

A Twentieth Century Woman in Music: Equilibrium Against the Odds: The Inspiring Career of Sylvia Foodim Glickman

by

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Sylvia's aspect in a photo in a Time magazine article of May 12, 1941 seems already to announce her hold on life. There she appears, though appropriately demure in dress and obligatory hair ribbon, almost disconcertingly sassy and challenging in her gleeful demeanor. "Button-eyed, sheepish-smiling," Time evidently found her a little girl difficult to classify. simply expressing amazement at how this eight-year-old virtuoso emerging from the depths of the Settlement Music School "gravely played Beehoven and Schubert," and "rattled through a Schubert scherzo."

A scrappy and enterprising spirit, unusual sagacity, and a dauntless sense of fun, as well as remarkable musical taste and judgment, sustained Sylvia Foodim Glickman throughout her astonishingly variegated career as pianist, composer, musicologist, author, publisher, and editor. Having begun taming the piano from the age of three, she was accepted by the Greenwich House Settlement School of Music at four, the youngest student accepted there at the time. She went on to distinguish herself at New York's La Guardia High School of Music and Art and at the Juilliard School where she received Bachelor's and Master's degrees. At Juilliard, she copped that distinguished institution's highest award, the Morris

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Loeb Prize for Excellence: (fellow-classmate, Van Cliburn had to content himself with second prize). Awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London in 1955, she there earned the Licentiate degree in 1956. Even though performance had been her major focus from early childhood, she'd already begun to compose from the age of sixteen. In recognition of her skill in this art, at the Royal Academy her suite for cello and piano was awarded the Hecht Prize in Composition. When once asked whether her female teachers had made any particular impact upon her, she retorted that they had, simply because during those years women were not encouraged to pursue concert careers, much less composing ones. And yet, a decided aura of great promise surrounded her in her early years.

A lovely young woman as well as a gifted one, romance came to enhance Sylvia's life as she crossed the Atlantic on the Queen Elizabeth. On this journey she was courted by young political scientist Harvey Glickman, also on a Fulbright scholarship year. Upon their return to the States they married and moved to Cambridge, where Harvey completed his work for the doctorate at Harvard University. There, as she would always do, Sylvia set about creating outlets for her talents in establishing a strong piano teaching practice and giving courses at the New England Conservatory.

When Princeton University appointed Harvey to a post in the Politics Department, Sylvia became a faculty wife. In the Princeton setting, she again found occasions to exercise her superb pianism with chamber groups in private homes. The Glickmans' first child, Lisa, was born in 1958. Their second daughter, Nina, was to arrive in 1960, shortly after the family's arrival at Haverford College where Harvey had been appointed to the faculty.

It was there that Sylvia and I met. We were both faculty wives. A species of curse surrounded this category of persons in the 1960's. After all, this was the period preceding Betty Friedans' late '60's identification of "The Problem that Has No Name," the malaise surrounding educated mothers of families who found themselves stymied professionally by a society with little use for their finely honed talents once they had, naturally enough, opted for love, marriage and family life. A case in point: at Bryn Mawr College where I was doing graduate work, one of my professors, married but not a mother, informed me it was perfectly acceptable that I be married and pursue an academic career as she had done. But, she admonished me firmly, if I were to have children, I would of course abandon the profession. This was the atmosphere into which young wives of academic men were expected to fit themselves seamlessly, muting their own aspirations so as to conform to tenaciously rigid and antiquated norms of domesticity.

Along with the myriad difficulties inherent for anyone in achieving success in a concert career, Sylvia then encountered a situation to say the least unpromising, even potentially daunting, to her ambitions as performer or composer. Her institutional marginality threatened to entrap her. Even her grace and delicate physical beauty played somewhat against her being recognized as possessing the powers, musical and organizational, that were hers. But she had several trumps in her hand. She was tirelessly resourceful. And she had a mate who loyally seconded her aspirations, wherever they led her.

