**Florence Marshall**

Birth name: Florence Ashton Thomas

* 30 March 1843 in Rom,
† 5 March 1922 in London,

In most public press releases and encyclopedia entries, Florence A. Marshall is referred to as "Mrs. Julian Marshall", which at least regarding her professional environment has to be considered an equally important main name. She did publish her compositions mainly under the name of "Florence A. Marshall", though both of her books bear "Mrs. Julian Marshall" as the author's name.

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("The Times", 15 June 1899, p. 13)

**Profile**

A married woman, Florence A. Marshall only began studies in piano and composition at the Royal Academy of Music at the age of nearly 30, supplementing these with university studies in music at Trinity College, London, which she completed in 1883 as "Associate of Music". During the ensuing decades she maintained a presence in many different areas of London's musical life: she performed regularly in concerts as a chamber musician, served as headmistress of the singing class at Dulwich High School in the south of London and published several instructional works for school singing as well as a biography of George Frederic Handel. Already from during her student days onward, Florence A. Marshall had also been successful as a composer. She wrote three operettas, including the fairy operetta "Prince Sprite", several orchestral works, chamber works, songs and choral pieces, most of which were published by renowned London music publishing houses such as Novello, Ewer & Co.

She became supra-regionally known primarily as a conductor of an amateur orchestra. The South Hampstead Orchestra, the performing ability of which she continually expanded with her orchestral work over the course of nearly 30 years, was considered one of the most renowned London symphony orchestras in the early years of the 20th century.

**Cities an countries**

Florence A. Marshall was born in Rome, grew up in London and maintained her sphere of activity there. She studied at the Royal Academy of Music starting in the early 1870s and at Trinity College in the early 1880s, and was subsequently active as headmistress of the singing class at Dulwich High School in the south of London. From the late 1880s until about 1920 she directed the South Hampstead Orchestra in northwest London.

**Biography**

Florence A. Marshall was born Florence Ashton Thomas on 30 March 1843 in Rome, the daughter of Reverend J. Thomas, canon in Canterbury, and his wife, and was raised in London. At present, nothing is known of her early musical education, but it can be assumed, for a start, that she received sound private instruction in piano and composition.

