

**Prof. Liza Lim, University of Sydney**

**Luck, Grief, Hospitality – re-routing power relationships in music**

Keynote for ‘Women in the Creative Arts’ conference, ANU, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2017

I would firstly like to acknowledge the First Australians on whose traditional lands we meet. I pay my respects to the Ngunnawal custodians and their elders, as well as to other Indigenous elders and emerging leaders here.

I also want to acknowledge our senior women in Australian music – the composers, performers, organisers – whose work and contribution allows us to build this conversation about gender equality today.

I feel very honoured to be invited to give a keynote and thank Natalie Williams, the conference committee and ANU for creating this space in which we might think together. I’m a great believer in the distributed and ecological nature of thought. I think individual ideas arise in a partnership with a surrounding fabric of ideas. The communities we locate ourselves in are forms of off-board memory, cultural resource and intelligences, of extended brain power and so I see this conference as a way of **strengthening our individual capacities for creativity, thought and action through a strengthening of our communities of creative women.**

As a composer, I make work that connects across very different scales of time and identity so I’m going to take a compositional and intersectional approach in this talk.

My **metabolism** as an artist is shaped by my experiences as a woman in a long lineage of Chinese matriarchs; by being a traveller from a long train of migrants, and by formative experiences growing up in lands colonised by the British, like Australia and Brunei. My compositional practice references Asian and various Indigenous ritual cultures as well as ecological thinking and this talk reflects those interests. Notation for me is a dance partner and improvisation one route to boundary crossing. My short composer cv is: ‘I love noise’

In this talk, when I speak about women and inequality that’s somewhat of a placeholder that also points towards underrepresentation of various groups in a broader sense – whether on the basis of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability.

These are stories about **shifting power**. I’m going to talk about **structural luck**; about **grief as art and politics** and about **hospitality** – the dynamic of belonging and not belonging; of the stranger becoming guest and then host.

## 1. Luck

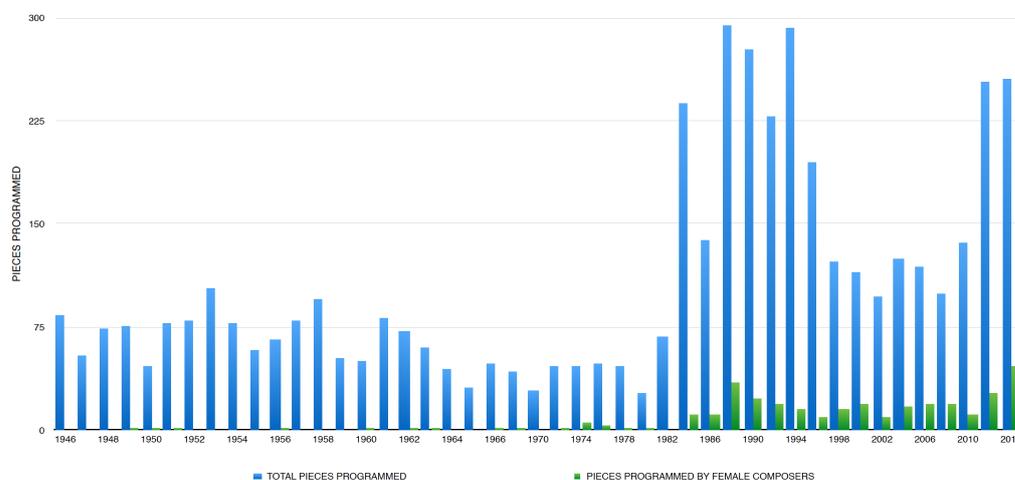
I don't think we should underestimate the **intensity** with which women's work and personhood continues to be devalued, suppressed and marginalised in various ways. These are deeply ingrained societal structures and so my focus is on depersonalised collective power that manifests in personal and individual ways.

