

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

Over the past century, American classical piano study has been dominated by the works of white, male composers. The “core” repertoire that nearly all classical piano students learn has not typically included works by diverse composers (e.g., women composers and composers of colors) (Chu 2002, 53; Gould 2005, 62; Race 1980, 2). The composers most frequently performed on undergraduate and graduate recitals and pre-collegiate piano competitions include Beethoven, Chopin, Bach, Liszt, Mozart, Debussy, Haydn, Schubert, Rachmaninoff, Schumann and Ravel—all white, European men (Chu 2002, 53; Hunter 1993, 16). While the classical piano standards like Bach preludes and fugues, Beethoven sonatas and Chopin’s nocturnes undoubtedly hold musical and technical merit that piano students should experience, teaching predominantly Eurocentric repertoire may not appeal to present-day students (Anderson and Campbell 2010, V), offer them relatable role models (Campbell 2002, 37) or promote a learning curriculum that appeals to students from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences (Hess 2018, 16). Additionally, teaching an exclusively Eurocentric curriculum simply

does not present students with a broad and full understanding of existing piano literature. In short, broadening the piano repertoire to include works from the traditional canon alongside works by minority composers better supports student needs.

## Piano Teaching Repertoire

Piano teachers select literature for students based on the technical demands, length, form, style and character, musical considerations, level of difficulty and overall appeal of a given work (Lu 2012, 72). While specific composers are intrinsically tied to certain genres and styles (e.g., J.S. Bach and the prelude and fugue), teachers typically believe they can develop their students’ musical and technical skills through varied works by varied composers (Bulow 2019, 12; Chin 2008, 19; Coutts 2018, 288; Pierson 2020, 8). In this scenario, repertoire merely functions as the tool through which to teach musical and technical concepts.

Since most teachers believe concepts can be taught and reinforced through a variety of works, the inclusion of works by traditionally underrepresented composers in the teaching canon would not inhibit teaching goals. Rather, the inclusion of works by diverse composers may present more viable options to choose

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

from when selecting repertoire for students. While this concept may appear obvious, without the intentional teaching of works by diverse composers, the Eurocentric standards will persist, and many high-quality composers will continue to be excluded from the canon. Broadening teaching literature is beneficial for several reasons: students are exposed to and learn the music of composers of both their own and other races and genders (Broadbent 2016, 52), and students who eventually become music educators are equipped with the resources and expertise to teach and perform music by composers of all genders and races.

## The Eurocentric Music Education Curriculum

Eurocentrism is defined as “a cultural phenomenon” that views the histories and cultures of Western-Europe societies as preeminent and superior to the culture of other societies and “views the histories and cultures of non-Western societies from a European or Western perspective” (Pokhrel 2011, 321). Eurocentrism impacts nearly all facets of American education, including music education. The impacts of the Eurocentric music curriculum upon the American music education system are far reaching and have been reinforced through centuries of practice (Anderson and Campbell 2010, V; Campbell 2002, 42; Hess 2018, 16). Most notably, a Eurocentric music curriculum perpetuates colonization and grants access to those with privilege, which creates issues of inequity (Oberhofer 2020, 1). Regardless of intention, when music is taught through a Eurocentric perspective, students learn that Eurocentric ideas, compositional traits and repertoire are superior (Campbell 2002, 31), which inevitably creates an “us” versus “them” mentality (Oberhofer 2020, 1). Such an approach requires students to reconcile their “role” within the established Eurocentric curriculum, which can result in some students feeling isolated and excluded. Additionally, through this format, the inclusion of diverse composers is peripheral, occurs tangentially to the “main” curriculum and appears as an act of tokenism. To gain authentic meaning, composers that fall outside of the

European canon should be contextualized and fully integrated into the curriculum. For example, rather than including one unit on “diverse composers” in a piano literature course, works by diverse composers could be integrated throughout the semester. Rather than teaching students one piece every year or two by a diverse composer, students could be provided consistent opportunities to learn music by diverse composers alongside works from the traditional canon. Only through deliberate action may students be exposed to an array of composers and styles that truly personifies the existing musical canon.

## Self-Efficacy

The successful integration of works by diverse composers into piano curricula may hinge on an individual’s ability to gain experience learning works by diverse composers while they are a student. Access to such experiences can positively increase self-efficacy related to this topic. Bandura (1997, 3) defines self-efficacy as an individual’s belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. For most, particularly music students, self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences like performing and studying repertoire (Zarza-Alzugaray et al., 2020, 10). Thus, increased experience with repertoire by diverse composers while a student may result in increased self-efficacy related to performing and teaching said works. Existing research evidences a strong relationship between experience and self-efficacy; however, the impacts of said experiences are unknown among piano majors. To understand the impact of exposure to diverse composers upon their self-efficacy more fully, examination of piano majors’ experience with learning diverse repertoire and resulting self-efficacy appears necessary.

