

Diversity Statement

Music in itself promotes diversity in the multitude of styles, themes, and cultures it represents. This is a reason, upon many others, why we as humans gravitate toward and implement music in our daily lives- it allows for connectivity in emotion, perspective, and the overarching human experience in a way no other medium can reach. It is evident that there is still a lack of diversity in the field itself that causes a disconnect between consumers and creators of music. In my experiences navigating the music industry as a bi-racial woman and minority, especially in classical performance, I have come into situations where I perceive myself as far removed from the grand scheme of the craft. I had never felt completely settled into the identity due to lack of representation and understanding of inclusive practices. On the flip side of the coin, I feel at times my identity is taken and used in a token mentality that does not promote fairness. I believe that this stems from the biases of associating genres of music with specific demographics, where in reality music can and should be experienced by all people regardless of its origin. As society continues to progress, as does the imperativeness to provide environments and spaces that allow voices to be heard. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach toward implementing diversity in the music classroom, but there are many approaches to fit one classroom. In my own, I address this by placing sense of belonging, confidence, and self-acceptance at the forefront of my teaching.

Connection and belonging are a huge part of my teaching philosophy. Music is an incredibly vulnerable subject and music makers deserve a safe space for their creative output. In this, I take diversity and inclusion into consideration through differing materials in order for students to establish a stronger connection to music making and feel they can actively engage in the creative space. In the context of choral and solo singing, this can be done by encouraging the programming of works in recitals and concerts by composers of various sexual orientations, gender identities, race/ethnicity, age, nationalities, and religions to expand outside the scope of their worldview and the Western classical music canon. I also utilize video/audio examples that give students the chance to be exposed to performers of all types.

In addition to building a diverse repertory, I seek to give students chances to build confidence by promoting a positive and inclusive classroom culture through the means of equity. I recognize that differing backgrounds can create barriers in participation and progress in the classroom. Every student deserves to have the resources in order to be successful and become as assured within themselves and their achievements as possible. I anticipate concepts that may appear unfamiliar or uncomfortable to students- in the theoretical or interpretive parts of music- and use them as tools to provide in-depth learning opportunities. I also diversify the style of instruction to fit the individual needs of my students. For example, if a student finds they best memorize music through visual or aural learning, I will craft my lessons in a way that emphasizes sight reading and rote learning or melodic/rhythmic dictation. Students should always feel they have a pathway toward success in achieving their goals.

Self-acceptance can be achieved by intertwining all the concepts above, allowing students openness to experience music through a lens of honesty and authenticity. I give them autonomy in their expression, repertoire selection, and trajectory toward vocal development while serving as a support system and guide. This is most applicable toward the preparation of a larger program such as an undergraduate or graduate degree recital, a performance that highlights the entirety of the person behind the musician. However, I want students to come in from the first lesson or class session feeling their unique backgrounds are an asset toward artistry rather than a hindrance. I uphold an incredibly strong responsibility as a music educator to remove biases, examine my own, and ensure students have the opportunity and ability to experience the art form for what it is while also encouraging individuality of expression. My aim as a facilitator and teacher of music is to continue my efforts toward promoting diversity by encouraging my students to use their voices, not just through singing, but through their presence in my classroom.