

of gay men and lesbians in earlier as well as recent times. For a brief time in the 1970s it looked as if explicitly gay-related music was successfully breaking into the commercially successful mainstream of popular music. Nevertheless, for examples of explicit treatment of gay/lesbian themes the contemporary listener must often turn to relatively uncommercial sources such as the feminist groups or the punks.

*Stephen Donaldson*

## MUSICIANS

The mythical archetype of the homosexual musician is the figure of the Greek **Orpheus**, noted for his magical art in music and poetry. After the loss of his wife Eurydice, Orpheus gathered together an entourage of young men, whom he wooed with song. In some **inventor legends** he is regarded as the discoverer of pederasty itself. A more humble ancestor is Corydon, the love-sick shepherd of **Vergil's** Second Eclogue, who poured out his unrequited affection for the youth Alexis in song, accompanying himself on the pipes.

*Baroque Music. Opera*, arising at the start of the seventeenth century in southern Europe where the Counter-Reformation had its baleful sway, nonetheless provided an umbrella for a certain amount of nonconformity. For musical reasons, many of the most important roles were sung by eunuch males, the **castrati**, who sometimes became the objects of male devotion among the rich and cultivated devotees of the art.

For Jean-Baptiste **Lully** (1632–1687), a native of Florence who dominated music-making at the French court of Louis XIV, scholars have been able to piece together a complex picture of the trials and triumphs of a major gay musician. After composing numerous ballets, in 1672 Lully obtained a patent for the production of opera and established the Académie Royale de Musique, which he used to ensure a virtual monopoly of the operatic stage.

Skillfully adapting the conventions of Italian grand opera to French taste, he set the pattern for French opera down to the late eighteenth century. His homosexual conduct generated endless gossip, which he forestalled temporarily by marrying in 1661. In the end he owed his survival to the support of the king, who could not do without the sumptuous entertainments Lully provided.

**Pietro Metastasio** (1698–1782) was by far the most important librettist of baroque opera. The son of a Roman grocer, Pietro was adopted at the age of eleven by a noble who was undoubtedly in love with him and who provided the classical education needed for his career. His tempestuous later career was marked by dramatic involvements with women as well as with men, including the famous castrato Carlo Broschi (better known as Farinelli; 1705–1782).

George Frederick **Handel** (1685–1759), born in Germany, but active mainly in Italy and in England, wrote many operas and oratorios. In striking contrast to his great contemporary Johann Sebastian Bach, Handel never married or had children. His associations point to homosexual inclinations, but if he exercised this taste, he covered his tracks so successfully that modern research has not been able to find the evidence.

*Romanticism and After.* The key figure for musical romanticism was the great Viennese composer **Franz Schubert** (1797–1828), whose unique melodic gift enabled him to reach the heart of every musical task he attempted. In Vienna Schubert moved in bohemian circles, which teemed with homosexual and bisexual lovers of the arts. Schubert never married, rejecting suggestions that he do so with outbursts of temper. His romantic attachments to men appear in veiled form in a short story he wrote in 1822, "My Dream." The composer died of syphilis just after reaching the age of thirty.

The sexual tastes of Schubert's lesser French counterpart, Camille Saint-

Saens (1835–1931) transpire from a quip attributed to him: "I am not a homosexual but a pederast!" However, it is uncertain whether this pleasantry reflected real activity, though in his later years the composer took up residence in North Africa where opportunities were legion.

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was the greatest Russian composer of the nineteenth century. His attempt at marriage was a complete failure, and his closest emotional relations were with men. His sixth symphony, the *Pathétique* (1893), was dedicated to his beloved cousin Bob Davydov, and was the fullest outpouring of the emotions he had felt during a lifetime. In the Soviet Union, where the composer's musical achievement is deeply revered as a national treasure, an impenetrable veil of silence has been drawn across his homosexuality, but in the West it is generally acknowledged. There seems to be no truth, however, in the claim that he was forced to commit suicide because of his homosexuality.

The Polish composer Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937), who became director of the Warsaw Conservatory, had a passion for handsome young men. He also wrote a homosexual novel, though it was never published.

Dame Ethyl Smyth (1858–1944) achieved more success in Germany than in her native England. In addition to full-scale choral and orchestral works, she wrote and produced six operas. An strong-willed, sometimes flamboyant personality, Smyth threw her energies into to the British movement for women's suffrage, for which she wrote a "March of the Women." She fought for equal treatment of women as artists, chivying conductors and performers, and staging grand scenes of temperament. After a number of affairs with women, at the age of seventy-one Smyth fell in love with Virginia Woolf.

