

Systems of Power, Privilege, and Oppression: Toward a Social Justice Education Pedagogy for the Music History Curriculum

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Recent scholarship has acknowledged that Western art music privileges white, cisgender, male composers through systems of power and oppression inherent in our histories and canons. For example, Philip Ewell describes social inequities and systemic racism in the study, research, and teaching of Western art music theory.¹ Margaret Walker calls for a decolonization of the Eurocentric music history curriculum to challenge the teleological and racist narratives that emerged from an entrenched colonial history.² And Loren Kawijawa challenges US schools and departments of music to confront Western art music's legacy of white supremacy.³ As we enter an era questioning these systemic problems, efforts to diversify music history curricula may actually reinforce the power of the canon, particularly in undergraduate music history survey courses. Therefore, creating formative changes that address these problems will require a new approach to teaching Western art music history. Social justice education (SJE) pedagogy equips students to recognize, analyze, and confront inequity and oppression, and is therefore an ideal framework for the study of systemic power, exclusion, and oppression inherent in the history of Western art music. Students are then empowered to confront oppression in the classroom and beyond and become socially conscious musicians in an

1. Philip A. Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame," *Music Theory Online* 26, no. 2 (June 2020): 1–29. Ewell gave an introduction to his scholarship on the white racial frame of music theory in his plenary address to the Society of Music Theory in 2019, recorded and made publicly available on Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com/372726003>).

2. Margaret E. Walker, "Towards a Decolonized Music History Curriculum," this *Journal* 10, no. 1 (2020): 13.

3. Loren Kawijawa, "The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in U.S. Schools and Departments of Music," in *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines*, ed. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Luke Harris, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and George Lipsitz, 155–74 (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

era seeking social change. This article introduces the tenets and practices of SJE pedagogy and, through a case study, demonstrates how SJE objectives can be effectively incorporated into a music history survey course. I will share approaches to overcoming barriers many instructors face in facilitating classes on difficult topics, such as racial or gender inequity, and finally argue for the inclusion of SJE objectives in Western art music history courses.

Getting Started with SJE: Critical Pedagogy and Inclusive Classrooms

Social justice education courses provide opportunities to examine course content from the perspectives of “social identities, power, privilege, and structural inequalities in our society and in [students’] own lives.”⁴ SJE pedagogy specialist Lee Anne Bell summarizes the following concepts that provide a framework for achieving social justice objectives: developing a critical consciousness, deconstructing binaries, drawing on counternarratives, analyzing power, looking for interest convergence, making global connections, building coalitions and solidarity, following the leadership of oppressed people, and being an accountable and responsible ally.⁵

The experiential pedagogy of SJE, through which students share and learn from each other’s experiences while they examine structural systems of advantage and disadvantage, is effective in not only achieving SJE outcomes, but also in engaging the students with the course content. Each classroom becomes a unique learning community that encourages personal and intellectual growth. By framing the course content around this process, students become committed to learning that content while developing a deeper connection to it.⁶ Therefore, rather than focusing course delivery on the dissemination of content, through SJE students become active participants in the creation of knowledge, which may have a greater impact on the students both and in and out of the classroom and at the same time provide them with critical skills to engage with the music and core content in a more meaningful way.

The practices and pedagogies of social justice education involve a two-fold, mutually reliant classroom approach: applying a *critical pedagogy* that teaches students the skills needed to recognize, analyze, and confront social injustices

4. Lee Anne Bell, Diane J. Goodman, and Mathew L. Oullet, “Design and Facilitation,” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed., ed. Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell (New York: Routledge, 2016), 55–93.

5. . Lee Anne Bell, “Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Education,” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed., 16–22.

6. Maurianne Adams, “Pedagogical Foundations for Social Justice Education,” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed., 28–29.

within an *inclusive classroom environment* that promotes discussion and learning. While no single set of practices exists for SJE pedagogy, recent research has shown that classroom approaches that emphasize questioning, listening, and dialogue are best for accomplishing social justice education outcomes.⁷

Central to social justice education is the large body of work in the field of critical pedagogy, developed on a principle of dialectical education through which students are taught to engage critically as participants in the production of knowledge rather than as passive recipients.⁸ Such a pedagogy is not necessarily unique to SJE but is foundational for student awareness and for the development of analytical tools to confront social injustices. Therefore, an interactive, student-centered classroom that applies action, critical reflection, mindful listening, and discussion of personal experiences in active dialogue have proven to be more effective to achieve SJE outcomes than lecture-based courses.⁹ Matthew J. Mayhew and Sonia Deluca Fernández report that students who “reflected on material, examined the material from different perspectives, and applied this knowledge to analyzing societal problems gained a better understanding of themselves and issues related to diversity, regardless of course content.”¹⁰ Through this process of critical reflection and discussion, students create knowledge with and through their learning environment and engage more deeply in their study of music history.

At my own institution, specific university courses are dedicated to social justice education and are required as part of a baccalaureate core curriculum for all undergraduate students. These courses are centered on teaching the tools to analyze systemic oppression in the United States and are available in subject areas across the university, from the liberal arts to the sciences.¹¹ Despite their disparate topics, all of these courses achieve the same objective: to teach

7. Tracy Davis and Laura M. Harrison, *Advancing Social Justice: Tools, Pedagogies, and Strategies to Transform your Campus* (Somerset, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 97.

8. Davis and Harrison, *Advancing Social Justice*, 85.

9. See for example Elinor L. Brown, “What Precipitates Change in Cultural Diversity Awareness During a Multicultural Course: The Message or the Method?,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 55, no. 4 (September/October 2004): 325–40; Davis and Harrison, *Advancing Social Justice*, 96–98; and Jennifer Akaine Phillips et al., “Barriers and Strategies by White Faculty Who Incorporate Anti-Racist Pedagogy,” *Race and Pedagogy Journal* 3, no. 2 (2019): 1–27, <https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/rpj/vol3/iss2/1/>.