## Need for the Study

The Eurocentric piano curriculum that is still largely used among collegiate and pre-collegiate piano programs may longer serve the present-day student. Not only does a Eurocentric curriculum provide an inaccurate representation of existing piano repertoire,

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

but use of this system may marginalize individuals and fail to accurately reflect the demographics and lived experiences of 21st-century students (Beggs 2019, 61; Butler, Lind and McCoy 2007, 247; Hess 2017, 136).

Music teachers represent a summation of previous experiences. They are largely influenced by their own learning experiences and teach what they have been taught because that is where they are most confident (where they hold the highest levels of self-efficacy) (Kelly-McHale 2018, 61). Experience learning and confidence teaching diverse repertoire have been studied among music education majors with varying primary instruments (Robbins 2019, 52) but has not yet been explored among piano majors.

Investigating piano majors' experiences learning, their beliefs about and their confidence teaching diverse repertoire is necessary to understand potential relationships that exist between these three areas (i.e., experience, beliefs, confidence). Through data gathered from this research, piano educators may become better informed to prepare future piano educators to teach music by diverse composers, and piano degree curricula can broaden to include both the traditional Western canon *and* the works of traditionally underrepresented composers to ensure developing pianists are exposed to a full representation of the existing piano repertoire.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this survey study was to examine undergraduate and graduate piano majors' confidence in selecting, performing and teaching piano repertoire by diverse composers. A secondary purpose was to investigate their beliefs about and experience learning diverse piano repertoire.

## Research Questions

1. What experiences do undergraduate and graduate piano majors have learning piano repertoire by diverse composers during their collegiate studies (as a student enrolled in piano lessons, literature or pedagogy courses)?

2. How confident are undergraduate and graduate piano majors in teaching repertoire by diverse composers?
3. What are the relationships between confidence among learning/performing, selecting and teaching repertoire by diverse composers?
4. What impact does undergraduate and graduate piano majors' experience learning piano repertoire by diverse composers have on their ability to teach piano repertoire by diverse composers to their current and/or future students?

## Definitions of Terms

The following operational definitions were used in this study:

- ▶ **Composer of Color:** The term composer of color will refer to a composer who identifies as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Color (BIPOC).
- ▶ **Diverse Composers:** For the purpose of this research, a diverse composer will be defined as a composer who does not identify with the definition of white male on the U.S. Census Bureau website: Males having "origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa."
- ▶ **Eurocentric:** "A cultural phenomenon" that views the histories and cultures of Western-Europe societies as preeminent and superior to the culture of other societies and "views the histories and cultures of non-Western societies from a European or Western perspective" (Pokhrel 2011, 321).

## Methodology

The target population for this IRB-approved survey study was undergraduate and graduate piano majors enrolled in a National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)-accredited program during the Fall 2021 semester as a part- or full-time student in one of the following programs: Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Musical Arts (BMA), Bachelor of Music Education (BME), Master of Music (MM), Master

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

of Music Education (MME), Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA), Doctor of Music (DM) or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

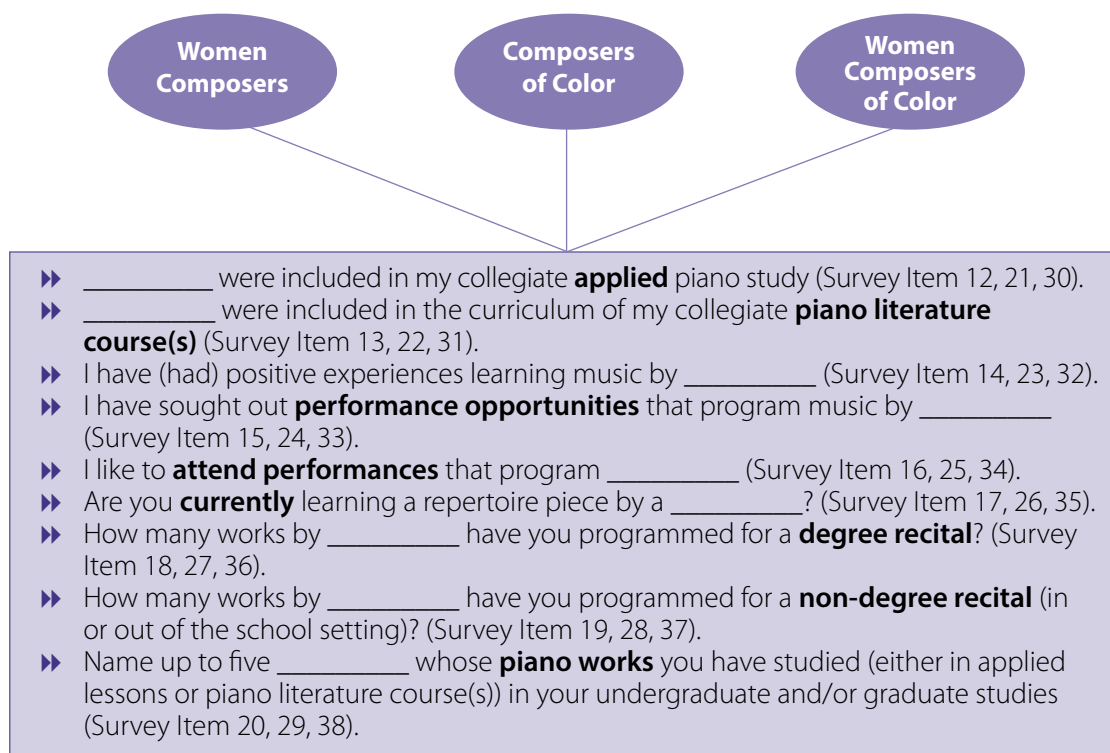
The survey was disseminated among students at NASM-accredited programs (via contacting department chairs and piano faculty) that offered degrees in piano. Survey respondents used the web-based survey instrument Qualtrics Lab, Inc. (2023) to complete the survey. The survey data collection tool was formatted into four sections.

