive organisations was much worse for women.

Examples of women's limited role in other arts fields were also given and, whilst they focussed primarily on Sydney, they were taken as typical Australia wide. The percentage of women as board members of NSW cultural institutions ranged from 0% for the Archives Authority to a high of 40% on the board of The Australian Museum. These figures demonstrated women's limited capacity to direct the affairs of such institutions due to their limited representation on the decision making bodies.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In terms of arts related courses, the report found that women outnumbered men in degree and diploma courses by up to 26% (Table 2). They were equally represented in postgraduate degree/diploma courses and were very much in the majority in vocationally oriented arts courses in stark contrast to their proportion among practising artists.

Table 2: Enrolments at 16 Higher Ed Courses 1982

Field of Study	Women
Art & Design	69%
Drama & Dance	56%
Music	62%
Film, Radio & TV	59%
Total Percentage	67%

Source: Higher Education Board (HEB) and Australian Film and Television School, cited in *Women in the Arts*, 1983.

Table 3: Academic Staff in Visual & Performing Arts & Related Courses, NSW CAE

Faculty	Women
Art & Design/Performing Arts	24%
Music	19%
Communications	18%
Total Percentage	22%

Source: HEB, cited in *Women in the Arts- a strategy for action*, 1984

In each of the courses reported on, female students were in the majority which is another reason the contrast with these figures and those for the academic staff at such institutions is so marked. In addition, those women who were employed as academics in higher education institutions tended to be clustered in the lower teaching levels with only 8% of the total 22% of women, to be found above the rank of Senior Lecturer and 30% of that cohort designated as other teaching staff.

The report added, that this pattern of majority of female students, minority of female academic staff and a concentration of female academic staff at junior levels, was widespread among Australian institutions offering education and training for the arts.

DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

As shown in Table 4, women artists were found to spend much more time on domestic duties than did men.

Table 4: Domestic Responsibilities

Time Spent on Domestic Duties as a Percentage of Total Time Available for Working	Women	Men
	(n=350)	(n=60)
0%	49%	82%
1-50%	42%	16%
51% and above	9%	2%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Individual Artists Enquiry, Op Cit p6

It is interesting to note that 82% of the male cohort of arts workers reported spending none of their possible working time at all on domestic duties, as opposed to only 49% of women reporting similarly. Ages were not reported but it is possible that whilst many of the cohorts were young and single it is unlikely that all were. That breakdown is not available but what is clear is the big disparity in the amount of domestic responsibility for each sex and the corresponding time therefore available for working in their art field. This of course, would have resulted in a lot less opportunity for women to develop their art work, and the range of their art work, in the same way that their male counterparts could.

FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Women artists fared far worse than the relative income position of women in the general workforce, earning an income that was only 2/3 of the average income of men with a similar imbalance appearing in the total income of artists. Table 5 shows an almost equal inversion of incomes with 75% of men earning \$10,000 and over and 80% of women earning \$20,000 or lower.

Table 5: Financial Circumstances		
Total Income of Artists 1981-1982 as a percentage from arts and non-arts sources	Women	Men
	(n=233)	(n=455)
Less than \$10,000	49%	25%
\$10,000-\$20,000	31%	34%
\$20,000 & above	20%	41%
Total	100%	100%
Source: Individual Artists Enquiry, Op Cit		

KEY ISSUES

The report also listed as concerns:

- Sexist art criticism
- Sexist interviews with women artists for the media
- Sexist research attitudes and assumptions
- Imbalances in the acquisition and exhibition of works by art galleries
- Professional disadvantage compared with men.
- An income imbalance where women artists earned 1/3 less than their male counterparts from the direct practice of their art.

The report interestingly, found that despite these many inequities, a narrow majority of women reported little or no disadvantage with men. The authors went on to draw a distinction between,

‘... experiencing inequitable conditions or professional disadvantages and recognising them for what they are.’⁴

The areas of music and the visual arts were the two in which at least 50% of the women surveyed reported some disadvantage, whereas under 20% of the women in the female dominated areas of dance and the crafts reported disadvantage.

Further, the report asked some salient questions stemming from their evidence, such as;

- Why do women form only 37% of all artists?
- Why do so many women not make the transition from arts training to an artistic career?
- Why are women so heavily in the minority in positions of creative and policy influence?
- Why do the practices of so many arts organisations and companies' patterns of purchasing, exhibiting and performing work apparently favour men?
- Why do women artists earn less, on average, than do men?
- Why are women not applying for Australia Council assistance in equal numbers with men?

PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Child-care was a priority, particularly arts related child care services which were needed due to the often, irregular hours of arts workers.
2. Training Inquiry - to explore why so many women dropped out after completing their arts training.
3. Exercise of Australia Council 'leverage' – to address the issues of women being outside many positions of influence, lower female earnings, male-oriented choice and presentation of works and activities by women. This leverage was to take a financial form as well as general advocacy. (eg guidelines for Equal Opportunity programs on a range of issues.)
4. Direct Council Action – on matters such as board representation.
5. Further Research.

The council also recognised the need to encourage a greater number of women to apply for grants and the need to address the attitudes in society that helped to perpetuate discriminatory practices. Among these entrenched attitudes were, 'internalised psychological barriers' to success within many women artists themselves, which the report authors believed, "... will take many years to disappear".

2016: EQUAL ARTS - WOMEN IN THE ARTS

We currently live in a political climate very different from that of the Whitlam era. In Queensland, one of the early cost saving actions of the 2012 Newman state government was to slash the funding of various arts awards with a budget cut to the arts of \$7.9mill. The ongoing cuts by the Newman government hit small and medium sized arts organisation and squeezed out artists. State and Territory arts funding fell \$20.7 mill between 2011-13.

The 2014 Federal budget saw a reduction in Federal Arts funding of \$100mill over 4 years including a \$30mill cut to the Australia Council resulting in fewer films and TV programs likely to be funded and fewer and smaller grants available to individual artists.

Labor's national cultural policy, Creative Australia, lasted only months before the incoming Abbott government killed it.

Attorney General and then Minister for the Arts, George Brandis, said of cuts to the arts, *"...I'm more interested in funding arts companies that cater to the great audiences that want to see quality drama, music or dance, than I am in subsidising individual artists responsible only to themselves."*⁵

This thinking effectively removes support from the next generation of individuals of talent whose contribution has been seen in the past to be enormous and, given the distribution of commissions and money, particularly impact on women.

Given this climate, how, we wondered, are women doing in the arts in the early days of the 21st Century?



Whilst the following data are not totally comparable in all categories, to that of the 1984 Women in the Arts report, they offer information as to how women are faring in the arts in current times. Some areas have seen significant increases in female participation in the arts. For instance all the major symphony orchestras have close to gender balance amongst their musicians. There are many women in high powered roles in arts institutions, universities, music and theatre companies. A handful of women composers is having work commissioned and performed regularly. Women writers are being recognised via awards such as the Stella Prize,* the Archibald Prize was awarded for two consecutive years to a woman, making 2014 however, still only the seventh year that the award has gone to a woman in the 73 year history of the prize.

Unfortunately, in many areas little seems to have changed. The following data therefore are designed to offer an overview of where women sit across a range of arts activities in the last three to five years.

* It needs to be noted that the Stella Prize, was specifically established as a prize for Australian women writers to address the imbalance of awards, reviews, recognition & publication of women writers in Australia. The fact that this imbalance exists demonstrates that male and female writers are not treated equally.

CENSUS STATISTICS ON WORKERS IN CULTURAL OCCUPATIONS

The 2011 census figures offer us some interesting information on art workers in Australia. The census reported that in the category of; Workers in Cultural Occupations, 47% were female and 53% were male whereas in the category of; Performing Artists and Music Composers, only 36% were female and the remaining 64% were male.

The following table refers to people who, on census night 2011, selected one of the listed categories as their main job. From these figures it is possible to suggest that there is simply less work available for women than men in many areas and possibly, many women are still working in the 'artworkers' category as defined in the 1984 report, than actually in their preferred role.

If for instance we take the composing figures we see that 17% of the total number of composers is women who are listing composing as their main occupation, yet we also know that female students in composing courses in Universities make up between 25-29% of the cohort. However this percentage is not maintained in the workforce. Women are outnumbered by men in all categories except for Dancers, Variety Artists and Singers. The disparity is particularly marked in the areas of Radio Presenting, Composing and Instrumental Musicians.

Table 6: Persons Employed in Performing Arts and Music 2011

Artist Category	Females	Males	Total
Actors	677	935	1612
Dancer or Choreographer	832	303	1135
Entertainer or Variety Artist	802	947	1749
Composer	49	235	284
Music Director	152	233	385
Musician Instrumental	1503	4530	6033
Singer	504	437	941
Music Professionals	89	168	257
Radio Presenter	465	1499	1964
Television Presenter	166	234	400

Source: *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview*, 2014, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

HIGHER EDUCATION STAFF

The following information comes from the Australian Year Book 2012 and, whilst it is looking at the entire higher education staff cohort, it is reasonable to assume that it reflects the situation in all faculties including those of the various arts related departments.

