

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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Challenging the Canon  
*A Thematic Exploration of Underrepresented Composers in Music Theory Pedagogy*

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## ABSTRACT

My goal is to create an inclusive database and information hub for music teachers of all backgrounds to allow them to introduce new and underrepresented composers and music to their students. I am focusing specifically on women composers who identify as Jewish, disabled, indigenous, and/or queer. I have identified these voices as missing from current databases, which provides me with the scope of my research. My mission with this database is to make the music and these composers' names more accessible to everyone, to provide educational material about these composers, to offer a theoretical application of their works, and to advance the new canon.

My thesis overall will be split into two halves: first, a database that includes composers who are underrepresented in the typical canon, which can be accessed at [challengingthecanon.weebly.com](http://challengingthecanon.weebly.com); and second, a written thesis that explores the backgrounds of these composers and applies them to curriculum data points that would be taught in a standard classroom. The second part, the written thesis, will center us by establishing where we stand currently and will contain a critique of 15 databases that are currently active, in which I examine their strengths and critique their shortcomings. The second section will be an in-depth exploration of each composer that I have selected and will include links to learn more about each of them. Finally, I attempt to give readers a sense of hope as we look toward the future and call educators to action to take control of their own learning to educate their students more effectively.

Education has been created for certain people, and that foundation is still there. When asked about why inclusion is so important to students who may not see themselves represented in the traditional curriculum, Hollie Kulago, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Penn State, says “To be inclusive means to include *and* value” (Kulago). When we consider the

significance of diversity and inclusivity, we realize that everyone who does not belong to the privileged group (white men) faces exclusion or has already been excluded. As students cannot see themselves represented in this field and these roles, they automatically (most times subconsciously) feel that their ideas, opinions, and they themselves do not belong or are not valued in the learning environment they are a part of. This is strictly qualitative research, and it is something that the music world direly needs.

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## Chapter 1

### Where We Are

“Does a theorist need to look and dress a certain way, have an abled body, possess a particular bearing, size, weight, and depth of voice, bestowing a familiar veneer of authority, in order to advance to the heights of the field?” (Hisama). There is a deep-rooted dispute between music theory professionals debating whether or not to add to what we view as the original European Musical Canon. On one hand, adding to the canon has been referred to as unethical or improper because of a long-held belief that these composers are gods among men when it comes to their compositional abilities and innovation. However, as teachers, we often emphasize a particular demographic that is seen as "qualified" to compose a certain type of music, inadvertently sending the message to our students that music created by others in that style or genre is less valuable or significant.

Defining what the canon of music is depends on who is interpreting music theory's pedagogical history. David Beard and Kenneth Cloag, professors of Music at Cardiff University, UK, characterize the canon as such:

Canon is a term that is used to describe a body of musical works and composers accredited with a high level of value and greatness. The origins of the term are in ecclesiastical and theological contexts, referring to those sources considered most worthy of preservation and propagation. Most cultures and cultural contexts reflect the presence of a canon and canonical values, but it is most clearly defined and active within the Western art music tradition. There is a common belief that a canon first emerged through

the Romanticism of the nineteenth century and its fascination with great composers of the past (principally, the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven but also the ‘revival’ of J.S. Bach) (Beard).

I concede that studying the canon and “the greats” has its place, but just having these pieces to reference becomes a problem when there is absolutely no diversity or inclusivity represented in the curriculum. Laura Kaminsky gives insight on this during her interview when she states, “Don’t just look to the traditional, obvious canon, and definitely look at the diversity of contemporary expression and voices and people making music... if we taught music history from now going back, as opposed to ‘once upon a time people banged rocks together, to today, we would have much more engaged students of music” (Kaminsky). I noticed this discrepancy whenever I sat in a music theory class, even in high school. When teachers present a certain curriculum, they imply what is actually important to know, and that “what counts as legitimate knowledge is the result of complex power struggles among identifiable class, race, gender and religious groups” (DePaul University Teaching Commons). When music theory teachers present just the accepted canon, they are implicitly telling students that other types of music and musical interests are not important and do not matter.

Undoubtedly, this is a problem, but how do we fix it? I posit that the first step educators take is to educate themselves before teaching their students. Students who grow up to be teachers generally teach the way they were taught, and if they were taught a sheltered curriculum, they will teach a sheltered curriculum. Perhaps the hardest thing is understanding exactly how to teach things that one is uncomfortable with. Teachers teach what they have enjoyed learning and teaching, and that will not change unless the system requires it to. This is also known as the path

of least resistance. When we look at how much music has changed and how many new genres of music have been created that are not included in the European canon, we vastly exclude so many new and important contributions to music that we can study to deepen our knowledge of the musical world. With the development of so many new forms of music (especially electronic music, using stereo or surround sound playback), a broader definition of the canon. When mainly depending on the European canon, students miss out on the expansion of their musical horizons, which adds to the development of a very narrow definition of what music is.

