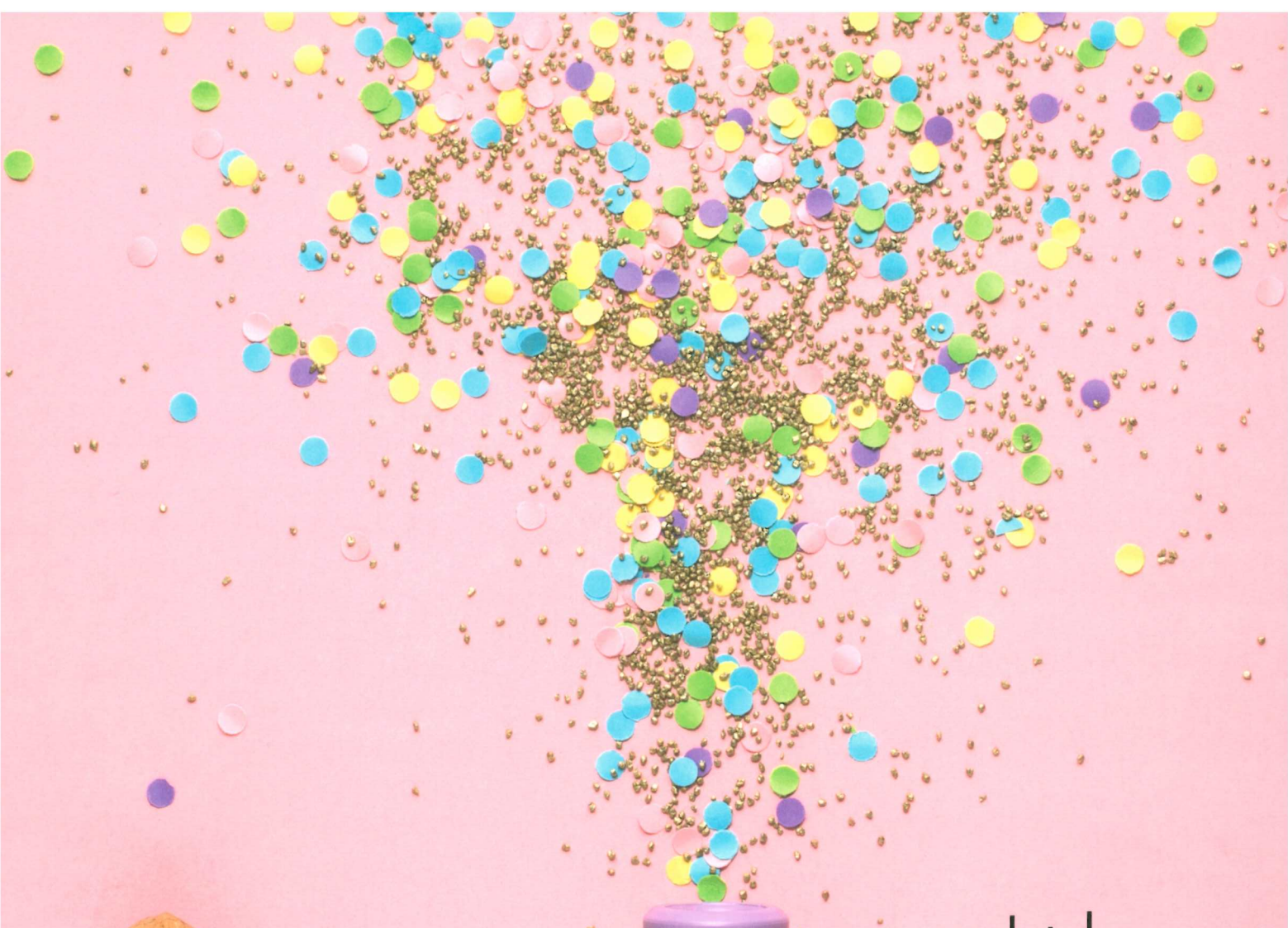




CHAMPAGNE

report 2019 the drinks business





Margareth 'Maggie' Henriquez of Krug

CHAMPAGNE'S grandes dames

The Champagne industry has traditionally been run by men, with a few notable exceptions. But, as *Lucy Shaw* discovers, there is a new wave of women who are smashing the glass ceiling and making their mark on the sector

