

A Standards-Aligned Educator Guide for Grades 7 – 9

## MUSIC MAVENS: 15 WOMEN OF NOTE IN THE INDUSTRY

### About the book:

*Music Mavens* transports readers around the world (and beyond)—to a jazz performance in Genoa, an instrument lab in London, a Tokyo taiko dojo, a New York City beatbox battle, and even a film scoring session aboard the starship Enterprise, to name a few. Along the way, it spotlights artists whose work spans musical genres and industry roles, including composing and songwriting, performing and conducting, audio engineering, producing, and rock photography. In *Music Mavens*, 15 extraordinary women reveal how they turned their passions into platforms and how they use their power to uplift others.

Their musical resumes will inspire, but the way each artist lives her life is the real story.

**Age Range:** 12 years & up

**Grade Level:** 7 - 9

**Publisher:** Chicago Review Press

**ISBN-10:** 1641607238

**ISBN -13:** 978-1641607230

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### About Co-Author Ashley Walker:

Ashley is an author, educator, and amateur musician. She studied violin alongside her sons and plays the đàn tranh with her daughter. Ashley holds degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Artificial Intelligence, and she recently graduated from the MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults at Vermont College of Fine Arts, where she was a three-time award winner. She lives in Pacifica, CA.



### About Co-Author Maureen Charles:

A lifelong lover of music and musicians, Maureen sings, plays guitar and ukulele, and was married for 24 years to the late Jon Charles, an arranger, orchestrator, and composer of television and film music. She holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts and lives in Pasadena, CA, where she shares an office with three feisty felines.



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### Pre-Reading Discussion:

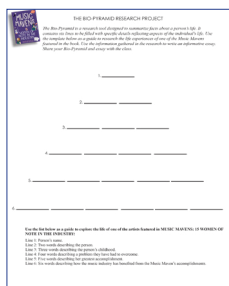
- The word *maven* means expert, master, and authority. Explain how a person might become a music maven.
- The phrase “women of note” is a figure of speech known as the *double entendre*, being a phrase devised to communicate two meanings. Determine how this phrase, in this context, can be interpreted in multiple ways.
- What is the industry referenced in the title of the book? How do you know?
- Predict what this book is going to be about.

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### Post-Reading Discussion:

- The Power to Innovate:
- Macy Schmidt
  - Lia Mice
  - Katarina Benzova
  - Examine Macy Schmidt’s motivations to establish The Broadway Sinfonietta. How, by doing so, did Macy become a true “agent of change” (pg. 11)?
  - “There is no such thing as an instrument that all people can perform,” says Lia Mice (p. 24). What is collaborative instrument design? Why is it essential to include the voices of musicians with disabilities in this process?
  - Discuss how Katarina Benzova’s creative success occurred as a result of her not being “afraid of change” (pg. 31). Identify how Kat’s willingness to try something new shaped her career.

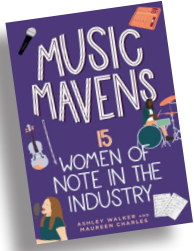
- The Power to Perform:
- Janet Dacal
  - Valérie Sainte-Agathe
  - Kaoly Asano
- Since childhood, Janet Dacal’s mentors have demanded she train hard, keep developing herself, and step into increasingly challenging roles both on- and off-stage. Discuss how her willingness to say “yes” led her to stardom.
  - Examine how Valérie Sainte-Agathe’s determination to keep the San Francisco Girls Chorus vibrant and alive during the pandemic is summarized in the phrase, “...in a time of need, she became “that teacher” for a new generation of young musicians” (pg. 64).
  - To be *humble* means to be unpretentious, genuine, and authentic. Make a connection between the practice of humility and Kaoly Asano’s belief that “When there is ego...I will make a mistake and the performance will not go well” (pg. 75), and “If I slack off or cut corners, the magic will disappear at once” (pg. 76).
- The Power to Compose:
- Nami Melumad
  - Joanne Shenandoah
  - Kate Schutt
- Film composer Nami Melumad considers herself a “storyteller” (pg. 85). How do spotting sessions and background reading contribute to her ability to underscore the emotion in a scene?
  - When asked about the inspiration for her music, Joanne Shenandoah explained, “I’m coming from a place that is purely a vessel. . . I’ve asked for it, and I’m here” (pg. 96). Interpret what Joanne means when she identifies herself as being a “vessel.”
  - One of singer-songwriter Kate Schutt’s guiding principles is “presence not perfection” (pg. 101). How does this life choice show up in her response to her mother’s diagnosis, her songwriting, and her musical performances?
- The Power to Improvise:
- Kaila Mullady
  - Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
  - Regina Carter
- The word *improvise* means to invent, freestyle and unscripted. Discuss how Kaila Mullady has taken the opportunity to improvise and blaze new trails when faced with personal and professional challenges.
  - Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ said, “Happiness is something that you have to create for yourself. You have to find it...no one will give it to you” (pg. 133). Determine how Vân-Ánh’s philosophy regarding the pursuit of happiness serves as inspiration for the song “86,400.”
  - Regina Carter was advised by her OU big band director to “...stop listening to [jazz] violin players. There’s too few of you out there, and you’re going to sound like them. You want to find your own voice (pg. 145)”. Examine how these words affirmed Regina’s life-long pursuit of authenticity, originality, and integrity as an artist.
- The Power to Produce:
- Nova Wav
  - Maria Elisa Ayerbe
  - Sylvia Massy
- Producer/songwriters Blu June Andrews and Chi Coney have deep trust and respect for each other. How does their relationship serve as a foundation for their studio work and enhance their creativity?
  - “One thing I’m not afraid of is starting over,” says audio engineer Maria Elisa Ayerbe (pg. 176). How has this ability to regroup and start fresh served her throughout her life and career?
  - Sylvia Massy sets aside one day in a session to do something “outrageous,” like recording in a church, castle, or cave (pg. 191). Discuss Adventure Recording. Why does she advocate for experimentation in pursuit of sound?



## THE BIO-PYRAMID RESEARCH PROJECT

*The Bio-Pyramid is a research tool designed to summarize facts about a person’s life. It contains six lines to be filled with specific details reflecting aspects of the individual’s life. Use the template on the following page as a guide to research the life experiences of one of the Music Mavens featured in the book. Use the information gathered in the research to write an informative essay. Share your Bio-Pyramid and essay with the class.*





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1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the list below as a guide to explore the life of one of the artists featured in MUSIC MAVENS:  
15 WOMEN OF NOTE IN THE INDUSTRY:**

Line 1: Artist's name.

Line 2: Two words describing the person.

Line 3: Three words describing the person's childhood.

Line 4: Four words describing a problem they have had to overcome.

Line 5: Five words describing the artist's greatest accomplishment.

Line 6: Six words describing how the music industry has benefited from the Music Maven's contributions.