10. Matthew J. Mayhew and Sonia Deluca Fernández, “Pedagogical Practices that Contribute to Social Justice Outcomes,” *The Review of Higher Education* 31, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 74–75.

11. Courses currently taught at Oregon State University that satisfy the DPD Baccalaureate Core requirement include “Biological and Cultural Constructions of Race,” “Food Justice,” “Communications Securities and Social Movements,” “Appearance, Power, and Society,” “The Economics of Discrimination Environmental Racism,” “Lesbian and Gay Movements in Modern America,” “Ethics of Diversity,” “Gender and the Law,” to name a few.

foundational skills for recognizing difference and analyzing how that difference leads to an unequal distribution of power.¹² Though my university's music history curricula are not dedicated social justice courses, I adapted SJE learning objectives into my upper-division surveys to reflect this aspect of the course and emphasize the social justice skills that students will acquire through the study of music history. In addition to traditional course objectives specific to music history survey courses, such as acquiring stylistic and historical analytical tools, I include the following SJE course objectives in my music history survey course syllabi:

Students will learn to

- recognize the systemic power, privilege, and oppression inherent to the study of Western art music, and
- analyze ways in which the centering of Western art music can lead to the marginalization of people and music from different social categories, such as race, gender, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

Critical pedagogy requires an inclusive environment that both challenges the students and at the same time allows them to feel safe. All students will enter the classroom with different experiences and exposures to social justice issues and will necessarily be challenged to engage in a dialogue with this new information. As facilitators, it is our responsibility to encourage growth in our students by leading them to what Maurianne Adams calls the “learning edge,” an area “located on, not beyond, the periphery of comfort,” while remaining in the realm of safety.¹³ To achieve this, Karen M. Peterson et al. suggest that the instructor must first feel secure in their teaching of social justice issues and recommend that difficult concepts be introduced slowly to build an environment based on trust and to gain the willingness of the students.¹⁴ In addition, neutral assessment strategies, in which credit is given for completed work rather than on content, allows the students to feel they are being fairly assessed and increases their willingness to participate in the course. For example, post-discussion reflection activities, such as journaling with or without instructor prompts, can be used as an opportunity for students to demonstrate critical engagement with the material and receive informal instructor feedback. Most importantly,

12. Oregon State University, Difference, Power, and Discrimination Learning Outcomes, <https://dpd.oregonstate.edu/proposing-dpd-course>.

13. Adams, “Pedagogical Foundations,” 39–40.

14. Karen M. Peterson, Larry F. Cross, E. Jean Johnson, and Glenna L. Howell, “Diversity Education for Preservice Teachers: Strategies and Attitude Outcomes,” *Action in Teacher Education* 22, no. 2 (2000): 33–38.

neutral grading on completed work ensures that instructors are not biased in their assessment of a student's expressed views or opinions if they are different from the instructor's own. In these kinds of low-stakes assessments, students can feel free to express their ideas without fear of losing points or saying something "wrong" and, moreover, encourages them to be more authentic, creative, or willing to take risks in their critical analysis.¹⁵

Adopting a few simple modifications can contribute to creating an inclusive classroom. For example, sharing personal pronouns indicates inclusiveness of gender fluidity. Adapting principles of Universal Design insures that all course materials (including course syllabi, assignment sheets, and online learning management systems content such as Blackboard or Canvas) are accessible to learners of all abilities so that they can actively participate in all aspects of the class.¹⁶ In my seminar-style courses with lower enrollment, I devote time in the first meeting for students to create agreed upon classroom guidelines for effective and respectful discussion. This process encourages students to determine together the shared expectations of the learning community, allowing them to take ownership of maintaining an environment focused on individual and group growth. Creating the classroom guidelines help them recognize that all students enter the discussion with different experiences, ensuring respect and open-mindedness for and by all students. It also stresses the importance of learning with and through their peers collectively.

As a final consideration, Mayhew and Deluca Fernández report that students are more likely to achieve social justice objectives when the course content confronts issues of power and oppression with a societal, systemic approach. This entails examining social structures that inherently privilege whiteness and disadvantage minoritized people. For example, by centering systemic rather than individual racism, students can learn how they may participate in racist social systems rather than place judgment on an individual's beliefs and experiences.¹⁷ In the study of music history, canons are examples of such hegemonic systems that privilege whiteness and disadvantage musicians of color and women. Throughout my courses, students study how canons are formed and reinforced

15. Bell, Goodman, and Ouellett, "Design and Facilitation," 68; Cyndy Kernahan, *Teaching Race and Racism in the College Classroom: Notes from a White Professor* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2019), 142.

16. My research in this area was in part influenced by a video lecture given by Jeff Kenney, "Advancing Social Justice Education: Integrating Critical and Inclusive Practices," T4 Tuesday Teaching and Tech Talk, Oregon State University, October 6, 2020. On the principles of Universal Design in higher education, see Nancy J. Evans, Ellen M. Broido, Kirsten R. Brown, and Autumn K. Wilke, *Disability in Higher Education: A Social Justice Approach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017), with special attention to chapter 10, "Universal Design," 274–302.

17. Kernahan, *Teaching Race and Racism*, 11.

as hegemonic systems and how they perpetuate the marginalization of people or other musics, both within the tradition of Western art music and of global cultures.

Teaching students social justice through the study of music history provides them with the critical skills to apply their knowledge to the ultimate goal of SJE: action. Writing on the historically discordant curricular challenges between “*knowledge and action*,” or “*knowing and doing*,” Adams offers approaches to bridge this gap and teach students to use their knowledge for activism.¹⁸ The arts hold a critical and powerful place in our society for opening up a dialogue about social justice on a public platform.¹⁹ If we frame our teaching of music history around issues of social justice, our students can be primed to confront systemic oppression and we can create a generation of socially conscious musicians, music educators, and scholars. In order for students to practice turning their knowledge into action, I assign class projects that model the skill of public musicology, for example group podcasts devoted to noncanonic music in which they problematize its exclusion from the canon.²⁰ Projects such as this offer the students an opportunity to explore social justice work as artists and educators and encourages them to pursue it in their future careers.

