

Concert Repertoire/Programming Task Force Report

Submitted April 1st, 2021 to Alma Ramos and Alexander George in the College of Music

Programming is a major part of the DEI efforts, linked to a long-term culture shift in the College of Music. These efforts connect with all other areas, such as curriculum, hiring, and recruitment. It is vital to the sustainability of our community to include and commission the work of underrepresented composers, performers, and scholars. While works that many consider critical or “canonical” are not to be minimized, there are many opportunities to include works by underrepresented composers that may serve similar purposes to works in the current repertoire. *Note: Details and further explanations follow the two-page summary.*

Culture Shift

Our task force felt the central purpose of programming-related change is to further enhance the sense of diversity, equity, and inclusion, adding authenticity to our sense of community and collaboration, already hallmarks of our College of Music efforts. We wish to nurture a culture which embraces inclusion efforts in ways large and small. We recognize that the burden of this labor currently falls disproportionately on faculty and students of color, women, and those who experience other axes of oppression.

Recommended Culture Shift Action Items:

- Create a College of Music survey that collects information about faculty **views** on the importance and state of our DEI efforts as a whole, and more specifically: Programming/Repertoire changes. Such data may provide a starting point and impetus for change.
- Implement transparent updates, which may include avenues such as a featured newsletter or regularly occurring pieces in CU Boulder Today that spotlight department or studio efforts
- Suggest a common or customizable pledge for studios and departments
- Examples of [existing DEI efforts](#) are also included in addendum

Training Retreat, Annual Critical Assessment of DEI Approaches

In discussing issues and barriers within the College of Music, our task force came to the conclusion that college-wide education in music-specific DEI issues will be necessary if we are to see widespread change. If educational sessions remain optional, it may well be that those who have the most to learn do not attend. Further [recommendations on scheduling, content, and tone](#) are listed in addendum.

Recommended Training Action Items

- Mandatory DEI retreat for faculty and staff
- Mandatory DEI retreat for students
- When possible, frame retreats as a celebration of values, rather than top-down mandates/restrictions

Education in Responsible Programming

From our informal survey on current departmental DEI efforts, the task force found that many are in the process of and excited to diversify programming. We urge a process of education amongst faculty to more clearly define and practice responsible programming.

Recommended Education Action Items:

- Recognize efforts currently being made in these areas; many positive actions are already underway
- Discuss the dangers of tokenizing efforts that may do more harm than good
- Shift execution to regular integration, and away from “underrepresentation” as a concert theme
- Shift from performing the same handful of underrepresented composers to programming a wider selection of composers who will directly benefit from inclusion in programming initiatives, including BIPOC, women, trans, and genderqueer composers
- A list of such [recommended composers](#) is provided in addendum

Data Gathering to Measure Progress

In addition to data about overall faculty view on DEI matters, we recommend the establishment of baseline data of current programming practices and ongoing tracking of those practices in the future. This will help quantify the College of Music's efforts and their impacts. [Recommended data points and feedback mechanisms](#) are listed in addendum.

Recommended Data Action items:

- Establish baseline records of programmed works in the last four years
- Track future programmed works as comparison against baseline

Diversity Goals and Guidelines

The task force urges a broad discussion about diversity goals, specifically, what impact programming goals or guidelines might have on our concert repertoire, as well as which identities and their intersectionalities should be emphasized within such guidelines. We recommend any implemented guidelines be explicit enough to be enforceable, and flexible enough to accommodate year-over-year idiosyncrasies, departmental needs, and adaptation. An example of [suggested guidelines and this process](#) is listed in addendum.

Recommended Goals and Guidelines Action Items:

- Open conversation around measurable diversity goals; what might be a well-accepted starting guideline?
- Define as appropriate starting guidelines, timelines, and explicit requirements
- Establish support systems to facilitate success
- Create broad action plan to address areas falling short of established goals
- Review guidelines annually or biannually and adjust as necessary

Library Involvement

The role of our library is essential and perhaps under-recognized by some faculty as a partner in addressing programming issues. As there was not a librarian on our rostered group, we believe that further collaboration with music librarians is essential moving forward.