### **The White Racial Frame in Music Theory**

Though we have started to move away from this, the state of music theory curricula for a long time has been negligent and ignorant. Philip Ewell gave a Plenary Session Speech at the Society for Music Theory's (SMT) National Conference in Columbus, Ohio on November 9, 2019, which contextualized the current canon within a white racial frame. This racial frame rationalizes and ensures white privilege and places white perspectives and ideas at the center of learning and innovation. In turn, the current musical canon holds white creativity as more important than any other creativity that exists. 1.67 percent of musical examples in the seven most widely used music theory textbooks are by non-white people, which Ewell, and many others, have noted as an educational threat (Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame").



The minds at the top of the theoretical hierarchy prioritize Western European music, to the detriment and neglect of other musical traditions. He calls for what can be best described as a revolution and a fundamental overhaul of the system of curriculum and teaching processes. This speech, among the others that were given that day, emphasized the drastic need for change. From Ewell's summary of the speech he would be giving, he writes:

For over twenty years music theory has tried to diversify with respect to race, yet the field today remains remarkably white... Aside from this literal whiteness, there exists a figurative and even more deep-seated whiteness in music theory. This is the whiteness—which manifests itself in the composers we choose to represent our field inside and outside of the classroom, and in the theorists that we elevate to the top of our discipline—that one must practice, regardless of one's own personal racial identity, in order to call oneself a music theorist (“2019 Program”).

In his article that followed, “The White Racial Frame,” published in the Society for Music Theory's *Music Theory Online* publication Volume 26, Number 2, September 2020, he expands on the ideas that he presented at the Plenary Session, referencing the larger societal structure of the “white racial frame” that had been proposed by Joe Feagin in 2013. Feagin states in his book ‘The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing (third ed.):

[I examine] systemic racism's oppressive reality as it operates in and through what I call the White Racial Frame – the dominant racial frame that has long legitimized, rationalized, motivated, and shaped racial oppression and inequality in this country. This white racial frame is a centuries-old worldview that has constantly involved a racial construction of societal reality by white Americans (Feagin).

This structure normalizes white and Eurocentric beliefs and ideas within larger institutions within society, such as curricula. From this point of view, a more inclusive approach to deciding not only what is taught but how to teach it is required for us to move forward. Ewell writes:

Aside from this literal version, there exists a figurative and even more deep-seated whiteness in music theory. This is the whiteness—which manifests itself in the composers we choose to represent our field inside and outside of the classroom, and in the music theorists that we elevate to the top of our discipline—that one must practice, regardless of one's own personal racial identity, in order to call oneself a music theorist (Ewell, "Music Theory's White Racial Frame").

Ewell critiques all efforts that have been made, stating they are too superficial to make any lasting difference. These measures are taken to correct the symptoms, but not the underlying problems that exist within the roots of any institution. We find ourselves frequently on the effects of the non-diversity, rather than challenging and upheaving the structures that keep the non-diversity in place, which keeps us repeating the same cycle again and again. The dilemma that arises from not addressing the root problem has practitioners and learners in the music theory

field questioning if what they are doing to diversify their own curriculum would just be considered token diversity. The people asking this are frequently not in positions where they can radically change the institutional mindset that perpetuates this issue in the first place.

### **Misogyny in Music Theory**

The decentering of whiteness and the white perspective in music theory is only part of the picture. For me, championing women and gender-nonconforming voices is just as important as advocating for and including nonwhite ones in the context of music theory as a discipline. In Ellie Hisama's article "Getting to Count," she notes several issues with the way demographics play out in the Society for Music Theory (SMT), and in the more general field of study referred to as Collective Music Theory. She asserts:

That women are only 33% of the Society's members is a hard fact, a number that has not improved significantly over the past two decades. In response to a request from the Executive Board in 2004 requesting that the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) "renew and redefine its activities as they fulfill its mission stated in the bylaws to 'promote gender equity in the Society,'" the CSW prepared a memo showing that the percentage of women in 2001, 2002, and 2003 hovered at around 30%—slightly less than the current figure... we appended twenty-eight pages that presented the results of a survey we [the CSW] conducted across the SMT membership, which included statements from women members about their experiences in the field. These statements revealed a culture that actively excludes women. (Hisama)

