


# This Musician Is Dedicated To Gender Equity In Her Male-Dominated Field



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According to a survey of the 22 largest American orchestras, women composers accounted for only 1.8% of the total pieces performed in the 2014-2015 concert season. Moreover, only 14.3% of living composers who are writing pieces that may one day enter these orchestras regular repertoires are female.



Marylene May

*Missy Mazzoli is working towards gender equity in music composition. (Photo by Marylene May)*

Missy Mazzoli wants to change those numbers. The professional composer and musician defines her life purpose as “helping people connect to emotions or experiences through music, and enabling more young people, particularly women, to express themselves through composition.” Mazzoli lives out her purpose by serving as an example in her career and mentoring upcoming female composers through her volunteer work.

Mazzoli earns a living composing operas, orchestras and pieces for smaller ensembles; writing music for TV and film; and creating arrangements for bands like Sigur Ros. She also tours and performs with her band Victoire and teaches at the Mannes School of Music at the New School in New York City.



David Andrako

*Mazzoli cofounded Luna Lab with Ellen Reid to mentor female composers. (Photo by David Andrako)*

In 2016, along with composer Ellen Reid and in partnership with Kaufman Music Center, Mazzoli founded Luna Composition Lab, an organization that provides mentorship and professional opportunities for female composers in their teens. “Teaching young women is a vital and fulfilling part of my life,” Mazzoli says. “I don’t think that performing or composing would make sense to me if I weren’t also doing my part to ensure that the path was slightly easier for future generations of creators.”

As a woman, Mazzoli sometimes struggles to be taken seriously and to carve out opportunities for large-scale work in what remains a male-dominated field. This is why she personally has mentored dozens of young women through her work as a professor and simply by speaking to girls and women who contact her out of the blue. Luna Lab is a natural outgrowth of this passion.

In its short life, Luna Lab already has established partnerships with the Metropolitan Opera, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, New Amsterdam Records, Contemporaneous Ensemble, and the New York Philharmonic, among others. “Many organizations use Luna Lab as a resource through which to identify the next generation of young female composers. Our current students and alumni have received commissions and performances from partner organizations,” Mazzoli explains.