

Scholars for Social Responsibility Diversity in the Music Classroom proposals

Sam L. Richards, Boise State University Reaching Thresholds of Diversity in the Undergraduate Classroom

Over the past few years I have made a concerted effort to diversify the musics and methods engaged in many of my own music theory courses by prioritizing the values of pluralism, inclusion, and breadth. This has resulted in somewhat unconventional units or subunits being integrated into my core undergraduate courses, including subjects like electronic dance music, popular music, hip-hop, aesthetics, semiotics, topic theory, Schenkerian analysis, film music, schemata, leitmotif, transformational and neo-Riemannian analysis, music cognition, music and gender, and a variety of other musical repertoires and analytical techniques. My experience in these courses has led me towards embracing the concept of a necessary diversity threshold—a threshold of exposure to methodological and musical diversity that, once reached, results in a student population who have a significantly increased capacity to compassionately encounter not only the different but the unknown. Anecdotal evidence with these curricular experiments suggests that, perhaps unsurprisingly, greater breadth in the classroom tends to generate students with a greater curiosity and intrigue when faced with musics that are different from their own. In other words, I believe that when such a threshold of diversity is reached, it creates musicians who are more socially responsible and well-equipped to face their own diverse musical futures as ethical artistic citizens.

Robin Attas, Elon University A First Step Toward Analytical Diversity in the Classroom

My primary goal in the music theory classroom is to teach students to think critically about music. Certainly, the standard compositional and analytical activities are a major component in achieving this aim. However, I also draw students' attention to their own subject positions as analysts, and the diverse ways of thinking about musical structures that exist among both professionals and peers. In this presentation I will discuss the initial classroom activity I use to bring awareness to diversity of analytical thought. In one of the first class periods of the first course in the music theory sequence, I use a simple identity-sharing exercise. Students anonymously share some of their held identities (around gender, race, religion, family background, socio-economic background, instrument, intended profession, etc.). This fuels a class discussion about the diversity already present in the classroom, and the potential for different perspectives on music that might result. I use this activity to highlight several things. First, I demonstrate to students (and myself) that identities in a classroom are typically more diverse than they appear on the surface. Second, students reflect on their own identities and musical perspectives. Third, sharing personal information in a public space builds community and trust in the classroom, encouraging more participation for future activities. Finally, this activity lays the foundation for later activities, in this course

and subsequent ones, that highlight the diverse perspectives each individual brings to the analysis of music.

Miriam Piilonen, Northwestern University
The Collaborative Playlist in the Aural Skills Classroom

This talk explores the collaborative playlist as a pedagogical tool and locus for questions about diversity. Although pedagogy is a crucial arena for questions of diversity, and music a rich source of cultural variance, it can be difficult to approach such topics in basic music theory courses where the music we learn is rudimentary and didactic. Collaborative playlists generate opportunities to hear and discuss diverse music without extending class time. My students create collaborative Spotify/YouTube playlists and we listen to them before class begins. Sharing musical taste allows music theory students to situate themselves culturally and be exposed to different backgrounds. Collaborative playlists help students expand their personal canons, develop nuanced preferences, exercise their musical vocabulary, and share anecdotes. They also raise difficult questions about the limits of music as a form of cultural exposure: is musical diversity itself a form of cultural diversity or is it mere cultural consumption? Although students frequently choose music from Black Atlantic, North Indian, and Latinx music traditions (among others), few of them share these cultural backgrounds themselves. I argue that collaborative playlists are valuable for those students present in the classroom while also highlighting the lack of diversity in the student body.

Mandy Smith, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame/Case Western University
Rockin' the Schools: Adapting Pedagogical Techniques to Cater to a Diverse Student Body

Teaching in the K-12 *Rockin' the Schools* program at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame offers a special set of challenges. Monday, you might teach Shake, Rattle, and Roll – a class designed to help students in the K-4 grade band learn building blocks of music like pitch, rhythm, and color – to a group of disenfranchised, inner-city African American kindergarteners. Tuesday, you might teach the same class to a group of racially diverse twelfth graders who have the social skills of high schoolers but the cognitive abilities of second graders. Wednesday's class could consist of foreign exchange students whose English skills fall below their cognitive level. And Thursday's class could involve all teaching all three groups simultaneously.

In this presentation, I discuss both the challenges of catering to such a broad population and the techniques the Rock Hall education staff harnesses to serve such a wide variety of students. I highlight the importance of reading a room of students in the first minute of class – and even as you greet the students and they take their seats – in order to know how to tailor pedagogical techniques such as matching the vocabulary level and listening abilities of your audience. Above all, music educators must meet their students at their cognitive level, tweak their delivery and demeanor to the appropriate age group, and understand how to draw on their high-level

musical expertise but convey it in a way that is meaningful for each particular group of students.

