

CHOOSE WISELY

Considerations for
Programming Works
by Composers from Historically
Underrepresented Communities

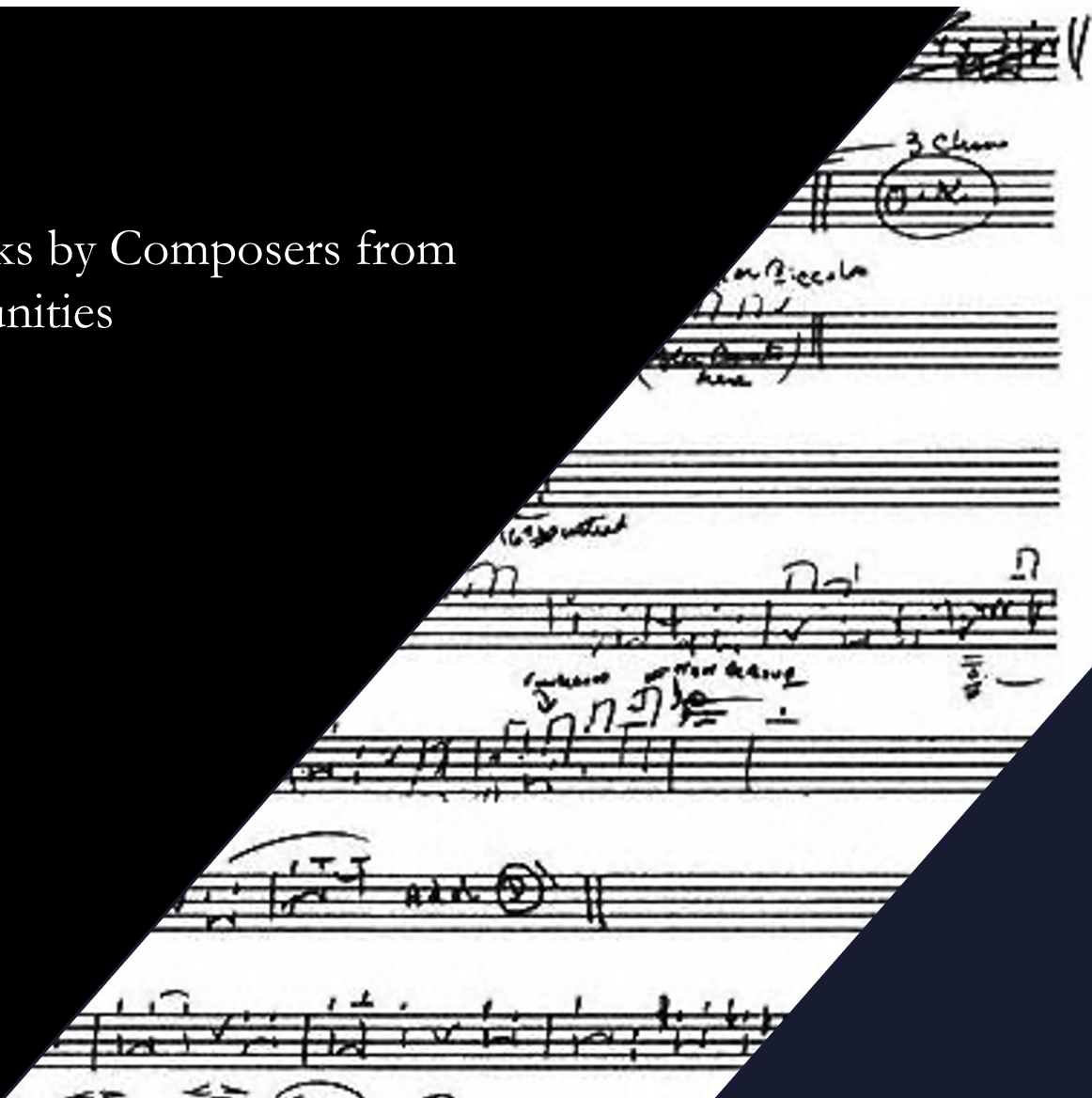
Dr. Henry L. Dorn & Cody Edgerton



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Considerations for Programming Works by Composers from
Historically Underrepresented Communities

- Preface
- Consider why
- Consider how
- Take action



CHOOSE WISELY - PREFACE

Disclaimer

- Not here to cancel Beethoven
- Not here to cancel “Classical Music”
- Not here to tell you what you HAVE to play
- But what about inclusivity?



