

Diversity Statement

As a woman in musical academia, I am sensitive to the lack of diversity within western classical music, a traditionally white male-dominated field. I am dedicated to creating an environment that adjusts power dynamics and allows students of all backgrounds, genders, races, and creeds the opportunity to succeed. I seek to foster diversity both in the classroom and across the collegiate community.

I nurture diversity and acceptance in the classroom through my lecture material, discussion methods, and music choices. As a female musician, my efforts in composition, performance, and academia have been minimalized and brushed aside for my male contemporaries. To prevent gender normative, negative experiences like mine from perpetuating, I broaden the outlook of my students by shedding light on the lack of gender diversity in the world of western classical music. I strive to incorporate female composers throughout the centuries, spending a great deal of time discussing the gender expectations of each one's historical period and how societal norms affected their career choices (publishing under pseudonyms, giving up career paths, etc.). I also create a community of diversity through a shift in power dynamics in discussions. For example, in online lectures, I leave the chat open for students to submit and answer each other's questions or comments. By placing the motivator at the students' fingertips, the power dynamic of the classroom shifts, allowing community and acceptance to grow among the students. This method allows students the opportunity to engage and educate their classmates culturally without the pressure of directly addressing the instructor. As the students broaden the discourse of the lecture in the chat, I address their comments, concerns, and questions and adjust the class for their unique needs and views. In my ensemble courses, I foster diversity and acceptance by introducing music by artists from diverse backgrounds. As an example, my students and I presented a choral concert highlighting the poetry of Langston Hughes and Emily Dickinson with music composed by women. We discussed the poets and musicians' unique perspectives and cultural backgrounds at length, and I witnessed my students take greater pride and care in their practice and performance because of these discussions.

My promotion of diversity extends beyond the classroom to greater campus and community dynamics. Every year I collaborate with the Office of Access and Diversity to present a series of concerts entitled “The Slave Narratives.” These concerts bring students, faculty, and members of the local community together to mourn and learn about the history of slavery in Tennessee. I prepare my students to deliver a selection of spirituals, both ensemble and solo, to enrich the narrative. Through this partnership, I help draw attention to the unique struggles and cultural beauty of the African-American community and spread the celebration of diversity from the college campus to the local citizenry.

Western classical music academia has little diversity; but with a shift in classroom power dynamics, a willingness to teach more than the accepted history, an openness to music from non-traditional sources, and cross-campus collaboration, I hope to extend musical academia to all who wish to thrive within it, regardless of their race, creed, or gender.