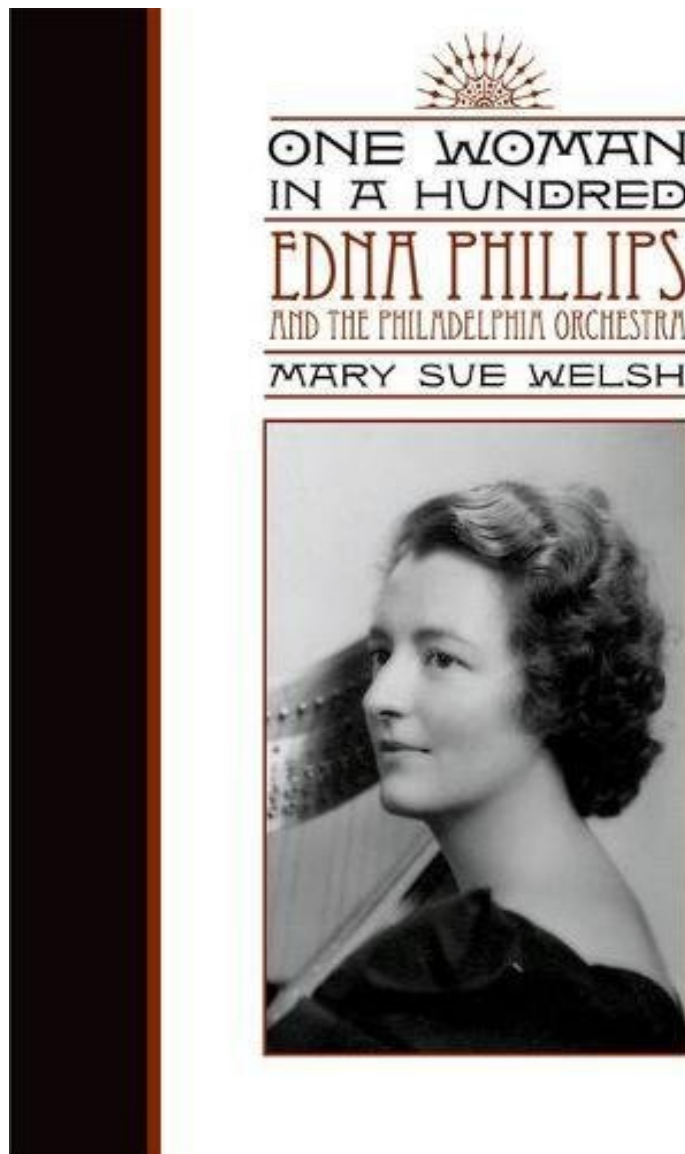


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One Woman in a Hundred: Edna Phillips and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Music in American Life)

Mary Sue Welsh

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Mary Sue Welsh : One Woman in a Hundred: Edna Phillips and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Music in American Life) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised One Woman in a Hundred: Edna Phillips and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Music in American Life):

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Well researched Well Written Informative and Enjoyable
By Gerontius
It is a pleasure to read a well written biography that leaves one more informed and knowledgeable about not just the subject of the biography but also the other major players in the life of the person. In the case of Edna Phillips these key people included Leopold Stokowski, Eugene Ormandy, Carlos Salzedo and, above all others, her husband, a leading business leader and member of the Board of the Philadelphia Orchestra in which Edna was principal harp for over a decade from the mid 1930s. We learn about harp technique, but in a non-technical way, we learn about the extraordinary musicianship and energy of her teacher Carlos Salzedo. For those interested in the career of Stokowski and perhaps already have a biography by Oliver Daniel or Chasins, here we have additional material that is mostly new and which gives Edna's recollections of touring with both the Philadelphians and the All American Youth Orchestra trip to South America. Above all we have a picture of Edna Phillips, a principal musician in a major American Orchestra in the 30s at a time when such a thing verged on the scandalous. Women have finally been admitted to the Vienna Philharmonic some 70 odd years later. Edna was a pioneer and a more influential musician than I had previously understood. For harp aficionados this is a MUST HAVE not least because there is an excellent appendix with Phillips' commissions for the instrument listed with details of first performances etc.
3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. More than just a biography
By Bugster
Mary Sue Welsh's "One Woman in a Hundred" is both a fine biography and an enlightening history. Her principal subject, Philadelphia Orchestra first harpist Edna Phillips, was the first woman to play in a major American orchestra. As her story unfolds, not only do we learn about her trials and triumphs but also about the development of the great Philadelphia Orchestra and its two long-term conductors: Leopold Stokowski and Eugene Ormandy. It is a fascinating tour of the inner workings an orchestra and as much a study of Stokowski and Ormandy as it is of Phillips. Edna Phillips was a great story teller, a great musician, and an ideal source for Welsh's terrific book. Beautifully written, it's a fine look at how women were treated in the '20s and '30s. We learn a lot about Phillips to be sure. We also learn a lot about orchestras, their leaders and their role in society during the 20th century. It's a book of great value and sensitive insight.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. One harpist to another
By salemwitch
This autobiography/biography of Edna Phillips was one filled with head-nodding antidotes that made me smile as I too remembered my experiences playing with orchestras during my rather insignificant career as an orchestral harpist. Edna carried herself through her time with dignity and resolve and although her time was early 20th century, the attitudes carried through as late as the 60s, when females were still considered "fair game" by the "good ole boys" of the orchestras. Although the subject of the book was a harpist, many a female musician will appreciate her tale.

Gifted harpist Edna Phillips (1907-2003) joined the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1930, becoming not only that ensemble's first female member but also the first woman to hold a principal position in a major American orchestra. Plucked from the Curtis Institute of Music in the midst of her studies, Phillips was only twenty-three years old when Leopold Stokowski, one of the twentieth century's most innovative and controversial conductors, named her principal harpist. This candid, colorful account traces Phillips's journey through the competitive realm of Philadelphia's virtuoso players, where she survived--and thrived--thanks to her undeniable talent, determination, and lively humor.

"Transforms into a riveting tale that spans the period from Phillip's audition to the second World War. Recommended."--Library Journal