CHOOSE WISELY - PREFACE

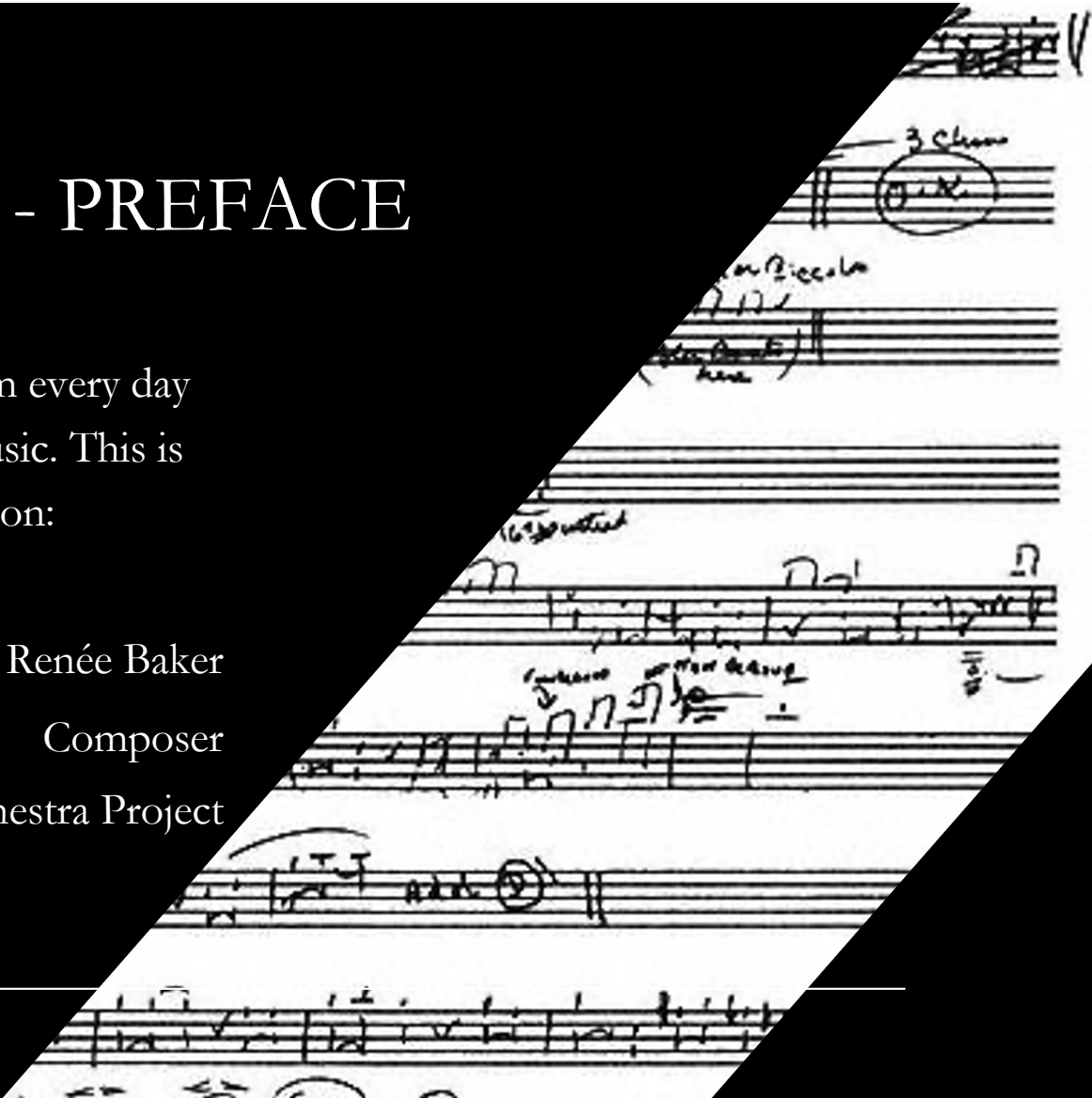
Disclaimer

“I’ve experienced prejudice and racism every day that I’ve been involved in classical music. This is what the classical music castle is built on: exclusion.”

