

RECENSION OF THE MARIE BUSCATTO'S BOOK, *WOMEN IN JAZZ: MUSICALITY, FEMININITY, MARGINALIZATION*⁷⁸

RECENSÃO DO LIVRO DE MARIE BUSCATTO, *AS MULHERES NO JAZZ: MUSICALIDADE, FEMINILIDADE, MARGINALIZAÇÃO*

CRITIQUE DU LIVRE DE MARIE BUSCATTO, *LES FEMMES DANS LE JAZZ: MUSICALITÉ, FÉMINITÉ, MARGINALISATION*

RESEÑA DEL LIBRO DE MARIE BUSCATTO, *LAS MUJERES EN EL JAZZ: MUSICALIDAD, FEMINIDAD, MARGINACIÓN*

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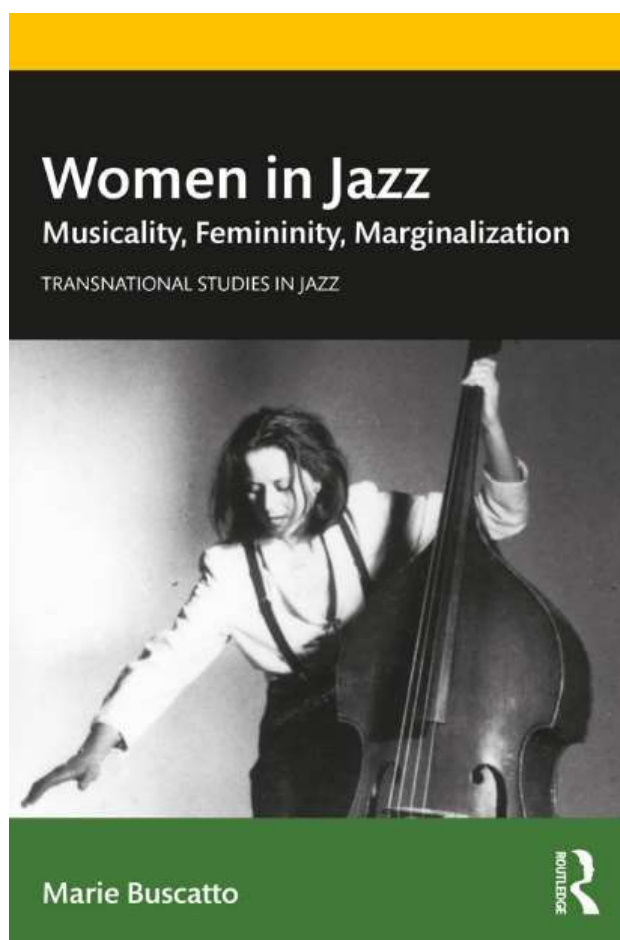


Figure 1: Cover of the book *Women in jazz: musicality, femininity, marginalization*

Source: <https://www.routledge.com/Women-in-Jazz-Musicality-Femininity-Marginalization/Buscatto/p/book/9781032011783>

⁷⁸ The proof-reading was done in collaboration with native speaker Jonathan Can Uzun Erkorkmaz.

Marie Buscatto is a professor in sociology at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in France, and her recently published book *Women in jazz: Musicality, femininity, marginalization* investigates the invisible discrimination against women musicians in the French jazz world and how women have thrived professionally despite these circumstances. The work was first published in French by CNRS Editions in 2007, and later reprinted in paperback, in 2018, with the author's note "(almost) nothing has changed". This recently published version by Routledge as part of the "Transnational Studies in Jazz" series, *Women in jazz: Musicality, femininity, marginalization*; carries the conversation beyond the borders of France, defining women jazz musicians as a discriminated minority all over the world.

In this work, Buscatto sheds light on the paradox for women in jazz: Expressing one's self in a 'feminine' way means humiliation for her, and acting 'masculine' means being devalued for lack of femininity. This masculine world makes it more difficult for women to be recognized as jazz musicians than men, even if musicians, critics, and audiences are ideologically opposed to discrimination. Women singers are constrained by the feminine stereotypes of their profession, while women instrumentalists must fit themselves into roles traditionally considered to be masculine. Methodologically, Buscatto's work is based on the ethnographic study, and the author also examines the academic and professional socialization of these women jazz musicians, their music choices, and how they are perceived by jazz professionals.