Hisama goes further to describe several experiences that women in music theory have faced, most under the umbrella of serious discrimination. The underrepresentation women have dealt with in the field of music theory is an extrapolation of what they have dealt with in the music industry as a whole. One of the most commonly talked about examples in music history is Felix Mendelssohn taking credit for, and ultimately stealing, some of the works that his sister Fanny actually wrote. Unfortunately, the time she lived in was unforgiving toward ambitious women, and she therefore was unable to publish her music. The pieces she composed were not officially published under her name until many years after her death (Davis). This belief that women are less than others (men), questioning them at every turn even when they are more qualified, still exists today. When women are excluded, the perspectives we learn from are severely limited, therefore limiting our potential for modernization and advancement. Hisama shares several accounts from women theorists to show exactly how terrible things truly are. From these testimonies, the only logical conclusion one could make is that music theory, broadly and in all contexts, is inclined to marginalize women. When something like this happens so pervasively, a culture is born. This culture teaches every person in the music theory field, new and old, how things are done, and etches into history the traditions and values of the status quo.

We cannot speak about women being able to ‘count’ in music theory without conversely including in the conversation people who may not even fit into the demarcation of the gender binary, or do not love who they “are supposed to.” Hisama explores the idea of “himpathy” when she references philosopher Kate Manne. Manne defines himpathy as:

... A family of emotional biases that distort our moral thought and attention in ways that not only serve to obscure, but may even plausibly cause, damaging forms of misogyny—e.g., the hostility girls and women face when they try to testify against or seek justice vis-a-vis an antecedent recipient of sympathy for his misogynistic behavior, sexual violence, and so on (Manne).

Using many examples from an interview with Milton Babbitt, a composer and key figure in music theory, Hisama reveals exactly what she has been hypothesizing in the entire article: that, left unchecked, these discriminatory beliefs have shaped our field, regardless of whether it was conscious or not. Similar to what Ewell states earlier, she calls for a rethinking from everyone in the field, which encompasses the question, ‘Who gets to count?’ More than anything, allowing more people a seat at the table is crucial for the survival and cognitive vitality of the discipline.

### **Principle Reform Recommendations**

Ewell proposes a few principle recommendations relevant to my area of study that combat the white racial frame that is deeply ingrained in music theory today. Even though these are presented under the umbrella of the white racial frame, these are far-reaching principles that not only apply to racism, but also misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and several ‘othering’ fears our minds conjure up.

First, curriculum reform. As Music Theorists, we must strive to include as many different types of musical traditions and perspectives in our teaching as possible. Rethinking the curriculum this way will decenter the normalcy of white voices and promote the thoughts and opinions from other musical traditions, making those of equal importance in the classroom.

Second, the decolonization of music theory as a whole. Similar to curriculum reform, decolonizing the entire field of study requires serious reform and reflection, and that means critically examining the racially-motivated hierarchies that implicit biases have put in place.

Third, research and scholarship that engages with non-Western music traditions, as well as contributions from marginalized groups. This project is a given example of this principle, which helps to question the long-held belief that the Western Canon contains “all the greats” of composition, which in turn excludes anyone who exists outside that box.

Finally, and most likely the hardest for many, especially teachers and professors who have been set in their ways, acknowledging and confronting personal and implicit biases, both in their own research and teaching, and consequently in the institutions that house these advancements. Recognizing and revealing these biases to others will help everyone confront and reform biases that impinge on students’ learning, obstruct research, and interfere with the presence of marginalized voices in the music theory sphere. Above all, the deconstruction and reformation are urgent and must be addressed immediately. These should not only be applied to the decentering of whiteness but also the decentering of maleness and the privilege of the masculine identity, when it comes to both music and music theory in particular. We see more research being done on these subjects, and active efforts to address and react against the insufficient information we have been teaching our students since the curriculum was initially created (Ewell, “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame”).

## Database Critique

The main group of resources that have been created to expand the canon beyond the white racial frame are databases of musical compositions written by marginalized composers of many different groups. These examples are well-researched, so they already provide accurate information about a plethora of composers and music that has gone unnoticed for hundreds of years. However, there are plenty of holes that these existing databases do not address. Below I have listed the databases I have consulted, and from which I have taken my cues when it comes to selecting the categories I have researched.