## Section 1: Demographics

Section 1 collected information related to respondents' degree level, major, current institution location, public or private status of their institution, gender identity, ethnicity, race and age.

## Section 2: Experience with Diverse Repertoire

"Experience with Diverse Repertoire" (Section 2) gathered information related to respondents' collegiate experience playing repertoire by diverse composers. Section 2 was divided into three subsections to ask respondents more specifically about their experience learning piano works by (1) women composers, (2) composers of color and (3) women composers of color. Likert-scale prompts were utilized for most of these three subsections along with one dichotomous question and one short-answer response, which served as the final prompt of each subsection. The purpose of the short-answer response was to measure respondents' knowledge of and ability to recall specific composers they had studied from each category (i.e., woman composer, composer of color and woman composer of color). See Figure 1 for a visual model of the nine prompts included in each subsection.



**Figure 1**  
Response Items for "Experience" by Topic

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

## Section 3: Beliefs Related to Diverse Composers

Section 3 examined respondents' opinions and views related to the importance of including repertoire by diverse composers in degree coursework and its role within the curriculum and performances. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used to gather data and most prompts began with the statement "I believe...."

## Section 4: Confidence with Diverse Repertoire

"Confidence with Diverse Repertoire" investigated respondents' confidence in teaching repertoire by diverse composers to their current or future students. Section 4 also measured their confidence in teaching diverse repertoire and standard Western music repertoire to investigate the impact of respondents' experience *learning* diverse repertoire on their perceived ability and confidence to *teach* said repertoire. These prompts provided insight toward respondents self-perceived ability (self-efficacy) both in their independent pursuits and through their collegiate program curriculum. For this section, an 11-point agreement scale was used.

## Results and Findings

While the full details of survey data results and findings are discussed in my 2021 dissertation, the most pertinent findings will be outlined here. Specific data findings will be shared; however, most of this section will discuss relevant findings in combination with implications and recommendations for (1) "Piano Majors," (2) "Instructors of Academic Piano Coursework" and (3) "Applied/Private Piano Instructors."

After examining initial data obtained from respondents ( $N = 242$ ) for incomplete or missing values, 180 survey responses served as the usable response rate for my study. Table 1 details respondents gender identity, race and ethnicity.

	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	104	57.8
Male	68	37.8
Genderqueer	1	0.6
Non-binary	1	0.6
Not reported	6	3.3
<b>Race</b>		
White	116	64.4
Asian	34	18.9
Black or African American	11	6.1
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	1.1
Other	16	8.9
Not reported	1	0.6
<b>Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Ethnicity</b>		
No	159	88.3
Yes	18	10.0
Not reported	3	1.7

**Table 1:** PMDR Respondents' Demographic Information  
(Note:  $N = 180$ )

Most respondents were current undergraduate students and piano performance majors. Table 2 outlines respondents' degree type and major.