I know many here of any gender will have their own stories of Sisyphean situations as composers, but we can also turn to statistics that overwhelmingly show that passion, hard work, persistence and brilliance are not enough for women to arrive at success (by which I mean achievement that is recognised and rewarded). Two powerful studies into gender inequality in music published just last week: Catherine Strong and Fabian Cannizzo's report for APRA AMCOS and the University of Sydney's 'Skipping a beat' co-authored by Rae Cooper, Amanda Coles and Sally Hanna-Osborne, illustrate in painful detail the **enormous attrition rate** occurring for women in music. The 50:50 gender split we see at Year 12 and at the beginning of tertiary studies dwindles to a participation rate for women of about 20-25% in the music profession with the screen music industry and areas of composition showing figures that are even lower.

Sexism is structural in our society and as a corollary, so is the magic ingredient that allows an artistic practice to thrive – what we call 'luck'. **Sexism also structures luck**. Rather than being a random, chance element, I want to uncloak what structural luck looks like and give some examples of how I and others have navigated this and then offer suggestions for how we can reroute these structures.

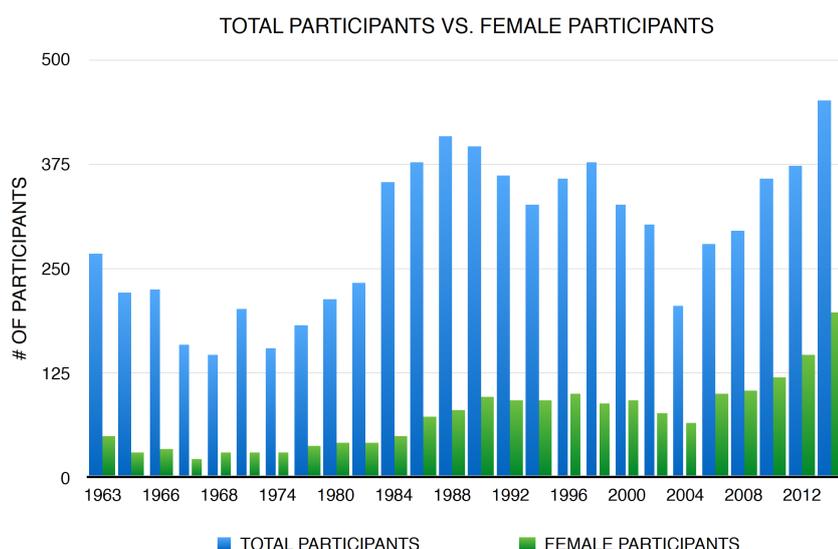
One of the most personally affecting of recent research on women's exclusion in music is the damning set of figures from the 2016 Gender Relations in New Music study (led by Ashley Fure) looking at the 70 years of the Darmstadt Summer School where I taught in both 1998 and 2010.

Ex.1 chart shows relative numbers of male and female composers' works performed (1946-2014)



The statistics show a persistent ceiling of 13-14% in the inclusion of women as composers (in the years when they were performed at all!). This is no matter what the total number of composers is and whether there are 50 or 300 works being performed. The best it gets to is a figure of 19% that is from 2014 (the last year of the data represented).

Ex. 2 Numbers of women as participants (composers and performers) over 50 years, 1963-2014 compared to total participants



The second diagram shows the number of women as participants (performers and composers) against total participants. It averages about 20% for 40 years (that’s looking at it generously) with a trend upwards in the last few years to 40%. The trending rise in the last 10 years is not really matched by the programming figures which as I said remains below the 20% mark. In 1974 Moya Henderson won Darmstadt’s Kranichstein prize in composition – one of the most prestigious of composition prizes in Europe. Moya was the second woman to do so and the only Australian. [Carl Rosman & Phoebe Green are Australians who have won this prize in performance]. In the history of the festival, women have been awarded 18% of the prizes and men 82%.

I’ll add a personal example about the loneliness of women composers’ low representation in music: there have been less than a handful of concerts where my music has been programmed solely with women – a concert in Vanessa Tomlinson’s ‘Amazing Women’ series back in the early 2000s; one earlier this year with Ensemble Offspring (that programme was played twice) and the other is in a few days’ time in New York with ICE playing work by me, Anna Thorvaldsdottir and Pauline Oliveros. When you think about a 30-year career, that’s kind of weird.