### Databases

Expanding the Music Theory Canon

Diversity Composer Database

Music By Women

Kassia

A Modern Reveal

Donne

The Wind Repertory Project

Key of She Jazz

Kapralova

Audible Women

Boulangier Initiative

Beyond Elijah Rock

Jewish Choral Music

Music by Black Composers

New Muses Project

I. Expanding the Music Theory Canon: [Link](#)

Expanding the Music Theory Canon was created by Dr. Paula Maust, Assistant Professor of Music Theory at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in the late 2010s. In an interview about the database, she said of finding the information she needed for the database “[I] combine musicology and music theory as much as possible [and] think about all concepts” (Maust). Additionally, she goes on to talk about how she finds the excerpts, and she mentions that “looking at things that are idiomatic for the time period” makes the most sense (Maust). It is organized by concept, rather than by composer, which is something I intend to change so that it focuses just as much on the composer as on their output. Composer biographies are attached to every composer featured on the database and include all the pertinent information associated with that composer (works list, vital dates). I use her database as a model for my database because of the inclusion of music theory examples. The inclusion of examples is important to me because that is one less step that the educator has to do, which bridges the gap from content to classroom.



II. Institute for Composer Diversity Composer Database: [Link](#)

The Institute for Composer Diversity was created in 2016 by Rob Deemer, who currently acts as the institute director. It is operated out of the State University of New York at Fredonia. Deemer remarks in an interview that “advocating for living composers has always been a passion,” but that he “shouldn’t be centered within the conversation about diversifying repertoire...” (Deemer). He states this as he represents the privileged majority as a white male, which he acknowledges unfairly prioritizes his voice over others. He has resolved to use this privilege to lift up marginalized voices and wants to change how people think. This database organizes its composers by name, vital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, demographic information, disability information, neurodivergence, genre categories within composition, and composer location. This database is the main one that I have modeled my database off of. However, this database does not include specific information about music theory or the pieces that have been composed by any given person, just the genres they composed in. Many of the other databases listed here also give reference to this database as their starting point.

III. Music By Women: [Link](#)

Music By Women was created in 2016 by Molly Murdock (PhD candidate at Eastman School of Music) and Ben Parsell (vocal music teacher at Alice Smith Elementary School in Hopkins, Minnesota). Similar to Expanding the Music Theory Canon, Music By Women includes music theory examples that are easily applicable in the classroom. However, the composers are organized by vital dates and compositional era, rather than by examples, which becomes confusing when you are searching for a specific composer and do not know their vital dates.

IV. Kassia: [Link](#)

This database, created by Logan Contreras, Assistant Professor of Music (voice) at the University of Northern Colorado, focuses specifically on art songs by women composers. The database categorizes composers only by name and date. A more in-depth categorization that references specific marginalized groups within the gender group of women is not shown anywhere in the database. It gives links directing to where music by the given composer can be purchased.

V. A Modern Reveal: [Link](#)

Created by Randi Marrazzo (voice teacher at Temple University) and Nicole Leone (vocalist and opera singer), A Modern Reveal hosts four main categories of composers on its website: Italian Songs and Arias, Early Latin Music, Jewish/Eastern European Composers, and French Composers. While this is a wide-spanning list, it does not include many of the other categories of marginalized groups I intend to include. It gives links to where music by the given composer can be purchased.

VI. Donne: [Link](#)

Donne was created by Gabriella di Laccio, an opera singer, concert singer, and activist from Brazil. This database includes over 5,000 women composers, but there is no place to access everything at once. You need to know what time period you are looking for, the composer's last name, or birth country to find results on the website. The database is categorized by vital dates, genre of composition, country of birth, and country of location. This database does not offer links to where music by the given composer can be purchased.

VII. The Wind Repertory Project: [Link](#)

The Wind Repertory Project was created by Dr. Nikk Pilato, the Director of Bands at Northern Kentucky University in 2008. It organizes composers by home country, instrument composed for, types of music, and compositional grade (how difficult the music is). This is a database that does not have a specific focus, rather focuses on exposing new pieces of music altogether, and acts as a hub for all things wind ensemble. This database does not include music theory analysis of any kind, but some of the pieces are linked to external sights for purchase and perusal scores.

VIII. Key of She Jazz: [Link](#)

Key of She Jazz was created by Olivia Hughart in 2014 when Hughart was just 12 years old. The database Key of She hosts on their website focuses on featuring composers and jazz musicians and points directly to their websites, in addition to giving their vital dates. There is no analysis of pieces, or any works lists linked to any of the musicians or composers on the list.