WHILE CHAMPAGNE remains a male-dominated region, its history is punctuated with strong female figures who had huge responsibility thrust upon them following the untimely deaths of their husbands. The most famous of these

willful widows is Veuve Clicquot. Born Barbe-Nicole Ponsardin, Clicquot took over her husband François Clicquot's Champagne business in 1805 after his sudden demise. Running the enterprise while looking after her young daughter,

Clicquot had a profound influence on the production and marketing of Champagne, and is credited with inventing the riddling process, turning her house into a respectable brand enjoyed at royal courts throughout



La Transmission is made up of 10 of Champagne's leading women

Europe, and creating Veuve Clicquot's distinctive yellow labels that remain to this day.

Half a century later, another famous widow emerged – Jeanne-Alexandrine Louise Pommery, who took over Champagne Pommery in 1858 after the death of her husband. During her time at the helm of the house she oversaw the construction of the domaine and masterminded the creation of Pommery Brut Nature in 1874 in response to an English thirst for a drier style of Champagne, which was sweet at the time. More recently, Lily Bollinger's 30-year tenure at Bollinger left a legacy that is still upheld today. Born Emily Law de Lauriston Bourbers, Lily took over Bollinger in 1941 following the death of her husband, Jacques, and quickly got to work expanding the house's production through the purchase of new vineyards.

Travelling the world extensively to promote the brand, in 1967 Lily was ahead of the curve when she launched prestige cuvée R.D. with the 1952 vintage. "Lily Bollinger left an extraordinary legacy that still resonates two generations on," says Andrew Hawes, managing director of Bollinger's UK agent, Mentzendorff. "From her desire to be independent and not follow the crowd, to her focus on Pinot Noir and emphasis on the house using grapes from its own vineyards, her values are deeply ingrained in the family today."

While we may still be a long way off gender parity in the region's boardrooms,

change is afoot, and more women than ever are taking on senior roles at their family houses, or are being welcomed into the Champagne industry from outside the area. According to the BBC, 60% of oenology students in Champagne are women, which bodes well for the future, though more needs to be done to make it easier for them to achieve the ultimate accolade of *chef de cave*, a position still only held by a tiny number of women in the region.

Hoping to inspire the next generation of female cellar masters and CEOs in Champagne is La Transmission, a 10-strong all-female initiative founded by two pioneers: Anne Malassagne, a fourth-generation co-owner of her family Champagne house, AR Lenoble; and Margareth Henriquez, who, as the president and CEO of Krug, is one of the most powerful and influential figureheads in the region. As well as her role at Krug, Maggie (as she likes to be known) is also the president of LVMH's

'Lily Bollinger left an extraordinary legacy that still resonates two generations on. Her values are deeply ingrained in the family today'

Feature findings

- > While Champagne remains a male-dominated region, its history is punctuated with strong female figures championing change at their respective houses, from Veuve Clicquot and Jeanne-Alexandrine Louise Pommery to Lily Bollinger.
- > We may still be a long way off gender parity in Champagne's boardrooms, but more women than ever are taking on senior roles at their family houses, or are being welcomed into the industry from outside Champagne.
- > Hoping to inspire the next generation of female cellar masters and CEOs in Champagne is La Transmission, a 10-strong all-female initiative founded by Anne Malassagne of AR Lenoble and Maggie Henriquez of Krug.
- > A growing number of women are becoming cellar masters at prominent houses. Floriane Eznack has been ushering in change at Jacquart for eight years, while Séverine Frerson was recently named as the successor to Perrier-Jouët's longtime cellar master, Hervé Deschamps.

