



Diversity within the Piano Repertoire

An Exploration of Piano Major's Experience with and Perceptions of Music by Women Composers and Composers of Color

By Jenna Klein

The repertoire studied by classical pianists throughout their development is largely dominated by the compositions of White, European men. While the “core” repertoire composers are homogeneous in nature, present-day students are not (Brown, 2007). Additionally, students benefit from exposure to works by composers with whom they can relate (race, gender, lived experience) (Hackett et al., 1989; Thornton et al., 2008). To better meet the needs of present-day students, present relatable role models (Thornton et al., 2008) and promote a learning curriculum that welcomes and supports all (Campbell, 2002), teachers must be prepared to teach music by diverse composers that fall outside the established Eurocentric framework.

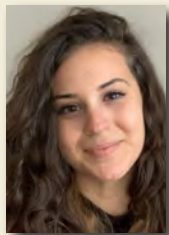
While pre-service teacher's confidence to teach repertoire by diverse composers has

been explored in other musical contexts, this topic has yet to be formally explored in the piano field. The purpose of this research was to examine potential relationships between piano majors' experience learning, opinions related to and confidence in teaching piano repertoire by diverse composers.

Participants were undergraduate and graduate piano majors at south-central colleges and universities. Questionnaire prompts related to three topics: (1) exposure to piano repertoire by diverse composers, (2) beliefs related to repertoire by diverse composers and (3) confidence teaching repertoire by diverse composers. Prompts asked respondents to list previously studied diverse composers and indicate their level of agreement with 48 Likert-scale prompts related to the three topics.

Findings indicate a strong correlation between respondents' experiences learning works by diverse composers and their confidence in teaching diverse repertoire. Findings also indicate differences in confidence, experience and ability to name diverse composers related to the respondent's gender and race. Regardless of race or gender, participants indicated that inclusion of piano works by diverse composers in the curriculum is important and valuable. ◀◀

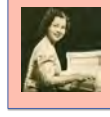
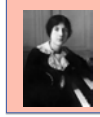
Jenna Klein completed a PhD in Music Education/Piano Pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma in December 2021. She teaches applied and class piano at Southern Nazarene University. Her research interests include rote teaching, pedagogical repertoire by underrepresented composers and flow theory.



Diversity within the Piano Repertoire: An Exploration of Piano Major's Experience with and Perceptions of Music by Women Composers and Composers of Color

Jenna Klein, University of Oklahoma

Can you name these composers?



Introduction

- The "core" piano repertoire is not demographically representative of or relatable to some present-day piano students (Campbell, 2002; Brown, 2007)
- Exposure to role models may provide a tangible ideal of success, improve confidence, and increase the likelihood that students will pursue music study. (Lockwood, 2006; Thornton et al., 2008).

Purpose of the Study

To examine the relationship between piano major's experience with and opinions related to teaching and learning piano repertoire by female composers and composers of color and their perceived ability to teach diverse repertoire.

Method

Participants

- $N = 48$
- Current BA, MM, PhD, and DMA piano majors enrolled at institutions in the south-central U.S.
- Women =24, Men =23, Unspecified =1
- Age range =18-28; Mean =21.79; Median =22
- Asian= 11(22.9); Black or African American= 3 (6.3%); White= 25 (52.1%); Other= 9 (18.75%)

Data Collection Tool: Online questionnaire

Results

- Piano majors felt more confident teaching standard repertoire ($M= 8.07$, $SD= 1.57$, median= 8) than repertoire by women composers ($M= 6.55$, $SD= 1.95$, median 7) and composers of color ($M= 6.21$, $SD= 2.14$, median = 6).
- Respondents were able to name significantly fewer women composers of color (72.08% of answers were left blank) than women composers (29.58% left blank) or composers of color (39.17% left blank).

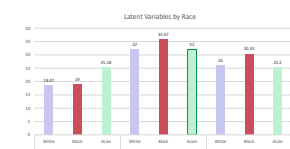
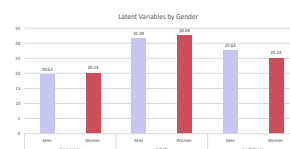
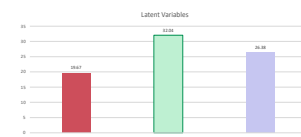
Latent variables (Cronbach Alpha of each variable: $\alpha > .70$):

- Experience:** Participants experience learning repertoire by diverse composers
- Beliefs:** Participants attitudes and opinions about diverse repertoire
- Confidence:** Participants perceived ability to teach diverse repertoire

Latent Variables by Race and Gender

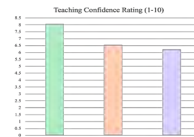
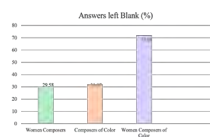
- Female piano majors had more experience and higher beliefs related to diverse repertoire. Male piano majors were more confident in their abilities to teach diverse repertoire.
- Black piano majors had the most experience with, the highest beliefs of, and most confidence in teaching diverse repertoire.
- Asian piano majors had more experience and equal belief levels with White piano majors.
- White piano majors were more confident in their teaching abilities of diverse repertoire than Asian piano majors.

| Women Composers (Listed by 4 or more participants) | Composers of Color (Listed by 4 or more participants) | Women Composers of Color (Listed by more than 1 participant) |
|--|---|--|
| Clara Schumann 31 | Scott Joplin 17 | Florence Price 18 |
| Fanny Mendelssohn 20 | William Grant Still 13 | Margaret Bonds 5 |
| Amy Beach 18 | Florence Price 12 | Unsus Chin 3 |
| Florence Price 11 | Toru Takemitsu 6 | Hazel Scott 2 |
| Hildegard von Bingen 8 | Duke Ellington 6 | Karen Tanaka 2 |
| Cecile Chaminade 8 | Charlie Parker 5 | Billie Holiday 2 |
| Germaine Tailleferre 4 | George Walker 4 | Alexina Louie 2 |
| | Dizzy Gillespie 4 | |
| | Alberto Ginastera 4 | |



Discussion

- More experience = more confidence. If students gain more experience teaching repertoire by diverse repertoire, they may become more confident teaching said repertoire.
- Respondents expressed that while they believed teaching diverse repertoire was important and necessary, they did not feel equipped to do so. Future teachers should be exposed to more experiences with diverse repertoire through their degree programs requirements.
- When asked to name five women composers of color, most respondents named one or less composers. Low response rate may indicate the need for greater exploration of these composers and conscientious effort to avoid tokenism when introducing students to underrepresented composers.



References

- Brown, M.R. (2007). Educating all students: Creating culturally responsive teachers, classrooms, and schools. *Intervention in School & Clinic* 43(1): 57-62.
- Campbell, P.S. (2002). Music Education in a Time of Cultural Transformation. *Music Educators Journal*, 89(1): 27-54.
- Hackett, G., Esposito, D. & O'Halloran, S. (1989). The relationship of role model influence to the career salience and educational and career plans of college women. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 35: 164-180.
- Thornton, L. & Bergee, M. (2008). Career choice influence among music education students at major schools of music. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 177(3): 7-17.