IX. Kapralova: [Link](#)

Kapralova was created in 1998 by the Kapralova Society, founded by Karla Hartl (Toronto, Canada). Similar to many of the previous databases, Kapralova just lists composers with the hope that they will spread awareness of the composers' names more than anything else. I aim to take things further than this, by analyzing music, as well as presenting works lists and biographies of the composers, so that my database becomes a hub of information that people do not need to click six different links to find.

X. Audible Women: [Link](#)

This database was created by Gail Priest, a Sydney, Australia-based sound artist, writer, and curator. While it does focus specifically on contemporary women composers who make music and sound recordings, the information presented on the website is too sparse for what my database needs to include. There are specific categories for different types of music (e.g., sound design, sound art, experimental pop, etc.) but nothing that separates the composers otherwise. One thing I do like is that there is a composer biography associated with each posting, as well as a link to the composer's website if it exists.

XI. Boulanger Initiative: [Link](#)

The Boulanger Initiative was created by the Sphinx Organization, which was founded by Aaron Dworkin, who acts as the strategic advisor for Sphinx, as well as a Professor of Arts Leadership and Entrepreneurship at the University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre, and Dance. The main reason this database made it on my shortlist is that they organize their information by composer. In addition, they include a complete works list and biography, while linking to the composer's website as well. This is the closest that I have seen formatting-wise that I would like to emulate with my database.

XII. Beyond Elijah Rock: [Link](#)

Created by Marques L. Garrett, this is the most comprehensive database of choral music by black composers that I have found. I found many databases like this, that specifically uplifted music of black composers, which is why I decided to focus on other marginalized groups. This database is organized by composition and composer and does not give any additional information unless you search for it further within the website.

XIII. Jewish Choral Music: [Link](#)

This database, powered by the Zamir Chorale of Boston, led by Dr. Joshua Jacobson, focuses on Jewish composers of choral music. Jewish Choral Music does not focus specifically on Jewish women composers, but it still gives a fairly comprehensive list of composers, and the database is organized by composer name. It gives external links for further research, as well as composer biographies and works lists.

XIV. Music by Black Composers: [Link](#)

Music by Black Composers is a database created by Rachel Barton Pine, an internationally-renowned violinist and the founder of the Rachel Barton Pine Foundation, which houses the Music by Black Composers Project. They house a living composers directory and a historic composers directory, but their directories only include a handful of women and non-binary composers compared to the number of men on the database. They do include links to the composers' websites and their contact information (if applicable), but there is no further information.

XV. New Muses Project: [Link](#)

The New Muses Project is different than any other database I have seen, founded by Rhianna Cockrell, Joe Lerangis, and Gloria Yin. This database organizes the composers in chronological order. The opening page features a large search bar where you can input any composer name. This will then take you to a new composer that you may like, based on the name that had been previously searched. I like this concept, but there is no organization outside of the timeline. There is no overall comprehensive database that shows all of the composers that are housed on the website. However, they do give a biography for each composer and link each composer's entry on the timeline to their individual websites. This database does span all genders but is more heavily focused on women and non-binary composers.

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## **Excluded Then, Included Now**

My database will address six different categories of composers and songwriters who have shaped the history of music, which we rarely discuss in the classroom. These categories are listed below.

### Categories

- Jewish Women Composers
- Queer-Identifying Women Composers
- Women Composers with Disabilities
- Indigenous Women Composers
- Women Composers in Jazz
- Female Pop Icons (singer-songwriters)

These categories have not extensively been addressed by any other database that I have come across thus far, and if they do appear, not in the way in which I will be analyzing them. The categories are just a starting point, as in addition to the composers themselves, I will be analyzing their music and presenting examples that are usable in the music theory classroom to be examples of any given concept in music theory (e.g., Major 7<sup>th</sup>, triad, etc.). Brandon Scott Rumsey puts it best when they state, “Over the years, we have learned that highlighting individuals based on a handful of specific identities doesn’t quite achieve this mission and that database resources such as ours may cause further harm if misused or misunderstood. In doing so, we have realized that our enthusiasm for learning a composer’s story is what truly motivates



us” (Rumsey). In that same vein, in addition to the database, I will be conducting extensive research on each composer and rationalizing those composers’ inclusion in my overall project. Each of these composers, as well as their categories, are so important to history and to today. It is not my intention to put these composers into boxes, but rather exemplify that these are multifaceted people whose life experiences have influenced their compositions and the why behind what we see produced by their creative minds.