What distresses me more than the raw low figures is how across the time-span (the Darmstadt figures are important because they span 70 years), we see compelling evidence of the **difficulty of building on any gains** beyond those low figures from year to year.

All the studies show a continuing and gaping **deficit of space** for women in the music industry. One of the things that the social economist Pierre-Michel Menger talks about in his book *The Economics of Creativity* (2014) is how in the creative arts, relatively small gains at the beginning of a career—of opportunity, of exposure, of association—are massively amplified into benefits and so-called lucky breaks as one continues. The gendering of access and inclusion in the music business means that women overall make fewer such gains and tend to have less structural luck.

When I look at my own career as a composer, I see that many of my early musical associations are **still in play**. For instance, my closest collaborators are musicians I've known since I was at high school: fellow student Deborah Kayser for whom I've written 3 operas and Peter Neville, a founding member of ELISION, who has been involved in at least 20 projects of mine starting with a high school piece called 'Lullaby' for tuba and marimba.

I see that the space that I was given as a 13 year old by my high school music teacher, Ros McMillan, to write for orchestra has continuing impact 40 years later. After two early pieces for school orchestra (one of them called 'Brain Salad Surgery'), I took part in the 1986 Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra's Composers school, which I'm glad to say is still running. Counting these early efforts, I've written 11 works for orchestra. I really hit my stride with orchestral writing at the 8<sup>th</sup> work in, with 'Flying Banner (after Wang To)'. This was the second work that I wrote as composer in residence with the Sydney Symphony in 2005 and this is after earlier commissions from the BBC Symphony, WDR Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic. 'Flying Banner' has been played by other Australian orchestras, by the BBCSO, the Zurich Tonhalle, by RAI Nationale Orchestra at the Venice Biennale, at Tokyo City Opera, it's been played by college orchestras in the States and continues to be performed at a fairly steady rate a couple of times a year – next up is Shanghai and Boston. I tell this story as an example of how there's a **feedback mechanism around opportunity** where it's only after some time that things reinforce themselves and start to create more luck, more success and so on.

But for this luck mechanism to kick in where your work gains momentum from being interwoven with other people's artistic lives, with institutions and therefore with ongoing opportunities, it requires that you're given a go in the first place. It requires multiple opportunities to try things out, to practice, to fail, to partly succeed, and to keep trying. It requires a trust in the future. When we talk about the urgent need to create space for women in music, we're also talking about long-term impacts on what our culture will be like all the way into the future. If we envision a culturally vibrant future it's absolutely imperative that we make space for and invest in a diversity of artists right now.

It's something I think about when I'm meeting students or teaching a class or running a workshop for high school students as I did for Speak Percussion's 'Sounds Unheard' school holiday programme (led by Kaylie Meville). Looking at that group of talented 13-17 year olds I thought: these young women and men will be the composers and performers that will shape our music and our cultural scene later; they'll be the artists, organisers, festival directors, teachers, heads of department and our funders (!)

Luck gifts energy, it gifts the power of ease (another word for this is ‘privilege’). Rather than seeing luck as random fortune, we can be much more conscious of how this power arrives. What cultural positions are at play and entangled with it? How is cultural value produced and reinforced—by and for whom? Who and what is included or excluded? By seeing luck in a systemic way, we can begin to act to shift how it works and impacts on us.

**Power is relational** – it grows between people, ideas and things and it is produced and reinforced by the stories we tell ourselves and tell each other.

## 2. Grief

If the story of luck is about a **politics of distribution**, this story is one of a **politics of recognition**. This is a story about grief, specifically in Yolgnu women’s culture, but I think there are resonances here that tell us important things about how the things women do, are or might be perceived and categorised, and how they therefore may or may not accrue value.