The beginning of her professional career is unusual compared to those of numerous other women musicians. Prior to the publication of her first compositions, i.e. before 1867, Florence A. Marshall married the author, art collector and amateur musician Julian Marshall (1836-1903), who was known for his extensive music library. Three daughters were born to them (see the article "Florence Ashton Marshall" in Wikipedia England). In the year 1867 two of her songs, "Il Poeta moriente" and "Solitude", appeared in print under her married name Florence Ashton Marshall. There followed in 1869 the one-act operetta "Damon and Phyllis" to a libretto by Edwin Simpson, and in 1870 her two songs "A Little While" and "The Withered Primrose" were published.
It was only at the age of almost 30, during the early 1870s, that Florence A. Marshall began studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, part of the time under the name of Mrs Julian Marshall. She studied piano and composition with William Sterndale Bennett and Sir George Alexander Macfarren and was awarded a bronze medal at the final concerts in the summer of 1873 (see "The Musical Times" of 1 August 1873, p. 177). Already during her period of study, several of her compositions, including two larger orchestral works, were publicly performed and received thoroughly favourable reviews. For example, the orchestra of the Royal Academy conducted by Walter Macfarren performed the Andante from Florence Marshall's Symphony in B minor in 1874 at the Hanover Square Rooms in London, and "The Musical Times" wrote about the work as follows: "Amongst the most remarkable compositions of the students, special commendation must be given to the selection from a Motett by Oliveria Prescott [...] and an Andante from a Symphony in B minor, by Florence Marshall, both of which evidence the possession not only of musical feeling and knowledge of effect, but of an originality of thought which may, if carefully directed, place their composers at the head of the small list of ladies who have created a name in this important branch of the art." ("The Musical Times", 1 August 1874, p. 577). Another orchestral work, a "Notturno", was performed in May 1875 outside the Royal Academy during the course of the concerts of the British Orchestral Society: "At the same concert a Notturno, for orchestra, by Mrs. Julian Marshall, a student of the Royal Academy of Music, was given with sufficient merit to meet with some more music from the same pen." ("The Musical Times", 1 August 1877, p. 396ff.) Her concerts were equally well received. For example, Florence A. Marshall organised a concert of chamber music at Vestry Hall in the London district of Hampstead on 25 February 1879, together with the singer Jessie Jones, violinist Henry Holmes, cellist Alessandro Pezze and her sister, clarinettist Frances Thomas. The programme presented a wide range of repertoire from baroque to contemporary music. The works performed were Ludwig van Beethoven's Clarinet Trio in E-flat major, Op. 38 (an adaptation of his Septet, Op. 20), the same composer's Violin Sonata in A major, Op. 47 as well as several pieces by Francesco Geminiani, Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frederic Handel, Jean-Baptiste Lully, Carl Maria von Weber and Robert Schumann. In addition, the programme included the world premiere of a piano trio by Florence A. Marshall and two of her songs. "The Musical Times" wrote the following about the concert: "On Tuesday evening, February 25, Mrs. Julian Marshall gave a Concert of chamber music at the Vestry Hall, Hampstead, the programme of which included Beethoven's arrangement of his Septett for piano, clarionet, and violoncello, solos for the violin by Schumann and Bach, and for the violoncello by Lulli and Geminiani, a Concertino by Weber for the clarionet, and the finale of the Kreutzer Sonata. The executants were Mrs. Marshall, who presided at the piano, Mr. Henry Holmes (violin), Signor Pezze (violoncello), and Miss Frances Thomas (clarinet). Three movements of a Trio for piano, violin, and violoncello by Mrs. Marshall, played for the first time at this concert, produced a highly favourable impression, the last movement especi-
ally displaying some excellent writing. Miss Jessie Jones sang two of Mrs. Marshall’s songs, and joined Mr. Julian Marshall in a Duettto di Camera by Handel. [...] The concert was highly successful.” (“The Musical Times”, 1 April 1879, p. 215)

Simultaneously with her artistic activities, Florence A. Marshall also dedicated herself to musicological works. Her translation of Louis Spohr’s “Violinschule” of 1832 was published in 1878 at Boosey & Co. in the English edition of the violinist Henry Holmes under the title “Spohr’s Violin School, revised and edited, with additional text, by H.[enry] Holmes, the translation from the German by F. A. Marshall”. In the early 1880s Florence A. Marshall studied music at Trinity College, London, the contents of which were of a scholarly orientation, passing her examinations there for the university diploma in music in January 1883. She thus received the title of an "Associate in Music" (see "list of successful candidates at the examination for the Diploma of Associate in Music of Trinity College, London", in: “The Musical Times”, 1 March 1883, p. 152). During the same year she published a biography of George Frederic Handel in the series "The Great Musicians" of the London publishing house Sampson Low and Marston, which was also reprinted until 1910 in several editions, and which was possibly her final thesis at Trinity College. “The Musical Times” reviewed it as follows: "The authoress is well known as an accomplished and cultivated amateur musician, and her admirable little book labours under only one disadvantage, which she has herself pointed out – the materials are so vast and the space allotted to her is so small. From this cause the book is compelled to be too much a mere compilation of bare facts. [...] Mrs. Marshall’s book, notwithstanding its brevity, contains much valuable information in a condensed form, and is one of a series of biographies published by Sampson Low [...], edited by F. Hueffer." (“The Musical Times”, 1 September 1883, p. 505) In 1889 there followed two volumes on the authoress Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley under the title "The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley" (London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1889). As a musicologist, Florence A. Marshall also wrote several articles for the first edition of "Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians” (see Grove Dictionary of Women Composers 1994).