Recommended Library Action Items:

- Connect with librarians for their expertise and help furthering works by underrepresented creators
- Implement regular full-studio and classroom visits to the library specifically related to DEI works
- Enhance the efforts underway to purchase works by underrepresented creators to grow collection and programming options

Audition Repertoire

Audition repertoire directly impacts programming, and changes in audition requirements will support changes in recital programming. Examples of [suggested audition requirements](#) are listed in addendum.

Recommended Audition Repertoire Action Items:

- Open conversation around the balance of our requested audition repertoire
- Invite faculty to revise their current listings for audition repertoire, and to consider including language in their syllabi about a balance of repertoire in student recitals that amplifies underrepresented voices
- Evaluate current audition repertoire and interview criteria (formal and informal) for all departments for points of gatekeeping, e.g., existing expectations of repertoire knowledge, music theory knowledge, sight singing ability.
- Review guidelines annually or biannually and adjust as necessary

Printed and Digital Online Programs

Changes to concert program content can help further a message of inclusivity, humanize composers who might be new to our audiences, and remove gatekeeping for the casual concertgoer who may be unfamiliar with even the most well-known composers.

Recommended Concert Programs Action Items:

- Include composer biography in concert programs for **all** pieces
- Pursue digital wiki-program with links to composers' background, additional pieces, and a wealth of information

Addenda

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Existing Efforts to Diversify Concert Repertoire in the College of Music

CU Orchestras Pledge for More Inclusive Programming

CU Orchestras Student Advisory Committee

A student advisory committee will be established consisting of a cross section of students in the orchestra, including women and students of color, both graduate and undergraduate students, members of both the Philharmonia and Symphony Orchestras, and representing strings, woodwinds, and brass/percussion. Members will be nominated and elected by their peers. This committee will advise the directors on programming consideration, procedures and other matters arising within the orchestra program.

Programming

The orchestra program recognizes the compelling need for more frequent and sustained performance of works by BIPOC composers. We further commit to a continuation of the regular programming of works by women composers. We regret that the coming year, impacted so severely by the COVID-19 pandemic, will be especially challenging during which to establish this commitment. In spite of this, we commit to programming works of BIPOC composers throughout 2020-2021, understanding performances will likely not be regular and public in nature and there will be significant restrictions on numbers and instrumentation within the ensembles.

Additionally, during the coming year, we will collaborate with the Composition Department to work toward the establishment of an ongoing commissioning project designed to solicit new works from BIPOC composers.

Given the many educational needs that an orchestral program must fulfill to prepare our students in the broadest manner for a life in professional music, and recognizing - as was mentioned during our meeting - that a student in any given year may wish to cover the widest possible range of repertoire, we pledge to program an individual BIPOC work on each program during the 2021-2022 season. We envision additional ways to engage both the audience and orchestra members in this programming initiative. Depending on the composer and work, examples could include a pre-concert lecture, student introduction of the work during the performance, associated media, a discussion, or special guests. The orchestral program seeks to encourage students in the development of these events, thinking deeply about how best to give the BIPOC work and composer featured on each concert the maximum possible profile. During the preparation process, we hope to find similar avenues for meaningful engagement. Going forward, in continued consultation with the CU Orchestras Student Advisory Committee, we pledge to maintain a robust presence of works by women and BIPOC composers in programming as a matter of course.

Our Advocacy for College of Music Engagement

The CU Orchestras encourage the College of Music to make a strong statement on behalf of all of its students, staff and faculty regarding the state of social injustice in our country. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other Black and minority Americans have compelled communities across the nation to respond to systemic racism, bigotry and oppression. We believe an unequivocal stance must be established regarding the College's long-term commitment towards equality, inclusion, and advocacy for historically marginalized voices. Only powerful example of such a statement can be found here: <https://www.unl.edu/english/home>

A Starting Point: List of Recommended Composers

In striving to amplify underrepresented composers, it is imperative that one consider the meaning of *amplification*. Composers such as William Grant Still and Florence Price are already being amplified. Continuing to program them is a wonderful act, but it is not amplification--it is turning up the gain on already amplified voices. We encourage programming efforts to *amplify*, i.e. program voices that are not already widely programmed, so as to broaden the canon and the repertoire being used for pedagogical purposes.