Back in 2005 I was invited to curate a twilight concert series for the Adelaide Festival and I heard about an Aboriginal women’s tradition of singing the light on to the land at dawn and off the land at sunset. After following various avenues of research, I finally discovered a rather **hidden tradition** where the Yolgnu in North Eastern Arnhem land have clan ownership of the light, and the women in particular bring in the light and also guide deceased souls in the departing light, by performing grieving songs. These intense crying songs, tears and wailing mixed with song, play an important role in funerary rituals and are also part of the life-giving rituals of affirmation that are performed at funerals.

When I tried to find out more from Aboriginal musicians that I knew – they all happened to be men – everyone told me that ‘the women don’t have any music’. This was in relation to a more traditional ceremonial context rather than the pop music world but I was really taken aback by this statement. Women’s ceremony has long been documented. In the 1940s the anthropologist Catherine Berndt discussed women’s song cultures in North Eastern Arnhem land, including crying songs. Work on Indigenous women’s music has been published by younger generations of researchers such as Elizabeth MacKinley, Fiona MacGowan, Myfany Turpin and others.

But of course I was asking the wrong people and asking the **wrong kind of question**. One important reason for that response (‘the women don’t have any music’) might be that as an Aboriginal man, one would not presume to talk about women’s business even if one knows something about it. As anywhere, open secrets may also be unspeakable. Another might be that the cultural activity of women which involves sound might not be seen as ‘music’ because it doesn’t occupy the same kind of public performance space that men’s music does. [Dr G Yunupingu who sadly just passed away in fact celebrates this tradition of women crying at sunset in his famous song ‘Bapa’ – and they have been singing for him up at Garma in the past week]

But let me tell you what the Yolgnu women of the Gumatj clan decided to do with the invitation to perform their music at the 2006 Adelaide Festival. The Grant Pirrie Gallery in Sydney who have a long-standing relationship with the famous Buku Larnngay Arts Centre organised for me to meet the senior women in Yirrkala but as it happened, the senior custodian of the songs passed away and so I visited Dhanaya to attend her funeral. Because of their hospitality I was able to hear their powerful, mournful and heart-wrenching crying songs at dusk in the bush. In 2006, one year after the funeral, a group of women led by the senior artist Mrs [G] Yunupingu sang these songs and showed video of their sister on a stage next to the Torrens River in Adelaide.

Not only was this the first major public performance of the songs but they **broke with cultural protocol** to name their sister and show images of her thereby asserting their political right to control information that would traditionally remain veiled. This was an important signal for the community and after this time, these women's songs were more regularly used at welcome ceremonies at gallery openings and made visible in an art context. I want to stress that this was very much a power shift for these women **on their own terms**, in a specific social context where it mattered for the women.

Ex 3 Here is a short excerpt from the 2006 Adelaide concert. I play this to you with the recent permission of the Yunupingu family and community at Yirrkala and they've asked me to announce that the recording does include the voices of members of the community who have passed on.

The women's power in this instance lies, I would say, on the construction and assertion of **rights of permission-giving and permission-taking** within a specific cultural system. Grief is both emotionally private and also performed publicly and understood in highly codified ways in the Yolgnu community and, in the instance of the Adelaide Festival performance, was put to work for multiple purposes reaching into and radiating out from a specific cultural context.

The Yolgnu are famous for initiating the 1963 Yirrkala bark petitions that sought recognition from the Australian government of traditional ownership of Indigenous land, and in the same year, their artists created the Yirrkala church panels that asserted title deeds to the land. More recently the negotiation of a Native Title Claim over sea rights involving, again, paintings made by 47 male and female artists as evidence of title deeds (the case was finally successful in 2008), shows the community's exquisitely **strategic** use of art for political leverage. I see the women's use of their cultural rights around grief work in order to assert power inside and outside their community, very much in this light.

Rather than laboured comparisons to women's work in other areas, though I think we can find many, I'm going to leave this a bit 'up in the air' as an example that I hope has resonance for the topic of gender and power. Of particular interest to me, related to the idea of women's work, is thinking about the power to be found in the act of **crossing over between private and public spheres** – particularly seen here as a **collective** rather than an individual act. There's the potential status shift to be found by repurposing what is seen as women's work, from hidden activity to art making – that is, acting to **change the code** (something I think that can also be seen clearly in many feminist projects in the visual arts). Finally there is the power of linking the personal and the cosmic – tears and light – grief and the ancestral domain – presence and absence and **spiritual power**.