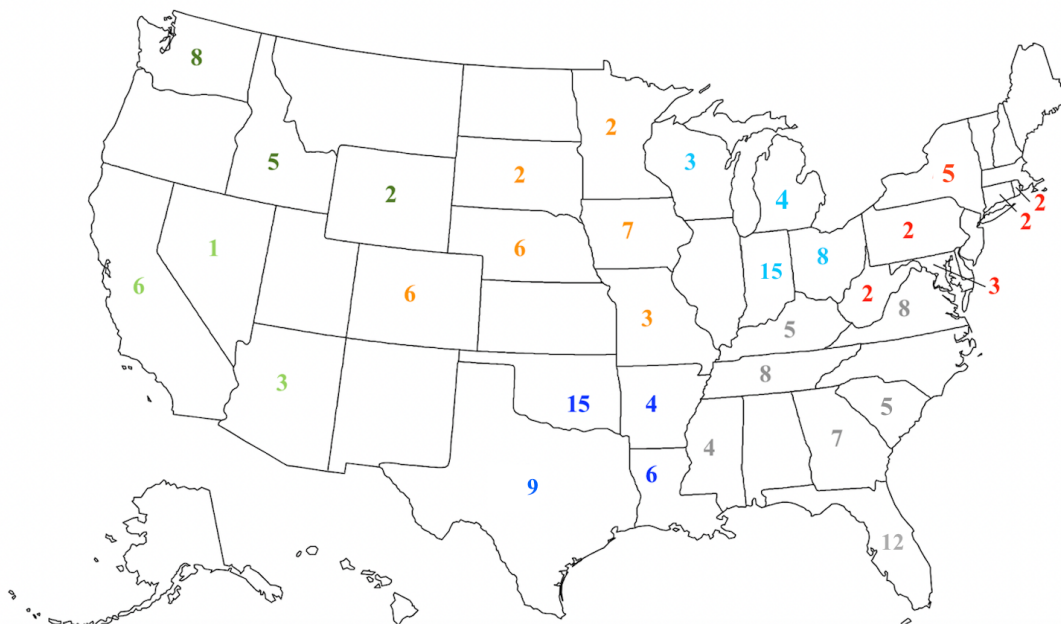
# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

Degree	Frequency	%
Bachelor's	118	65.6
Master's	35	19.4
Doctorate	23	12.8
Other	4	2.2
Major		
Piano Performance	93	51.7
Music Education	20	11.1
Piano Performance and Pedagogy	18	10.0
Piano	15	8.3
Piano Pedagogy	12	6.7
Collaborative Piano	2	1.1
Other	20	11.1

**Table 2:** PMDR Respondents' Degree Level and Degree Program  
(Note: N = 180)

Respondents ranged in age from 18–39 years old. Most respondents ( $n = 143$ , 79.4%) fell into the age bracket of typical undergraduate students aged 18–25, supporting the survey data that most respondents were seeking an undergraduate degree. The average respondent age was 22.5 years. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of respondents were students at public institutions ( $n = 140$ , 77.8%).

Among respondents, 33 states were named when providing the location of their collegiate program. Indiana ( $n = 15$ , 8.3%), Oklahoma ( $n = 15$ , 8.3%), Florida ( $n = 12$ , 6.7%) and Texas ( $n = 9$ , 5.0%) represented the states with the highest number of recorded responses. Complete geographic region information is found in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** PMDR Respondents' Collegiate Institution Location (State) (Note: N = 180)



# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

Regions are represented by colored numerals: Northwest (dark green), Southwest (light green), West Central (yellow), South Central (dark blue), Southern (gray), East Central (light blue) and Eastern (red). Region delineations follow those outlined by Music Teachers National Association (MTNA).

## Experience

Overall, data findings indicate piano majors had at least some experience learning repertoire by diverse composers, either in piano literature, applied, pedagogy, chamber or other affiliated degree coursework. Respondents indicated they more frequently studied women composers in piano literature courses than in applied lessons. Despite women composers appearing more often in piano literature than in applied lesson curricula, respondents still most frequently indicated they seldom ( $n = 50$ , 27.8%) studied women composers in piano literature courses. While 35.1% ( $n = 65$ ) of respondents indicated they had never studied a work by a woman composer in an applied lesson, a smaller percentage, 15% ( $n = 27$ ), indicated they had never studied a woman composer in a piano literature course. Respondents' self-reported experience with repertoire by diverse composers indicates a lack of consistency in curricula related to the inclusion of works by diverse composers. To provide students with more experiences learning works by diverse composers, curricula must be adjusted to integrate these works more regularly into course study.

In each subtopic of the survey's experience section (i.e., women composers, composers of color and women composers of color), respondents were asked to list five composers of piano music they had learned about during their collegiate studies. Respondents more successfully recalled the names of women composers than composers of color or women composers of color.

**Women Composers.** With 180 respondents and five possible submissions from each respondent, a total of 900 potential responses could have been reported regarding women

composers. Respondents listed 365 composer names, resulting in a response rate of 40.6%. After consolidating repeated composers across respondents, there were a total of 80 different women composers who had composed at least one piano work. Clara Schumann was the most frequently named woman composer, listed by 79 respondents (see Table 3).

Composer	Frequency
Clara Schumann	79
Amy Beach	34
Fanny Mendelssohn	33
Florence Price	28
Cécile Chaminade	20
Lili Boulanger	9
Germaine Tailleferre	8
Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre	5
Rebecca Clarke	5
Alexina Louie	4
Louise Farrenc	4
Grażyna Bacewicz	4
Margaret Bonds	4
Maria Szymanowska	4
Nadia Boulanger	4
Valerie Capers	4
Response Rate	40.6%

**Table 3:** Women Composers Listed by 4 or More Respondents  
(Note:  $N = 180$ )

**Composers of Color.** Respondents submitted 232 valid responses for the prompt related to composers of color (25.8% response rate). Among the 90 different composers of color listed by respondents, 79 composers were listed by three or less respondents and 11 composers were listed by four or more respondents. The most frequently named composer of color was Scott Joplin, listed by 44 respondents (see Table 4).