## Chapter 2

### Composers of Note

#### Jewish Women Composers

##### I. Rationale for Inclusion

Many of the composers we study today, by default, identify as Christian or Christian-adjacent. Inherently, this is not a wrong thing to do, as Christian composers, such as Bach, Beethoven, or Haydn have been studied for centuries as having created the archetypes of music that propelled music forward. However, studying *only* this music is extremely narrow-minded, and the lens is miniscule and exclusionary.

##### II. Composers of Note

###### a. Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847)

Born in 1805, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel was a piano virtuoso and composer from a young age. Her younger brother, Felix, called her “Minerva,” referencing the Roman goddess of wisdom, which showed that he recognized her developed academic and musical knowledge (“Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, 1805-1847”). Along with her brother, she was afforded an in-depth and broad education via tutors throughout her childhood.

Unfortunately, regardless of the fact that she was just as, if not more, talented than her brother, she was not afforded opportunities to perform publicly or publish her music for public performance because “societal constraints at the time precluded women from pursuing musical professions,” (“Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, 1805-1847”).

The Mendelssohns were of Jewish heritage but faced much antisemitism during their time in Germany. Other family members who had converted to Protestantism frequently encouraged them to convert as well for the protection of their family (Singer). Regardless of the backlash the family received, both for religious reasons and Fanny’s actions, she still held strong and continued her composition studies.

Fanny produced around 500 compositions throughout her life, most of which were unpublished. A few of her pieces were published under Felix Mendelssohn’s name, and we are only now discovering that they had in fact been composed by Fanny. Her music is similar in style to that of her brother, even though his music was published more than hers was. Just in the past few years, Fanny’s work has been gaining more and more recognition, and rightly so. Even without regard to her knowledge of part writing and harmony, just her sheer output of compositions should qualify her for publication. Posthumously, she is finally getting the recognition she deserves. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

b. Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006)

Ruth Schonthal (formerly Schönthal) started studying music at age five at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin. However, she was expelled in 1935 after the election of 1932, which led to the beginning of Jewish oppression. She traveled with her family around Europe until safety for Jewish people became insecure anywhere they went. Her family made their way to the Americas in the early 1940s, where she met Paul Hindemith, who offered her a scholarship at Yale, where she would then study until 1948.

She has been a recipient of many commissions, including some of her biggest works, *Self Portrait of the Artist as an Older Woman* (1991) and *From the Life of a Pious Woman* (1999). From the Milken Archive of Jewish Music, Schonthal is quoted saying about her music, “For me, the contrasting elements—the beautiful-ugly, tension-release, good-evil—are opposite ends of one and the same thing. They have a magnetic attraction towards each other; they are never static. I deliberately combine the good old with the good new, because of my background and because I believe that every revolution throws out the baby with the bathwater. I am not religious—on the contrary—but I believe in a spirit of devotion,” (Levin). To learn more, visit this [link](#).

c. Laura Kaminsky (b. 1956)

Laura Kaminsky’s compositions mainly focus on social and political themes – her pieces are “full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection” (“Laura Kaminsky”).

Kaminsky frequently addresses social and political issues in her compositions. She states on her experience as a woman composer in a male-dominated industry, “I don't know what it's like to not be a woman composer, so I have nothing to compare it to. Sure, I mean it's ‘this is who I am, this is my life’” (Kaminsky).

Her first opera, *As One*, is the most-produced contemporary opera in the United States. It tells the story of a transgender woman dealing with the complexities and newfound freedom of living authentically.

Kaminsky is an award-winning composer who has been featured at Boston, Oberlin, Purchase, and Shanghai Conservatories, among other well-known schools of music. She started her educational journey with a bachelor's degree in psychology but received a master's in composition studying with Mario Davidowsky at the City College of New York as a Tuch Foundation Fellow. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

## **Indigenous Women Composers**

### **I. Rationale for Inclusion**

This category is arguably the most important and pertinent to today. I found at least a few minor resources and databases for Jewish composers, queer-identifying composers, and composers with disabilities, but aside from a few articles about “Indigenous musicians you should know about right now” articles, there was the opposite of a plethora of information on Indigenous composers.

Many of the databases I consulted did not even have this as a category.

Indigenous peoples' interaction with the Westernization of music, unfortunately, has meant that these composers have been brushed aside in favor of the Western art music traditions of the greats (dead white men (e.g., Bach and Beethoven)).

More than anything, it is important for indigenous students to see their elders succeeding in this field, as then they can feel that they could succeed too. The composers listed below are blazing the trail for future students of music and composition with every piece of music they produce.

