**Abigail Ybarra** joined a community of working Latina women when she began working for Fender in 1958. She learned the important task of making electric guitar pickups from Pilar Lopez, and eventually was named "Queen of Tone" for her work. She later trained Josefina Campos, passing her knowledge on to the next generation of female guitar makers. Fender hired Ybarra and other women because the company thought that women's hand skills were superior to men's.



The Gibson Company began employing women during World War II like many other companies because of the number of men who went to fight overseas. **Irene Stearns** (pictured right) was one of these women, and together with her other female coworkers, produced around 25,000 instruments over the course of the war. Not only does she remember her experience fondly, but these guitars, called "banner guitars" for their banner-shaped decal, are now collectors' items known for a rich sound.

**Dolores Navarres de Goñi** was a famous guitar performer in the mid-1800s and was an early promoter of the now iconic Martin guitars. She was well known in both Europe and the United States, so her glowing review of Martin guitars in 1843 undoubtedly brought them important publicity!

**Joan Baez** is a popular and influential folk musician, most famous in the 1960s. She has long been a fan of vintage Martin guitars, including the Martin O-40 on exhibition here. Baez's performances on these vintage guitars re-popularized them for many people.

**Shawn Colvin** is a famous singer-songwriter who was actually born here in Vermillion, SD! She got started with the Buddy Miller Band, where she met John Leventhal, who gave her important encouragement and ultimately produced her first album. Over the course of her career, she has since won three Grammys and released twelve albums!

**Joni Mitchell** is one of the most celebrated singer-songwriters of all time. She is recognized worldwide for her insightful lyrics and her musical artistry. Not only does she incorporate numerous genres into her music, but she also unusual tunings, which makes her stand out among other artists. Her lifetime of musical achievement has brought her 10 Grammys, a place in the Musical Hall of Fame, and numerous other awards and recognitions.

**Tracy Chapman** began playing guitar at age 11 and was writing songs within the next few years. Moved by the poverty and racial violence that she witnessed growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, Chapman blends musical artistry with social justice. Not only does her perspective on social and political issues emerge in her lyrics, but she also performs in support of charities and world justice organizations like Amnesty International and Free Tibet.

**Maybelle Carter** was a woman of many musical talents, as she could already play banjo, autoharp, and guitar by age 13. Carter performed folk and country music both with family acts and as a soloist. Her country performances were massively impactful in shaping country music as we know it today, and was well-known for her signature technique, called the "Carter Scratch." Not only did her performance bring guitar into the lead position in country music, but she also mentored country musicians of younger generations, earning her the nickname "Mother Maybelle."

**Vadah Olcott-Bickford** was not only a guitarist herself, but a collector, teacher, organizer, and inspiration. She started American Guitar Society in 1923. Her goal was to expand classical guitar education and performance across the nation. She also collected guitars, and this collection contained an 18th century Tielke-attributed guitar that inspired the Dreadnought, later the D-Series, one of the Martin Company's most famous guitar models.

national music museum
NMMusd.org

SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM
womenshistory.si.edu

# Women's History is American History.

### March is Women's History Month!

The National Music Museum, along with the Smithsonian Institution and other affiliates across the country are celebrating women's roles and contributions through exhibits, events and online content.

## Celebrate with us!

### During your visit....

Watch for these symbols throughout the galleries. They showcase some of the women across time and place who have contributed to musical history through their work as performers, entrepreneurs, makers, and more!

### Throughout the month...

**Attend** a women's history month event
**si.edu/events/womens-history-month**

**Learn** more online with the ***Smithsonian American Women's History Museum's*** first digital exhibition "Becoming Visible." Launching on March 8, (International Women's Day) the exhibit explores the uneven process of women becoming visible in American history.

**Follow** the NMM's social media sites for additional information and posts.

**Share** what you've learned!
#WomensHistoryMonth
#SmithsonianWHM
#SmithsonianWomensHistory

## Lamont Gallery

**Women have always played an important role in musical communities. The women highlighted in these galleries contributed to musical traditions important to their families and broader cultures!**

**Sonja Silva Holy Eagle** is a contemporary female artist who participates in her tribe's traditional drum-making by painting drums at the Dakota Drum Company. Holy Eagle shares her story and love of art through a centuries-old tradition, incorporating ancient symbols and techniques into her artwork. She also shows how women also have a role in the traditional art forms of local Indigenous tribes.