Renée Baker

Composer

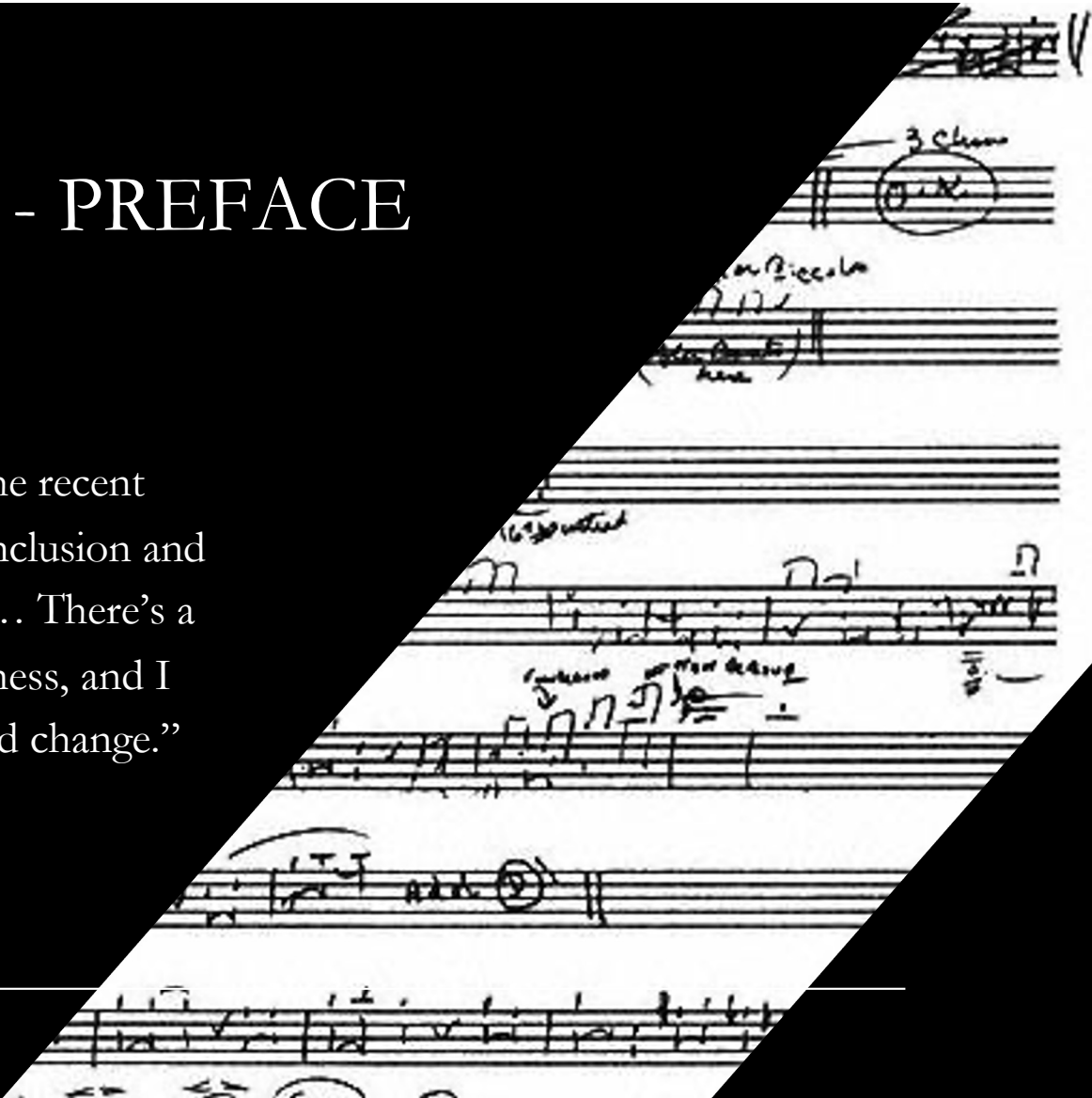
Founder - Chicago Modern Orchestra Project



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Disclaimer

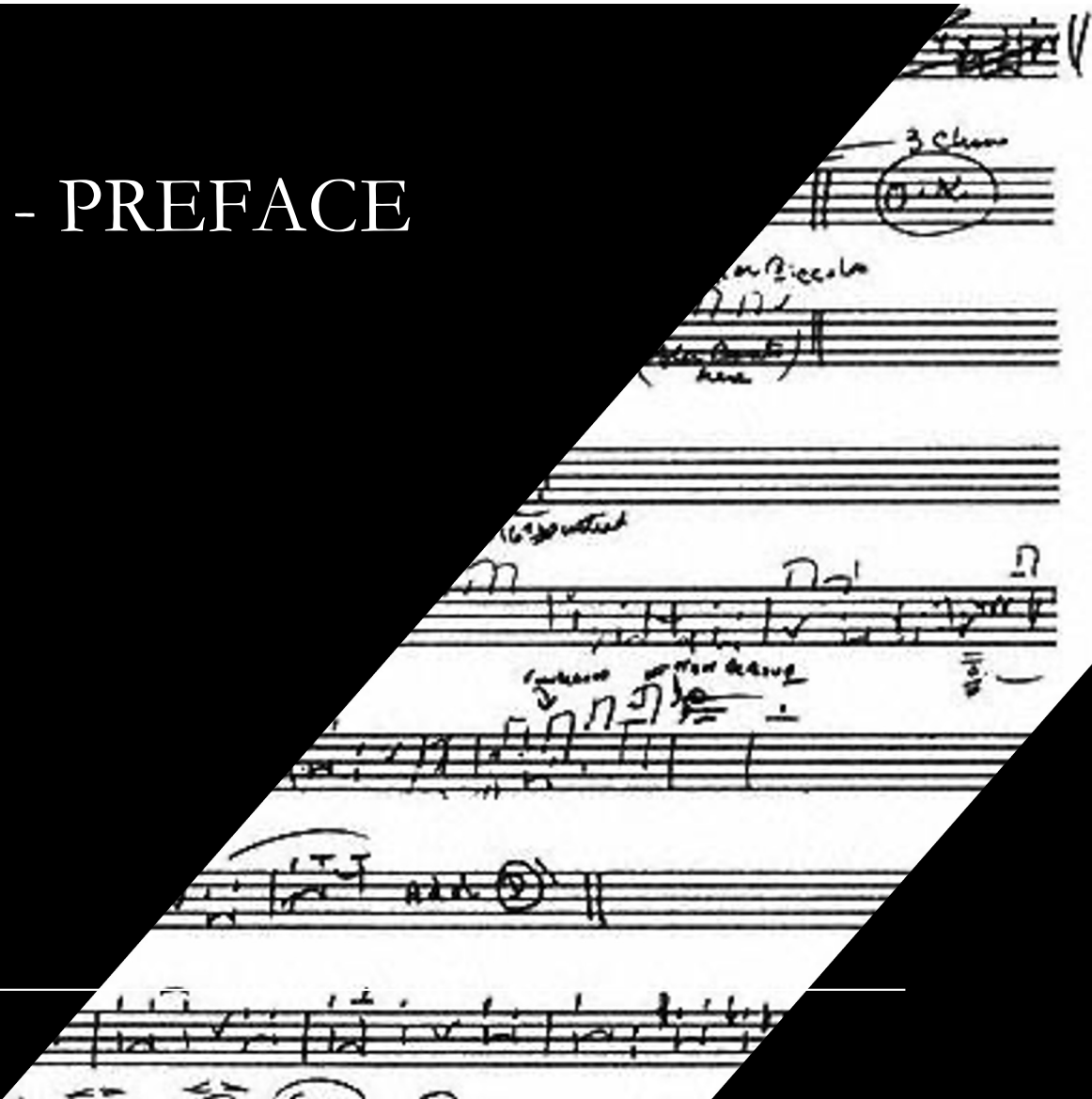
Composer Jesse Montgomery “sees the recent push in the classical world for more inclusion and equity as an ‘important turning point... There’s a movement happening. There’s awareness, and I think awareness is the first step toward change.”