Taken altogether, the central practices of SJE can thus be outlined as: engaging students in critical reflection, analysis, and application; building an inclusive learning environment; using alternative assessment practices to eliminate teacher bias in grading; and centering problems of social justice on systems rather than individuals. In the following example, I will demonstrate my approach to social justice education pedagogy that addresses the problem

18. Maurianne Adams, “Social Justice and Education,” in *Routledge International Handbook of Social Justice*, ed. Michael Reisch (New York: Routledge, 2014), 255–56 [emphasis given]. For an extensive resource of topic-based essays on social justice and diversity, see Maurianne Adams et al., eds., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013). This volume provides a multi-dimensional understanding of intersectional oppression, which models the SJE approach to providing knowledge (in chapters categorized as “Context” and “Voices”) and suggesting approaches to action (under the category “Next Steps”).

19. For sources on social justice and the arts see Lee Ann Bell and Dipti Desai, eds., *Social Justice and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Barbara Beyerbach, R. Deborah Davis, and Tania Ramalho, eds., *Activist Art in Social Justice Pedagogy: Engaging Students in Global Issues Through the Arts*, rev. ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 2017); and Mary Stone Hanley, George W. Noblit, Gilda L. Sheppard, and Tom Barone, eds., *Culturally Relevant Arts Education for Social Justice: A Way Out of No Way* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

20. The podcast series “Sound Expertise: Conversations with Scholars About Music,” hosted by Will Robin and produced by D. Edward Davis can serve as a model for students to learn about podcasting and public musicology: <https://soundexpertise.org/>. Some of the episodes could also be offered as excellent supplemental material to Western art music survey course.

of the historical condition of being marginalized through the lens of colonial Spain.

Case Study: Colonial Systems in Mexico City's Cathedral

My current institution's History of Western Music series is a three-term survey divided into two style periods per term. We use J. Peter Burkholder's *A History of Western Music* and the accompanying *Norton Anthology of Western Music*.²¹ The class size is around 35–40 students without teaching assistants or student assistants. Due to the size of the class, I balance lecture-style delivery with small group discussions that address broader issues of power and oppression in Western art music history. A primary challenge that I face teaching the traditional Western art music survey courses is that centering the canon inherently reinforces its power and oppressive force. In order to teach my students awareness and analysis of social inequities related to Western art music, I supplement the textbook with readings and discussion topics that deeply engage students in questions that confront “the values and ideologies that control the shaping and re-shaping of the canonic fantasy,” as Alejandro Madrid puts it.²²

I introduce students to concepts of historiography and the canon at the beginning of the first course of the music history survey sequence through several short readings in preparation for a brief lecture.²³ The aim of the lecture is to challenge the notion of “objective” histories and acknowledge the value system and limitations of the narrative presented through their text and anthology. To that end, I provide prompts for an in-class writing assignment followed by a group discussion that probes various problems with canons, such as what

21. The term system is ten weeks of classes and a finals week. The History of Western Music is a three-course sequence divided into two style periods per term. In general, my organization is five weeks for each style period. Since beginning my research and work with SJE pedagogy, I have slowly begun shifting my course toward these goals with the final intention of completely redesigning the sequence away from the traditional lecture format and textbook. J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. (New York: Norton, 2019); Burkholder and Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 8th ed., 3 vols. (New York: Norton, 2019).

22. Alejandro Madrid, “Diversity, Tokenism, Non-Canonical Musics, and the Crisis of the Humanities in U.S. Academia,” this *Journal* 7, no. 2 (2017): 125.

23. For example, to prepare for an introductory lecture in the music history sequence, students read the entries “historiography” and “canon” in David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, *Musiology: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016) and Alex Ross, “Black Scholars Confront White Supremacy in Classical Music,” *The New Yorker*, September 21, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/09/21/black-scholars-confront-white-supremacy-in-classical-music>. We return to these concepts throughout the course, and I seek opportunities to raise awareness of issues surrounding gender, race, class, etc. in the canon and problematize reasons for the lack of diverse voices in the study of Western art music.

is privileged and what is missing from this history, and what we, as musicians, can do to make our histories more inclusive. In my experience, beginning our history sequence with critical, open-ended questions gives the students a sense of autonomy over their learning, prepares them for more challenging small group discussions throughout the year, and excites them to engage with the course content.

A few times per term, students are divided into smaller cohort groups of about fifteen to discuss topics on a deeper level and in a space where all students can feel comfortable contributing to their learning community.²⁴ I facilitate the discussion but allow the students to lead the conversation in a direction according to their interests. Prior to the discussion group that is the subject of this case study, students learn about Catholic music in Spain in the sixteenth century as exemplified in the motets and masses of Tomás Luis Victoria through a class lecture and score study. Victoria is framed in *A History of Western Music* as a Counter-Reformation composer within a subsection titled “Spain and the New World,” making him the link between the Continent and its colonized territories.²⁵ While the textbook introduces music making in the “Spanish New World,” I supplement this discussion with Javier Marín López’s “The Musical Inventory of Mexico Cathedral, 1589: A Lost Document Rediscovered.”²⁶ This article summarizes the contents of the inventory list in three categories: printed polyphonic music from the Continent, manuscripts produced locally for use in the cathedral, and devotional vocal music, the last of which includes regional genres and styles and represents the influence of local practices and musics