In the United States, Stephen Foster (1826–1864), who wrote such popular songs as "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Come Where My Love Lies Dream-

ing," and Edward MacDowell (1861–1908), composer of many symphonic poems, were probably homosexual. The picturesque wanderer Francis Grierson (1848–1927), who resided for a time in France, achieved success as both a pianist and a singer. The gay life of Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884–1920), perhaps America's first cosmopolitan composer of distinction, is well attested. Katherine Lee Bates (1859–1929), the Boston professor who wrote the text of "America the Beautiful," was lesbian.

*Modern Music.* Twentieth-century musical life has witnessed a number of famous gay couples, including the French Francis Poulenc (composer) and Pierre Bernac (tenor), the English Benjamin Britten (composer) and Peter Pears (tenor), and the Americans Samuel Barber and Gian-Carlo Menotti (both composers). The major avant-garde composer John Cage has long shared a residence with the influential choreographer Merce Cunningham. Henry Cowell (1897–1965), a pioneering American modernist composer, was convicted on a morals charge in California and imprisoned at San Quentin. Charles Ives, who had been a close ally, reacted with virulent homophobia, suggesting that Cowell should kill himself. In his several volumes of *Diaries*, Ned Rorem has been frank about his homosexuality, both during his early career in France and his later one in New York. Other American composers of distinction are Aaron Copland, David Diamond, Lou Harrison, and Charles Wuorinen.

Among performers the high correlation of homosexuality and the instrument of choice is particularly striking among organists. Many contemporary pianists are also gay. What is the reason for this link? Surely, it cannot be simply that touching the ivories has some special affinity with homosexuality. The explanation of why most organists are gay, and many pianists are, appears to reflect the fact that both instruments are normally played solo. Only on special occasions is an organ or piano used in conjunction with

a symphony orchestra. Contrast the violin. Although this instrument can be played solo, the vast majority of violinists earn their living playing in string ensembles in orchestras. This contrast between solo and group activity has its counterpart in the world of sport, where swimmers and runners are more likely to be homosexual than baseball and hockey players. Like all such generalizations, this one has exceptions. Nonetheless, gay musicians and athletes seem more drawn to individual performance than to team participation.

Many contemporary gay pianists and organists, for understandable professional reasons, have chosen to keep their sexual orientation private. This is not the case with the great Russian virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz (1904– ), who has not objected to Glenn Plaskin's frank biography of 1983. A child prodigy, Horowitz' homosexuality became evident in his early maturity in Russia and Germany. In the 1930s the pianist came under the influence of the charismatic Arturo Toscanini, who encouraged him to marry his daughter Wanda. Despite the husband's resort to psychoanalysis, the marriage proved troubled, and Wanda objected to Horowitz' close relationships with a series of young men. The pianist's temperament became legendary: he would cancel concerts at the shortest notice, sometimes apparently in order to complete a sexual rendezvous. In the 1970s, responding to New York's upscale version of the counterculture, Horowitz became more gregarious, and his sexual tastes became widely known. Accompanied by his lover, the aging pianist essayed frequent trips to gay bars and clubs.

Less clear is the instance of the distinguished harpsichordist Wanda Landowska (1877–1959), who revolutionized the aesthetics of baroque music. Her companion seems to have been lesbian, but Landowska's own orientation is uncertain.

There is one exception to the solo–group contrast. Homosexuality has

long been particularly decried in the field of conducting, where the role seems to call for macho assertiveness. Nonetheless, the Greek conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos (1896–1960) quietly defied the ban, at the same time taking risks in championing avant-garde music. His protégé, Leonard Bernstein (1918– ) has broken the mold altogether, insisting on his right to live openly as a gay man. Active also as a composer and educator, Bernstein has probably also attained the status of the most successful conductor of all time—certainly the wealthiest. His achievement is a beacon of light to countless young musicians.

*See also Music, Popular; Opera; Punk Rock.*

Wayne R. Dynes

## MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

The impression that homosexual and lesbian characters and situations are rare in mystery and detective fiction is true for earlier decades, but not for more recent ones. Lesbian characters can be found in some British mysteries of the late 1920s, including Dorothy L. Sayers' *Unnatural Death* and *Strong Poison*, and gay male characters began to appear in the next decade. In most of the early fiction, however, the homosexual characters are incidental, often introduced to complicate the plot.

*The "Hard-Boiled" Novel and After.* Gay male characters begin to appear in the work of those American writers classified as "hard-boiled" because sexuality of all sorts along with drugs, alcohol, and violence were displayed without moralizing in these naturalistic novels. The first examples is in Rex Stout's 1933 novel *Forest Fire*. The protagonist is a macho forest ranger who is sexually attracted to a summer helper. Stout then proceeded to the Nero Wolfe novels where homosexuality seems sublimated in misogyny, gourmet meals, and cultivating orchids. More