Estates & Wines division. Having put the idea to Cecile Bonnefond in 2011 soon after she became president of Charles and Piper-Heidsieck, Malassagne had to put La Transmission on ice for five years after it failed to take off.

Undeterred, in 2016 she went for a second bite of the apple, this time recruiting Henriquez to launch the concept. Malassagne's aim was simple: to bring together a group of female decision makers from the Champagne region with shared values and a passion for



Alice Paillard

the group is made up of women, their events are open to both sexes.

"The great thing about La Transmission is that it's not driven by ego – we're all working together for the better of the group, and our brands stay in the background. We never compare figures when we get together; it's all about sharing our experiences and collectively promoting Champagne in a more modern way to a younger audience to make it more accessible and less intimidating," says Malassagne, who was thrust into the role of managing her family Champagne house in 1993 when she was 28. "Back then, if women were running Champagne houses it was usually not their choice – they were forced to do it through circumstances. I was working at L'Oréal at the time and wanted to stay in Paris, but my father became ill and I was the only one in the family able to take on the role. It was really difficult initially, as I had no credibility and no idea how to make wine. The first 10 years were really tough," she admits.

While her job is a lot easier now, Malassagne has had to prove herself every step of the way. "I asked my brother to join me in the business in 1996. When we turned up to meetings together, most clients thought I was his assistant or wife, and at tastings people thought I was there just to open the bottles. There are still some areas of the business where my brother finds it easier than me because he's a man, particularly when it comes to dealing with our growers."

While initially dismissed as "just another group of women", La Transmission is gaining recognition in Champagne and Malassagne has her sights set on collaborations with other

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collectively promoting the product to a new generation of drinkers. While the size of their respective houses wasn't important, all members had to be modern in their approach and outward-looking in their thinking.

Though the idea failed to take flight in 2011, something clicked in 2016, and Malassagne and Henriquez soon recruited eight like-minded women to the La Transmission collective, including Évelyne Boizel of Boizel, Alice Paillard of Bruno Paillard, Melanie Tarlant of Tarlant and Floriane Eznack, who was named *chef de cave* of Jacquart in 2011 when she was just 31. "Having a space that encourages open discussion where you can share your ideas with like-minded people in the industry is priceless," says Paillard. Since its inception three years

ago, La Transmission has hosted events open to wine students and international press, including an exploration into the effects of glassware on the taste of Champagne, and a tasting of back vintages to illustrate its evolution. While



Photo courtesy: Oliver Doran

Vitalie Taittinger

women in wine initiatives around the world. "We're not a commercial organisation; it's all about sharing ideas and promoting female wine professionals. I want to show future generations that it's possible to be a woman and work in Champagne if you're passionate and hard-working."

Another woman who found herself unexpectedly at the helm of a Champagne house is Belgium-born Carol Duval-Leroy, who took over Duval-Leroy in 1991 following the death of her husband at 39. Aged 35 and with three young sons to look after, Duval-Leroy put her dream of running a restaurant aside and flung

herself into her new role, having promised her husband that she would keep the house in the family. Over the past 28 years, she has not only kept her promise, but helped the *maison* to thrive, expanding exports, increasing production and launching a prestige cuvée called Femme de Champagne, in a nod to her status as one of only a small number of women in charge of a Champagne house. Taking over the domain "turned out to be the best possible remedy for my sorrow", Duval-Leroy told *Vigneron* magazine in 2011, though it wasn't easy at first. "No one thought I would succeed. The task was huge, and offers to buy the house

were coming in every day, but things started to change once I gained the trust of our employees, suppliers and clients," Duval-Leroy recalls. "Success came little by little. Running a Champagne house is like navigating an ocean liner – the decisions you make take time to come into effect."