The following list of composers is a starting point for expanding the repertoire:

Angélica Negrón
Anthony Davis
Anthony R. Green (CU Composition Alum)
Carlos Simon
Derrick Spiva Jr.
Eleanor Alberga
Erin Paton Pierce (CU Alum)
Errollyn Wallen
Elizabeth A. Baker
Iman Habibi
inti figgis-vizeuta
Jeffrey Mumford
Juri Seo
Marcos Balter
Nina Shekhar
Reena Esmail
Reza Vali
Sarah Hennies
Shelley Washington
Unsub Chin

Mandatory DEI Training Scheduling, Content, and Tone

We believe the College of Music should consider mandatory training on DEI issues to occur at least once annually. We advise a mandatory DEI training retreat with administrators, faculty, and staff to take place during the week before the Fall 2021 semester begins, a slot of time for which all faculty are already required to report.

This training session should include educational sessions on library resources, responsible programming, potential quota recommendations, general diversity education with regards to racial and gender inclusivity, as well as opportunities for group discussion and reflection on these topics. We also recommend that this retreat

include performances of works by underrepresented composers. Rather than a dry delivery of mandates, we would like this retreat to be framed as a **celebration** of our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as a celebration of a return to in-person learning and community.

Furthermore, we recommend that the College of Music provide a similar training for its students, which could occur during the semester during large ensemble rehearsal blocks on given days.

Creating an Accurate Picture of Faculty (and others) Views as a Starting Point

Discussions about a short survey, and the value of establishing current viewpoints held by current faculty (and perhaps students and others) took place during the course of the task force committee's work. This survey would gather data on the degree to which faculty rank the importance and state of DEI efforts/matters in the college currently, and to what degree changes are valued. This would inform how to frame our conversations and efforts moving forward. Samples of survey questions might include the following sorts of questions and statements, to which a range of responses would be possible (Disagree, Mostly Disagree, Mostly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, etc.):

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion in General in the College of Music

- I am satisfied with the current state of DEI efforts and awareness in the College of Music
- I wish to see small and incremental changes that create a greater sense of DEI in the College of Music
- I believe a great deal more needs to be done to move our College of Music to a better place with our DEI efforts

Programming/Repertoire

More specific survey questions may also be created about programming and repertoire and the key matters in our report and addendum.

Data, Tracking, and Analysis

Data may track, for example: identifiers and their intersectionalities, including but not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and national origin. Categories to which this would apply could include composers, featured performers and guests.

Continued support for counting and tracking attendance at public concerts to analyze community engagement.

Recommended survey mechanisms for DEI efforts feedback include FCQ's, post-concert evaluations, and additional opportunities.

Example of Suggested Guidelines and Process

The task force could not agree to a specific quota that could apply to all areas. Instead, we discussed beginning with suggested guidelines for people who don't know where to start, with periodic check-ins on how changes are progressing. Faculty not making progress towards the suggested guidelines (within whatever timeline is reasonable) could then be followed up with per-department or individually for additional support. A possible starting point could look like:

- Suggested increase of programmed works by underrepresented composers to 20-30% of total biannual programmed works within three years, with a goal of 30-40% within five years.
- Department chair and dean-level check-in each year to assess progress and provide support.

- At three years, faculty members with programmed works fewer than 20% of total biannually would work with chair, dean, or a DEI accountability committee to outline an individualized plan to increase diversity of programming.