It was probably already the mid-1880s when Florence A. Marshall became headmistress of the singing class at Dulwich High School in the south of London. It was in this connection that three instructional works for singing were written between 1885 and 1893, all of which were published by the London music publishers Novello, Ewer & Co. The "Seventy Solfeggi" appeared in 1885, with the "Five Minutes’ Exercises, in two parts, for the use of singing classes" following in 1889 and the "Interval Exercises for Singing Classes" in 1893. In the preface to the "Seventy Solfeggi", citing the extensive review in "The Musical Times", Florence A. Marshall wrote: “Although illustrating various technical facts in music, they [the solfeggi] do not profess to instil any of these, except indirectly. Although affording practice to the vocal powers similar in kind [...], to that of ordinary Solfeggi for solo singers, they are not essentially exercises in vocalisation. [...] They are little music-pictures, adapted for the voice or for two voices; recreation-exercises for all the musical powers, uttered in song.” (quoted from "The Musical Times", 1 January 1886, p. 40). In addition, the reviewer emphasised not only the pedagogical, but also the compositional abilities of the author: “Bearing in mind the avowed design of the composer in writing the Solfeggi contained in this volume, we have nothing but unqualified praise for them, not only as Exercises for class-singers, but as refined and graceful little Sketches thoroughly worthy of being sung to words instead of syllables: indeed in such charmingly melodious pieces as 'A Song of yesterday,' 'Evening Song,' 'Forest Echoes' and the 'Siciliana,' little vocalists will find it difficult to avoid supplying some [...] lines to the highly suggestive notes they are singing. [...] Some are unaccompanied, and others have a simple pianoforte part, always appropriate, and always easy to play. That the work must become extensively known is beyond a doubt; and when we affirm as we do with the utmost confidence, that Mrs. Marshall has done for young vocalists what Schumann has so successfully effected for young pianists, there is equal certainty that it will become as extensively appreciated.” (“The Musical Times”, 1 January 1886, p. 40) Florence A. Marshall also composed the “fair operetta” “Prince Sprite” for her schoolgirls, the libretto of which had been prepared by Bertha Thomas based on a short story by Countess D’Aulnoy. “The Musical Times” review read: "The story has, we believe, been dramatised before under the title of 'The Invisible Prince'; but the present version derives no little of its attractiveness from the simple yet graceful music with which it is associated. There is a bright overture for four hands, with violin ad lib., and fifteen other numbers – choruses, duets, songs and instrumental pieces, including some graceful soft music, and some excellent dance
measures. The vocal parts are well written, and show considerable knowledge of vocal effect and no little skill in writing for treble voices, so that it should command a welcome from those choral societies where female voices only are available for its utility in that respect. Its musical qualifications will be certain to secure favour for it wherever it is known.” (“The Musical Times”, 1 April 1891, p. 234) On 28 July 1891 the operetta was performed by schoolgirls of Dulwich High School, followed by three guest performances at James Allen Girls’ School, as “The Musical Times” reported: "A series of dramatic and other performances was given at Dulwich High School by the pupils [...]. On Tuesday, the 28th, the performance consisted of the Fairy Operetta 'Prince Sprite,' [...] the music composed by Florence A. Marshall (Mrs. Julian Marshall), class-singing mistress at the school. [...] The music is fairly easy and tuneful, and the plot forms an excellent and amusing acting piece; for the lines are well written and full of point. Three performances of the same Operetta were given at the James Allen Girls’ School, under Mrs. Marshall’s direction, by permission of Miss Betty, the head mistress. These were semi-dramatic, as they were given by daylight and without a regular stage, but were, from a musical point of view, very successful. [...] The work is written for treble voices, with accompaniment for the pianoforte (which in the overture and dance-music numbers is written for four hands), and an occasional ad lib. violin obbligato. [...] the whole Operetta is admirably adapted for school performances, and deserves to be known in all places where such a work is available." (“The Musical Times”, 1 September 1891, p. 550ff.) One year later followed the public premiere at the theatre of London’s Albert Hall, again under the direction of Florence A. Marshall. Her daughter probably participated in this performance as a violinist: "Mrs. Julian Marshall’s Fairy operetta 'Prince Sprite' was given for the first time at the West Theatre in the Albert Hall, on the 9th ult., by a company of young ladies, under the direction of the composer. The operetta, the libretto of which is written by Bertha Thomas, is designed for school use, and in this capacity will no doubt be found extremely valuable, the music being tuneful, and, it need hardly be said, musician-like, while the composer’s large experience in school work has enabled her to effectively gauge the capabilities of youthful vocalists. [...] The operetta, which was prettily mounted and dressed, was accompanied on the pianoforte by Mrs. Marshall, assisted in the duet parts by Miss Mary Carmichael and by Miss Marshall (violin). The theatre was crowded by a friendly audience, and the composer and authoress were warmly called at the end of the performance. The operetta is one which should find special favour at school entertainments." (“The Musical Times”, 1 August 1892, p. 491)

