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NEW DOCUMENTARY EXPLORES THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND AS CONDUCTORS

*Documentary portrays the life of Marylouise Nanna, a violinist who also wanted to be a conductor. Conducting has traditionally been a male position in a symphony orchestra. Ms. Nanna founded the Ars Nova Chamber Orchestra in 1978 and created her own opportunity to conduct.*

Women have performed classical music in public since the early 1900s, but women were not allowed to join orchestras in the United States until the late 1930s and then did so only in very small numbers. Women began joining orchestras in larger numbers in the early 1970s, when orchestras switched to a "blind" audition system so their sex, race, and ethnicity would be concealed. But you cannot audition a conductor blind. Despite there being female soloists and star players on every instrument, the conducting position has remained a male one until very recently. In 1998 the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) appointed JoAnn Falletta as its Music Director, becoming the first major symphony orchestra in the United States to do so.

La Maestra in the House is the story of one Marylouise Nanna, a first violinist with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and conductor of the independent Ars Nova Musicians' Chamber Orchestra. Ms. Nanna joined the BPO in 1963 and remains a member of the orchestra to this day. Early in her career, Ms. Nanna studied conducting as well as the violin. Coming of age in the 1950s when women conductors were almost unheard of, she never succeeded at getting a conducting position with a full orchestra. In 1978 Ms. Nanna instead founded her own chamber orchestra, and by doing so created her own opportunity to conduct. Ars Nova has successfully been performing in Buffalo, New York to sold-out crowds for almost 30 years.



Ms. Nanna is from Buffalo and still lives in the home that her Italian-immigrant grandparents (the filmmaker's great-grandparents) raised their six children in after coming to this country, and where she was raised as well. For Italian immigrants of the early 1900s opera and classical music were popular music. Her family has a strong musical tradition, which has had a profound influence on her career. Today in the United States, classical music has become an art form relegated to the elite and consequently is struggling to maintain and attract an audience. One of Ms. Nanna's great accomplishments with *Ars Nova* is to attract people who normally would not listen to classical music. Ms. Nanna has taken the musical tradition in her (and the filmmaker's) family and brought it to the people of Buffalo; she has taken something that is intimidating to many people and made it accessible.

Through Ms. Nanna the documentary tells the story of women in classical music. In interviews with JoAnn Falletta and Ms. Nanna among others, the film identifies women's challenges and progress in the music industry, especially women conductors.

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