



EVELYN GLENNIE |
GENDER QUESTIONS

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Evelyn Glennie

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Why has this stereotype appeared? Is it true?3

Do you feel image plays a part in what you do as a performer?3

Do you, or did you, feel pressure from the industry to look good or to project a certain image?4

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Have you ever heard an opinion that percussion and women can hardly be combined?

Indeed I have but not in relation to my career. We are all capable of creating emotions on all levels and my tools happen to be percussion instruments whereby the sense of touch is key. As with any family of instruments percussion is masculine and feminine, as are sounds and as is the physical negotiation of playing the instruments.

Why has this stereotype appeared? Is it true?

Perhaps in some sectors it is true. Even in many of today's Samba Schools in Brazil most of the musicians are male whilst the majority of the dancers are women. Music is often seen as the engine to movement so the sensual aspect of the female form has been used more in the delivery of dance rather than the execution of the music. With solo percussion the career is so recent and new that we do not have enough history to draw upon to see how it will pan out as regards to gender.

Do you feel image plays a part in what you do as a performer?

To an extent but it's important for me to always feel comfortable, natural and true to who I am and how I feel. I do think about what I wear in relation to the music I'm performing but it always has to be natural to me. I play a group of instruments whereby I have to think practically due to the physicality of playing and moving around therefore the clothing has to be comfortable and practical to what I am doing. At the end of the day, listening to what feels right for yourself is important – people want to feel sincerity more than anything.

Do you, or did you, feel pressure from the industry to look good or to project a certain image?

Yes, very much at the beginning of my career. Record companies wanted me to dress in a certain way as did certain territories in the Far East but I made it perfectly clear that I am my own person. It's important to listen to advice from others but not to be roller-coasted in to doing something that doesn't feel natural to you. An 'image' takes time to develop, just as learning a piece of music. One needs the freedom to experiment and to be exposed to many different types of scenarios in order to find your visual voice.

Percussion and brass sections have traditionally been male dominated. Obviously as a soloist you are somewhat removed from this, but in the orchestras you have worked with, do you feel there was a gender discrimination – overall, or in certain situations?

There are certainly more male players than females in the percussion sections of the orchestras worldwide. I cannot say with authority what the reasons for this would be as we are talking about many different cultures and societies. However, auditions are more fairly conducted due to the use of screens and I have certainly seen an increase in female percussion players in the sections and females in general throughout orchestras worldwide.

Have you ever personally experienced prejudice/discrimination in your musical life?

My hearing-impairment made it a challenge to be accepted into the Royal Academy of Music initially despite reaching the standard to get in. It took a second non-prepared audition to be accepted on the spot. This opened the door for all people, no matter what their physical challenges are, to be accepted provided they are of the standard to be accepted.

If you have any more questions, take a look at the range of student booklets we have available divided into topic sections. Still can't find what you're looking for? Email pr@evelyn.co.uk with your questions.

Where to find Evelyn?



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