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Hey There! Welcome to episode 16 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music-loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so happy that you're joining me today.

In our last episode of Busy Kids Love Music, we learned about composer Fanny Mendelssohn -- both her skills and talent as a pianist and composer as well as the challenges she faced as a female composer in a time and society when it was not common for women to have such a job. In today's episode, we're going to take a look at three landmark moments in music history where women began to defy social norms of the times.

While certainly women have been inventing and singing melodies since the beginning of time, the first woman composer whose music was written down is 12th century St. Hildegard -- also called Hildegard von Bingen -- of Germany. At the age of 15, Hildegard began pursuing a religious life as a nun. As a child, she had visions which she began recording in writing at the age of 43. She was a woman of many talents, and wrote 77 lyric poems, each with a musical setting which she composed. She was a prolific writer and wrote about the lives of saints, as well as treatises on medicine and natural history because she was a scientific observer. She even constructed her own language!

In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI declared her to be a saint, and many regard her as the patron saint of musicians and writers. She is one of only four women who were named a doctor of the church, meaning that her doctrinal writings have special authority in the Catholic church.

When it comes to conducting, many female “firsts” have been recent ones. It wasn’t until 2002 that a British orchestra first had a female conductor, Marin Alsop. But the very first description we have of a female conductor are all the way back in 1594 from a convent in Italy. The female conductor these records describe is Raphaela Aleotti.

Aleotti was a nun who trained and directed 23 singing nuns at a renowned convent in San Vito. -She herself was a singer and also played a variety of musical instruments, which was unusual for a woman of that time. She began her studies as a very young child, learning voice, keyboard and composition with private tutors hired by her father. She was sent to the convent San Vito to pursue these musical studies, and decided to remain at the convent, though she had invitations from suitors to return to public life. While she was the musical conductor and director for the 23 musicians and vocalists at the convent, she also composed music and served as a music teacher for young children.

Women were not allowed to join the orchestra until the first women’s orchestra was founded in Berlin by Mary Wurm. And for the next fifteen years, women were still only allowed to play in women’s orchestras. In 1913, Sir Henry Wood hired six female violinists for The Queen’s Hall Orchestra in London. Before you think Sir Henry Wood too much of a hero, though, you should know he also said, “I do not like ladies playing the trombone or double bass, but they can play the violin, and they do.”

The first woman to join an American orchestra was harpist Edna Phillips, who was accepted into the Philadelphia orchestra -- which was ranked as one of the best in the United States, making this a huge breakthrough.

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It wasn't until 1997 that the Vienna Philharmonic allowed women to be full members of the orchestra, because they believed accepting women would lower their musical standards. Here, too, it was a harpist who became the first official female member of the orchestra. Her name was Anna Leikes and she had played with the Vienna Philharmonic previously, but her name was never listed in the program and she was never publicly acknowledged.

By 2014, American orchestras were made up of 37% women, on average. While women make up 59% of the violinists in an orchestra, they only make up 3% of the trumpet and trombone players. Listen now to one of those 3%, Allison Bolso, playing the trumpet.

I hope you've had fun as you learned about these landmark moments in music history with me today. Head over to my website for links to 10 more outstanding performances from women in the past and present in this episode's Listening Calendar. You'll find that at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/16](http://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/16). Enjoy these performances over the next two weeks until our next episode of Busy Kids Do Music airs. I'll see you in two weeks for more musical discoveries. Bye for now!