



# British Women Composers and Instrumental Chamber Music in the Early Twentieth Century

*Laura Seddon*

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This is the first full-length study of British women's instrumental chamber music in the early twentieth century. Laura Seddon argues that the Cobbett competitions, instigated by Walter Willson Cobbett in 1905, and the formation of the Society of Women Musicians in 1911 contributed to the explosion of instrumental music written by women in this period and highlighted women's place in British musical society in the years leading up to and during the First World War. Seddon investigates the relationship between Cobbett, the Society of Women Musicians and women composers themselves.

The book's six case studies - of Adela Maddison (1866-1929), Ethel Smyth (1858-1944), Morfydd Owen (1891-1918), Ethel Barns (1880-1948), Alice Verne-Bredt (1868-1958) and Susan Spain-Dunk (1880-1962) - offer valuable insight into the women's musical education and compositional careers. Seddon's discussion of their chamber works for differing instrumental combinations includes an exploration of formal procedures, an issue much discussed by contemporary sources. The individual composers' reactions to the debate instigated by the Society of Women Musicians, on the future of women's music, is considered in relation to their lives, careers and the chamber music itself. As the composers in this study were not a cohesive group, creatively or ideologically, the book draws on primary sources, as well as the writings of contemporary commentators, to assess the legacy of the chamber works produced.

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