In terms of an overview, the book; *Women in jazz: Musicality, femininity, marginalization* consists of two parts with ten chapters excluding the introduction and the conclusion. The introduction includes three subheadings named: "Women in the arts and gendered segregations", "A long-term cross-reference ethnographic study", and "Outline of the Book". The introduction begins with some quantitative observations such as "only eight percent of the 2,000 jazz musicians that make up the small planet of French jazz are women" and ends with the following important interpretation:

When singers are denigrated for being in a 'feminine profession', by nature lacking in legitimate professionalism, the instrumentalists say they are 'tired' of having to perform a 'masculine profession' in a world of men who are not inclined to make them work (Buscatto, 2021: 4).

The first chapter after the introduction is titled: "A saturated and hierarchized professional world" and it comprises four subheadings as follows: "How to make a living from jazz", "Precariousness, flexibility and permanent availability for the youngest", "Expressing oneself in jazz: a marginal activity for a majority", and "Make a living from one's jazz music for a renowned and masculine elite". In this first chapter, Buscatto describes the main principles organizing the functions of the French jazz world in which male and female jazz instrumentalists and singers operate, in order to

explain gendered segregations to be addressed in the next two parts. Part 1, "Jazz singer: such a 'feminine' job", has five chapters titled: "Vocal jazz, commercial jazz, gendered jazz", "So 'feminine' in such a 'masculine' world", "The voice is not an instrument", "An irresistible feminine seduction", and "Amateur vocal jams: an illusory gendered transgression?". In general, within these five chapters, the author critically examines the status of women jazz singers within the French scene. In the second chapter "Vocal jazz, commercial jazz, gendered jazz", Buscatto explains within subheadings the conception(s) of jazz as instant composition and as interpretation, as well as the ongoing tensions that run between singers and instrumentalists, and the concepts such as vocal jazz, commercial jazz, and gendered jazz.

The third chapter "So 'feminine' in such a 'masculine' world" has five subheadings named; "'Serious' singers: a valued reality", "The marginalization of 'serious' and 'Valuable' singers", "Creativity in confrontation, revealing in stability", "Formal language as the sole bargaining chip", "The musician-partner: help and dependency". Within these subheadings, Buscatto observes the status of women jazz singers in a male dominated field by referring to quotations from some male and female jazz musicians. The author ends this chapter with an important statement:

The predominance of male conventions in the jazz world mostly plays to the benefit of men and gives them access to the most valued positions, whether social, economic, or musical. And the story doesn't stop there: the difficult integration of women singers in the jazz world is also due to 'feminine' demeaning stereotypes that are regularly associated with their musical practices (Buscatto, 2021: 41).

In the fourth chapter "The voice is not an instrument", Buscatto shows "how the voice being defined as a natural expression of the singers' personalities, is locked up into prejudices working against the employment of female singers as colleagues." (Buscatto, 2021: 42) The chapter has five subheadings as follows: "The sung voice, between nature and culture", "The voice - the fruit of a long apprenticeship", "The voice is 'natural'", "The other voice of renée fleming", and "'Vocalist' or the elements of a difficult transgression". The fifth chapter "An irresistible 'feminine' seduction" consists of five subheadings named: "The obvious seduction", "'Feminine' stereotypes die hard", "A 'discreet' seduction", "Myths and jazz divas" and "Stage gestures or invisible bodily knowledge". As Buscatto highlights in this chapter, singing tends to be regarded as an essence, a natural expression of 'femininity', and female singers appear as attractive women, naturally gifted at expressing themselves with their voices and their body. The sixth chapter, "Amateur vocal jams: an illusory gendered transgression?" has two subheadings named: "A place designed to transgress 'masculine' conventions", and "An 'invisible' reproduction of gendered differences". This last chapter of the first part is based on a series of observations

conducted during vocal jams⁷⁹ organized in two Parisian jazz venues, in which the author Marie Buscatto has participated as an amateur singer. As we point in a recent article:

The role of a singer being a more 'appropriate' role, and one that's more customary for women in jazz is an ongoing social code that provides women a place on the jazz stage and an ease in getting a job due to demand to see the female figure aesthetically or up front -in front- of the musicians on stage (Ilbi & Karaol, 2020: 44).

However, even when this is the case, as Buscatto observes, women jazz singers face certain prejudices throughout their careers. The most important of these is that although it is not related to their musical performance, they are expected to be 'feminine' and/or to be at the forefront with their aesthetic and physical features. Therefore, one of the most significant contributions of Buscatto's work is that it reveals the difficulties and prejudices experienced not only by women jazz instrumentalists but also by women jazz singers, and the impact of gender role expectations on them.