24. Additional sample readings I have used for small group discussion in MUS 324 (Medieval and Renaissance Music History) and MUS 325 (Baroque and Classical Music History) include John Haines, “The Arabic Style of Performing Medieval Music,” *Early Music* 29, no. 3 (August 2001): 369–78, paired with Kristen Yri, “Thomas Binkley and the Studio der Frühen Musik: Challenging ‘The Myth of Westernness,’” *Early Music* 38, no. 2 (May 2010): 273–80, to explore notions of whiteness in musical performance (special thank you to Matteo Magarotto for bringing this pair of articles to my attention); Lynette Bowring, “Notation as a Transformative Technology: Orality, Literacy and Early Modern Instrumentalists,” *Early Music* 47, no. 2 (May 2019): 225–39 to challenge the primacy of notation literacy in the study of Western art music; Wendy Heller, “The Emblematic Woman,” in *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women’s Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) to consider historical notions of womanhood in relation to feminine representation in opera; and William Webster, “Did People Listen in the 18th Century?,” *Early Music* 25, no. 4 (November 1997): 678–91 to examine alternative historical approaches to musical listening that is different from modern classical performances. For all of these small group meetings, we discuss not only the historical concepts that are introduced but also how it relates to the present day and individual experiences.

25. Burkholder et al., *History of Western Music*, 248–51.

26. Javier Marín López, “The Musical Inventory of Mexico Cathedral, 1589: A Lost Document Rediscovered,” *Early Music* 36, no. 4 (November 2008): 575–97.

prior to and during colonization over the previous century.²⁷ I chose this article for two reasons. First, the writing is accessible to undergraduate music students; it is an appropriate length, includes helpful charts, and has well-reproduced images from the Mexico City Cathedral archive.²⁸ Second, the purpose of this article is to convey the contents of the inventory list; Marín López does not conjecture on the meaning and larger implications of its contents, leaving an opportunity for the students to engage critically with the author's report to draw their own conclusions about historical power and oppression.

Students are given an informal writing assignment in preparation for the cohort meeting to reflect on the writing and come to an individual assessment of the article. In addition to reading the assigned article, I ask students to further explore the devotional genres mentioned using *Oxford Music Online*. Students are prompted in their premeeting informal writing assignment to reflect on the experience of sacred and devotional music in Mexico City and how it may be similar to or different from those practices in Spain. These questions are intended to prepare students for class discussion, and using a neutral grading scheme, they are given completion credit when submitted prior to the class meeting (See Appendix A).

During the in-class discussion of Marín López's article, students draw on the concepts described by Bell above, focusing in particular on developing a critical consciousness, deconstructing binaries, drawing on counternarratives, analyzing power structures, and making global connections. For example, power is a central theme of the conversation as students note multiple levels of power represented in the three inventory lists. The sources of the printed material are from Continental publishers and primarily contain music by Spanish composers. Spanish colonizers in Mexico City are represented in the manuscripts with the music of local, Spanish-born composers Juan de Carabantes and Hernando Franco appearing alongside manuscripts of Continental ones. Finally, a view of the local population can be seen through devotional music; no composers are listed and no music survives from this third category.²⁹ The hierarchical

27. Marín López writes that there is very little detail of composers' names in the locally prepared manuscripts, identifying the practice of emphasizing the repertory over the composer. Marín López, "Musical Inventory," 581.

28. I have found generally that *Early Music* is an excellent resource for articles on music before 1800 that are accessible for an undergraduate music student population for both the length (typically under six thousand words) and writing style.

29. Though the limits of the inventory list make it impossible to fully reconstruct its contents, Marín López provides names and collections where possible based on known repertory. Composer names are most prominently found in the prints: Victoria is the best represented composer, followed by Cristóbal de Morales, Pedro and Francisco Guerrero, and others who are not specified. The manuscripts are organized by repertory within the collections rather than by composer, though the names of local composers Juan de Carabantes and the chapelmaster

presentation of the inventory list in the article offered an opportunity for the students to recognize the contemporary bias toward music from the Continent, even in sources centering Mexico City, which can also serve as a metaphor for colonial power over the indigenous people.

Emblematic of this power dynamic, Marín López writes, “The cathedral, constructed in 1530 on the site of the legendary Aztec temple and elevated to a metropolitan see in 1546, has long been considered to be one of the most important centres for the cultivation of polyphony in the New World.”³⁰ I ask students to reflect on this sentence, which aptly demonstrates the systemic oppression of local practices and the beliefs of native peoples. Most notably, the placement of information about the Aztec temple as a participial phrase within a larger sentence celebrating the power of this Catholic cathedral ironically subjugates this critical fact. This leads to a deep discussion about the displacement of people and loss of native practices, which set up important concepts that would return at the end of our conversation.

The discussion of power inevitably leads to a deconstruction of binaries, which are present on numerous levels in this example. Through the macro level of West vs. everyone else (or “us” vs. “Other”), the students examine how this binary reinforces and perpetuates a Eurocentric, thereby white supremacist, construction of history. Further breaking down binaries of “us” and “them” on a local scale, the students explore counternarratives of the local community within Mexico City that took part, willingly or not, in European Christian practices. In one class, the students were particularly drawn to the regional genres of devotional music named by Marín López, such as villancicos, chanzonetas, and ensaladas, which enabled them to develop a counternarrative about the indigenous population. The students considered how devotional music was imported from Spain in the Castilian dialect, the impact it may have had on the local Aztec population, and the role it would have played in converting indigenous people to Christianity. They were inspired by imagining the impact of local Aztec traditions on this repertoire, such as the game of the *pelota* and poetic-musical genres such as the *coloquio*, which could serve as a metaphor for the interplay between European and Aztec practices. The lack of extant devotional, non-Latin music from this region in the sixteenth century demonstrates for the students the loss of evidence of nonnotated musical practices; on the other

Hernando Franco appear, along with composers from the Continent, such as Morales and a few Franco-Netherlandish composers commonly found in Spanish inventories (Philippe Verdelot, Lupo, and Orlande de Lassus). Of the devotional music, no composers’ names are provided and no music survives; however, Marín López explains that this repertoire is not typically inventoried, so its inclusion identifies the significance of this music.