Higher education staff may be classified as being in either academic (engaged in teaching, including supervision of post-graduate study) or non-academic (such as student support, corporate services or governance) roles. There were 48,000 academic staff in Australian higher education institutions in 2011 and 61,000 non-academic staff .

While two-thirds (66%) of non-academic staff in 2011 were female, more than half (56%) of academic staff were male, though this represented a slight decrease from 59% in 2006. The majority (58%) of senior lecturers in 2011 were male, a slight decrease from 63% in 2006. Almost three-quarters (73%) of academic staff above senior lecturer in 2011 were male, down slightly from 77% in 2006.

Table 7: Higher Education Staff - 2011

	Males %	Females %	Total %	Total '000
Academic classifications	56.4	43.6	100.00	48 325
Above senior lecturer	72.7	27.3	100.00	12 574
Senior lecturer (Level C)	57.8	42.2	100.00	11 149
Lecturer (Level B)	48.5	51.5	100.00	16 316
Below lecturer (Level A)	45.1	54.9	100.00	8 286
Non-academic classifications	34.4	65.6	100.00	61 199
All classifications	44.1	55.9	100.00	109 524
Source: DEEWR Selected Higher Education Statistics, Staff Numbers, 2011.				

In conversation with Tony Gould, a Professor of Music at Monash University, he acknowledged, and bemoaned the fact, that women at the top of the academic tree in that faculty, were scarce.

BOARD REPRESENTATION

Table 6 shows that the situation for women in terms of representation on boards has not changed markedly from the 1980's. Whilst every board but one, now does have female representation, the figures indicate that women still have a lesser role in the decision making processes of many of the mainstream arts organisations, than do their male counterparts. Of the 26 organisations listed below, only 5 have gender balance and just two have a majority of women board members. Only 3 of the 26 have female chairs.

Table 8: Current Board Membership of a Selection of Australian Arts Organisations

	Total	Females	Males	Chair
Adelaide Symphony Orchestra	10	0	10	M
Australian Chamber Orchestra	15	6	9	M
Australian Brandenburg Orchestra	14	5	9	M
Australian Ballet	11	5	6	M
Bangarra Dance Theatre	10	5	5	M
Bell Shakespeare Company	13	6	7	F
Black Swan Theatre Company	9	4	5	M
Canberra Symphony Orchestra	9	3	6	M
Company B Belvoir	10	4	6	M
Griffin Theatre Company	10	5	5	M
Malthouse Theatre	12	6	6	F
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra	10	2	8	M
Melbourne Theatre Company	14	6	8	M
Music Victoria	10	5	5	M
Musica Viva	10	6	4	M
Opera Australia	10	5	5	M
Queensland Symphony Orchestra	8	1	7	M
Queensland Theatre Company	7	3	4	M
State Theatre Company SA	8	5	3	M
Sydney Symphony Orchestra	11	3	8	M
Sydney Theatre Company	13	3	10	M
Sydney Dance Company	11	5	6	M
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra	9	2	7	M
WA Symphony Orchestra	8	2	6	F
WA Ballet Company	9	2	7	M
WA Opera	8	3	5	M

Source: Data taken from their websites in February 2016

As an addition to these figures on board memberships, it is noteworthy that the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra have women in the role of Concertmaster. The Perth Symphony Orchestra, Western Australia's newest orchestra formed in 2011, is something of a ground breaker in Australia, as its founder and CEO is female, as is half the board and they have appointed a young Australian woman, Jessica Gethin as their conductor. In addition she has also won the 2015 Brian Stacey Emerging Conductor Award becoming only the fourth woman to have won the award which was established in 2002.

The Queensland Symphony Orchestra has appointed a woman to become their chief conductor later this year. Australia's Simone Young has been spectacularly successful in working as a conductor and Director of Music in Hamburg, Germany and has made frequent guest conductor appearances with the major symphony orchestras of Australia. Similarly, the Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Australian Ballet is a woman, Nicolette Fraillon, a position she has held since 2003 but she and her female counterparts are still a rare thing to find amongst the orchestras and musical companies of Australia.

The major symphony orchestras all currently, have close to gender balance in their composition and discrimination seems to be absent in both the selection process and the workplace.

Wilma Smith, a former Concertmaster of the MSO, says:

*"From my perspective, women have been doing very well at getting jobs in orchestras for at least a generation or 2. I have personally never felt any discrimination with respect to getting work. There are still some instruments which are largely a male domain eg trombone, tuba but even there, there are some women making inroads."*⁶



"The Victorian Music Council was established in June 2011 to advise Music Victoria on any issues affecting artists and the wider music community." It is comprised of, "...leaders of the Victorian music industry who have been chosen for their skills and experience as artists, or their senior roles in peak bodies and music companies across different genres."