CHOOSE WISELY - PREFACE

Disclaimer

Exclusion



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Disclaimer

Inclusion

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a gold-colored fountain pen, writing on a sheet of music. The music is written on five-line staves with blue ink. The background is dark and out of focus. The image is split diagonally by a dark blue triangle on the right side, which contains white text.

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AND NOW TIME FOR
SOMETHING TOTALLY
DIFFERENT

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a fountain pen, poised to write on a sheet of music paper. The paper features several staves with blue musical notes. The image is split diagonally, with the top-left portion showing the hand and pen, and the bottom-right portion being a solid black background.

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Temperature Check Poll

- Series of yes or no questions
 - Keep tally of the questions you answered “YES”
 - Instant Polling
 - Ready?
-



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Temperature Check Poll

1. Do you feel good about how your identified culture is portrayed in the media?
 2. Is English your first language?
 3. As a student, did you have a reliably quiet place to practice?
 4. In your high school, was/is AP Music Theory offered?
 5. Did your parents/guardians consistently attend your concerts?
-



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Temperature Check Poll

6. Were you able to attend summer programs?
 7. Did you have access to a professional quality instrument before age 18?
 8. Were you able to travel 4+ hours for college auditions?
 9. Have you had dependable access/transportation to rehearsals and performances?
 10. Did you had private music lessons before you were 18?
-



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Temperature Check Poll

11. Were you able to attend summer programs?
 12. Did you have an ensemble director that looked like you (consider ethnicity, gender, etc)?
 13. Could you afford to pay for meals on school trips?
 14. You could afford instrument maintenance/repairs?
 15. Could you name five (5) composers that look like you before college?
-



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Temperature Check Poll

- 16. Was one (both) of your parents a musician?
 - 17. You were never told a different instrument would be more suitable due to gender/race.
 - 18. You participated in ensembles playing music by composers that look like you before reaching college.
-



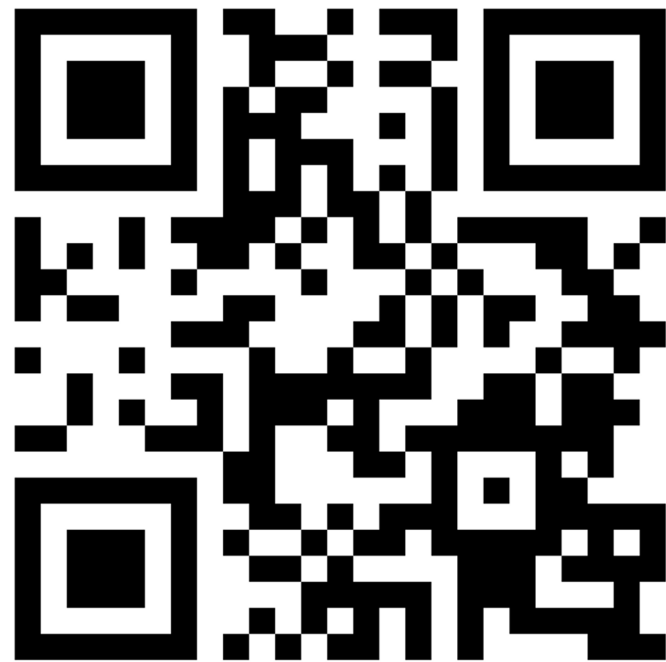
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Poll Results

- Scan the QR on the next screen using your phone camera
 - Wait until being directed to complete the poll
 - Using your tally of “yes” responses, answer the poll question
-

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Take the poll now!