Florence A. Marshall also regularly performed at concerts as a chamber musician. Thus she organised a concert in 1901, for example, at which not only several London musicians participated, including the cellist May Muckle, oboist Leila Bull, bassoonist Cornwell and hornist Brain, but also two of her daughters, Frances and Amabel Marshall as well as her sister, the clarinetist Frances Thomas. Florence A. Marshall accompanied the concert at the piano: "The Blind School, Eton-Avenue. – The third of the delightful chamber concerts given in the convenient little room near the Swiss-cottage, by Misses Frances Thomas, Frances Marshall, and Amabel Marshall took place last night, when an admirable performance took place of Mozart’s beautiful serenade for eight wind instruments and of Beethoven’s septet. In the former, Miss Leila Bull played the first oboe, and Miss Thomas the first clarinet, with fine artistic feeling. Messrs. Corwell and Brain played first bassoon and first horn. The string parts of the septet were undertaken by the Misses Marshall, Miss May Muckle, and Miss R. Watson, the two forming of whom played a charming sonata by Leclair for violin and viola, to Mrs. Julian Marshall’s accompaniment.” (“The Times”, 5 February 1901, p. 9)

Florence A. Marshall became especially well known, however, as the conductor of the South Hampstead Orchestra, founded in 1885 and consisting largely of amateurs. Florence A. Marshall conducted the orchestra beginning in the late 1880s at the latest until about 1920. The large annual concerts took place at the Hampstead Conservatoire in the beginning, at St. James’s Hall, London starting in the mid-1890s and ultimately at Queen’s Hall and were soon considered amongst the great symphony concerts in London, not least because Florence A. Marshall required a professional repertoire from the orchestra from the very outset, with major symphonic works and solo concertos. The concerts were regularly reviewed in “The Times” and “The Musical Times”, with Florence A. Marshall’s abilities as orchestral leader and conductor brought to the fore almost without exception. Thus "The Times" wrote the following about the 5th annual concert in mid-May 1890, which included Franz Schubert’s Symphony No. 8 in C major, D 944 ("Great C Major") and the Concerto grosso in G minor, Op. 6 No. 6 HWV 324 of Ge-
orge Frederic Handel on the programme: "The fifth annual concert of the South Hampstead Orchestra took place at the Hampstead Conservatoire on Friday evening, when a most meritorious performance was given of no less difficult a work than Schubert's great symphony in C major. The way in which the band had been drilled (the players of the chief wind instruments alone were professional) reflects the greatest possible credit on the conductor, Mrs. Julian Marshall, who wielded her baton to some purpose, really leading her orchestra, not merely beating time." ("The Times", 20 Mai 1890, p. 13; see also "The Musical Times", 1 June 1890, p. 350). The 6th annual concert in 1891 included Johann Sebastian Bach's Concerto in D minor for two solo violins and string orchestra, BWV 1043, Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Op. 38, Antonín Dvorák's "Romance and Polka" from his Czech Suite in D major, Op. 39 as well as Overtures by Ludwig van Beethoven and Carl Maria von Weber, and this time, too, the work of Florence A. Marshall was highly praised: "The Society is doing admirable work, the tone and attack being decidedly good, and Mrs. Julian Marshall is to be congratulated upon the very satisfactory result attained." ("The Musical Times", 1 July 1891, p. 423) In addition, Florence A. Marshall received special acknowledgement for her interpretations of the symphonies of Johannes Brahms, being one of the first conductors to establish these works in the London concert repertoire. Thus "The Times" reviewed the annual concert of 1893, which included Ludwig van Beethoven's Leonore Overture, Op. 138, his Romance for Violin and Orchestra No. 2 in F major, Op. 50 and Hamish MacCunn's Overture "Land of the Mountain and of the Flood", Op. 3 and Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73: "It is most rarely that an amateur orchestra attains to such a degree of efficiency as was exhibited at the concert directed by Mrs. Julian Marshall at the Hampstead Conservatoire on Tuesday evening. Even for professional players Brahms's fine symphony in D is a somewhat severe test of ability, and it is no exaggeration to say that the performance under Mrs. Marshall's extremely skilful direction, judged by any standard, was a most creditable one. The delicacy and animation displayed in the scherzo, and the breadth of phrasing in the slow movement, were really remarkable." ("The Times", 9 June 1893, p. 3) Two years later, the orchestra appeared again under her direction, with Johannes Brahms's Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn in B-flat major, Op. 56a and Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55 ("Eroica") and "The Times" reviewed it as follows: "The South Hampstead Orchestra. – The excellent band conducted by Mrs. Julian Marshall gave a most interesting concert at the Hampstead Conservatoire on Wednesday evening, when the two principal works given were Brahms's fine variations on a theme by Haydn, and the Eroica symphony of Beethoven. With the exception of one or two very trifling slips [...], both works were extremely well played, and Mrs. Marshall once more proved herself a most capable conductor." ("The Times", 1 June 1895, p. 5; see also "The Musical Times", 1 July 1895, p. 479) The review of the annual concert of 1899 – including Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90 – has almost the effect of a summary of the orchestral work achieved by Florence A. Marshall so far: "The excellent band conducted by Mrs. Julian Marshall gave its annual concert in St. James's-hall on Tuesday, when the chief work played was Brahms's magnificent symphony in F, No. 3, the formidable difficulties of which were overcome with complete success by players the bulk of whom are amateurs. What careful, constant, and well-directed practice can do in the way of attaining the best results was seen in the accuracy, spirit, and even breadth with which the work was played throughout and more especially in the manner in which the wonderfully poetical termination of the slow movement was given out by the first violins. [...] There is no need to dilate upon Mrs. Marshall's remarkable skill as a conductor, which is sufficiently well known to cultivated musicians; not only does she establish the magic rapport with her orchestra without which the most intelligent musician must fail, but she has the fine taste and musicianship which is lacking in so many of the virtuosi of the conducting stick." ("The Times", 15 June 1899, p. 13)