Of these 'leaders' 51 are men and 12 are women.

The 10 member board itself comprises 5 men and 5 women, (a vast advance on 2014/15) and is chaired by a man.

Source: Victorian Music Council website:
www.musicvictoria.com.au 2016

Only 6 female fronted outfits made their way into triple-J's Hottest 100 of the last 20 years, held in 2013 and female singers/groups/musicians made up at best, approximately one third of the triple-J playlist.

Source: Justine Hyde, Triple j's Hottest 100: Where are the Women? June 11, 2013
www.womensagenda.com.au

COMMENTS BY WOMEN ON WORKING IN THE AUSTRALIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY:

"After years of working in the music industry as a photographer and writer, holding solo exhibitions and having my work published and commissioned, I still get referred to as a groupie. The men who have less experience, however, get called by their professional titles."

"I was backstage at a gig and a completely wasted venue rep asked me which of the band member's girlfriend's I was, then asked if I was a groupie. I was backstage because I worked in the band's management."

"For years, despite my experience and time in the industry, I was rarely, (if ever), invited to speak on panels at industry events until my male boss started actively suggesting me in place of him or alongside of him. My contemporaries – all male – were consistently reached out to, and while I don't think it was intentional, it was a reality. For some time I had no female contemporaries."

These and more can be read at:<http://junkee.com/discrimination-assault-and-everyday-sexism-women-talk-about-working-in-australian-music5/69186#u24GLsYetgXfGPZh.99>



WOMEN IN THEATRE

This report of 2012, by Associate Professor Elaine Lally and Professor Sarah Miller, shows that women taking leadership roles in theatre productions over past decades has ebbed and flowed, and whilst there was progress in some years, the current position seems to be that women are once again losing ground in terms of numbers in leadership roles in theatres. Whilst it seems that there is gender balance on the boards of all companies and many of the boards of Theatre Key Organisations are chaired by women, only one Major Performing Arts company is currently chaired by a woman. But the report stated somewhat despairingly that, "many of the issues they raised are frustratingly similar to those canvassed in the 1980s & 1990s research, policy and strategy".

Various factors are pointed to as an explanation for women still not accessing creative leadership opportunities in anything approaching that of men. These factors include the selection process, the autonomous role of the director, the precarious nature of the work in terms of career stability and the perennial issues of career progression for women as they juggle motherhood, childcare and domestic responsibilities, with those of a demanding career.

One bright spot was that there had been an increase in the number of women applying for and receiving grants in the arts, which are now almost equal to the amount asked for by male applicants. However, works for theatre written by women and acting roles for women are still fewer than those for men. Also, the works written and produced and acted in by women are often shorter pieces and not the higher profile 'meaty' roles. It also seems that some shift in public attitudes has occurred as, when the issue of inequality is brought to public attention it provokes a critical response and calls for action. Sadly, the action and improvement that occurs has so far not been permanent suggesting that the long held attitudes regarding women in leadership, still hold sway and a return to the 'status quo' soon occurs.⁷

TELEVISION AND FILM

Despite many recent improvements, television programs and films are still predominately male-centric. Despite movie goers being 50/50 female and male, females are not only largely missing from popular media but when they are on screen, they frequently seem to be there merely for decoration - not to engage in meaningful or prestigious employment. Men are predominately the 'doers' women are too often, the passive decoration. This has worrying implications for how both males and females see their roles in society. Movie going young people, who are repeatedly exposed to portrayals of women as sexual and men as violent, undoubtedly internalise these portrayals. The Geena Davis mantra of, 'If you can see it you can be it,' is an important one to consider and the Geena Davis Institute Report on Gender in Media and The Status of Women in the US Media, 2013 explores this and the question and ramifications, of, Who Narrates the World? Some of their research facts are that:

- Males outnumber females 3 to 1 in family films. In contrast, females comprise just over 50% of the population in the U.S (and Australia). Even more staggering is the fact that this ratio for films is the same as it was in 1946.
- Females are almost 4 times as likely as males to be shown in sexy attire.
- From 2006 to 2009, not one female character was depicted in G-rated family films in the field of medical science, as a business leader, in law, or politics. In these films, 80.55% of all working characters are male and 19.5% are female, which is a contrast to real world statistics, where women comprise 50% of the workforce.
- Females are also under-represented behind the camera. Across 1655 content creators, only 7% of directors, 13% of writers and 20% of producers are female. This translates to 4.8 males working behind the scenes to every one female.⁸

Whilst these figures are American in origin, the saturation of our film and television screens with American content, makes them more than pertinent to Australia and to this discussion.