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

Composer	Frequency
Scott Joplin	44
Florence Price	32
William Grant Still	15
Duke Ellington	9
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor	8
Valerie Capers	5
George Walker	5
Alberto Ginastera	4
Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges	4
Robert Nathaniel Dett	4
Response Rate	25.8%

**Table 4:** Composers of Color Listed by 4 or More Respondents (Note: N = 180)

**Women Composers of Color.** Respondents listed a total of 27 women composers of color (approximately one-third fewer composers than were named for the women composers and composers of color categories). Three composers were listed more than three times: Florence Price (37 times), Margaret Bonds (12 times) and Valerie Capers (6 times). Of the cumulative 900 spaces respondents could complete for this category, only 87 were completed (9.6% response rate). The response rate for women composers of color was considerably lower than composers of color ( $n = 232$ , 25.8%) and women composers ( $n = 365$ , 40.6%), which indicates that piano majors have far less experience learning about women composers of color during their collegiate studies. See Table 5 for a list of women composers of color who were reported by four or more respondents.

Composer	Frequency
Florence Price	37
Margaret Bonds	12
Valerie Capers	6
Response Rate	9.6%

**Table 5:** Women Composers of Color Listed by 4 or More Respondents (Note: N = 180)

Respondents' noticeably lower response rate when asked to list women composers of color they have studied suggests that women composers of color may not be included in many collegiate piano degree programs' curricula. In addition, Florence Price was overwhelmingly the only woman composer that respondents were able to recall. While Florence Price undoubtedly deserves inclusion in the curriculum (particularly due to her significant piano compositions for beginning to advanced pianists) she is by no means the only black woman classical composer. Respondents' inability to list other women composers of color suggests that Florence Price may be presented as the "token" black women composer. This approach is regarded as superficial, leaves women composers of color as peripheral rather than integrated and does not address systemic issues of representation in the classical music degree curriculum (Marcho 2020, 13). To dismantle the existing Eurocentric curriculum and broaden students' knowledge of the piano repertoire, curricula could consistently include a variety of women composers.

## Impact of Gender and Race on Experience

In the present study, respondents (regardless of gender) reported the same level of experience learning repertoire by traditionally underrepresented composers. While low, the level of experience was consistent across genders. American Indian, Alaska Native and Black



# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

or African American respondents did have slightly more experience learning works by diverse composers; however, the finding was not statistically significant and, like gender, experience was comparable among all races. This finding is important to note since it indicates that *all* piano majors gain experience learning works by diverse composers—not solely those piano majors who relate in gender or race to composers of a traditionally unrepresented group. Although consistent across gender and race groups, the low experience levels indicate the need for further inclusion of diverse composers among the works student study.

## Interaction Between Variables

The survey was formatted in three sections to reflect the three components (i.e., experience, beliefs, confidence) that influence piano majors' relationship with piano repertoire by diverse composers. To better investigate the relationship between experience, beliefs and confidence, latent variables were created using larger groupings of questions by topic (i.e., experience, beliefs and confidence). Through comparing latent variables a statistically significant relationship was identified between respondents' experience learning works by diverse composers ( $M = 55.76$ ,  $SD = 9.93$ ) and their confidence teaching repertoire by diverse composers ( $M = 98.73$ ,  $SD = 25.46$ ). Similarly, a significant relationship ( $r = .24$ ,  $p = .006$ ) was found between piano majors' confidence teaching repertoire by diverse composers ( $M = 98.73$ ,  $SD = 25.46$ ) and their beliefs related to repertoire by diverse composers ( $M = 50.16$ ,  $SD = 8.59$ ). Simply put, respondents with more experience learning works by diverse composers were more confident teaching and performing works by diverse composers and held higher beliefs related to diverse composers. These findings support existing research related to self-efficacy (Burak 2019, 265; Regier 2016, 37) and suggest that to build confidence related to diverse composers, pianists gain

experience learning diverse composers while a student.

## Beliefs Related to Repertoire by Diverse Composers

Overall, most respondents agreed ( $n = 46$ , 25.6%) or strongly agreed ( $n = 113$ , 62.8%) that it is important to *teach* music by composers of all genders. Similarly, respondents agreed ( $n = 47$ , 26.1%) or strongly agreed ( $n = 115$ , 63.9%) that it is important to *teach* music by composers of all races. Further, most collegiate pianists agreed ( $n = 47$ , 26.1%) or strongly agreed ( $n = 112$ , 62.2%) that it is important to *play and/or perform* music by composers of all genders and mostly agreed ( $n = 41$ , 22.8%) or strongly agreed ( $n = 114$ , 63.3%) that it is important to *play and/or perform* music by composers of all races.