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Why It Matters

- Isn't this "Post-racial" America?
- What about modern gender equality?
- Does discrimination still exist in band music?
- Aren't there programs set up to stop this?
- Consider our last exercise
- Where are we now?



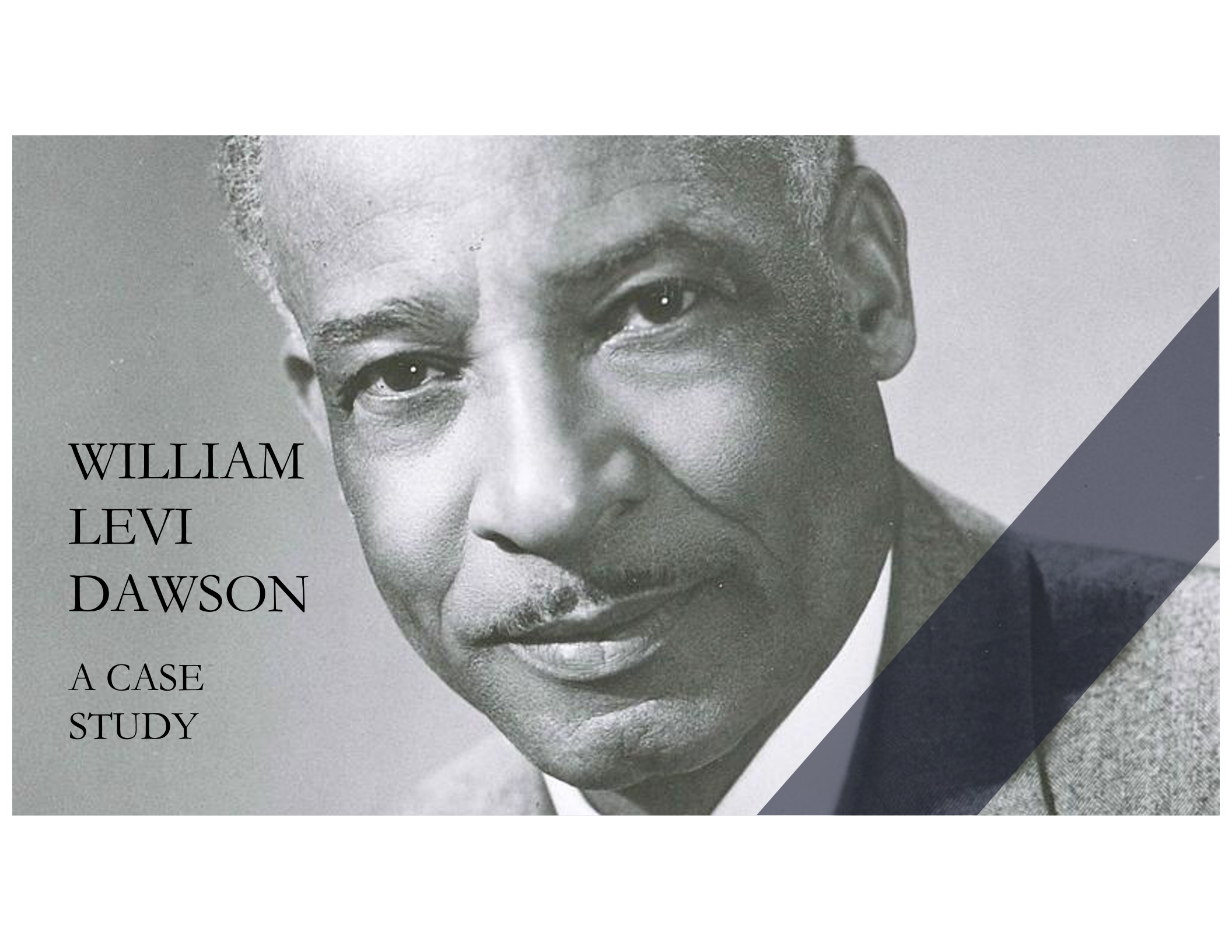
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Why It Matters – The Band Canon

- Western music culture and the rise of canon of great works from the past
- “Musicologists have been slow to recognize the problem of canon, because it is so embedded in their assumptions about music, and controls so much of what they do.”¹
- The current “canon” is built (similarly to orchestra) on the works of white men.
- Band chasing equal footing with orchestra

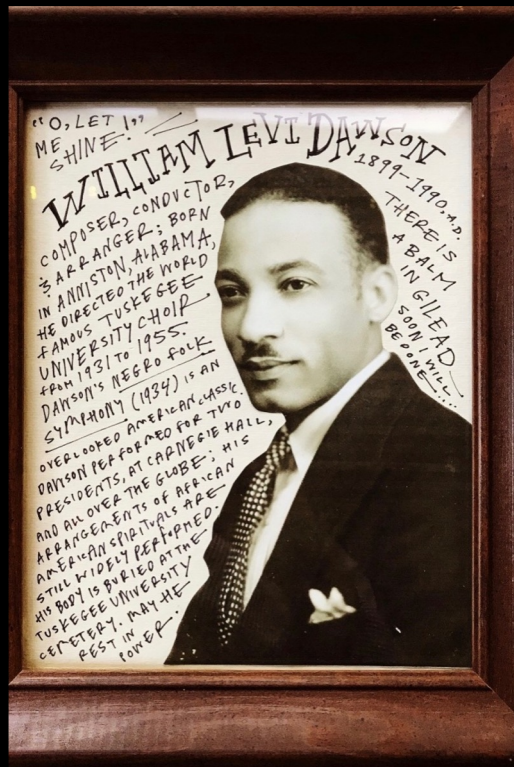
¹ William Weber, “The History of Musical Canon,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nick Cook and Mark Everist, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 337.