According to the Women's Media Center Report 2013, (USA), "...there is stubborn gender inequality in how women are employed and represented in news, entertainment and technology related media. At its current pace it will take until 2085 for women to reach parity with men in leadership roles in govt/politics, business, entrepreneurship and non-profits." There is little reason to think that the situation is any different in Australia.⁹

An informal assessment of UK and some of the Scandinavian countries' TV programs seems to suggest that they are doing better than Australia and the U.S at featuring strong, leading roles for women and that these roles often show women to be in charge, successful and smart. A personal perception however, is that they also focus attention on women's domestic life & family issues, rather more than do programs featuring men in comparable positions.

One heartening development has been the announcement, reported in *The Australian*, November 18, 2015, that Screen NSW has become the first Australian screen institution to introduce a target for gender equity in its funded programs. The report goes on to say that, "...the body aims to achieve an average 50-50 gender equity in its development and production funding programs by 2020". This follows the Australian Directors Guild Women in Film Action Committee's call for federal body, Screen Australia to introduce a 50% quota for women in their film funding programs to right a gender imbalance for female directors. Interestingly, this announcement coincided with the Jocelyn Moorhouse film, *The Dressmaker*, with its box office of \$11.6m, becoming second only to *Mad Max: Fury Road* amongst all Australian films.

This initiative has been followed by an announcement, (reported in *The Australian* on December 8, 2015), by Screen Australia that they would launch, "...a \$5 million program, Gender Matters, that aims to achieve at least equal representation by women in funded feature productions by 2018". Such targets need to be approached and applied with caution given that they can lead to resentment, accusations that positions are not filled on merit and the need to avoid creating a parallel industry of women only rather than one in which talented women and men work together. Despite this, there is a case for some 'positive discrimination' to redress the current imbalance.

LITERATURE

In the world of literature, there is a bias as to who gets reviewed and by whom. The majority of book reviewers are men and the novels they review are written by men. Eleanor Catton, winner of the 2013 Booker Prize is reported as saying, *"I have observed that male writers tend to get asked what they think and women what they feel. In my experience and that of a lot of other women writers, all of the questions coming at them from interviewers tend to be how lucky they are to be where they are – about luck and identity and how the idea struck them. The interviewers much more seldom engage with the woman as a serious thinker, a philosopher, as a person with preoccupations that are going to sustain them for their lifetime."*

We still live in a culture where it is necessary to launch the Stella Prize for, "...*excellent, original and engaging*", books by Australian women to rectify a male dominance of awards, media and cultural attitudes. Alexis Wright, who won the Miles Franklin Literary Award for her novel, *Carpentaria* says, *"It is difficult for any writer, but particularly for women"*.

In her article in theage.com.au of October 2013, Emma Young comments that, *"There's almost an unconscious bias that sees novels written by women tending to be read and marketed as genre fiction and novels for women, whereas novels by men, (particularly white men) are still more likely to be seen as just novels"*. As in film and television, many novels, (apart from many written by women), feature fewer women as strong protagonists.¹⁰

VISUAL ARTS

CoUNTess, a blog that presents data and reviews on gender representation in the Australian contemporary visual art world offers some thought provoking information and statistics.

It reported that of 19 major art prizes Australia wide in 2013, 8 were won by women and 11 by men. This in itself is not a huge disparity but, of the 700 finalists exhibited in those 19 prizes, 290 were women and 410 were men. This suggests two possibilities, simply more male works were selected from an equal pool or secondly and more likely, fewer works by women were submitted. This more likely scenario takes us back to the suggestion that fewer women are working as artists and the reasons for this may well be similar to those discussed in the 1983 report on women art workers; that they were unable to devote as much time to their art work due to a range of other domestic responsibilities or because their work is not commissioned, promoted or earning them as much as their male counterparts.

CoUNTess also reported on the 2014 Biennale of Sydney which was curated by Julianna Engberg and included 38 female artists, 45 male artists and 10 collaborations. This was a steep improvement over previous years. On the downside however, CoUNTess expressed concern about what it perceived as gender bias in the media and marketing around the exhibition/event. The resources prepared for schools, the video interviews with artists and their catalogue cover, were all male-centric. This has the unfortunate effect of perpetuating the idea in the minds of the public and in students in schools, (particularly girls), that this is a male domain. An echo of the representation of women in film and television reported on by the Geena Davis Institute.

CoUNTess presented the fact that twice as many female artists graduate from our art schools as do male artists. The Blog goes on to say that, *"Of the total number of Visual Arts Graduates in 2011, 65% were female and 35% were male"*. Yet in the same year CoUNTess reported, that of the artists exhibited in selected Contemporary Arts Organisation, (CAOS), galleries across Australia, 56% were male, 39% were female and the remaining 5% were collaborations. CoUNTess concludes that, *"...a third of artists exhibiting in CAOS galleries for example are women, yet women make up two thirds of art school graduates. That means that a female graduate has a much less chance of getting recognition and remuneration than a male graduate"*.