However, when asked if they consider gender and race when selecting repertoire to learn or teach, pianists' responses were neutral. Most respondents selected that they "neither agree nor disagree" that considering gender is important when choosing literature for themselves ( $n = 59$ , 32.8%) and for their students ( $n = 70$ , 38.9%) to learn. Similarly, respondents indicated that considering race is important when choosing literature for themselves ( $n = 54$ , 30.0%) and for their students ( $n = 73$ , 40.6%) to learn.

This disparity is particularly interesting: Respondents overwhelmingly believe teaching music by composers of all genders and races is important, but most do not consider gender or race when selecting repertoire. While more information is necessary to understand this disparity, contributing factors may relate to experience and in turn confidence. Although piano majors may appear to believe it is important to perform and teach repertoire by all composers, they may not have the tools and resources to do so. If they have not studied women composers and composers of color in their piano literature courses or do not know of resources to access on their own (e.g., composer diversity websites, pedagogical resources), they may not have the necessary

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

information and experience to thoughtfully consider race and gender when selecting repertoire. This finding supports existing research related to self-efficacy since experience may have impacted their self-efficacy related to the topic (Burak 2019, 267; Regier 2016, 77; Zelenak 2014, 47).

The contrasting results from these two prompts reflect a disconnect between vocalizing a desire for change and taking action to move toward making that change. Piano majors' beliefs indicate they support broadening the performance repertoire to include works by traditionally underrepresented composers, yet many respondents indicated low follow-through to help make this change. Although reasons related to lack of experience learning diverse repertoire and knowledge of resources/access may contribute to this disparity, these findings illustrate an important point: To shift from a Eurocentric to a more inclusive curriculum, pianists and piano teachers may need to consider gender and race when selecting repertoire, and thus teach music, works or composers that they may not have learned themselves as a student (Kelly-McHale 2018, 61). Current educators may need to take measured action to broaden their own knowledge so cyclical trends of Eurocentrism can be disrupted. Without breaking Eurocentric traditions, students may continue to lack the necessary experience to confidently teach and perform works by traditionally underrepresented composers.

## Confidence Teaching Repertoire by Underrepresented Composers

Overall, respondents were more confident teaching works from the traditional canon ( $M = 8.07$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ) than works by women composers ( $M = 6.04$ ,  $SD = 2.52$ ) and composers of color ( $M = 5.61$ ,  $SD = 2.54$ ). Given respondents' lack of experience learning works by diverse composers, this finding is unsurprising. When respondents were asked if they teach repertoire by diverse composers, most reported they did not currently teach works by women composers or composers of

color, and they would more often teach works by diverse composers if they felt better prepared to do so. Again, these results support existing self-efficacy research that suggests those with more experience in a given area may have more confidence in their abilities (Regier 2016, 37).

## Implications for the Inclusion of Diverse Repertoire with the Piano Curriculum

Findings from this investigation have implications for a multitude of audiences. Piano majors, piano teachers, instructors of piano major course curricula and piano publishers all play important roles in bringing greater accessibility and more experiences related to performing and teaching piano repertoire by diverse composers. While the following suggestions for piano majors, instructors of academic piano coursework and applied/private piano instructors vary, all share the need for student-led change. Students should take initiative to seek out desired repertoire and learn contextual information about each work's composer. Instructors should give students the encouragement and freedom to choose these pieces. To make long-term and meaningful change, students' interests, knowledge and voices should be valued and used to help lead progress in the piano field.

## Suggestions for Piano Majors

Piano majors often are in the unique position of both student and teacher, simultaneously. Their unique role allows piano majors to address the broadening of the piano repertoire to include diverse composers from both a student and teacher perspective. The suggestions for piano students—from this study and related research—are presented below.

- ▶▶ Consider the literature piano majors would like to teach in future studios/classrooms and take intentional action to become familiar with this repertoire while a student.
- ▶▶ Seek out performance opportunities (as both an attendee or performer) that program diverse literature.

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

- » Be proactive and independently curious in discovering repertoire by diverse composers. Share new repertoire discoveries with applied instructors to help promote continued expansion and change.
- » Set a goal: "I will learn [number of pieces] by a composer from [a traditionally underrepresented group] this academic year." The goal may be in consultation with their applied instructor to further continue discourse regarding representation in programming.
- » Attend professional conferences, particularly those that program presentations that address diversity within the piano repertoire. Students can often register to attend conferences at a discounted or free rate.
- » Discuss diverse composers and their literature with peers. Share ideas and resources and learn from one another.
- » Be an advocate for others who actively program, teach and present on diversity within the piano repertoire by attending their performances and presentations and sharing the information you have learned and where you learned it with peers.
- » Seek out a mentor who is vested in the inclusion of diverse literature in the piano repertoire or discuss with a mentor interest in learning more about diverse works.
- » Ask piano instructors (applied, piano literature, pedagogy) for tools and materials that can be used to teach future music students about diverse composers.
- » Seek out publishers that publish collections by diverse composers.