The Glickmans' third child, Peter, was born in 1965. One of Sylvia's finest achievements was the creation, with Harvey, of a delightfully warm family ambiance. Her investment in her children, grandchildren, and spouse was as

unquestioned as her devotion to her musical life. Together, the Glickmans' home steadily radiated a welcoming hospitality. Sylvia's extraordinary quality as a person lay in a capacity to achieve a balance between the drive to express her remarkable musical gifts and a loving attention to her ongoing life, her family and friends. A species of tact, even wisdom, gave her a rare ability to sustain her needs both for enhancing her immanent, day-to-day world, and her transcendent goals in music.

While her children were still very young, she became Artist-in-Residence at Haverford College and initiated and directed its chamber music program, a connection which lasted sixteen years. It was there she invented a unique and unforgettable series of summer chamber music concerts. (At that time, no such summer musical events in the Philadelphia area existed, and ever since their demise, Philadelphia summers mostly lack live occasions to enjoy this repertory.) At the Haverford College library she performed with the De Pasquale Quartet, four brothers, all of them members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Sylvia's superb performances at the piano during this period made the Haverford College student newspaper's music critic, Andy Silk, refer to her as Haverford's remarkable "secret," a treasure its community was alone to be in on.

Even as Sylvia continued teaching privately and at the various institutions within reach of her home--at West Chester, Haverford, Swarthmore, and Franklin and Marshall--or afar, as at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, and even as she concertized either in the vicinity or abroad in Europe or Africa, her restless energies sought out ever new avenues of expression. Her college teaching served to sharpen her musicological curiosity. In support of her

interest in American music, she made herself first an expert interpreter and editor of the works of Amy Beach, virtually the sole American woman composer then recognized by music history. (Beach, Sylvia claimed, had been the sole woman composer deemed worthy of mention by her instructors at Juilliard in the fifties.) Later, she disinterred works by the American Revolutionary era's Alexander Reinagle. F. Warren O'Reilly's Washington Times review of her playing of Reinagle's Sonata No. 3 in C major aptly captures Sylvia's essential qualities as a pianist. She played Reinagle's three-movement sonata, he wrote, "in grand style. It was clear from the outset that she possesses a prodigious technique, which she employs without show and which she subordinates to making music faithful to a composer's aims."¹

These forays by Sylvia into the lesser-known repertory, initiated in an exploratory mood, had an essentially pedagogical and propagandistic aim: to enlarge peoples' idea of the musical canon. Ever an advocate of the new in music, as well as the old, visibly, she was in search of larger musical missions, more suited to her independence of spirit, than those that had presented themselves to her earlier on.

Even for those who knew her well, to peruse Sylvia Glickman's Vita is to be awed by the reach of her energies during the last thirty years of her life. She concertized as soloist or in chamber groups in museums, colleges, universities, in communities, and even in concert halls in Holland, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Israel, east and Central Africa and Great Britain. A sampling of her

¹ The Washington Times, "A prodigious talent at Festival," April 24, 1984.

reception: Turin; “Decidedly compelling...The rendition of Mozart was exquisite as well as precise....Surprising also was her interpretation of the gigantic piece by Beethoven [the Waldstein], in which Sylvia Glickman demonstrated, in addition to a faultless technique, the maturity of a great musician.”² Brussels: “What a beautiful pianist:...The three movements of the sonata in D-major by Mozart...[were] a pearl necklace of unutterable perfection.”³ Salisbury, Rhodesia celebrated in her appearance there: “a recital of infinite polish and rare musical imagination.”⁴

No mere prima donna, Sylvia Glickman was a conscientious and effective musical “citizen,” serving on state and local music and arts councils--presiding over the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and serving on the Pennsylvania Composers’ Forum, for example. At the same time, she also took on huge tasks of editing and publishing . And it was actually during her work preparing Vol. IV of American Keyboard Music: 1865-1909 for G.K. Hall that its lack of representation of music by women so galled her, an American composer herself, as to impel her to act. She resolved to seek out in archives and libraries exemplary old works, lost, but worthy of recognition, and seek out collaborating scholars to help set these works in appropriate context.