That particular blog, (June 26, 2014), concluded by saying, “CoUNTess numbers have consistently shown that women artists make up 60-65% of the artist population, yet get 33-40% of the pie, while male artists who make up 33-40% of the artist population get 60-65% of the pie”.¹¹

BRIGHT SPOTS

Despite the preceding, somewhat gloomy numbers, women, of course, are to be found having successes in many arts fields and at the top end of many arts organisations. For instance, Mary Vallentine is the Chief Executive Officer of the Melbourne Recital Centre, Helenka King is the Victorian State Manager of Musica Viva, which is administered by women with an artistic team headed by a woman. Professor Su Baker is the Director of the Victorian College of the Arts, Sarah Neal is a co-Ceo of the Malthouse Theatre, Lisa Dempster is the CEO of the Melbourne Writer's Festival where she heads up a predominately female team, Sophie Galaise has moved from Managing Director of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra to that role at the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, making her still the only female CEO of a major Australian symphony orchestra. In addition, Louise Denson lecturer in Jazz at Griffith University, Dr Sally Macarthur from the University of Western Sydney, Dr Jane Gilmour at Melbourne University, Professors Anne Boyd, Anna Reid, Linda Barwick, Associate Professor Kathleen Nelson and Dr Rowena Cowley at the Sydney Conservatorium, Associate Professor Elizabeth Koch and Dr Jennifer Rosevear at the Adelaide Conservatorium, Professor Julie Warn at the WAAPA and many, many others, occupy prestigious arts related academic positions.

Another bright spot, reported in The Australian, November 27, 2015, is that, “*The long overlooked market for early works by women artists is surging as the nation's auction houses hold their final round of sales for the year*”. The co-managing director of auction house Deutscher and Hackett, Damian Hackett said, “Women artists are coming into favour. I think the market is seeing value and quality in certain women who have been overlooked.” Despite this surge, prices for the women's works still have a long way to go to be on a par with those of works of equivalent male artists. It also remains to be seen whether this interest in early works by women artists will result in a greater interest in works by current women artists

Whilst not yet gaining equal representation with men in most organisations, women are getting seats on boards across the country. There are many more examples around the country of dynamic and successful women operating very effectively in top positions. But the fact remains that the academic and arts worlds are still male dominated and that very, very few of the very top jobs are held by women.

COMPOSING IN AUSTRALIA

Returning to our starting point, it is worth looking at the situation for female composers in some depth as, in many ways their circumstances are a reflection of the position of women in the arts more generally.

The composer population of Australia is a tiny 1.45% of the total work population and of that total, women currently seem to be between 25-29% as opposed to men who comprise 75-79%. But, whilst recognising that fewer women study composition than men and fewer women then become composers, when it comes to their work being commissioned and played, that percentage is not maintained. The expectation would be that of the works commissioned and performed of contemporary Australian composers, 25-29% of these works would be by women, but the reality is that the percentage of music commissioned and performed that is composed by women, is around 12% of the total and that this percentage is possibly the work of a handful of composers such as Elena Kats-Chernin, whose work is currently featuring with various symphony orchestras.

It must be acknowledged of course that it is quite difficult for any contemporary Australian composer to have their work played by the major orchestras given that programming tends to favour the, ‘dead white males,’ that will sell seats, so premieres of any music are limited, but of those available commissions, men seem to get a greater percentage. (For instance, in my time of subscribing to the ACO and the MSO, not one of its premiered works has been by a woman.)

Gemma Turvey, the young Melbourne based composer/pianist, said that life as a composer is hard in Australia either way, be you male or female and that is undoubtedly true. She has produced a number of recordings of her music. However, she did point out with wry humour, that often when she arrives to perform and/or record her music with musicians she has hired, that the assumption is made that she must be the singer, not the leader of the group nor the creator of the music. Despite her hard work, exposure and recordings however, she is still not making a full-time equivalent living out of her music, but that can be true for both sexes in the arts.¹²

A variety of reasons have been suggested for the low percentage of women's compositions being played. They include:

- Simply the lower number of women composers and therefore less work available to be selected. This of course, begs the question of why women do not enter the field of composition in the same numbers as men. Is this because of traditional gender stereotyping where girls grow up with the belief that composers are male or are females just not as interested in composing as males? Further to the above, the lack of equal numbers of women in teaching roles in universities and as professors in composing, perhaps perpetuates the perception that composing is for men. (See the table on Higher Education Staff)
- It also seems to be the case that the majority of works written by women are shorter than those written by men which has programming repercussions.
- A lack of familiarity by the public audience, with women's composition and therefore, an inclination to stick with the known.
- Linked to the above, it has been suggested that there exists an assumption that music written by women is of a lower quality than music by men. Associate Professor Stuart Greenbaum, Head of Composition at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, makes the interesting point that, at the undergraduate level, "...the boys tend to have more technical prowess, ...but... the girls tend to exhibit artistic 'taste' or 'maturity' more quickly than the boys." He goes on to say, "Some people say that women write different music-but I'm not sure. This might be the case but it doesn't seem obvious to me."¹³ Professor Anne Boyd from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music says that, "...quality results from a combination of imagination and appropriate technique- but the imaginative IDEA is what is most significant." She goes on to say, "Originality is not gender specific. But the original women's musical voice will have more difficulty in getting a hearing. Personality and entrepreneurship are the stuff of 'successful' commissioned compositional careers. Men still hold many of the cards in that they are more likely to produce grand works of a quality to justify the expense of performing them. This is gender prejudice. I think it is slowly waning. I hope so for the sake of the next generation of women composers."¹⁴
- The decision makers and gate-keepers, are mainly men, they make the programming decisions in most of the Australian orchestras and in many of the musical festivals.

In an article entitled Secret Agendas in Orchestral Programming, and focused on Europe, Patricia Adkins Chiti, tackles the issue of "quality" in compositions by women. She suggests that one way to restrict women's compositions is to dismiss them on the grounds of quality. She says that when a woman is never considered for promotion, commissions, career progress, performances, programming, "one hears that a woman would have been invited if they had had the same qualities as a man." She goes on to say,

"There are still barriers, hurdles, gates and moats to be passed through and across and the gate-keepers are above all men who still talk about 'quality' and not about the wheels behind the scenes that help them to make and take their decisions: the old boy's network, party politics, investments from publishers and record companies, particular friendships including sexual discrimination. A well known English composer told me that she had personally heard some powerful 'movers' and 'shakers' in the music world express the opinion that women are incapable of being good composers."¹⁵

(This view of women and their abilities is not just limited to the world of the arts of course. Here in Australia, Annabel Crabb commented on then Prime Minister Abbott's, "merit" claim in relation to his inability to find enough women of 'merit' to fill his governments' cabinet positions. She says: "that's just how it panned out," is the traditionalist's defence of organisations that proudly appoint "only on merit" and find, time after time, that an astonishingly high proportion of the really excellent people also have willies."¹⁶

Whilst the situation in Australia is more similar to that of America than to Europe and seems to lack much of the entrenched bias of Europe with its much older traditions of male composers and musicians, there are still vestiges of those views to be found here. However, with men being in the majority in terms of positions of power, there is very little push for change. As one male Melbourne academic put it when talking of female composers, *"It's good to be proactive but we also need to accept that the world moves slowly and history cannot be upended overnight."*¹⁵ Yet events in many spheres of life show that history can be upended overnight and that the world is not any longer moving particularly slowly. As Anne Summers argues in, *The Misogyny Factor*, the idea that, *"..we just need to be patient, or more polite or more clever, and things will eventually change,"* does not bring results. *"We have,"* she says, *"clung to that belief for forty years and where has it got us?"*¹⁸

WHERE DO WE STAND AND WHERE TO FROM HERE?

All this data show us that the shifts that have occurred and the gains that have been made by women in the arts in the last 30 years, whilst important, are limited. There is still a substantial gap in earnings, acknowledgement, commissioning, valuing and power between men and women. When we view the world of the arts through the prisms of equality, justice and diversity, we are forced to conclude that despite improvements in treatment and attitudes, the longed for equality has not been realised. So, do we accept the view, 'that the world moves slowly' or do we say that this state of affairs is not acceptable? Are we as a society really content for half its population to have to wait another 30 or 40 years to, perhaps, be on an equal footing with the other half of the population?

The arts world is one that is commonly regarded as being at the forefront of change, of being about breaking through barriers and throwing off the shackles of the past. As a community it leads the way in terms of confronting the ideas we hold and the values we espouse. It is a community that frequently challenges the past and long-held stereotypes through all mediums; theatre, performance, visual art, music, composition, dance, literature, so that we think anew and differently about our world. And yet, women are still not an equal part of that world.

In Australia, we pride ourselves on being about equality, about opportunities for all, about being different from the 'old' world. If that is truly the case, then the world of the arts needs to be questioning and changing many of its attitudes and practices

LOST TALENT

Across the world and across the board, there is a looming talent shortage that is expected to increase in coming decades. In Europe alone, a shortfall of 24 million people is expected by 2040.¹⁹ In Australia in 2010, 39% of men aged 25-34 had tertiary level education compared with 50% of women of that age. In 2010, 79% of tertiary educated women were employed compared with 90% of similarly educated men.