A black and white portrait of William Levi Dawson, an African American man with a mustache, wearing a suit and tie. The portrait is the background of the slide. A dark blue diagonal graphic element is in the bottom right corner.

WILLIAM LEVI DAWSON

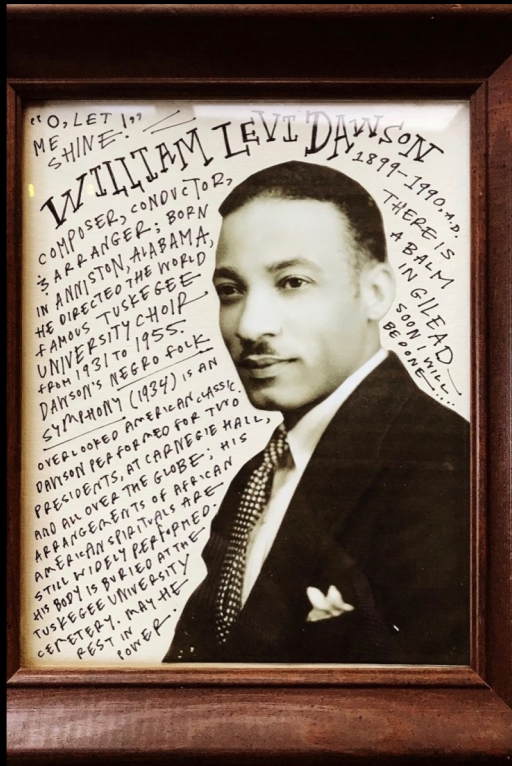
A CASE
STUDY



William Levi Dawson: A Case Study

- Who was William Dawson... and why don't we know him?
- Could he be considered a “great composer?”
- *Negro Folk Symphony* and the Philadelphia Orchestra
- Reception

William Levi Dawson: A Case Study



“The audience reserved its enthusiasm for the symphony of William Dawson, the Negro composer born in Alabama, who now teaches at Tuskegee Institute. The end of the concert saw a majority of them remaining to applaud long and lustily, and to call Mr. Dawson several times back to the state...But the best pages of this symphony have a big curve, a real melodic line which is developed by the composer and does not consist merely in the quotation of a phrase of folk-melody. In essence this music has dramatic feeling, a racial sensuousness and directness of melodic speech, and a barbaric turbulence.”²

² Downes, Olin. "STOKOWSKI GIVES AMERICAN WORKS: DAWSON'S NEGRO SYMPHONY AND MCDONALD'S 'SANTA FE' IN CONCERT OF NOVELTIES. THEMES FROM FOLK LAYS PONCE'S 'CHAPULTEPEC,' MEXICAN SKETCHES, ALSO PLAYED BY PHILADELPHIA VISITORS." *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1934.

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Why It Matters

continued

Zhou Tian

³ All orchestra data taken
from resources available
through the American
Symphony Orchestra
League

- What your students see in the music profession matters
- BIPOC musicians account for around 15% of all of professional orchestra musicians.³
- While the number of women in professional orchestras national is 52%, women conductors are still rare to find.