**Emelia Lawrence Wellisch** was a German American immigrant who lived in the Twin Cities and became famous for her virtuosic zither performance. Because the zither is a traditional German instrument, her performances deepened bonds between many German immigrants in her local community.

Although **June Carter Cash**'s husband, Johnny Cash, may be more famous today, June came from a family of famous country musicians herself. Known as a talented songwriter, she too was an artist in her own right and performed with her mother, Maybelle Carter, as part of one of the first famous country music acts.

## Cutler Gallery

**Women have played music in a variety of settings. In many cases, women have adapted their musical performance and instruments to their daily lives, whether at home or in their social circles.**

**Trumpet Marines** were used from around the 1300s through the 1800s to take the place of traditionally male trumpet performances in convents. Because women were not supposed to play the trumpet, the trumpet marine, or nun's fiddle, allowed women to use the trumpet's voice without playing a brass trumpet.

Women's musical performance was one way that a family could display its wealth and taste to guests, as women would often play for visitors in their homes. **Mrs. George Elliott McManus von Berg** and her husband became well-known in their home state of Iowa and beyond for entertaining guests in their home with harp and violin performances.

**Nanny whistles** Musical instruments like nanny whistles had utility beyond their attractive design and sound. Wealthy families hired nannies to care for their young children and gave them whistles like these for the job. However, the women who used these whistles often were not wealthy themselves, and depending on the time and place could have even been enslaved.

**Upright Piano and Dressing Table Piano** As middle-class families sought to provide their aspiring daughters with musical instruction, they often looked for ways to adapt instruments, like pianos, to their homes. As a result, inventors found ways to combine pianos with other household furniture, like bookcases or a dressing room table. These adaptations allowed women of middle to upper class families to entertain guests and highlight their refinement, which could attract potential suitors.

## Knudson Gallery

**Women have also been innovators both in musical performance and instrument making. Here, we can see how women both participate in traditions and create their own!**

When **Betty Bang Mather** played flute during the early 1950s, professional flute performance was dominated by men. Nevertheless, Betty Bang Mather stepped into the flute performance world and made a name for herself. Betty Bang Mather was a trailblazer for both women and men in flute performance because she was one of the first full-time college-level flute instructors in the U.S!

Although Gustave Besson was the namesake of the Besson instrument company, his wife, **Florentine Ridoux Besson** was a talented innovator in the brass world in the mid to late 1800s. She ran the Paris branch of the company starting in 1850, while her husband managed the London branch. She received a patent for her design of this cornet and was a successful business leader! Once her husband died, she took over his part of the operation as well. Her daughter Marthe would later expand her family's business to capitalize on American markets, continuing her mother's tradition of female business management.

## Lillibridge Gallery

**Although there was a time where it was assumed that the guitar was a man's instrument, prior to World War II, the guitar world was not considered heavily masculine. Women have contributed to guitar performance and guitar making for hundreds of years by inventing new techniques, contributing excellent craftsmanship, and blending genres.**

**Lizzie Douglas**, also known as Memphis Minnie, was a famous blues guitarist and star in the middle of the twentieth century. She started her career with street and circus performances at age 13 but changed her name and brand once she signed with Columbia Records in 1929. As Memphis Minnie, she brought the electric guitar to blues performance, which later inspired many rock bands of the 1960s and 1970s.

**Tish Ciravolo** became a professional bassist despite the sexism that she encountered in the rock genre and hoped to break the popular stereotypes of the time which suggested that guitars and rock music were masculine. Eventually, she launched her own company, Daisy Guitars, in 2000, which produced instruments designed for women and sought to appeal to girls by adding details like flowers, hearts, and sparkles to some of their guitars.



**Sister Rosetta Tharpe** (pictured left) began her musical career in evangelical gospel shows by age six, traveling around the South with her mother as part of a performing troupe. As she grew up, she began incorporating the sounds she heard as a child in the South into her developing signature style. As an adult performer, she remained on the cutting edge of guitar and vocal performance during her lifetime. Tharpe, a Black bisexual woman from the South, sang and played electric guitar in her gospel and R&B hits. Resisting clear definition of genre, Tharpe was the first big gospel recording star in the 1930s, and later pioneered rock music in the early 1940s.