In 2009, Tim Toohey, the Chief Economist at then Goldman Sachs JBWere, wrote a report which stated that closing the gap between male and female employment rates would boost the Australian GDP by 11%.²⁰ In Australia, higher educational attainment does not narrow the gender gap in wages. In 2002 in Australia 56% of tertiary graduates were female, in 2012 60% of graduates were female and this ratio is increasing. Women outnumber men from bachelor degrees to the top doctoral peaks. Women's skills, education and training need to be recognised, rewarded and utilised to ensure that they stay in the workforce for the benefit of all.

There are unrealised benefits of increased gender diversity for women in the arts. A precious resource, namely creative women, is being under-utilised. As reported earlier, female tertiary graduates in arts related courses, outnumber males. Yet we have also seen that in the workforce, the number of men working in the arts outnumbers that of women.

- *Despite some improvement, why are women still so heavily in the minority in positions of creative and policy influence in arts, media and education institutions? (The Workplace Gender Equality Agency, shows that in 2013, across the workforce, fewer than 1 in 10 executives is female.)*
- *Why do so few orchestras have female concertmasters, board members and chairs of boards.*
- *Why do so few orchestras have female conductors?*
- *Why do arts organisations and companies' patterns of purchasing, commissioning, exhibiting & performing work, apparently favour men?*

There is conclusive evidence from a range of studies²¹, that gender diversity on boards and in leadership positions, lead to better financial performance and improved governance. The report concluded that increasing the numbers of women on corporate boards has enormous benefits for a company's economic and emotional health. The Catalyst report found the following:

- ✓ Return on Equity: on average, companies with the highest percentages of women board directors outperformed those with the least by 53%.
- ✓ Return on Sales: on average, companies with the highest percentages of women board directors outperformed those with the least by 42%.
- ✓ Return on Invested Capital: on average, companies with the highest percentages of women board directors outperformed those with the least by 66%.²²

All the long term research makes a strong case for diversity. The clear links that have been made between a company's performance and the number of women serving in its governing body, show that the reasons for this enhanced performance are the leadership styles that women typically adopt.

We have seen that in the world of the arts, boards of management are heavily male centric with predominately male chairs. And yet the evidence is there to demonstrate that companies with higher percentages of women on the boards outperform the others. In a climate of dwindling arts funding surely this competitive edge would be an advantage to arts organisations?

- *Why is it that women are so much in the minority in terms of the top jobs in universities, boards of management, CEO's of companies etc?*
- *Is there reluctance on the part of women to apply for the top positions and, if so, why are women reluctant to take that step?*
- *If that reluctance exists, is that because of the very real gender differences in styles that the research acknowledges, and does that suggest that many women are perhaps not willing to be a minority in that male environment?*

Women's purchasing power is on the increase. Women increasingly have a major influence on purchase decisions and are the predominant driving force behind the majority of household purchases. In Australia women make up 50% of movie going audiences, are in the majority as audiences at musical events from popular music concerts through classical to opera and musicals.²³

According to Claire Braund, the Executive Director of Women on Boards, Economic growth is being driven by the world's women who will have collectively earned \$18 trillion up to 2014. Trends in birth rates show that women who work are the ones having more children, challenging old style government and business policies enabling women to more easily opt out of the workforce.²⁴ So it makes good economic sense to ensure that the women artists of Australia are encouraged to stay in their chosen art field and are positively supported to flourish in it.

- *When will non-traditional childcare come out of the 'too hard basket', to accommodate female art workers with hours of work outside the conventional norms?*
- *If women are at least 50% of the audience/ consumers of the arts, why do they have so little control over its management, so little say in its content and, often, less participation in its making?*

FINALLY

The arts community is a mirror of society generally. The gap in earnings is not only in the arts but also community wide, the imbalance in executive positions is community wide, the participation rates of women in the major decision making bodies and processes are community wide, the beliefs about men's work and its importance versus women's work and its importance, are community wide. If, as Professor Baker of the Victorian College of the Arts contends, that in the arts world there are no barriers to women, that young men are now socialised differently, that impediments are personal and young women have internalised feminism and accept it as the norm, then women working in the arts, should be equal to men in all areas: earnings, power, exposure, commissioning.

It is possible that the arts community could become the driver of change in the wider community. History tells us that the arts are a powerful influence on society. An arts world where women are as equally represented, valued and respected as men, would be a powerful force for change across all of society.



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