



MATILDA

EFFECT



Pionierinnen der Forschung Female Pioneers of Research

Pt. 66

Frieda Belinfante



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Frieda Belinfante (1904-1995)
Cellist, Conductor & Resistance Fighter

After receiving a classical education in violin and viola, she founded the “Orpheus Quintet” in 1927—one of the first professional chamber ensembles led by a female conductor—which gained international recognition.



In the early 1930s, she conducted the “Amsterdam Chamber Orchestra,” but as a lesbian Jew, she was forced to flee to Great Britain following the German invasion of the Netherlands in 1940. There, she joined the resistance network “De Geuzen” (“The Beggars”) and helped rescue Jewish prisoners—under the cover of her musical activities.





Together with the group
“Persoonsbewijzencentrale (PBC)”,
she forged over 65,000 identity
documents to protect Jews sought
by the Gestapo.

Since the forged documents would
have been detected through
verification at the municipal
registry office, the PBC decided to
blow up the office.

Although she was involved in
planning the attack on
Amsterdam’s municipal registry
office in autumn 1942, she could
not participate in the actual
bombing in 1943 due to
her being a woman.



After the war, she emigrated to the USA and became the first woman to be permanently appointed conductor of the “Orange County Philharmonic” symphony orchestra.

In 1962, the orchestra was disbanded—Belinfante suspected (not without reason) that her sexual orientation played a role. Thereafter, she gave private music lessons until her death in 1995.





„Ich habe nie an mich gedacht –
nur an die, die ich retten konnte.“

„I never thought of myself – only
of those I could save.“

