

Diversifying the Violin Curriculum for Private Teaching

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Abstract

Classical music, including violin pedagogy, is often dominated by the works of European composers, and there is little emphasis on other composers and their works. This project aims to help pedagogues incorporate diversity into their private teaching. Through Internet and database searching, we identified many pieces teachers can use and organized them for use. Although we were successful in creating these resources, further work is needed to improve the accessibility and utility of underrepresented works.

Introduction and Importance

The term “classical music” to many refers to the works of the European tradition. Although this tradition is full of works worthy of study and performance, other styles have been historically disadvantaged, and it is important to show the other genres within classical music. Therefore, understanding these styles and their composers and works will foster a richer understanding of classical music and, for this project, the violin and its history.

This topic is important to classical music because of how long-lasting this underrepresentation has existed. Many areas in classical music - teaching, orchestras, auditions, etc. - use works from the tradition. Although more attention has been placed recently on the issue of diversity in classical music, greater efforts remain to ensure equitable access and representation in classical music.

Intended Outcomes

We hope these resources will help violin teachers implement principles of diversity in their music selections and further hope this is only part of their exploration. We also recognize that our goal is to augment the European tradition with diversity and not to replace it.

Methodology

To collect the information in this project, databases including the EBSCOhost Music Index, Oxford/Grove Music Online, and the Institute for Composer Diversity at SUNY Fredonia were consulted. Where possible, works are public domain in the US, but this wasn’t always possible, so some works were purchased.

Examples of Surveyed Composers



Joseph Bologne

Mather Brown, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Ignatius Sancho

Thomas Gainsborough, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Luise Adolpha Le Beau

See page for author, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



José White

Unattributed, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Nicanor Abelardo

Judgefloro, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Clara Schumann

Franz Hanfstaengl, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Ethel Smyth

Bain News Service, Public domain, via Library of Congress



Xian Xinghai

See page for author, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Florence Price

George Nelidoff, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Amy Beach

Bain News Service, Public domain, via Library of Congress

Quick Facts about Research

36

Composers
Surveyed

52

Works
Analyzed

10

Suzuki Books
Covered

52%

Works Freely
Accessible

This project culminated in the production of a database with information about many works from underrepresented composers. The researchers have compiled 52 pieces from 36 composers and provided pedagogical and historical information to guide instruction and offer a rich perspective.

Project Results

Needs for Further Research & Contribution

Freely-Accessible Beginner Works

Partial Accessibility of Composers

Greater Venues for Performance

Although such beginner works or arrangements exist, many are not available for free. We recognize that buying several books for private teaching is not substantial, but having free versions would reduce barriers to entry. This would help for students from more disadvantaged families who recognize the cost of learning an instrument. Therefore, creating free beginner works or arrangements would help teachers integrate principles of diversity earlier in their teaching.

Another challenge is the poor accessibility of works by underrepresented composers. Although many are online, other composers do not have their music digitized, and even more still have not been rediscovered. For example, the works of Sawney Freeman were recently rediscovered, but most can't play them since the music isn't public. More work is needed to discover obscure composers, but effort should be put to make sure their music is available for everyone.

Although musicians have access to underrepresented works, they may be discouraged to do so because of its poor utility. Many American postsecondary music programs require or encourage a performance audition with works from the standard repertory. There is a value of a standard repertoire set to gatekeepers, but decision-makers should work to ensure performers can program diverse works without any cost to future musical careers.

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Conclusions

The researchers hope this project will be useful for violin pedagogues wanting to incorporate a diversity of works in their teaching. They further hope that this is only a part of a continuing exploration of diverse works.

As described in the future research needs, greater resources need to be put toward improving the accessibility and utility of underrepresented works. By addressing these challenges, this project's goal to further diversity and inclusion within violin pedagogy and classical music will be advanced.

Project Links



Full Project Report

Our full project report, containing full biographical information, project information, and work.



Condensed Report

A shorter version of the full project report, containing abridged biographical information and project information.



Phase One Report

Our report from the first phase of our research, by researchers Vanessa Cruz and Cam Schwind.

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Student Researchers



Vanessa Cruz, Student Researcher, Phase 1



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Disclaimers

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