### 3. Hospitality

And what about this 'woman artist', 'women composer' label... it is one that is easy to reach for, but historically and in our present (though I sense it's changing), it can mean that one is outside of, is a stranger to systems of access, respect, rights, responsibilities and power. This is a social label for something that is different for each composing woman; different as felt from the inside, from the **zoomed-in view**. That's the inside where you have a name... where you don't represent a whole gender but inhabit your own subjectivity... where you're an independent spirit with very particular ways of being, knowing and creating in music.

I'll tell you an origin story – this is about **relational politics**. My lived experience and a large part of my psychological make-up comes from feeling that I come from and inhabit several worlds; that I slip between different cultural skins some of which are more ill-fitting than others and that I also construct hybrid versions of them as a survival mechanism. It's no accident that my artistic practice has an **anthropological orientation** - the ethnographic view that is afforded by being a stranger or more positively, of being a guest, is something the feminist theorist Sara Ahmed has written about in her book *On Being Included* (2012).

I experience an existential in-betweenness that comes from having grown up between several cultures in Brunei and Australia, both places very much formed by British colonial rule. Brunei is a place where people speak a hotchpotch of languages, moving between them to find words that fit a situation: English, 2 or 3 Chinese dialects, Malay and perhaps Tamil. When I was a child there, Islamic, Christian, Buddhist and Indigenous animistic beliefs all had a place with their customs, festivities and social codes. Having to translate between languages and learn cultural dialects 'on the run' has imprinted on who I am in a positive way.

That kind of fluidity of identity formation was further complicated in the Australia I grew up in through the Fraser-Hawke-Keating years and then later, living in Brisbane during the first era of Pauline Hansen's One Nation. My experience of the political ethic of multiculturalism has been of a **pluralism emptied of power** within a political container of nationalism that is basically exclusionary – in Australia's national imaginary, multiculturalism still doesn't extend very far beyond having more restaurant choices.

So much for self-made and for externally imposed myths of identity...

Where is 'home'?

Home for me is an intersectional vastness, it has uncertainties but also immediacy. That's the hyper-reality of estrangement, the more real than real feeling that kicks in when you're in strange places – think of jetlag! Usefully, for a creative life, that alertness and sense of the weirdness of things brings many highly specific sensations and particularities of meaning, articulation, emotion and gestures. As a stranger, one gains new ears and eyes! In this space my senses are sharpened and for me, this is where the world of the stranger can also become the world of the guest.

I find when travelling to a place where I don't know the language or the social codes, that I switch my attention to the semantics of inflection and intonation, the semantics of time and space, of micro-gestures and micro-timing. This is a very musical way of receiving information: my compositional antenna notices the hesitations, pauses, the little softenings or perhaps tensions that are part of the rhythmic enactment of thinking and feeling processes. As I notice, as I listen, **I tune in**; I am linked to whatever I pay attention to. There is vulnerability in that co-existence. I stop being outside the culture and am drawn into it. I become implicated in it. I am learning and being transformed by the experience.

So I'm talking about life experience and I'm also talking about aesthetics and ultimately also about politics – the ways in which we belong and don't belong. The heightened experiences brought by de-familiarisation that I describe really highlight how making sense of life *is* aesthetics.

A recent project of mine looks at the work of a composer who was a 'guest' who became a 'host'. Walter Smetak (1913-1984) Swiss born 'cellist-conductor-composer' migrated to Brazil in 1937, and became a highly influential figure in the counter-cultural Tropicalia pop & experimental-music movement inspiring figures like Gilberto Gil, Tom Zé, Caetano Veloso and Tuzé de Abreu.

Somewhat like American composer Harry Partch, Smetak created his own world of tuning, performance practice and philosophy of music through invented instruments - *plásticas sonoras* – sculptural instruments used in improvisational pieces and collective performances with graphic scores and electronics. These sounding sculptures are now held in the Museum Solar Ferrao.