## II. Composers of Note

### a. Dawn Avery (b. 1961)

Of Kaniènkéha (Mohawk) descent, Dawn Avery, also known as *leriho:kwats*, wears the turtle clan. Her compositions are deeply rooted in her Indigenous heritage and love of sacred traditions. She also runs a World Music program at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland, where she is a full professor. She holds a BM from the Manhattan School of Music, an MFA from New York University, and a PhD in ethnomusicology from the University of Maryland, College Park with primary research in native classical contemporary composition and the application of indigenous research techniques (Avery).

Avery has been nominated for Grammys for World Music and has won the Global Music Award for her record *50 Shades of Red* (2014). In addition to her compositional feats, she leads meditation groups and spiritual performances around the country. One of her crowning accomplishments in this area is that she has worked with the Dalai Lama. Some of the music she releases on record has been created explicitly for meditative studies. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

b. Karen Sunabacka (b. 1975)

Hailing from Manitoba, Canada (originally the Red River Settlement), Métis composer Karen Sunabacka draws from her indigenous and mixed European heritage. The mix of cultures that she identifies with (namely the Métis, Scottish, Swedish, and Finnish cultures) frequently creates conflicts that she then explores in her compositions. She often collaborates with her mother, Joyce Clouston, who is an Indigenous Culture Carrier. “Together they have completed numerous works that explore family stories and the intersections of Indigenous-Settler relations and philosophies” (Sunabacka).

Her works have been premiered by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra. She has also been the recipient of the CMC Prairie Region Emerging Composers’ Competition first place prize. She works as an Associate of Music at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

## Queer-Identifying Women Composers

### I. Rationale for Inclusion

Queer-Identifying composers still struggle to get their music heard because of the stigma that they have faced for so long. As of recent, the music industry has done great things to promote the music and lived experiences of queer musicians, but they are not acknowledged on nearly the same level as composers that are synonymous with the word composer: Bach, Beethoven, or Mozart, among others. This is a direct promotion of their music within an educational context, so much so that the idea that these composers are just as important to the compositional scene as any other is ingrained from the beginning.

### II. Composers of Note

#### a. Dame Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)

Dame Ethel Smyth came from a military family and was introduced to the music of Wagner and Berlioz at a young age by her first instructor, Alexander Ewing. She then went on to study at the Leipzig Conservatory. She met Dvořák, Grieg, and Tchaikovsky there, and has since been dubbed “an extraordinary ‘lost’ opera composer, as her music is not nearly as popular as others who were composing in her time, after passing in 1944” (D’Silva).

When Smyth first started composing, there were always comments about her gender. Dr. Amy Zigler states, “For more than a century, the gatekeepers believed women weren’t capable of writing music on par with male composers” (D’Silva). Smyth wrote music that she considered manly, and dressed the part too,



just to intimidate her male counterparts. Additionally, in 1910, Ethel became involved in the Women's Suffrage movement in England, in turn meeting many people who would become her lovers, such as Emmeline Pankhurst, the leader of the Women's Social and Political Union, and writer Virginia Woolf. On the other end of the spectrum, Henry Bennet Brewster was thought to have been her only male lover. She was fiery and defiant, which is why so many scholars believe her music outlasted her as well as it did (D'Silva). To learn more, visit this [link](#).

b. Wendy Carlos (b. 1939)

Wendy Carlos took a somewhat circuitous route to composing. She started by studying physics and music performance at Brown University before studying composition alone at Columbia University. She was an integral part of the development of the Moog synthesizer, which she used in later compositions.

Carlos is best known for her electronic music, as well as her film scores. Her first major work was *Switched-On Bach*, which she created by taking the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and arranging and performing it on a Moog synthesizer. This helped popularize Bach's music, as well as put Wendy's name on the map. She claimed three Grammy Awards for this creation in the 1970s. She has composed music for movies like *The Shining*, *A Clockwork Orange*, and *TRON*. However, her compositions for Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining* were thrown out unbeknownst to Carlos until she attended the premiere. Only two of Carlos' compositions were featured in that movie, but one would argue they are some of the most important musical works included in the picture. One is the

main theme, the other being a piece entitled *Rocky Mountains*, where Carlos drew inspiration from Berlioz's arrangement of the Dies Irae sequence in *Symphonie Fantastique* (Sewell). To learn more, visit this [link](#).

c. Michael Bussewitz-Quarm (living)