Among her proudest achievements thus far is serving as the first female president of

the Association Viticole Champenoise from 2007 to 2010. She has also made a point of championing other talented women in the region, promoting winemaker Sandrine Logette-Jardin to the role of cellar master at Duval-Leroy in 2005, and in doing so making her the first female *chef de cave* in Champagne. This desire to help others succeed is, according to Duval-Leroy, what sets women apart from men in business. "Women focus more on succeeding collectively while men compete for themselves. The wine industry is still very male oriented, and I feel many of the ego battles among them wouldn't exist if there were more women at the top of the industry," she says.

Fortunately, Logette-Jardin is no longer the sole female cellar master in the region. For the past eight years, Floriane Eznack has been ushering in change at Jacquart, while last September Séverine Frerson was named as the successor to Perrier-Jouët's longtime cellar master, Hervé Deschamps, four months after being made *chef de cave* at Piper-Heidsieck. Neither of these achievements have come easily, with Frerson describing Champagne in a recent interview as a "hyper-masculine" world. In her new role Frerson is seeking to follow in the footsteps of the house's co-founder, Rose-Adélaïde Jouët. "She was a woman of great character and determination, and is a great source of inspiration for me," she says. Rather than reinventing the wheel, Frerson's goal at Perrier-Jouët is to preserve and perfect the house's floral style by getting the best out of the Chardonnay she works with.

Having dreamt of being a fighter pilot, Jacquart's Eznack has had to fight a few

'Success came little by little. Running a Champagne house is like navigating an ocean liner – the decisions you make take time to come into effect'



Charline Drappier

battles to get where she wanted to be. "It's still very hard being a female *chef de cave* – I've had to work harder than my male counterparts to prove myself and my ability because I'm a woman. I have three male colleagues and they still think I'm the gentle blonde that is more focused

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on communication than the technical side of things. It's exhausting having to constantly fight to prove that I'm capable of doing my job," she admits, though believes things are slowly changing for the better. "There are a lot of women poised to take over their houses in the next 10 years, but it's still hard for women to reach the top in Champagne. I'd love to see a change in the patriarchy as there is a glass ceiling above our heads, and a lot of women in the region are viewed as only being interested in marketing and communications," she says.

GLASS CEILING

One woman who has managed to smash through the glass

ceiling is Krug president and CEO Margareth 'Maggie' Henriquez. The Venezuelan-born Harvard graduate is known as the 'turnround CEO' for her canny ability to breathe life back into flagging companies in need of a fresh direction. Beginning her career in Central and South America, Henriquez was the first female president of Seagram in Venezuela, and went on to bring American cookie company Nabisco back to profitability at a time when it was hemorrhaging money. Moving back to drinks, in 2001 Henriquez upped sticks to Argentina to run Bodegas Chandon – a Moët & Chandon offshoot producing Andean fizz. The experience stood her in good stead for her current role at Krug, which she took on in 2008, having turned down the chance to run Veuve Clicquot eight years earlier.

Henriquez is refreshingly honest about being unsure at first if she was the right woman for the job. "I thought that Krug had an arrogant image and a closed culture, which was the complete antithesis of my personality," she told *Meininger's Wine Business International* in a recent interview. In the midst of the global financial crisis, the big bosses at LVMH were clearly hoping Maggie would work her magic on the fizz firm, whose volume sales were plummeting when she was appointed, and dipped further still during her first year in the role, giving Maggie her biggest challenge to date. "When I arrived the house was in crisis, but being a good Latin American, I've been through many a crisis throughout my life, so it didn't faze me," she says.

Her aim was straightforward: to simplify the Krug message and turn it

from a house loved by a knowledgeable few to a leading player in Champagne. Progress, however, was slow, and Henriquez is open about the fact that she was criticised early on in her role for not making an impact quick enough. Her lightbulb moment came after meeting the president of Dior at a leadership conference, who let her in on a secret – all luxury brands need a founding myth. At the time, Krug had lost its connection with its founder – Joseph Krug – so Henriquez set about researching his life and philosophy, and made it her mission to tell his story to both the trade and consumers to bring the brand back to life.