Ex. 4 pics of instruments...

Smetak visited Berlin as a guest of the DAAD in the 70s, and the DAAD with Ensemble Modern and many other cultural partners in 2016 & 17, set up a multi-faceted project called 'Re-inventing Smetak' with numerous concerts, films, conferences and workshops in Germany and Brazil. As a former guest of the DAAD myself, I was invited to reflect on this body of work. The history of the DAAD itself is an incredible **sedimentation of the structural luck** I talked about: Smetak's residency in Berlin in the 70s, which resulted in the presence of his scores and writings in the DAAD archive, later ripens into a huge manifestation of attention for his work 40 years later. My own association with the organization as a resident artist back in 2007 is given new resonance 10 years later when they commissioned me to write a work for the project.

The piece I made, 'Ronda – The Spinning World', is a tuning in to the sounds and sensations of Smetak's work and of Salvador da Bahia as a city where one is continuously sound-tracked by singing and drumming. There, one experiences sound not as something confined to formal or frontal presentation formats but exploding out into the streets in a dynamic, morphing, intricate circulation of things. There one finds the sounds of berimbau, drums and singing in capoeira (the Afro-Brazilian martial arts form) played in the squares and parks; processions of percussionists practice their rhythms and moves in the narrow streets; sound pours out through gigantic speaker systems strapped onto passing cars; and then in more secret spaces, there are the sounds of the intense circles of dancing and singing of Candomblé rituals.

Ex. 5 capoeira in the street

Ex. 6 percussion group in the streets of Salvador da Bahia

Ex. 7 Candomblé ritual (the Gods come down as cowboys)

I was fascinated by this Brazilian aesthetics of sound and of listening that is a consequence of the myriad social forms that thrive in a city. In my piece, I work with this aesthetics of spatial circulating attention intersecting with the spatial dynamic of concert presentations. There is the disciplinary power of a frontal, conductor-led arrangement but also another power dynamic in action, where musicians are moving around the space in dialogue and in playful improvisatory combat (like in capoeira). In the piece I interpret the experiences of my guest-hood in the city. This is not just metaphor as a picture, of making something 'about' something else but a **tuning in** and **performance along with** (Ingold, 2013) and a **hosting** of all I have encountered.

Ex. 8 'Re-inventing Smetak' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyfW6buIDck>

Here's a video collage of the 'Re-inventing Smetak' project with both my work and 3 Brazilian composers who were involved (Daniel Moreira, Arthur Kampela, Paulo Rios Fihlo). It gives you a snapshot not just of the musical works made in response to the brief but a number of communities of practice – the highly funded expert musicians of Ensemble Modern, the DAAD Berlin's curatorial depth who draw upon their archives to frame the project, the engagement with key musical associates of Smetak and his family in Brazil, a sense of time and place in Salvador da Bahia and time and place in Berlin. In other words, an extended, distributed conversation.

## Re-routing power relationships

As I said before, **power is relational** – it grows between people, ideas and things, It is produced wherever one places one's energy and attention. Hannah Arendt says that freedom doesn't come from the individual but arises, 'as a relation *between* us, or, indeed, among us' (quoted in Berbec, 2016). The politics of distribution, of recognition and relationality is co-produced by communities.

At a basic level - whatever we give our attention to is amplified and when it comes to creating space for women, that means paying attention to everything – everything is interlinked: curatorial choices, support structures, funding, physical spaces, what we discuss and write about, what we give time to, who we reference and how we refer to things. As Sara Ahmed says, 'systems of exclusion and inequality around categories are **not autonomous but are entwined** with all kinds of social-psychological ideologies and percolate through things.' (2012)

Like the Yolgnu women, out of attention and attunement, we can take a strategic position:

- 1/ we can take space (intervention)
- 2/ we can change the terms of representation – break the rules, change the code
- 3/ through a combination of both rigour and emotion, we can create a critical mass of attention that shifts the field and **re-routes** the lines of power. The optics and atmospherics of how something is represented and performed - **the art** - carries the charge that communicates ideas across boundaries that have been resistant to change.