Abigail Shupe, Colorado State University
Teaching ‘Women in Music’ as a Woman in Music Theory

In Spring 2016, I taught “Women in Music,” an elective course aimed at all music majors and non-majors. This course attracted visibly diverse students and comprised material from different disciplines, such that it challenged all of the students. For most music majors, this was the first time they had considered the gendered constructs underlying much of Western music culture and the classical canon. Some non-majors received a crash course in Western music history and appreciation, while in other cases I called upon them to explain concepts from gender, feminist, and queer theories that were unfamiliar to students of classical music. From our discussions on wide-ranging musical practices, music majors learned that it was possible to critically discuss both the personas *and* the music of female pop musicians and rappers. Conversely, non-music students saw that popular music by women of color, for example, was valued and received an equal part of the discussion. Many students remarked that they were “finally” allowed to examine aspects of music that had not fit in other courses. Discussions of music and queer theory allowed students to openly address issues of transphobia, homophobia, and sexism that are typically excluded from music courses, despite their lurking presence in the repertoire we teach. While this course will not remedy the complete absence of women from many music theory courses, I witnessed students gaining awareness of the reasons for the exclusion of women and the politics of their own consumption of women in music.

Eric Hung, Rider University
Using the Music History Seminar to Connect to National Debates

In Spring 2016, I taught an upper-level seminar entitled “Music and Trauma.” My primary goal in teaching this (and other) seminars is to allow students to discover how music can connect to major issues that they will face on both personal and public policy levels. During the first half of the seminar, we read theories about trauma and case studies from the musicological literature. The second half of the seminar centered around a four-week workshop with composer Byron Au Yong and writer Aaron Jafferis, who are currently collaborating on an oratorio entitled *Trigger*, which will be premiered during the 10-year memorial of the shootings at Virginia Tech next year.

My proposed lightning talk will be a reflection on the successes and failures of this workshop. The workshop consisted of reading and discussing the libretto, learning and discussing selected songs, and having the students create artworks and activities (poems, paintings, maps, adult coloring books, meditations, food, etc.) based on the issues brought out during the workshop. Au Yong, Jafferis and I believe that, in order to move forward in the debate about gun violence, we need to

go beyond the polarizing national debate by building community through the use of personal stories. These personal stories might include direct experiences, or responses based on talking to friends and family or reading memoirs, fiction and news stories. The students in this class were highly engaged by this workshop. However, getting them to move beyond the polarizing national debate remained elusive.

**Mark Pedelty, University of Minnesota
Biodiversity in the Musical Classroom**

The term diversity tends to be associated with human identity, difference, and equity. Is there a place for *biodiversity* as well in that discussion? Biodiversity is typically associated with preservation of nonhuman species as they struggle to survive in increasingly crowded, human-dominated ecosystems. In this lightning talk I will argue that biodiversity and cultural diversity are productively linked via environmental justice (1 minute). I will outline an assignment (4 minutes) that helps students explore soundscape connections to biodiversity, cultural diversity, and environmental justice. Following field experiences and library research, students develop performances that integrate, advance, and communicate their understanding of the relationship between identity, biodiversity, and environmental justice. Based on course assessment, the method appears to work. However, one challenge remains: few students actually take up the musical performance option, despite encouragement and support. They choose what they view as more accessible spoken word alternatives. Therefore, the next step is to help “non-musicians” experience the more immersive and creative learning that musicians, dancers, and artists are taking from the course. After the session, I will make myself available for follow-up discussion with anyone who might like to discuss the course and assignment in greater detail.

**Gavin Lee, Soochow University School of Music, China
Rethinking Chinese Difference**

Recent efforts at diversifying the music repertoire in Western music history and theory classes have resulted in the notable incorporation of lesser known composers, women composers, popular music, and jazz. However, there continues to be a separation of Western and non-Western music in different courses, the latter usually under courses designated as “ethnomusicology.” In this paper, I examine the intellectual history that resulted in the polarization of Western and non-Western musics, and musicology and ethnomusicology. I use the analytic of difference to explain how binary terms tend to become set in stone, and why a more flexible, dialectical approach is necessary. Western classical music has a vastly different symbolic status in China than within the field of ethnomusicology as it is practiced in the US, and it is critical that we take an intersectional approach to understanding how this musical genre is intertwined with middle class and nationalist identity. I suggest various other ways that difference can be employed in

relation to ethnocentrism, world music, ethnography, and Chinese research traditions.

Daniel Barolsky, Beloit College
Destabilizing the Core

Imagine that you are presented with the opportunity to create an entirely new music curriculum, without being beholden to restrictions imposed by NASM, tradition, the limits of current faculty, the needs to prepare students for graduate placement exams, or even conventional definitions of music. Imagine, also, that the central charge of this undertaking is to create a music program that serves a diverse community of students and seeks to prepare them for a radically changing musical world. What would this program look like?

Few of us are granted this almost idealistic opportunity. Yet even the exercise of imagining the possibilities encourages the designer to question and challenge the reasons behind existing structures. In particular, how do the ways in which we divide curricula into such isolated tracks as theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology (among others) reinforce the very constructions of knowledge our charge seeks to re-conceive? To what degree is the “core music curriculum” the primary obstacle to fostering musical diversity of many kinds?

Based on the writer’s experience of throwing out and completely re-designing an entire music curriculum, this lightning talk suggests ways in which we might move beyond the “core” and, instead, envision a music curriculum that at its heart integrates and celebrates the inherent tensions among music theory, musicology, ethnomusicology, and sound studies. If we are truly to address diversity as teachers, we need, at the heart, a curriculum that incorporates and centralizes a diversity of disciplinary voices and perspectives.