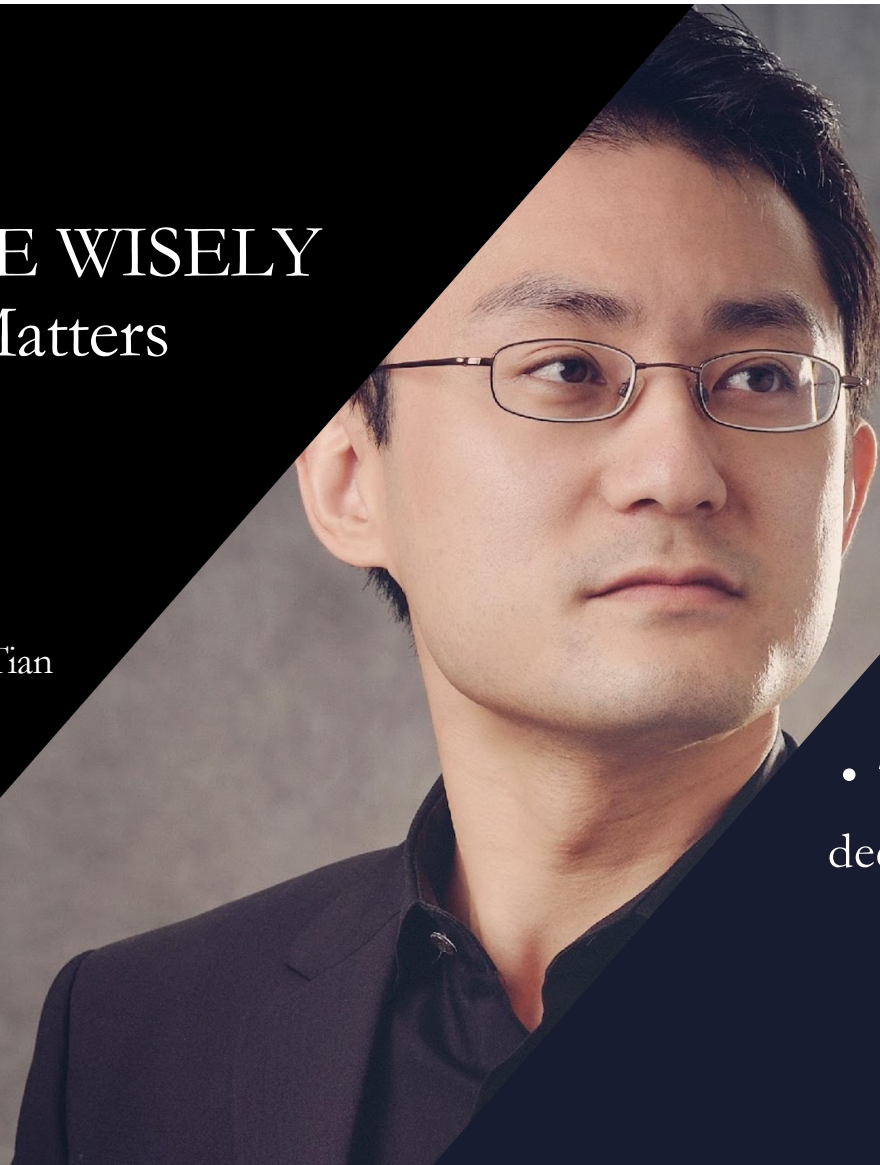


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Why It Matters

continued

Zhou Tian



- Windrep.org's *Music of Merit* – zero works by a woman or BIPOC composer
- Ostling List – 0 Women
0 BIPOC Composers
- Towner List – Out of 144 works of deemed to meet “serious artistic merit”
 - 2 works by women composers (1.4%)*
 - 1 work by a BIPOC composer (0.7%)*
- State Rep Lists Nationally ~ 4%

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Why It Matters *continued*

American Bandmasters

Association National Convention

- 2022 – 22% Women/BIPOC
- 2021 – None/Canceled
- 2020 – 20% Women/BIPOC
- 2019 – 17% Women/BIPOC
- 2018 – 5%, 0 women/2 BIPOC



Jennifer Jolley

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Why It Matters *continued*

CBDNA National Conference

- 2019 – 29% Women/BIPOC
- 2017 – 13% Women/BIPOC*
- 2015 – 8% 1 Women/2 BIPOC
- 2013 – 15% BIPOC; 0 Women



Jennifer Jolley

SO...WHAT NEXT?

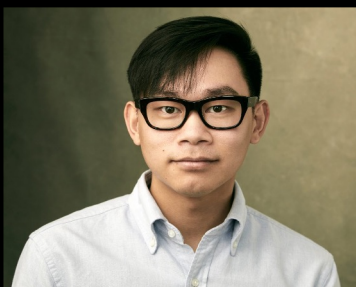
Diversifying
repertoire is
important

There is a **need**
for more
diverse
repertoire

BUT: **How**
exactly do we
go about it???



Dr. Jodie Blackshaw



**Credit: Aaron Jay Young*

Viet Cuong



**Credit: Sara Bill Photography
and Karen Cubides Agency*

Kevin Day



**Credit: Michael Brosilow*

Dr. Stacy Garrop



Joni Greene



**Credit: Liz Glenn*

Dr. Jennifer Jolley



**Credit: Ann Marsden.*

Dr. Libby Larsen



**Credit: Karen Pearson*

Dr. Gilda Lyons



Dr. Nicole Piuunno



Dr. Kathryn Salfelder



**Credit: Paul Chepikian*

Alex Shapiro



**Credit: Terrance Ragland*

Dr. Carlos Simon



**Credit: Harley Seeley*

Dr. Zhou Tian



PROGRAMMING

“Intentional” programming

Horizontal vs. vertical planning

Program order

Music content vs. composer identity

“TOKENISM”

Representing
only a single
portion of a
full identity

Reductionist and symbolic only (“virtue signaling”)
i.e. choosing a piece based solely on the
composer’s identity



Instead:

Identity as a starting point
Leads to a musical connection*

An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide, featuring a vibrant red background with flowing, organic shapes in shades of red and a small section of green at the top.

