

*Women of Influence in Contemporary Music: Nine American Composers* is a collaborative book project, a collection of nine chapters contributed by eight authors about nine prominent, living American composers: Elizabeth R. Austin, Susan Botti, Gabriela Lena Frank, Jennifer Higdon, Libby Larsen, Tania León, Cindy McTee, Marga Richter, and Judith Shatin. The book proffers a series of intriguing and pertinent questions: What exactly *is* the state of American culture concerning women who seek to develop careers as composers? What stories would women tell, who had chosen this path, say, in the early 1950s? What about now? How have things changed over the past fifty years? Are there things that *haven't* changed? And how may such issues be addressed without drawing further, undesired attention to gender differences?

The nine chapters of *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music* seek to reflect the contexts of the shifting societal landscapes in the United States over the last seven decades, as well as different stylistic approaches to writing music. The chapters benefit from the insights of recent cultural studies approaches that contextualize the creative output of composers rather than understanding it as having a source in genius alone. The combination of biographical information, interviews, discussion of compositional style, and analysis of a specific work presents a unique approach to the topic of American women in music. Dialogues between composer and author, which led to each contribution, situate the studies of these composers in the grounded reality of the composer's own experience. It is hoped this approach will complement those found in other essential resources and will be a welcome updating, helping readers find another

path to discovery of important contributions made by American women through its personal approach and clear focus on theoretical and analytical aspects of each composer's style.

*Women of Influence in Contemporary Music* is intended to provide perspective on issues of musical composition from the personal vantage point of the composer; plainly put, this book is about music and the people who create it.