

Diversifying the Violin Curriculum for Private Teaching: Stage One

Vanessa Cruz & Adam Schwind

The Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam, NY 13676

Abstract

This project seeks to broaden the scope of violin education by incorporating compositions from marginalized composers, including women and people of color, into an accessible online repertoire list for private violin teachers and students. Over two years, student researchers will delve into the technical aspects of selected works, categorizing them by difficulty and assigning technical ratings. Drawing from established curricula such as the Suzuki Method, this endeavor aims to grade pieces outside the normal teaching repertoire for use by teachers to supplement popular curriculum. Through this initiative, student researchers will enhance their skills in repertoire analysis, pedagogy, and research methods, cultivating a more inclusive approach to violin pedagogy and repertoire.

Background

The background for this research project stems from our aspiration to enhance the inclusivity of violin education by integrating compositions from marginalized composers, specifically focusing on women and people of color. We aim to address the underrepresentation of these composers within the repertoire commonly utilized by private violin teachers and students.

At its core, the project seeks to develop an online resource that facilitates the sequencing of music by composers who have historically been marginalized. This resource will serve as a tool for violin teachers and students, providing them with access to a diverse selection of repertoire that reflects the richness of the varied experiences of composers and audiences alike.

Materials and Methods

We started on our search by evaluated music available in the public domain, and sought pieces appropriate for beginner students. Additionally, we studied arrangements specifically tailored for beginner violinists, which led us to discover Rachel Barton Pine's work, "Music by Black Composers." This music book features duets arranged for beginner violin by talented black composers.

To maintain the educational structure of the pieces found within the Suzuki method, we compiled essential information for each selection: range, key, time signature, and the highest position required. Furthermore, we documented the musical elements suitable for incorporation/teaching, as well as technical notes and potential challenges. This comprehensive information was recorded on a spreadsheet, serving as a valuable tool for organizing the pieces according to their level of difficulty.

Once we had categorized the pieces by their level of complexity, we employed the same criteria to analyze each Suzuki piece. This allowed us to determine the optimal placement of our selections within the Suzuki pedagogy, ensuring a seamless integration of the newly discovered repertoire.

Once we completed our research, we compiled the pieces and information into a pdf, accessible below.

Results

With a focus on Books 1-3 of the Suzuki Method, which are widely utilized in beginner violin instruction, the project members evaluated 55 pieces and identified 34 of those that would be suitable as additional pieces by underrepresented composers to add to the Suzuki Curriculum. These pieces were selected align with the instructional scaffolding of the Suzuki Method while providing learners access to works that reflect diverse cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

By developing an accessible online resource, this initiative not only broadens the cultural and stylistic diversity of violin repertoire but also underscores the importance of inclusivity in music education.

Future Direction

Our next step is to consolidate our research from a rough database and format it into a user-friendly list for general use, while continuing to explore more diverse repertoire.

Acknowledgments

Research conducted by Vanessa Cruz & Adam Schwind with support from the Loughheed Center for Applied Learning team and faculty mentor Timothy Yip. Future researchers: Michael Wong and Alyssa Spina.

Completed Research
from
Stage One



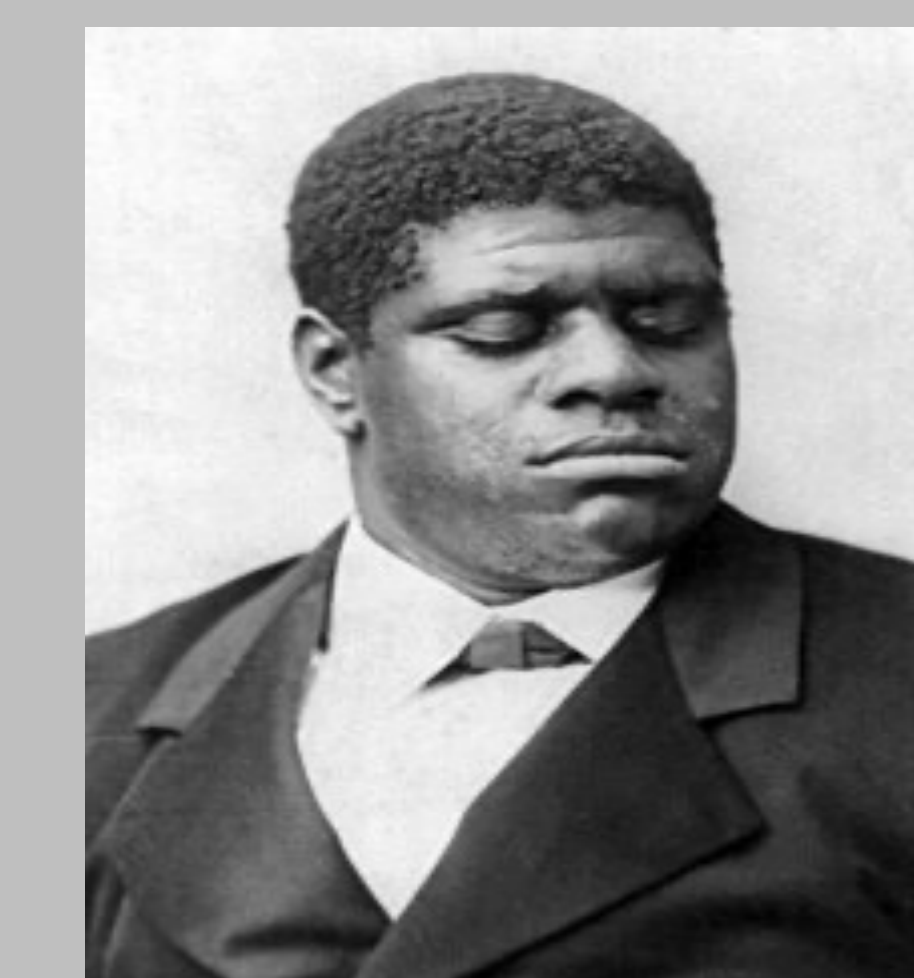
Selected
Incorporated
Composers



Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint Georges (1745- 1799)



Francisca "Chiquinha" Gonzaga (1847-1935)



Thomas Greene "Blind Tom" Wiggins (1849-1908)



Sister Marie-Seraphine Gotay (1865-1932)



William Grant Still (1895-1978)