Her final years reflect two facets of an integrated goal: one selfless, one self-realizing. The twelfth-century composer, Abbess Hildegard of Bingen,

² Secondo Villata, La Stampa Sera, February 20, 1984.

³ Marcel Hastir, “Sylvia Glickman,” A 1”Atelier ASBL, February 24, 1984.

⁴ Rhodesia Herald, August 12, 1959.

lent Sylvia both a model and a name. With the creation in 1988 of the Hildegard Publishing Company, she would research and publish, and, via her formation of the Hildegard Chamber Players, perform music by women, so as to rectify the mendacious impression, universally accepted, that they had never composed works deserving of cultural remembrance. But also, she needed to fulfill her need to “sculpt time,” as she called it, into music; to create her own body of compositions so as to become a member of the cohort of valuable women composers of her own era.

Frisky Sylvia described her Hildegard Chamber Players to the press as “a merry band of women who want to put the sounds of these composers in your ears.”⁵ Although women composers have recently made important inroads into popular acceptance, a review of a concert by the Hildegard Chamber Players of October 8, 1991 in The Philadelphia Inquirer by Daniel Webster recreates the atmosphere of reception they faced. “Such concerts are as polemical as they are musical,” he wrote, “and the danger is that the music chosen or the performances themselves will contradict the argument on which the concert is based.” Webster chose to characterize Clara Schumann’s memorably melodic Trio in G Minor as “not a strong” work. Glickman’s initiatives in restoring the women’s repertory in live performance, reinforced by those of a number of groups around the country during the ‘80’s and ‘90’s, must be acknowledged as the daring and pioneering but not always richly rewarded work that prepared the way for the more positive reception women’s compositions may find today.

The Hildegard Publishing Company, which, with the help of her new

⁵ Lesley Valdes, “Hildegard group settles some unfamiliar scores,” Philadelphia Inquirer, March 30, 1993.

Macintosh computer Sylvia had the courage to inaugurate in 1988, was at first a mere “table-top” operation. Yet, when she produced her very first offering of six historic items in 1990, she found herself bought out. The market for them had lain underground, but was palpably real. At present, Hildegard’s list numbers hundreds of works by women, from the ninth century to the present. These scores are now distributed internationally through Presser Music, and thanks to the Hildegard’s continuation under Harvey Glickman’s leadership [now Ellie Armsby’s; ed. note], they continue to remain available.

At the same time, incredibly enough, with her able and devoted collaborator Martha Furman Schleifer, Sylvia also launched a huge anthology, Women Composers--Music Through the Ages (G.K. Hall-Gale Grop-Thomson, 1996-2006), which was completed through Volume 8 at the time of her death. Through Glickman’s initiative and labor, this vast women’s repertory has become part of the heritage of our twenty-first century for the first time in history. As if that were not sufficient, Glickman and Schleifer also published an excellent and pedagogically canny companion textbook to this anthology, From Convent to Concert Hall, A Guide to Women Composers (Greenwood Press, 2003). They reasoned that such a text, setting the composers in their historical and musical contexts, would enable students in music history and musicology classes to *want* to seek out the actual works anthologized in Women Composers.

Certainly Sylvia’s achievements did not go unrecognized. Women’s Way of Philadelphia honored her in 1986 for her “exceptional talent as a musician and teacher and for her unique contributions to women’s music history” in May, 1986. And in 1995, the New York Women Composers, Inc bestowed upon her

their annual Award for Distinguished Service to Music Composed by Women. She obtained grants and awards--from APSCAP and “Meet the Composer, for example,-- almost beyond compute.

But it is, finally, her own music that must command our attention as we review her creative career. I can dwell upon only a few of her works, which for me provide musical expression of aspects of her personality.