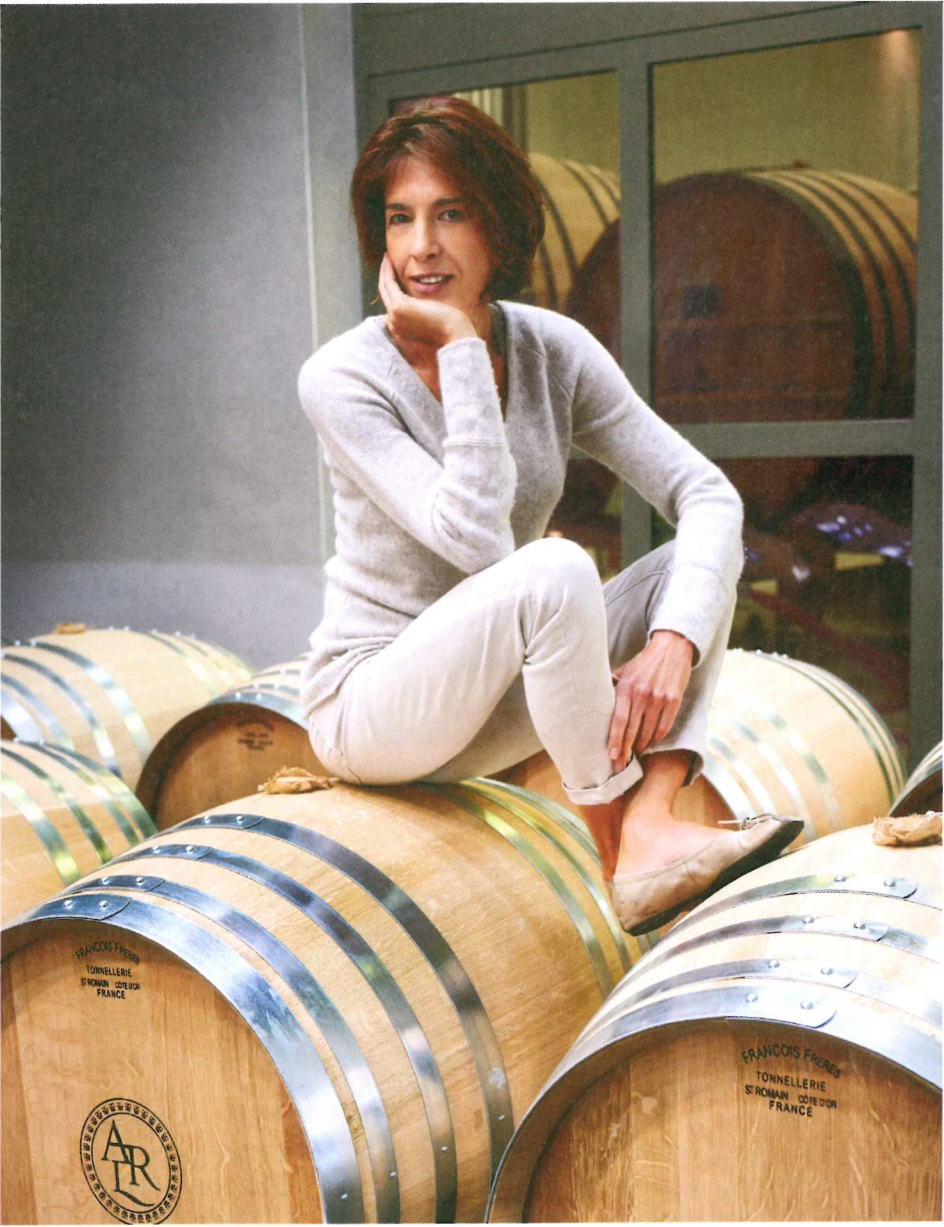
Keen for Krug to be more transparent, one of Maggie's proudest achievements is the introduction of the Krug ID code on all bottles of flagship fizz Grande Cuvée, which gives people access to detailed information about the wine in their bottle, from the disgorgement date, the year of the base wine and the number of wines that make up the blend to the varietal composition and where the grapes hail from. A radical move for Krug, at first the idea didn't go down well with the family but has since been embraced by both house director Olivier Krug and *chef de cave* Eric Lebel. Her next big goals are to get more women drinking Krug and to mentor the next generation of female leaders in the wine industry, a role that comes naturally to Henriquez, who was a teacher before entering the drinks trade.