30. Marín López, “Musical Inventory,” 575.

hand, the rare inclusion of devotional music in the inventory list identifies the importance of these genres for the local population, and thus represents an alternative value system to one that privileges notated practices.

Through imaginative thinking about the experience of a marginalized, indigenous group's oppressive experiences in a hegemonic system, students begin to ask questions about the hierarchy of power in everyday life in sixteenth-century Mexico City. Such a view further allows the students to make global connections between the musicians and music making in Spain compared with the various members of the community within colonized Mexico City—a connection tenuously implied but not explicitly explored in their textbook. This comparison can help uncover differences in value systems, for example regional devotional music created and performed in Mexico City in relation to those imported from the Continent, the latter of which tends to be privileged in our modern Western canon and teaching.

To close the class discussion on this topic, I was inspired by a recent essay by Olivia Bloechl titled "Doing Music History Where We Are."³¹ Bloechl calls for musicologists to study colonization in our local communities and regions. My university campus, Oregon State University, is on land that was taken from the Ampinefu Band of Kalapuya peoples. Following the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855, Kalapuya people were forcibly removed to reservations in Western Oregon. Today, living descendants of these people are a part of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians. Many of my students are not aware of this history, and reflecting on and discussing OSU history in relation to the Mexico City Cathedral allows the students to imagine their own place within larger structures of oppression of the United States, thus creating cross-historical global connections between sixteenth-century Aztecs in Mexico and the Kalapuya people in Oregon. Their university, where they profit from the land taken from Native Americans, is analogous to the Mexico City Cathedral built on the land of the Aztec temple. As a point for a parting reflection in one class, our conversation turned toward Thanksgiving, which we celebrated the same week as our study. This holiday inspired students to think about their own colonial history as North Americans, which could ultimately compel them to develop their critical consciousness by connecting "the personal with the socio-political to understand both the external systems of oppression and the way they are internalized by individuals."³²

This classroom discussion, however, fell short of achieving several goals named by Bell that have the potential to offer restorative justice to the Kalapuya

31. Olivia Bloechl, "Doing Music History Where We Are," *Newsletter of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music* 36 (Fall 2020): 1, 9–10.

32. Bell, "Theoretical Foundations," 16.

peoples, such as building coalitions and solidarity, following the leadership of oppressed people, and being an accountable and responsible ally. Fully achieving these restorative justice goals would require a more expansive project that connects the students with the local community in social activism. With this problem in mind, I created a post-meeting informal writing activity that considers the ways the students could continue the important work of social justice outside of the classroom through music (as above, for completion credit). I hope through this assignment students are encouraged to discover innovative ways they could confront issues of social justice and use their knowledge for activism through their future work as performers and educators (see Appendix A).

Rather than simply absorbing information about colonization in the “New World,” students unpacked, explored, discovered, and analyzed systemic power and oppression and the ways that music played a role in that process. Analyzing music making in colonized parts of the world in this way allows the students to understand the lasting impact of structural oppression. This case study demonstrates how conversations on systemic oppression can allow the students to engage more critically with music history and the course content by recognizing and analyzing the ways the study of music can lead to the marginalization of diverse people and cultures to ultimately achieve the principles of social justice education.

Self-Refection, Social Identity, and Barriers to Teaching Social Justice

Many instructors feel unprepared to teach courses on social injustices because they are uncomfortable or fear confrontation when facilitating discussions on difficult topics. In a 2019 study of white, “anti-racist allied” faculty at predominantly white and public universities, participants acknowledged that, among other reasons, personal struggles with their own white racial identity was a significant barrier to their teaching of race and racism in the classroom.³³ In addition, participants disclosed their fear of being perceived as nonexperts in the anti-racist discourse and that their Black colleagues fail to see them as allies.³⁴

33. The study defines an “anti-racist ally” as a member of a dominant culture who is working to end the systemic privilege they benefit from. Also named as critical barriers are a lack of institutional commitment and challenges of tenure and scholarship. Phillips et al., “Barriers and Strategies,” 6–10.

34. Drawing on C. S. Collins and A. Jun, *White Out: Understanding White Privilege and Dominance in the Modern Age* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), Phillips et al. introduce the terms “Black pat” and “White 22” to describe the phenomenon of white allies needing affirmation from people of color and the resulting feeling of futility for the lack thereof, respectively, both of which epitomize white privilege. Phillips et al., “Barriers and Strategies,” 9.

In order to feel comfortable teaching social justice-oriented classes, instructors have to engage in self-reflection on both a personal and a disciplinary level. Most importantly, instructors should assess their own individual biases and social positionality—a necessarily difficult and profound process—while at the same time investigating disciplinary assertions of power and privilege within the field.³⁵ Beyond merely understanding the content, Cyndi Kernahan urges instructors to ask themselves challenging questions about how their social identity shaped their own life before asking their students to do the same.³⁶ As educators, we have power in the classroom, and it is important to recognize how our individual social identity is central to the content and how it impacts our interactions with learners.³⁷ We can use our power positively to model openness in exploring social identity and systemic oppression with our students. Furthermore, if we engage in self-reflection and experience the discomfort of recognizing our own advantages and disadvantages, we can be more prepared to guide our students to do the same.³⁸

While taking part in my university's SJE faculty development program, I directly confronted my whiteness and its corresponding privilege in numerous capacities and was inspired to further investigate and understand the disciplinary problems of power and privilege in musicology.³⁹ My self-reflection was brought into sharper focus around my teaching through an activity in *Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics with Students*, a Teaching Tolerance Guide created by the Southern Poverty Law Center.⁴⁰ This guide offers strategies for facilitating a dialogue on race and racism in the classroom by first assessing our own comfort level in discussing difficult topics

35. Kathleen Skubikowski, "Beyond Diversity: Social Justice Education Across the Curriculum," in *Social Justice Education: Inviting Faculty to Transform their Institutions*, ed. Kathleen Skubikowski, Catharine Wright, and Roman Graf (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2010), 90; and Pat Griffin and Mathew L. Ouellette, "Facilitating Social Justice Education Courses," *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2nd ed., ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 91.