Sylvia’s compositions may not be numerous, but they are varied, richly creative, inventive, at once eclectic and original, emotionally expansive and well-constructed. I will not stop to reflect on her impressive choral works which include her movingly lyrical 13-part Prayer Service for Cantor, Choir, Organ and Flute, composed for her own Main Line Reform Temple of Wynnewood, PA, or the rightly harsher yet effective Seven “Deadly Sins, set to a parts of Piers Plowman, the fourteenth century poem by William Langland.⁶ I choose instead to reflect first on her Dances and Entertainments for piano,⁷ As described in a new music review, this “highly contemporary eight-movement work, consists of an Introduction, four dances (Earth, Air, Fire, and Water), and three intervening “entertainments” (Sarabande, Waltz, and Rag). It requires five drum sticks (two with felt head, two with wooden head, and one wire brush) for strumming the piano strings and a light chain to lay across the upper strings. Dramatic and arresting, it merits investigation.”⁸ I see this piece as representative of Sylvia’s comic sense, her love of play, games, puzzles. It’s full of the lively brio of her

⁶ Commissioned by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Pro Arte Chorale in May 1987.

⁷ Commissioned by the Network for New Music and performed first in Philadelphia in 1990.

⁸ J.M., Clavier 32, No. 6, July-August 1993).

being.

The need to compose “The Walls Are Quiet Now,” came to Sylvia after her visit to Berlin in 1992. While waiting in the S-bahn Gruenwald station, she was surprised and moved by its haunting memorial relief depicting “irregular silhouettes” of disappearing concentration camp figures. The searing orchestral composition it inspired features four brief but connected sections entitled I: Fear, Foreboding; II: Fright; III: Frenzy; and IV: Lest We Forget. It aims, in Sylvia’s words, not to “tell a story, but rather to explore the feeling aroused by the Holocaust.”⁹ The Washington Post’s critic Tim Page wrote of it, “It is difficult to memorialize such a ghastly event, and the many attempts to do so have often suffered from a certain sameness--a sort of white-knuckled, ultra-chromatic angst that can seem generic. Glickman took a different approach; this was a deeply felt but never indulgent work that invited solemn meditation rather than gnashing of the teeth. The composer made particularly expert use of a phrase from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7, which flickered through the piece as a sad echo from Germany’s prouder days.”¹⁰ When this work, rescored for string quartet, received its world premiere from the Hilton Head Quartet in November of 1999, Jane Shaw described it this way: “Contemplative and plaintive, dissonant and eerie, with phrases that rise and hover like calligraphic strokes, the impressionistic, asymmetrical piece combines a sense of fragility and poetry underscored by tightly packed emotion. There are curling musical sentences that become one phrase punctuated by

⁹ From Program Notes to the Premiere performance by the Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra in 1992.

¹⁰ The Washington Post, Section D, May 24, 1999.

fragments broken by silence. There is a delicate interplay of tonality throughout.”¹¹ Barbara Govatos, a Philadelphia Orchestra First Violinist who performed in the Philadelphia première of this work, described it as “intensely moving; with a solid structure, it evokes a modern sensibility while retaining its tonal centers. With its heartbeat, cries, prayers and haunting waltz, the emotion of the music is on a human scale which has an immediate impact on listeners and performers alike.” These reports convey a sense of the intricacy, finesse and power of this extraordinary composition. As I look for Sylvia in The Walls, I find the depths of her commitment to our common life, to others, to the fate of her own Jewish people, to humankind, to family, to friends. We find her pain, but also her hopes, as she contemplates a consummate evil.

