

# WOMEN

## IN THE ARTS



### 3. THE FIRST PROFESSIONALS

October 7, 2024

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THE CLASS WILL CONSIST OF MINI-BIOS of artists, composers, and poets, each of whom has managed to sustain a professional career in their art. All are women. All but one were born in Italy and worked there, though we will also visit France and Spain. With the exception of one remarkable medieval predecessor, all come from the later Renaissance or early baroque. We will pose the same questions of each: what factors enabled them to become professional artists in the first place, and to sustain their careers once begun? And along the way, we shall hear, read, and see some quite remarkable work. *rb.*

### PROLOGUE

- ♪ **Barbara Strozzi:** “Tradimento,” opening
- Bernardo Strozzi:** *The Gamba Player* and *Saint Cecilia*

### A. CHRISTINE DE PIZAN

Born in Italy, but brought to France by her physician father as a child, Christine grew up in a court environment and married a court official, then turned to her pen for support when her husband died.

- Christine de Pizan:** “Doulce Chose Est Que Mariage,” opening
- Christine de Pizan:** “Je Suis Vesve, Seulete, et Noir Vestue”
- Christine de Pizan:** “Sage Seroit Qui Se Saroit Garder”
- ♪ **Suzanne Savoy:** *Je Christine* (2016), excerpt
- Illustrations** to Christine de Pizan’s *Cité des Dames* (1405)
- ♪ **Binchois:** “Dueil angoisseux” (first three stanzas)

### B. SOFONISBA ANGISSOLA

Coming from a noble family, Sofonisba showed precocious talent as a painter, then sustained an exceptionally long career as a portraitist that took her all over Italy and to the Spanish court.

**Anguissola:** *Self Portrait with Bernardino Campi* (1550, Siena)

**Anguissola:** *Elizabeth de Valois*

**Anguissola:** *King Philip II of Spain* (1573, Madrid Prado)

**Anguissola:** *The Artist's Sisters Playing Chess* (1555, Poznan)

**Anguissola:** *Minerva, Amilcare, and Asdrubale Anguissola* (1559)

## C. FRANCESCA CACCINI

Francesca and her siblings were trained as a performing group by their father, who literally wrote the book on singing. But support from some high-placed Medici women enabled Francesca to strike out on her own, making her (among other things) the first woman to compose an opera.

♪ **Caccini:** *Alcina* (1625), Boston Early Music Festival preview, 2019

♪ **Caccini:** “Io mi distruggo” (Henriette Feith and Jasper Schweppe)

♪ **Caccini:** *Ciaccona*

## D. TWO SCULPTORS

**Properzia de' Rossi** is the only woman to be given a chapter of her own in Vasari's *Lives*, but since so little of her work survives, we compare her story with that of **Luisa Roldán**, who worked for the Spanish crown.

♪ **BBC video** on Properzia de' Rossi (with Amanda Vickery)

**Rossi:** *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (1520, Bologna)

**Roldán:** *Entombment of Christ* (c.1700, NY Met)

**Roldán:** *Death of Mary Magdalene* (Hispanic Society of NY)

## E. PUBLISHED IN VENICE

A brief look at two women who each had collections of their work published in Venice: the poet **Gaspara Stampa** and the composer **Maddalena Casulana**.

♪ **Casulana:** “Morir non può il mio core” (Nightingale Ensemble)

**Stampa:** *Sonnet XXVIII*

## F. ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

The daughter of a leading artist of the Roman baroque, Artemisia soon eclipsed her father. But her part at the center of a sensational court case in her teens raises questions about the legitimacy of assessing an artist in terms of her biography or gender.

**Gentileschi:** *Self-Portrait as Painting* (1639, Royal Collection)

**Gentileschi:** *Susanna and the Elders* (1610, Pommersfelden)

♪ **Video:** *Artemisia's Rape Trial* (National Gallery, London)

**Gentileschi:** *Delilah and Samson* and *Jael and Sisera*

**Gentileschi:** *Judith and her Maidservant* (1623, Detroit)

**Gentileschi:** *Judith and Holofernes* (Naples 1612 and Florence 1620)

**Judiths** by Giovanni Baglione (1698) and Cristofano Allori (1613)

## G. BACK TO BARBARA

Finally, we return to the Venetian singer-composer **Barbara Strozzi** with whom we began, and listen to two very different performances of one of her many works.

♪ **Strozzi:** “Che si può fare” opening (Céline Scheen, Ens. Artaserse)

♪ **Strozzi:** “Che si può fare” (Venerem Ensemble, Metz Cathedral)

Sofonisba **Anguissola** (1532–1625, *Italian painter*), Gilles **Binchois** (1400–60, *Burgundian composer*), Francesca **Caccini** (1587–1640, *Italian composer*), Maddalena **Casulana** (1544–90, *Italian composer*), Artemisia **Gentileschi** (1593–1653, *Italian painter*), Orazio **Gentileschi** (1563–1639, *Italian painter*), Christine de **Pizan** (1364–1430, *Italian-born French writer*), Luisa **Roldán** (1652–1706, *Spanish sculptor*), Properzia de' **Rossi** (1490–1530, *Italian sculptor*), Gaspara **Stampa** (1523–1554, *Italian poet*), Barbara **Strozzi** (1619–77, *Italian painter*), Bernardo **Strozzi** (1581–1644, *Italian painter*)

The course website is [www.brunyate.com/WomenArts](http://www.brunyate.com/WomenArts)  
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