Ecologist Timothy Morton in his book 'Realist Magic' says: 'When you make or study art you are not exploring some kind of candy on the surface of a machine. You are making or studying causality. The aesthetic dimension is the causal dimension (Morton, 2015, p.20).

Drawing on Timothy Morton's thinking and on Caroline Levine's fascinating work on form in art and politics, I propose that the aesthetic dimension and what we do as artists is a **profoundly useful** way of experimenting with what the world is like and can be. Through art, we can experiment with forms that contain, split and spill, organise and *disorganise*. Those forms expose hierarchies that show prioritisations and investments in different values; their rhythms reveal how we pattern and repeat those values; they show how we are linked to people, their ideas and labour.

As artists, what we do creatively, aesthetically, is implicated in causal relations. Where we place the power of our attention is also expressive of social and political relationships.

- What do we make space for?
- To whom and also **how** do we offer our hospitality?
- How do we collectively take space and build alliances to redistribute power?

I strongly advocate intervention as the strategy to make and take space, to build new structures that are hospitable to women and to address the deficits in structural luck that women experience again and again, I strongly believe in the use of quotas. There's always some controversy around them but let me turn around that idea of quotas as a crude and simple thing.

A 'quota' means 'a share', 'an apportionment' and in media-speak, '**a piece of the action**'. Quotas create pathways – to careers, to skills and to re-imagining legitimacy. Quotas create a space for talent to rise up and come through. My belief is that there is enormous value, through the use of quotas, in jumping immediately to the result one is looking for rather than just talking about it and relying on incremental creep to get there (which history shows us never arrives). By modelling the result one is looking for, one can help normalise perception – for instance, that women have the right to occupy cultural space and to hold positions of authority. [Actually, in some places it's not that hard... French President Macron's cabinet of 22 has a 50:50 gender split as does Trudeau's cabinet]

I want to address the criticism that tends to come out when there are any discussions of positive discrimination, which is the question of **legitimacy**. On the one hand, everyone wants to be chosen on merit rather than seemingly crude attributes. On the other hand, as activist Peggy McIntosh has said, unconscious bias and invisible privilege also work to give 'crude' results. As the statistics show, our current systems more readily recognise the merit of men rather than the merit of women. It's actually really easy to show that **including women means increasing standards** with the example of orchestral auditions where musicians play behind a screen – the fact that there is good representation of women in orchestras can be directly traced to the use of blind audition processes.

So **it's not either/or** (quotas versus quality). **We can have the best and have women** – we can get there through gender blind assessment or by quotas (a space is opened for women where their merit can be recognised) or by bypassing entrenched systems of exclusion by choosing women who are the best. This is what Harvard University's music department did recently. They chose the best and simultaneously addressed the problem of under-representation of women in contemporary music and jazz by simply inventing new positions and appointing MacArthur Prize winner, flautist Claire Chase and Grammy award winning jazz musician Esperanza Spalding as Professors of the Practice. And of course making space for someone (usually a man) is how it's always been done in the field of music...

Creating structural 'luck' or structural opportunities is part of my work at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. The 'National Women Composers Development Program' was established by Matthew Hindson in 2016 offering 4 women composers opportunities to work with high profile groups. I'm pleased to announce that the new 'Composing Women' program that I'm leading for 2018 & 19 is partnering with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Chamber Opera (with NIDA), the American flautist Claire Chase as well as national bodies such as Musica Viva, ABC Classic FM, APRA AMCOS and the AMC.

Ex. 9 Composing Women, Closing date for applications 31 Oct 2017

<http://music.sydney.edu.au/study/national-women-composers-development-program/>

& Sue W Chamber music composition prize, Closing date 13 Oct 2017

<http://music.sydney.edu.au/study/scholarships/sue-w-chamber-music-composition-prize/>

The program seeks to open new spaces that are not so easily accessed by individuals and as well as opportunities for women composers, provides financial backup and mentoring. Of course with just 4 places, it doesn't cover every situation and it takes place within the context of an educational institution at postgraduate level (though this is precisely the area in which the statistics are showing we have the greatest attrition). It is however a significant signal about moving **beyond lip service** to redressing a gender imbalance. I want to point out that various men who head organisations also play a really important role in owning and supporting this feminist agenda.