Sylvia had a decided gift for setting poems to music. Her song settings seem to me to best represent her aspirations as woman and creator. Her wonderful version of Emily Dickinson’s recipe for Black Cake is a masterpiece of musical wit, altogether suitable to its poetic original. Sharon Mabry has recommended to singers her settings of three Dickinson songs “From Cocoon forth,” “After Great Pain,” and “It Will be Summer, that ”they are full of pathos, delicacy, urgency, soaring vocal lines (which sopranos love), and beautiful legato movement, with little parlando or recitative....Glickman’s compositional style is expansive, but she has the ability to bring out the slightest intimacy apparent in the text. The music is tonal, bold, and buoyant. Piano and singer play as a true duo, feeding each other ideas and then relaxing to listen to the other’s comment. If you are looking for a

¹¹ The Island Packet, November 13, 1999, Low Country Life, “Hilton Head String Quartet performance a cultural adventure.”.

stunning, somewhat romantic work in a contemporary style, choose this cycle.¹² It is Sylvia's identification with the solo singer's voice that registers in this account, as well as her ability to dialogue. These skills are likewise evident in her eloquent piece for soprano, flute, viola and piano, "Antigone Speaks." There, she voices, sometimes with harshness, sometimes with tenderness, the protest of the girl whom, in Greek legend, king Creon's decree deprives of her right of conscience to give decent burial to her outcast brother. Sylvia's own individual voice, her own protest subordinated to her artistry, emerges into its fullest expression in these vocal works.

So gracious, unassuming and unassuming was Sylvia that you never fully realized her strength. A glance backwards at her career suggests that her final goal, that of picking up and dusting off women's musical achievements after centuries of neglect and forgetfulness, evokes the rebirth from its ashen fate of the glorious Phoenix of Egyptian myth. A Phoenix, I would contend, she was herself.

¹² "New Recital Songs, NATS Journal, December 17, 1996.

Selective Vita
Sylvia Foodim Glickman

Education

Royal Academy of Music, London
L.R.A.M. in Performance, 1956
Harold Craxton, piano
Manuel Frankel, compositon

Juilliard School of Music, New York City
M.Sc. 1955
B. Sc. 1954
Beveridge Webster, piano

Honors and Awards

New York Women Composers:

Annual Award for Distinguished Service to
Music Composed by Women 1995

Pennsylvania Humanities Council -Grant to support lecture-recital series on late 18th Century
Philadelphia area composers. 1986

Samuel S. Fels Fund Grant to support series of Mozart Piano Concerto concerts
1986 1986

Women's Way, Philadelphia Award for "excellence as a classical pianist and an educator"
1986

National Endowment for the Arts: Solo Artist Award 1981

Barra Foundation Grant, Reinagle Recording 1982

Royal Academy of Music: Hecht Prize, Composition 1956

Fulbright Scholarship: Royal Academy of Mujsic, London 1955-56

Juilliard School of Music:Morris Loeb Prize, highest award for excellence 1955

Juilliard School of Music: Concerto Competition Winner 1953

Publications and Recordings:

Books and Editions:

From Convent to Concert Hall - with Martha F. Schleifer, (New York: Greenwood, 2003)

Co-Editor with Martha F. Schleifer of Women Composers: An Historical Anthology eight of twelve proposed volumes completed, Boston: G.K. Hall, 2006

American Keyboard Music 1865-1909, an anthology, (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1990)

Piano Music of Amy Beach (1867-1944), (New York: Ca Capo, 1982)

Marianna d'Auenbrugg: Sonata per il Clavicembalo o Forte Piano), (Hildegard Publishing Company, 1990)

Amy Beach: Children's Carnival, Op. 25, (Hildegard Publishing Company, 1990)

Amy Beach: Childen's Album, Op. 36 ,(Hildegard Publishing Company, 1990)

American Women Composers: Piano Music from 1865-1915, (Hildegard Pulishing Company, 1990)

Maria Szymanowska: Music for Piano, (Hildegard Publishng Company, 1990)

General Editor of all Hildegard Publishing Company editions (1990-2006)

Articles:

Articles on Marianna D'Auenbrugg and Maria Szymanowska of the New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers, (London: The Macmillan Presss Ltd. (forthcoming)

"How Women have fared in Musical Competitions from 1967-1988," The Musical Woman, vol. III (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991)

Keyboard Music Section, ed., Books for College Libraries, (Middletown, CT: /choice Publications, 1987)

Reviews:

Regular reviewer for Choice, Books for College Libraries, (1985-2006)
"American Piano Trios," American Music, Journal of the Sonneck Society, (Vol. 1, No. 2: 1983.)