These percentages, in our recommendations as well as for guidelines moving forward, should have some flexibility to account for the number of total pieces programmed over a two-year cycle, and accommodating the continued inclusion of critical/canonical works. Support in these instances could include help finding composers or works, or funding to purchase or commission additional works. The definition of “underrepresented composers” would need to be explicit enough to be enforceable, but broad enough to allow flexibility and ease of application.

Example Audition Requirements

[How Audition Requirements Exclude](#), by JiJi Kim, Assistant Professor of Guitar at Arizona State University, audition requirements excerpted below:

Master of Music

Three solo works demonstrating different musical styles and techniques at an advanced level (any era).

*It is strongly encouraged to play at least one composition by a BIPOC or a female composer (e.g., Casseus, Bebey, Snijders, E. Giuliani, Lutyens, Tower, Holland, Coulanges, C. Assad, Kruisbrink, León, etc)

Applicants can also choose to demonstrate one (1) of their own compositions or an arrangement

*optional OR a curated (themed) recital program could be submitted directly to the guitar faculty

Doctor of Musical Arts

Four solo works demonstrating different musical styles and techniques at an advanced level (any era).

The chosen works may all be by BIPOC or female composers. *It is strongly encouraged for a Doctoral applicant to include one piece by a BIPOC **and** a female composer. (e.g., Casseus, Bebey, Snijders, E. Giuliani, Lutyens, Tower, Holland, Coulanges, C. Assad, Kruisbrink, León, etc)

As per the Master’s audition requirements, original compositions/curated (themed) programs would be accepted as well

Current [Audition Requirements](#) for the Bachelor of Music in Voice, CU Boulder

- One of the songs must be from the classical repertoire (which can include a folk song or a spiritual); the other can be either a second classical song or a musical theater number.
- If you have a background in a language other than English, please feel free to offer a piece in that language.

Concert Programs and Concert Themes

Another recommendation discussed in our task force was to include an additional short biography and headshot (when applicable) of programmed composers on concert programs. This could allow the audience to connect more deeply with the composer and the piece(s) performed, and increase education around all programmed composers. To avoid tokenization and othering, this short bio would need to be included for **all** composers, not just “lesser-known” composers. This addition to the concert programs would have the further benefit of education for the casual concertgoer, extending inclusivity to those who are not well-educated on even the most well-known composers. An advanced version of this program might look like a digital wiki-program, with links to information on composers’ background, additional pieces, and a wealth of other information.

Concert themes present an opportunity for education on topics including: tokenization, cultural appropriation, problematic or othering themes, commissioning, and how to normalize repertoire that is new to the canon. In our informal survey, several respondents indicated a strong desire to program underrepresented composers, and pointed to concerts programmed with entirely female or entirely BIPOC artists. These respondents were passionate about taking these measures, and doing more, but unfortunately did not recognize that a concert themed around composer identity is tokenizing and othering. A recommended approach would be to more frequently include these composers in regular programming, like one would program any other artist. This education is not meant to be punitive, but rather, to maximize our execution and authenticity in these efforts.

As an arts and cultural institution, our concert programming is the gateway to our community. All of our students, donors, faculty etc. start their journey with us first as audience members. This makes concert programming a key barrier or opportunity to any strategic goal around increasing diversity and inclusion in our community.

As we develop more diverse and inclusive seasons of concert repertoire, we have the opportunity to expand our promotional reach. Investment in concert promotional work can help us bring in new audiences, and consequently support the downstream outcomes in diverse and inclusive student recruitment, community engagement and developing our donor base.

Bibliography: Additional Resources

[Music by Black Composers](#), Database of Black Women Composers, International

[Helen Walker Hill Collection](#), Music by Black Women Composers of the United States

[A Guide to Sheet Music by Women Composers pre-1800](#), via Robert Hill

[A Seat at The Piano](#), Database for Inclusion in Piano Repertoire by Dr. Annie Jeng

[Music Theory Examples by Women](#), Database by Molly Murdock

[Black Composers](#), list by Anthony R. Green

[What the Optics of New Music Say to Black Composers](#), article for New Music Box by Anthony R. Green