36. Kernahan, *Teaching Race and Racism*, 80–84.

37. Lee Anne Bell et al., "Knowing Ourselves as Social Justice Educators," *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2nd ed., 382.

38. Bell et al., "Knowing Ourselves," 382–83.

39. "Difference, Power, and Discrimination Program," Oregon State University DPD Academy, Summer 2018, <https://dpd.oregonstate.edu/>, co-facilitated by Nana Osei-Kofi and Bradley Boovy. I am deeply thankful to the facilitators and other participants for our open, engaging, and productive dialogue that, in the end, challenged me to reconsider my overall teaching approaches of music history and the ways it reinforced systemic power and oppression in my class and through the teaching of the canon.

40. Teaching Tolerance, *Let's Talk: A Guide to Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students* (Montgomery: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019), <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/lets-talk>.

such as racism and addressing our fears surrounding such conversations with students.⁴¹ I used this moment of self-reflection as an opportunity to challenge my own positionality and biases, ultimately discovering how I unwittingly reinforced privilege in my courses through its content, structure, and organization.

The seminar participants were encouraged to complete a free writing activity to assess our own comfort level in facilitating discussions on race and racism. My own writing centered on my discomfort teaching the few BIPOC composers that are included in the canon. From my memory of previous experiences, my discomfort was especially prominent in my teaching of William Grant Still, who is often celebrated in music history textbooks for achieving numerous firsts as a Black American composer to an almost “hero” status. As a white woman, I could feel the tension between my racial power in recognizing Still’s achievements and my lack of acknowledgment of the systemic power and oppression that restricted composers of color to begin with.⁴² This exercise helped me begin the difficult work of understanding my social identity and confronting my privilege that informed my approach to the classroom and my interactions with students. Through my process of self-reflection, I learned that my discomfort with addressing problems of race and racism in the classroom was a barrier to effective, critical classroom discussion. My discomfort reflected both my lack of experience with the topic and my need to understand and critically evaluate my own social identity.

Because of the personal nature of social identity, teaching social justice-oriented courses can lead to emotional and challenging class discussions. Beyond knowing yourself and your content, exploring resources on effective facilitation can provide necessary skills and prepare you for those difficult moments that initially inhibit instructors from engaging with social justice issues, particularly in handling confrontation in a classroom setting (see Appendix B for a list of

41. *Let’s Talk*, 4.

42. For example, the only mention of systematic oppression regarding William Grant Still in *A History of Western Music* is his success at a time “when blacks were still largely excluded from the field of classical music.” This seemingly temperate and uncontroversial statement leaves out some of the most important questions; at the bare minimum there should be a discussion of why BIPOC were excluded and who was doing the excluding. Failure to interrogate the issues of oppression is in fact a statement that reinforces systems of privilege and oppression. The text goes on to celebrate Still for breaking “numerous racial barriers” and earning “many ‘firsts’ for his race—the first African American to conduct a major symphony orchestra in the United States [. . .], the first to have an opera produced by a major company in the United States [. . .], and the first to have an opera televised over a national network.” Such statements hardly scratch the surface of systematic oppression experienced by people of color in the Western art music tradition in the US. Not only should our text confront Still’s experience of oppression head-on, the widespread exclusion of people of color from our narrative and tradition should be treated comprehensively in our history. Burkholder et al., *History of Western Music*, 895.

resources on teaching social justice). Through my personal experience in the faculty development seminar, I took away the importance of self-reflection on those uncomfortable moments in my teaching, a starting point to gain the skills to facilitate difficult conversations, and a pressing urgency to address systems of power and oppression in my teaching of Western art music history, which I am slowly introducing in my courses through small discussion groups such as those offered in my case study. Furthermore, this process convinced me that discussions of race, gender, and privilege cannot be limited to lectures on “tokenized,” noncanonic composers but must be addressed as a hegemonic narrative that privileges white male composers. No work can be done in the classroom to break down these narratives of Western art music if we, as educators, do not actively and regularly challenge our own (acknowledged or covert) biases in our teaching, our histories, and our own belief systems.

New Objectives: From Diversity to Social Justice

For at least the last decade, music history pedagogy research has challenged our approaches to diversity in the music history curriculum, and at the same time musicologists have created more resources to teach a greater diversity of repertoire.⁴³ However, music history courses and textbooks with expanded repertoires may only give the illusion of diversity and inclusion. Absent a critical analysis, attempting to diversify the curriculum with noncanonical works can result in mere tokenism, as Madrid warns. This approach to diversification forces this music to be considered within the epistemological framework of the canon, thereby judged on values not inherent to that music. Furthermore, by relying on the guise of “diversity . . . to perpetuate privilege, power, inequalities, and the status quo,” the experiment in diversity thus “stands for nothing.”⁴⁴

Rather than tokenizing diverse examples within a white Western frame, a social justice approach enables a deeper, more critical analysis of the canon’s systemic oppression. Maurianne Adams and Ximena Zúñiga suggest that diversity ideally promotes an “appreciation of difference among and within groups in a pluralistic society,” whereas a social justice approach goes deeper to create opportunities to recognize and analyze how different social groups “interact with systems of domination and subordination to privilege or disadvantage

43. For example, see contributions by Douglass Seaton, Melanie Zeck, Gillain M. Rodger, Stephen C. Meyer, and Andrew Dell’Antonio in *Teaching Music History*, ed. C. Matthew Balensuela (New York: Norton, 2019) and the growing bibliography and teaching resources available on <https://inclusiveearlymusic.org> and articles in this *Journal*.