Part 2 "Some 'great chicks'⁸⁰" consists of four chapters: "Very 'well-endowed' young women", "Difficult access to stable working networks", "Women in a man's world: reconciling the irreconcilable?", and "Managing one's 'femininity' in public: disparagement, neutrality or seduction?". In these four chapters, the author critically examines the status of women jazz instrumentalists – "female instrumentalists represent less than 4 percent of all instrumentalists while 65 percent of singers are female" (Buscatto, 2021: 80) - within the French scene. Throughout history, it has been quite difficult for women to find a place in jazz playing instruments and thus, women jazz instrumentalists have been a 'minority'. The reason for that is connected to parameters based in gender inequality. In this second part of the book, the author intends to examine these issues focusing on the career routes of women jazz instrumentalists. The seventh chapter "Very 'well-endowed' young women" comprises two subheadings: "Family, academic and/or professional 'oversocialization'", and "Knowing how to adapt to a very 'masculine' world". In this chapter, the author highlights the fact that women instrumentalists 'over-socialize' and develop strategies during the early stages of their careers that enable them to perform successfully as soon as they get access to this very masculine jazz world. In the eighth chapter "Difficult access to stable working networks" Buscatto notes that "most French women instrumentalists, when they are over thirty years old, do not live from jazz" (Buscatto, 2021: 94) and describes the ways social networks that ensure

⁷⁹ A jam is "a privileged moment where musicians play in an impromptu way and without programming the songs, the musicians or the playing time ahead of time" (Buscatto, 2021: 22).

⁸⁰ "This is a poor translation of the French expression 'sacrées nanas' often heard in the French jazz world to speak of those female instrumentalists who made it despite all obstacles" (Buscatto, 2021: 80).

employment in the jazz world are organized, within five subheadings. These subheadings are as follows: "Very 'personal' social networks", "Belonging to the professional network of her jazz musician-partner", "Very masculine social networks", "The jazz musician-partner: a 'constraining' help", and "'Female' bands: between a fear of denigration and a 'useful' experience". About the employment in the jazz world, in the book *Madame Jazz*, Leslie Gourse states that:

It isn't necessarily chauvinism alone that still keeps most men playing with men. Habit usually guides them... So men usually play with musicians they have always worked with: other men...For the women players, the breaks have to come from leaders who... keep their minds and options open. Or the women must get their own gigs as leaders... (Gourse, 1995: 12).

This statement can be confirmed in Buscatto's book.

When I asked this male instrumentalist, very favorable to the presence of women in jazz, if there are women instrumentalists in his musical projects he had just introduced to us, he said: "No. Chance encounters too. There are three or four that I've been working with for about fifteen years. I mean, those are ... And then, the new people I told you about, both of whom are people I work with on a regular basis on other projects, and it went like this (Buscatto, 2021: 98).

The ninth chapter "Women in a man's world: reconciling the irreconcilable?" consists of two subheadings: "Tired of 'masculine' social conventions", and "The lack of a partner to manage day-to-day affairs: sacrificing one's private life?". This chapter investigates a situation in which after the age of thirty, female instrumentalists see their position weakened and remaining in the jazz world becomes more and more difficult, whatever their reputation. Finally, the tenth and final chapter "Managing one's 'femininity' in public: disparagement, neutrality or seduction?" has two subheadings named: "A feminine musical 'style'?", and "Such a 'feminine' body: the controlled dangers of seduction". In this last chapter, Buscatto examines the ways in which women build their professionalism while constantly being subjected to strange paradoxes: to be directed to both express themselves in a 'feminine' way and to be professionally humiliated for it; and also, to behave in a 'masculine' manner and to be devalued for lack of 'femininity'.

After all the chapters, in "Conclusion" the writer again highlights that "the jazz world proves to be a quite unwelcoming world to women, singers and instrumentalists." (Buscatto, 2021: 126). Within the findings and interpretations of the chapters it can be observed that the jazz world is a male-dominated field and that there are several invisible discriminations in this field. This work of Buscatto is one that fills a gap in the literature on women (jazz) musicians and it is also a significant source for my doctoral research since its subject is women jazz leaders. There have been serious issues regarding career routes of women in the jazz scene, hence it is essential to create a collective memory and to continue researching this topic in

depth. The purpose of examining this topic, should also be “to take a close look at women’s productivity, their creativity, and the strategies developed by them to overcome difficulties, to make yesterday’s experiences visible/recognizable within today’s practices” (Ilbi & Karaol, 2020: 51). As Buscatto notes:

The social processes, both internal and external to the jazz world, not only make it difficult for female musicians to enter and maintain themselves in this art world, but also situate female singers and instrumentalists in the lower ranks of the musical, professional and economic hierarchy (Buscatto, 2021:126).

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