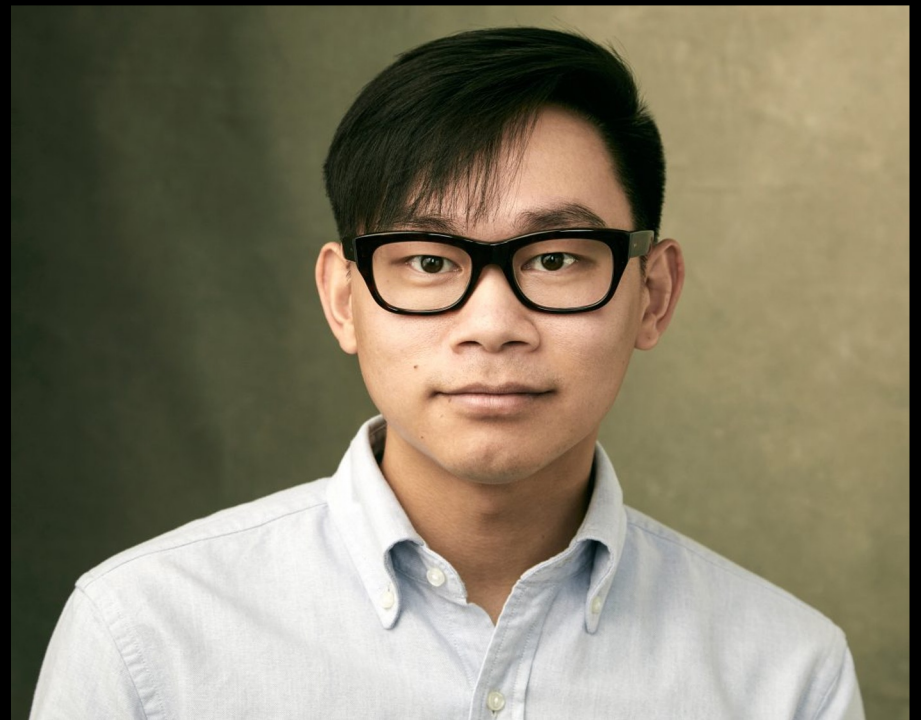
“TOKENISM”

“If I was a [man] watching some composer get celebrated as a woman composer, I would think ‘she got there because people really want to play something by a woman,’ not ‘she got there because she’s probably working really hard and is good at this.’”

-Anonymous

MUSICAL CONNECTION: VIET CUONG

"It's not about the quotas and having every concert have [underrepresented composers]. It's about finding the music that you are really excited about doing and really excited about sharing with your students."



REHEARSAL TIME: DR. STACY GARROP

“It’s one thing to say we want [underrepresented composers] to be featured ... it’s quite another to make sure those pieces have enough rehearsal time to do the work justice that will get the audience interested to want to hear more.”



**Credit: Michael Brosilow*

EXCLUSIVE IDENTITY PROGRAMS

- All music by composers from a single identity
- During designated 'celebration' periods
- Separate = abnormal = inferior
- "I want to be celebrated because my work is quality, not because I'm ____"



“NORMALIZATION”

Programming without formally recognizing composer identity

Together = “normal” = equal

Influences norms and expectations

NORMALIZATION: DR. NICOLE PIUNNO

“The concert wasn’t called ‘women and music’ or a similar kind of theme. It was about our music. Our pictures were on the flyer but nowhere did the director draw attention or even mention the fact that we were women. He just happened to have two composers who were female as the guests. No one said a word about it...he didn’t draw extra attention to it. It was just a normal thing.”



COMPOSER AS MODELS:

- Shape expectations on what a composer looks and sounds like
- Connect and relate to students
- Promote career to students

“Representation gives a person the idea that they can become that, and they can achieve like that.”

~Kevin Day



**Credit Sara Bill Photography/Karen Cubides Agency*



COMPOSERS AS MODELS: VIET CUONG

DISCOURSE

- **Person-first** language
- **Label-free** descriptors
- Personal **representation preference**



TAKE ACTION

- **Transfer of power:** resources from those in positions of privilege
- **Platform** for underrepresented voices
- Diverse identities in **positions of leadership**
- **Sensitive commissioning*** and consortiums



TAKE ACTION: LOCATING REPERTOIRE

- Designate **time and effort**
- Locate **resources**
- Join **discourse** and discussion
- Searching outside of the “**bubble**”
- **Collaborate** beyond friend groups



PITFALLS TO AVOID

“**Tokenism**”: selection by identity only

“**Virtue signaling**”: effort is symbolic only

“**White saviorism**”: seeking validation or praise

“**Repertoire blindness**”: lack of knowledge

Justifying **impact**: “That wasn’t my **intention**”

Assumptions about composers’ music





PITFALLS: THE BIAS OF GREATNESS

"I don't care
about diversity: I
just play great
music."

"We don't look at
gender; we
program on how
good it is"

"Greatness":
historically **white**,
male aesthetic
values of the 19th
century

"Good," "great,"
and "quality" are
relative

Ability to "not see
race" shows
privilege



FURTHER NEEDS

Engagement, advocacy, and allyship by majority figures

Increased safe space for minority voices

Expanded visibility of issues and available resources

Increase of u/r identities in student, teacher, and leadership roles

Increased repertoire and involvement from women of color, Indigenous, LGBTQIA+, and composers with disabilities

Focus on diversifying and improving young band literature

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Resource Handout