44. Madrid, “Diversity, Tokenism, Non-Canonical Musics,” 125–26.

different social groups relative to each other.”⁴⁵ Thus, one of the potential failures of merely teaching a more diverse music history narrative is a lack of analysis on how those diverse figures were oppressed, which ultimately results in empty and potentially harmful tokenism in the context of a Eurocentric music history.⁴⁶ I argue that incorporating SJE pedagogy objectives, such as those outlined above, to the study of music history will naturally lead to a reshaping and re-envisioning of the content and structure of music history courses and ultimately the students’ acquired skills.

The aims of SJE according to Bell is “to enable individuals to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand the structural features of oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems.”⁴⁷ Applied to the music history curriculum, students can gain the skills to examine critically diverse experiences and musics and recognize how reinforcing the canon can inherently marginalize them. I suggest that students should learn to apply these skills more broadly in curricula beyond university courses dedicated to SJE since systemic oppression is not limited to those topics. For that reason, I propose that social justice education objectives be incorporated across the music curriculum, especially in the study of music history. By teaching students to examine how canons engage, reinforce, and validate systems of power, privilege, and oppression, they can use this acquired knowledge to create social change. Adapting SJE course objectives in music history courses will ultimately create a more critical engagement with a diverse curriculum and contribute to forming an inclusive learning environment in our courses and music programs. Furthermore, through these newly acquired critical skills, students can feel empowered to become socially conscious citizens and musicians.

Conclusion: June 1, 2020

On June 1, 2020, three critical events converged in the United States: COVID-19, skyrocketing unemployment rates, and nationwide riots protesting the murder of George Floyd. This pivotal moment in history exposed the dark core of the

45. While this view of diversity as “appreciation” is fairly limited, it allows for understanding the different objectives between studying diverse cultures, which in itself serves numerous purposes, and analyzing systemic oppression. Maurianne Adams and Ximena Zúñiga, “Getting Started: Core Concepts for Social Justice Education,” *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed., 96.

46. On the problem of tokenism in the study of Western art music, see Madrid, “Diversity, Tokenism, Non-Canonical Musics.”

47. Bell, “Theoretical Foundations,” 4. For a history on the philosophical and theoretical groundings of social justice education and social justice in education, see Adams, “Social Justice and Education.”

unequal systems of power in the United States. During what was supposed to be the start of the final week of classes in an already unusual, fully-remote spring term, I knew we had to discuss this historic moment together. Many of my students and I were emotionally raw from the outpouring of anger and solidarity in the streets over the naked exposure of structural racism and oppression in our country. From the privacy of my Zoom classroom, I asked students to share their feelings and thoughts, carefully navigating a conversation many needed but were afraid to have. It is these moments that convince me that issues of systemic power and oppression need to be discussed at an institutional level in our classrooms. We practiced for this conversation all year as we struggled through concepts of privilege, the canon, historiography, and tokenism in music, all of which are inextricably linked to the hegemonic power and systemic oppression we were witnessing in our news feeds. Having created an inclusive classroom environment, my students felt safe to share their thoughts and feelings with each other in this much needed dialogue. And I was prepared to facilitate the conversation through self-reflective work.

Naturally, it took time to develop the skills to teach SJE, and I continue to work to be an effective facilitator. In the beginning, I had difficulty letting go of the control of the conversation and resisting the urge to give my opinion (and I still do!). I had to learn through practice that the students are more likely to acquire critical analytical skills if they have control of the learning—indeed a foundational principle of critical pedagogy. Students, on the other hand, have been mentally, emotionally, and intellectually ready to confront systemic oppression in their coursework for some time. In my experience, university students have become increasingly aware of systemic racism in our society, are introduced to these problems in their required baccalaureate core courses, and many of them engage in social justice work in other aspects of their lives. They are ready and even eager for these difficult conversations.

As music history textbooks and anthologies continue to expand and become more diverse, we need to be willing to make room for and prioritize teaching the threshold concepts of systemic power and oppression, which could arguably have a longer lasting impact on our students than the course content itself. Our music history courses can offer a unique opportunity for students to recognize and analyze systemic power and oppression and provide them with key skills to confront structural inequities. To go beyond this single example of the sixteenth-century Mexico City Cathedral I have offered here, I propose that a broader pedagogy centering social justice education objectives be developed in our field to transform our approaches to teaching music history in a way that avoids tacit acceptance of and further socialization into the oppressive system that is Western art music. If we do not challenge the systems that formed and continue to inform our study of history and the canon, we are perpetuating

white supremacy in the classroom and doing harm to our students by reinforcing those systems.⁴⁸ As Madrid suggests, by working in the humanities we are in a unique, and I would add, urgent position to recognize and critically evaluate historical systems of power in our classrooms.⁴⁹ Ultimately, it is my hope that students will take this knowledge and apply it to activism to become a new generation of social justice-oriented musicians. Now is the time to re-envision our curriculum and our classrooms and begin the difficult work of dismantling the systems of power and oppression at the foundation of our field.

Appendix A: Pre- and Post-Cohort Meeting Writing Assignment

Pre-Meeting Assignment:

Read:

1. Javier Marín López, “The Musical Inventory of Mexico Cathedral, 1589: A Lost Document Discovered,” *Early Music* 36, no. 4 (November 2017): 575–96.

As you are reading this article, I invite you to think broadly about differences in European and Mexican traditions of sacred music described here and the relation of power that exists between these two cultures.

2. Marín López mentions a few genres, such as the villancico, chanonzeta, and ensalada through their entries in *Oxford Music Online*.