During the next two decades, the South Hampstead Orchestra under the direction of Florence A. Marshall was considered one of the orchestras in Great Britain, with which musicians including violinists Fritz Kreisler, Mischa Elman and Isolde Menges as well as violoncellist Pablo Casals performed in concert. At the 22nd annual concert in 1908 at Queen's Hall in London, Mischa Elman performed Camille Saint-Saëns' Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61 and "The Times" wrote the following about the orchestra, their conductor and the concert: "The South Hampstead Orchestra, which gave its 22nd annual concert in the Queen's-hall last night, is certainly the most artistic in aim, and one of the most efficient in accomplishment, of the organizations of the kind. Mrs. Julian Marshall is not only a capital conductor, but an ardent lo-
ver of the best music, and her interpretations of the symphonies of Brahms are none the less welcome now that they are more frequently given by the professional conductors than was the case when the symphonies were scarcely to be heard elsewhere. The lovely second symphony in D [op. 73] was the principal work given last night, and very well it was done; Mischa Elman's fine playing of Saint-Saëns's concerto in B minor was another admirable feature of the concert.” (“The Times”, 5 June 1908, p. 13) The annual concert of 1910 took place at Queen's Hall in London once again, this time with Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 2 in C major, Op. 61, Bedrich Smetana's "Vltava" ("The Moldau") and the Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 of Johannes Brahms and with Fritz Kreisler as soloist. At the annual concert of 1912, the programme consisted of Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68 as well as the Violoncello Concerto in C major Op. 20 of Eugène d'Albert with Pablo Casals ("The Musical Times", 1 July 1913, p. 468); in 1913 it was Antonín Dvorák's Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 ("From the New World"), Johannes Brahms's Tragic Overture, Op. 81 as well as Peter I. Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35, again with Fritz Kreisler as soloist: "Renewed admiration for the playing of the South Hampstead Orchestra and for the high ability of Mrs. Julian Marshall as an instructor and director of orchestral forces was felt at Queen's Hall on June 3, when this organization gave an interesting concert. The performance of Dvorák's 'New World' Symphony gave full effect to its beauty and freshness, and an excellent account was given of Brahms's 'Tragic' Overture and Tchaikovsky's Violin concerto, in which Herr Kreisler was soloist." ("The Musical Times" of 1 July 1913, p. 469) Finally, at the 28th annual concert of the South Hampstead Orchestra under the direction of Florence A. Marshall, Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98 and one of Max Bruch's violin concertos with Isolde Menges as soloist were performed (see "The Musical Times", 1 July 1914, p. 472).