So I would like to put the **merit question as a justification for exclusion of women** to rest. In my own experience as a composer (as you heard with my story about writing for orchestras) and in my experience of teaching composition over many years, I can say that **talent, skill and excellence are not static values but are developed in tandem with opportunity**. Merit does not exist in a vacuum. It's obvious of course when one says the more chances one has to practice something, the better one will become but it has to be said again because the language that is used to **cloak** ideas around excellence such as genius and mastery (already a gendered word I know), as well as just competence, hides the structural fact of opportunity.

Give her access to the orchestra, the recording studio, the soldering iron and the string quartet, support her with skills development, and fabulous results will flow.

Ex.10 As a fantastic example of positive action for women's participation and access, here's a short video from a workshop from YWSN (Yorkshire Women in Sound Network) led by my colleague at the University of Huddersfield, Dr Elizabeth Dobson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbSry2Z5-eE>

I think one striking thing about this video for an Australian audience is the presence of Muslim schoolgirls of Pakistani descent speaking with Yorkshire accents. This highlights that the project to include women is also and must also be about racial and ethnic representation – if it isn't, that is probably a sign that the **project of inclusion** is incomplete.

It feels like a potent time for change. It's heartening to see a number of important shifts in response to all the reports and statistics. APRA AMCOS have implemented a requirement of 40F:40M:20F/M participation in order for projects to receive funding and I hope other funding bodies will follow suit. As a direct result of the Darmstadt research, 5 major European festivals in new music - Darmstadt, Donaueschingen, Maerzmusik Berlinerfestspiele, Ultima Festival and Huddersfield Festival - have publically committed to a 50:50 gender split in their programming over the next 5 years. Showing how ideas can magnetise action and be amplified when they reach a critical point, Klangspuren Schwaz in Austria has also responded to the Darmstadt statistics and have curated a programme with 76% women composers in their festival this year which is a significantly better level of representation than in any previous festival.

I am making a call for Australian festivals and concert programmers, our orchestras, other groups and venues to similarly examine their statistics for new work and make similar commitments to gender equity in commissioning and performance.

We are starting to see change and there are bold examples for addressing inclusion such as Ensemble Offspring and Claire Edwardes' 2017 all-women composers programming; Lisa Cheney and Peggy Polias's 'Making Waves'; and the work of leaders such as Cat Hope at Monash and Natalie Williams and in fact, everyone here at this conference. The more models we have of this kind of **attentiveness and action** to opening up more space for women, the more likely it will be that we'll see sustainable positive change.

We are a community right here, now, in this room and at this conference. Our attention and attunement can shift us towards bringing about a more equitable worldview that includes and values women's power and creativity. An enormous amount of energy and resources has been expended to bring us together thanks to the tireless work of Natalie Williams who has been the perfect host. But we can go much further than having just one party – **we can convert this energy into an ongoing set of associations.** We have a chance in the session after this to share ideas about what that might look like – whether a women's network in the arts and academia, of a national collective for women in sound that connects with other such groups internationally, perhaps a festival for women composers.

As artists, we do not exist apart from the world and the operations of power. As creative thinkers, seeking more space for our work in this relational world, we can find pathways for challenges to power and ways of rerouting that power in unexpected places - even in the forms of the things we call luck, grief and hospitality.

Liza Lim  
7 August 2017

## Abstract

A discussion of constructions of power in music looking through the lens of intersecting concerns with gender, race and ethnicity. The talk unpicks some structures in relation to luck in new music; a politics of grief as art in Indigenous women's business, and the ethics of hospitality as a shaping force in Lim's compositional language. These stories look at how cultural value is produced through processes of social and aesthetic representation and provide clues for re-routing power in order to increase support for women's music.

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