## Suggestions for Instructors of Academic Piano Coursework

Piano major coursework holds powerful potential for disseminating valuable information, resources and experience regarding all types of literature, including that by diverse composers. To utilize this potential, course instructors may need to re-evaluate and adapt current curricula to meet the diverse needs of 21st-century pianists. The following suggestions could aid instructors in creating coursework that integrates repertoire by diverse composers.

- » Create experiences that allow students to build self-efficacy within the parameters of the course. This could be achieved through teaching observations (both of the student observing teachers or of the student's own teaching), mock in-class teaching, repertoire performance projects or other related activities.
- » Design projects that allow students to explore works by underrepresented composers. Give students guided practice in accessing resources and analyzing music by diverse composers.
- » Assign student designed projects that encourage independent exploration of works by underrepresented composers. Students can design such projects to fit their specific interests as a pianist and teacher and introduce the instructor and their peers to new works and composers.
- » Utilize a pedagogy text that includes repertoire by diverse composers or, if unavailable, supplement the course text with information about said composers.
- » Fully integrate works by diverse composers into coursework. Rather than treating diverse composers peripherally or introducing one or two composers from a specific group (tokenism), teach diverse composers alongside the traditional composers already included in course curriculum to broaden the repertoire.

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

- ▶▶ Consider the intersectionality of many diverse composers. Rather than using only white women or men of color to introduce diversity, include an array of composers that encompass multiple facets of identity (e.g., women composers of color, transgender composers).
- ▶▶ Invite guest lecturers who are vested in the inclusion of diverse composers and can share resources and relevant piano works with students.
- ▶▶ Discuss with students what they would like included in the curriculum. This could be specific composers, diverse composers in general or other related topics (e.g., four-hand music by diverse composers). Consider their input when designing a course curriculum.
- ▶▶ Seek and support those working to make diverse repertoire more known and accessible and share the names and research of these individuals with students.
- ▶▶ Purchase books for use in the teaching studio that include compositions by traditionally underrepresented groups. Purchase a copy for student use that can be added to an institution's pedagogy library or collection of teaching materials.
- ▶▶ In a university setting, request that the library purchase more scores by diverse composers.
- ▶▶ Share with students the resources that teachers have used to access literature by diverse composers.
- ▶▶ Create performance opportunities that encourage the inclusion of traditionally and underrepresented composers alongside one another.
- ▶▶ Teach not just the repertoire, but its contextual history and relevance as well.
- ▶▶ Encourage students to explore the intersections of their own identity through piano composers and the works they study.
- ▶▶ Set a goal: "I will assign [number of pieces] by a composer from [a traditionally underrepresented group] this academic year."
- ▶▶ Attend professional conferences, particularly those that program presentations that address diversity within the piano repertoire.
- ▶▶ Be an advocate for others who actively program, teach and present on diversity within the piano repertoire.
- ▶▶ Be proactive and independently curious in discovering repertoire by diverse composers.

## Suggestions for Applied/Private Piano Instructors

While many of the suggestions above regarding course curricula pertain to applied piano instructors, the unique nature of the one-on-one instructional setting of applied piano lessons necessitates further specific suggestions. These may help piano teachers more proactively address diverse composers in their piano lessons.

- ▶▶ Carefully select the repertoire that students will study, which includes consideration of composer race and gender. Share this process with students and, under guidance, have them recreate the process.
- ▶▶ Encourage students to select at least one repertoire piece to study each semester by a traditionally underrepresented composer.
- ▶▶ Discuss with students what works and composers (both traditional and diverse) they would like to study. Consider their input when choosing literature, even if the specific composition or composer is new or unfamiliar to the teacher.

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

## Conclusion

In recent years, representation has become a frequently discussed and important topic among those who desire to broaden the piano curriculum to include works outside of the established Eurocentric standards. While challenging, attention to inequities and deliberate action can lead to successful and meaningful change. To support effective change and build self-efficacy, students should gain experience with diverse composers while a student through coursework, piano lessons, performances and teaching opportunities.

Data from this study reveals that while piano majors find the inclusion of diverse composers in the college piano curriculum important and desire to include more works by women composers and composers of color in their future teaching studios and classrooms, they often did not feel equipped with the necessary experience to teach diverse literature. Through this research, I hope to contribute to the growing initiative to broaden the piano repertoire to include both traditionally studied works *and* the works of those composers traditionally underrepresented in the piano canon. For the piano profession to expand the repertoire taught and performed to include works by diverse composers, piano teachers and students should make deliberate and intentional actions that challenge Eurocentric standards and foster greater inclusion and representation of piano composers who represent a varied assortment of demographics. ◀◀