“Chamber Music by Jean Eichelberger and Joseph Schwantner,” Sonneck Society Bulletin, (Spring, 1990)

Records:

Alexander Reinagle: Four Piano Sonatas, first complete recording (Orion Master Recordings ORS 82437, 1982)

Bela Bartok: Piano Quintet 1904, with the Alard Quartet (Leonarda Productions LP1 108, 1981)

American Piano Music Since 1750 twelve programs (Public Broadcasting System, Philadelphia, 1976)

The Walls are Quiet Now (A Holocaust Remembrance Trilogy): “Carved in Courage, Am I a Murderer?, The Walls Are Quiet Now”). Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra, Albany Records, 2001.

Teaching:

Franklin and Marshall College-Artist-Teacher/Piano (1985-89)

Swarthmore College - Studio Piano (1983-89)

Haverford College-Artist-in-Residence, Assoc. Prof. (1969-85)

Princeton University - Studio Piano (1983-84)

West Chester University- (Studio Piano (1967-68)

Rubin Academy of Music, Jerusalem, Israel-Studio Piano (1967-68)

New England Conservatory of Music - Studio Piano (1956-58)

Concertizing

Solo and Chamber (since 1956)

Museums, Colleges, Universities and Community and Concert Series throughout the United States and abroad, including Holland, Italy, Belgium, France, Austria, Israel, East and Central Africa, and Great Britain. With the Hildegard Chamber Players, the Pennsylvania Trio, the Alard String Quartet, the Dorian Wind Quintet, the de Pasquale String Quartet, the Pennsylvania Chamber Players, and members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Baltimore Symphony and the Bay Area Women’s Philharmonic

Administration:

Hildegard Publishing Company - Founder-President (1988-2006)
Hildegard Institute for Research on Women Composers-President (1992-2006)
Hildegard Chamber Players - Artistic Director (1991-2006)
Development Committee - Sonneck Society for American Music (1991-2006)
Advisory Committee/Music Industry-University of the Arts, Phila. (1991-)
Executive Board, Northern Delaware Valley Chapter - PA Music Teachers Assoc. (1991- 93)
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts - Music Panelist (1988-91)
Pennsylvania Composers Forum - Vice Pres. (1992), President (1992_
Delaware Valley Composers - Vice-President (1988-90)
Governor's School for the Arts, PA - Adjudicator (1988)
Early Philadelphia Composer Series - Project Director, Lecturer, Pianist
Pennsylvania Chamber Players - Founder-member, pianist
Chamber Music Programs and Artist-in-Residence Program, Haverford College - Director (1969-85)
Haverford College Chamber Music Center (summers) - Director (1967-68)
Middle-States Accreditation Board- Director (1983)
Philadelphia Orchestra Youth Auditions - Adjudicator (1970's)

Selected Compositions

(available from Hildegard Publishing Company)

Dances and Entertainments (Piano solo)
Prayer Service (Cantor, choir, flute and organ)
Emily Dickinson Songs (High voice and piano)
Black Cake, A Recipe by Emily Dickinson (Soprano and piano)
Sound Elements for Trio (Flute, oboe, cello and prepared tape)
The Walls are Quiet Now (Chamber Orchestra)
The Walls are Quiet Now (Large Orchestra)
Seven Deadly Sins (SATB solosits, SATB chorus, piano)
Crystal Fanfare (Chamber Orchestra)
Am I a Murderer/ (Basso, violin, viola, cello, flute, pc., clarinet/bass clar. piano)
Carved in Courage (Large Orchestra)
Carved in Courage (Chamber Orchestra)
Shabbat Shira (Cantor, choir, organ)
Antigone Speaks (Soprano, flute, viola, piano)