Write:

After completing the readings required above, write a short essay (~250 words) on how you understand the experience of sacred and devotional music in Mexico City. For example, what kind of music would they have heard, and how might it be similar to and unique from sacred music in Spain?

48. Madrid, “Diversity, Tokenism, Non-Canonical Musics,” 129.

49. Madrid, “Diversity, Tokenism, Non-Canonical Musics,” 129.

Post-Meeting Reflection Prompt

In our Cohort 2 Meeting this week, we discussed Javier Marín López's article "The Music Inventory of Mexico City Cathedral, 1589: A Lost Document Rediscovered." Part of our discussion was an analysis of the balance of power and oppression in colonial "New Spain" as represented through these documents, which we related to our local history of indigenous peoples and OSU campus.

For this post-class reflection, I would like you to consider ways you, as a musician or future educator, could potentially use music to raise awareness of social inequities, whether of our local history, of the problematic history of the Western art music canon, or of any other issues of social justice that you are interested in/passionate about. Be creative in your response, and try to think of ways you could engage your audience with these issues.

Word expectation: ~250

Appendix B: Resources for Teaching Social Justice

Introduction to SJE Pedagogy

Adams, Maurianne, and Lee Anne Bell, eds. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Adams, Maurianne, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, eds. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2007.

Davis, Tracy, and Laura M. Harrison. *Advancing Social Justice: Tools, Pedagogies, and Strategies to Transform your Campus*. Somerset, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

Inclusive Learning Environments

Evans, Nancy J., Ellen M. Broido, Kirsten R. Brown, and Autumn K. Wilke. *Disability in Higher Education: A Social Justice Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017. See in particular chapter 10, "Universal Design": 274–302.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "Yes, But How do We Do it?": Practicing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." In *White Teachers/Diverse Classrooms: A Guide to Building Inclusive Schools, Promoting High Expectations, and Eliminating Racism*, edited by Julie Landsman and Chance W. Lewis, 33–46. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2011.

Thomas, Cornell, ed. *Inclusive Teaching: Presence in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014.

Facilitating SJE Conversations

Adams, Maurianne, Joanne Jones, and Beverly Daniel Tatum. "Knowing Our Students." In Adams, Bell, and Griffin, eds., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2nd ed., 395–410.

Ahad-Legardy, Badia, and OiYan A. Poon, eds. *Difficult Subjects: Insights and Strategies for Teaching about Race, Sexuality, and Gender*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2018.

Bell, Lee Anne, Barbara J. Love, Sharon Washington, and Gerald Weinstein. "Knowing Ourselves as Social Justice Educators." In Adams, Bell, and Griffin, eds., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2nd ed., 381–394.

Bell, Lee Anne, Diane J. Goodman, and Mathew L. Oullet. "Design and Facilitation." In Adams and Bell, eds., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed, 55–93.

Bell, Lee Anne, Diane J. Goodman, and Rani Varghese. "Critical Self-Knowledge for Social Justice Educators." In Adams and Bell, eds., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed, 397–418.

Johnson, Allan. *Privilege, Power, and Difference*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2018.

Kernahan, Cyndy. *Teaching Race and Racism in the College Classroom: Notes from a White Professor*. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2019.

Critical Pedagogy

Davis, Tracy, and Laura M. Harrison. *Advancing Social Justice: Tools, Pedagogies, and Strategies to Transform your Campus*. Somerset, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 50th anniversary ed. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Jan McArthur, "Achieving Social Justice within and through Higher Education: The Challenge for Critical Pedagogy," *Teaching in Higher Education* 15, no. 5 (2010): 493–504.

Kincheloe, Joe L. *Critical Pedagogy Primer*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.

Social Justice and the Arts

Benedict, Cathy, Patrick Schmidt, Gary Spruce, and Paul Woodford. *The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Music Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Bell, Lee Ann, and Dipti Desai, eds. *Social Justice and the Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Beyerbach, Barbara, R. Deborah Davis, and Tania Ramalho, eds. *Activist Art in Social Justice Pedagogy: Engaging Students in Global Issues Through the Arts*. Rev. ed. New York: Peter Lang, 2017.

Dewhurst, Marit. "Where is the Action? Three Lenses to Analyze Social Justice Art Education." *Equity and Excellence in Education* 44, no. 3 (2011): 364–78.

Duncum, Paul. "Engaging Public Space: Art Education Pedagogies for Social Justice." *Equity and Excellence in Education* 44, no. 3 (2011): 348–63.

Hanley, Mary Stone, George W. Noblit, Gilda L. Sheppard, and Tom Barone, eds. *Culturally Relevant Arts Education for Social Justice: A Way Out of No Way*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Social Justice in Higher Education

Ash, Allison N., Redgina Hill, Stephen N. Risdon, and Alexander Jun. "Anti-Racism in Higher Education: A Model for Change." *Race and Pedagogy Journal* 4, no. 3 (2020): 1–35.

Cole, Courtney E. "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in Higher Education: Teaching so that Black Lives Matter." *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 36, no. 8 (2017): 736–50.

Dancy, T. Elon, II, Kirsten T. Edwards, and James Earl Davis. "Historically White Universities and Plantation Politics: Anti-Blackness and Higher Education

in the Black Lives Matter Era.” *Urban Education* 53, no. 2 (February 2018): 176–95.

de Oliveira Andreotti, Vanessa, Sharon Stein, Cash Ahenakew, and Dallas Hund. “Mapping Interpretations of Decolonization in the Context of Higher Education.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 4, no. 1 (2015): 21–40.

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Freebody, Keely, Susan Goodwin, and Helen Proctor. *Higher Education, Pedagogy and Social Justice: Politics and Practice*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Kajikawa, Loren. “The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in U.S. Schools and Departments of Music.” In *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines*, edited by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Luke Harris, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and George Lipsitz, 155–74. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019.