As a composer, Florence A. Marshall regularly published works of her own until about 1900. Alongside the three above-named operettas "Damon and Phyllis", "The Masked Shepherd" and "Prince Sprite", the catalogue of her compositions also includes numerous songs, choral pieces and chamber music. Most of her songs and choral movements were published by renowned London music publishing houses, including Novello, Ewer & Co. and Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co., as well as in magazines, including "The Musical Times"; her instrumental works probably remained unprinted and are presently considered missing (see Grove Women Composers 1994, p. 316).


Appreciation

Florence A. Marshall was a presence in public English musical life for over fifty years and was doubtless one of the most versatile women musicians of her generation. She was active as a chamber musician, composer, conductor and music pedagogue, and also published two large scholarly works as well as translations, including that of Louis Spohr's "Violinschule". All of her activities were perceived and reviewed by the press. She received special acknowledgement, however, for her many years of continuous orchestral work as conductor of the South Hampstead Orchestra, which, under her direction, advanced to the position of a highly regarded symphony orchestra in England. In an obituary, "The Times" acknowledged her artistic and scholarly work as follows: "Up to the time of the war Mrs. Julian Marshall, who died in London on Sunday at the age of 79, had been a very well-known figure in the musical life of London. For close on 30 years she had conducted the South Hampstead Orchestra, an excellent amateur institution, which gave occasional concerts in the centre of London, latterly at Queen's Hall. When she began this work the fact of a woman conducting a full orchestra at all was sufficiently unusual to excite remark, but Mrs. Marshall was the last person to wish to found a reputation on the sex qualification. She was a genuine musician who knew what was good and was determined to give it in the best possible way. Musicians were attracted to her concerts because they found there, played with intelligence and care, works which were often passed over by the more commercial institutions. In particular Mrs. Marshall gave some notable performances of the symphonies of Brahms at a time when they were not considered to be the popular attractions they are to-day. She secured the cooperation of the most eminent solo artists, such as Kreisler and Casals, and their performances of concertos with her, who so well understood the art of orchestral accompaniment, will long be remembered." ("The Times", 7 March 1922, p. 14)

Research

In December 2012, the New York antiquary James Cummins Bookseller offered the following manuscript for sa-
le prepared by members of the South Hampstead Orchestra as a gift for and tribute to Florence A. Marshall: "Illuminated and calligraphic Manuscript 'To Mrs. Julian Marshall from the past and present members of the South Hampstead Orchestra" [...] 4th July 1911". The description of the antiquary reads as follows: "Illuminated title page with calligraphic lettering in red and black, large initial "T" in gold and several colours, within elaborate floral frame of red, green and black, followed a list of the orchestra members, calligraphed in red and black on rectos of 8 leaves. 10-3/4 x 8-1/4 in.; 27.5 x 21 cm, [England: 1911]. Bound in full brown crushed levant morocco with elaborate gilt-ruled borders framing a central, gilt-lettered monogram "FAM" (Frances [recte: Florence, SW] Ashton Marshall) within a circular gilt locket design; stamped-signed on the front turn-in, 'Illuminated and Bound by Sangorski and Sutcliffe'." [As of: 4 December 2012]

Need for Research

The need for further research on Florence A. Marshall includes her biography, her activities and compositions as well as her contacts within London musical life.

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