A number of Champagne's rising stars,

'When I arrived the house was in crisis, but being a good Latin American, I've been through many a crisis throughout my life, so it didn't faze me'



Mélanie Tarlant



Anne Malassagne



Séverine Frerson



Carol Duval-Leroy



Floriane Eznack

Members of La Transmission

- > Evelyne Boizel of Champagne Boizel
- > Delphine Cazals of Champagne Claude Cazals
- > Floriane Eznack of Champagne Jacquart
- > Charline Drappier of Drappier
- > Chantal Gonet of Champagne Philippe Gonet
- > Margareth Henriquez of Krug
- > Anne Malassagne of Champagne AR Lenoble
- > Alice Paillard of Bruno Paillard
- > Mélanie Tarlant of Tarlant
- > Vitalie Taittinger of Taittinger

women are being encouraged to be themselves in business rather than having to act in what is perceived to be a masculine way." **db**

including Charline Drappier and Alice Paillard, are part of La Transmission, and benefit from the wisdom of its more experienced members. Drappier was so honoured to be asked to join the fold that she initially didn't feel she deserved to be in such esteemed company. "I'm the newest member of the group and also the youngest. I was surprised when Anne asked me to join because I wasn't sure I had the right to be there, but she said she needed my energy and that I represent the next generation. I certainly take a lot more from the discussions than I can give

back at the moment," she says. No stranger to hard work, 28-year-old Drappier "never really stopped working" after giving birth to her daughter Gabrielle six months ago, and is poised to take over the running of her family's Champagne house from her father Michel when he retires.

Encouragingly, the next generation of female leaders in Champagne are entering the industry out of choice rather than obligation. "I wanted to be an artist and studied art. My father gave me the freedom to choose what I wanted to do,"

says Vitalie Taittinger, who asked her father, Pierre-Emmanuel, if she could work for her family's house after he bought it back from American private equity fund Starwood Capital Group in 2006. Unshackled by the prejudices of the past, Vitalie sees a bright future for women seeking to smash Champagne's glass ceiling. "Being a woman in Champagne is no longer a handicap; it's

an asset. People first and foremost respect someone that is doing a good job," she says. The path has also been smoother for Melanie Tarlant, who co-runs her Marne Valley-based family house, Champagne Tarlant, with her brother, Benoît. "Growing up, I saw my mother, grandmother and great grandmother helping out in the vineyards and the cellar, but I'm the first daughter of the Tarlant family to have an official role at the estate," she says.

Things move slowly in the wine world, and with its tradition of long cellar ageing before release, the pace of change is at its

slowest in Champagne, so any disruptions of the status quo will be felt in ripples rather than waves. With a small number of women present in boardrooms in Champagne, and those who are there having to adhere to rules devised by men that don't always take having a family into account, there is still a long way to go before Champagne becomes a region where women are given ample opportunity to thrive at every level.

BE YOURSELF

But initiatives such as La Transmission are helping to oil the wheels of progress, and we're likely to see many more female cellar masters and estate owners in the not too distant future, particularly as the world is waking up to the importance of empathy and emotional intelligence at management level, as Henriquez points out: "Women are more protective and connective in their behaviour, and these characteristics are expected of people in leadership roles now, which is hugely positive, as

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