## References

- Anderson, W. M., and P. S. Campbell. 2010. "Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education." Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Bandura, A. 1997. "Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control." New York: W. H. Freeman.
- Beggs, B. C. 2019. "Building School Music Programs That Promote Diverse Student Enrollment: A Review of Literature and Suggested Strategies for Change." MM capstone project, University of Florida.
- Broadbent, A. A. 2016. "The Piano Teaching Pieces of Florence B. Price: A Pedagogical and Theoretical Analysis of 11 Late Elementary Piano Teaching Pieces." MM thesis, Western Illinois University.
- Bulow, E. 2019. "Repertoire Selection Practices of Piano Teachers of Intermediate-Level Students as a Function of Teaching Experience and Training." DMA diss., Boston University.
- Burak, S. 2019. "Self-Efficacy of Pre-School and Primary School Pre-Service Teachers in Musical Ability and Music Teaching." *International Journal of Music Education*, 37(2), 257–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761419833083>.
- Burnham, R. 2003. "Perspective Performance for Elementary-Level Piano Students." *American Music Teacher*, 52(6), 30.
- Butler, A., V. Lind, and C. McKoy. 2007. "Equity and Access in Music Education: Conceptualizing Culture as Barriers to and Supports for Music Learning." *Music Education Research*, 9(2), 241–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800701384375>.
- Campbell, P. S. 2002. Music Education in a Time of Cultural Transformation. *Music Educators Journal*, 89(1), 27–54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399881>.
- Chen, C. C. 2008. "Selected Repertoire of the Gillet Competition from 1996 to 2006." DMA diss., University of Maryland.
- Chin, H. L. 2008. "Repertoire and Technical Exercises." *American Music Teacher*, 58(3), 18–21.

# An Examination of Collegiate Piano Majors' Experiences Learning, Beliefs About and Confidence in Selecting and Teaching Literature by Diverse Composers

- Chu, H. 2002. "Investigation on Piano Recital Program-Building". PhD diss., Columbia University.
- Coutts, L. 2018. "Selecting Motivating Repertoire for Adult Piano Students: A Transformative Pedagogical Approach." *British Journal of Music Education*, 35(3), 285–299. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051718000074>.
- Elliot, D. J., ed. 2009. *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195385076.001.0001>.
- Gould, J. 2005. "What Did They Play?: The Changing Repertoire of the Piano Recital from the Beginnings to 1980." *The Musical Times*, 146(1893), 61–76. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30044125>.
- Hess, J. 2017. "Troubling Whiteness: Music Education and the "Messiness" Of Equity Work." *International Journal of Music Education*, 36(2), 128–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761417703781>.
- Hess, J. 2018. "Interrupting the Symphony: Unpacking the Importance Placed on Classical Concert Experiences." *Music Education Research*, 20(1), 11–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2016.1202224>.
- Hunter, C. M. 1993. "A Study of Repertoire Performed in Degree Recitals by Piano Performance Majors at Selected United States Schools of Music." DMA diss., University of Missouri – Kansas City.
- Jones, M. J. A. 2020. "A Recording and Performance Guide for Six New Works for Concert Band Composed by Composers of Underrepresented Communities." DMA diss., Arizona State University.
- Kelly-McHale, J. 2018. "Equity in Music Education: Exclusionary Practices in Music Education." *Music Educators Journal*, 104(3), 60–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432117744755>.
- Lu, Y. 2012. "Survey of Eighteen North American Piano Method Books: Repertoire Selection and Categories."
- Marcho, T. 2020. "Socially Responsible Music Repertoire: Composer Gender Diversity in Instrumental Ensembles." PhD diss., Ohio State University.
- Oberhofer, C. 2020. "Decolonization and Indigenization in Music Education." *Canadian Music Educator*, 62(1), 48–53.
- Pierson, J. M. 2020. "An Index of Graded Piano Repertoire to Support Undergraduate Music Theory and Secondary Piano Sequences." DA diss., University of Northern California.
- Pokhrel, A. K. 2011. "Eurocentrism." In *Encyclopedia of Global Justice*, edited by D. K. Chatterjee, 321–325. Dordrecht: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9160\\_25](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9160_25).
- Race, W. 1980. "What Did Pianists Play in New York City?" *American Music Teacher* 29(4), 6–8.
- Regier, B. 2016. "A Measurement of Self-Efficacy Among Oklahoma Secondary Band Directors in Concert, Marching, and Jazz Ensemble Pedagogy." MM thesis, University of Oklahoma.
- Robbins, E. K. 2019. "Effects of Race and Gender on Preservice Music Educators' Perception of Composer Diversity." PhD Diss., Temple University.
- Zarza-Alzugaray, O., O. Casanova, G. E. McPherson, and S. Orejudo. 2020. "Music Self-efficacy for Performance: An Exploratory Model Based on Social Support." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(1249). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01249>.
- Zelenak, M. S. 2011. "Self-efficacy in Music Performance: Measuring the Sources Among Secondary School Music Students." PhD diss., University of Florida.

**Jenna Klein**, NCTM, PhD, serves as assistant professor of piano at Mississippi State University, where she teaches group piano, functional skills, piano pedagogy and applied piano. She holds degrees in music education, pedagogy and piano performance.