Michael Bussewitz-Quarm composes for art's sake or emotion's sake, rather than by a theoretical approach. She is not a professionally trained composer, yet she composes music that speaks to the common person. From her biography, "Her work addresses topics ranging from coral reef conservation to gun violence and the global refugee crisis. An active advocate for the transgender community, she aims to foster understanding through guest speaking engagements and artistic collaboration" (Bussewitz-Quarm). She self-publishes most of her compositions through MB Arts, her own publishing company, and is one of the composers at the forefront of the contemporary composition movement. She says of her compositions, composing style, and inspirations:

"As a composer one of the things that I found very interesting is that people expected that my music was going to be themed around the trans experience... but there's this expectation I think sometimes that, you know, if you're in the marginalized community, that that might be your focus, and it never has been my focus. You know, I wondered why that's the case and I think part of it is the fact that it's a struggle in real life in my everyday life... I'm very fortunate to have [a supportive family] but I

know that not everybody has that... I live in the real world, I've had experiences that are negative, and also I see what's happening in the world. Now I am writing more about the trans experience because I've been commissioned to write about the trans experience, but I've gravitated to wanting to work on some other things that have really stressed me out and wanting to be part of the solution where I felt helpless... I don't want to feel helpless anymore so if I write music about it and I surround myself with the community it makes me feel less helpless because I feel like I'm part of, in my own small way, making a difference in those communities” (Bussewitz-Quarm).

Her compositions have been performed by The Duke University Chorale, Singers of New and Ancient Music, the Eugene Concert Choir and Orchestra, and the Esoterics, and have been performed at the International Society of Contemporary Music's New Music Days in Vancouver, Carnegie Hall, among others (Bussewitz-Quarm). To learn more, visit this [link](#).

## **Women Composers with Disabilities**

### **I. Rationale for Inclusion**

Since we live in such an ableist society, I frequently find that we sweep everything that does not conveniently fit our idea of aesthetics under the rug. Composers who have disabilities should be able to celebrate their exceptionalities without fear that

they might not become popular because they do not fit the mold of what we have unfairly decided makes a composer. Beethoven went deaf in his early twenties, but the compositions that he wrote long after that are still performed today. In an interview with Molly Joyce, she gives some advice on making classroom curriculum more inclusive, “[Simply put] trying to meet students and young musicians where they’re at” is so important and “don’t be afraid to give accommodations” to help students be more successful (Joyce). Why can we not find it in ourselves to dedicate that same amount of attention to composers of today who are forced to deal with an arguably more judgmental and harsh societal culture?

## II. Composers of Note

### a. Molly Joyce (b. 1992)

Molly Joyce’s professional path started with composition but also includes a divergence into disability studies. She is “a graduate of Juilliard, Royal Conservatory in The Hague, Yale, and alumnus of the YoungArts Foundation. She holds an Advanced Certificate and Master of Arts in Disability Studies from CUNY School of Professional Studies and is a Dean’s Doctoral Fellow at the University of Virginia in Composition and Computer Technologies” (Joyce).

She has lived with an impaired left hand since she was seven (because of a car accident). When asked in an interview about how identifying as a composer with a disability has shaped her experience in the music industry, she mentioned that it has been “[a very] positive experience because it opens more doors for collaborating with other disabled musicians... [but] some people don’t know how

to talk about it [the disability]” (Joyce). Her disability and the visible and invisible disabilities others have deeply informed her compositional style, and she believes that talking about disability, and being disabled as a whole, strikes down the stigma around disabled people, and she stands as an advocate for people with disabilities. “After the accident, Joyce’s mother began advocating for her child’s continued participation in childhood sports, education, social activities, and music—she had started playing the violin at age 5” (Stokes). Her works have been presented and commissioned most notably by Carnegie Hall, TEDxMidAtlantic, and Bang on a Can Marathon. Joyce is a recipient of many awards, including ASCAP’s Leo Kaplan Award as a part of the Morton Gould Young Composers Awards, grants from New Music USA, and has also completed residencies at AIR Krems on Der Donau, De Link Tilburg, Embassy of Foreign Artists, among others. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

b. Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972)

Gabriela Lena Frank is a professionally trained composer, with degrees from Rice University, where she studied composition with Sam Jones, and University of Michigan, where she studied with William Bolcom and Leslie Bassett. Her works frequently draw from her mother’s Peruvian heritage and often feature Latin American instruments. In addition to being a composer, she is the founder of the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music. She has received a Latin Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Music Composition and nominations for Grammys as both a composer and pianist, as well as several

Guggenheim Fellowships (“About Gabriela”). When asked about how she prefers to be referred to in terms of the labels put on her as a composer, she writes in an interview, “Either is fine by me. It just depends on what makes sense for that situation. When my disability gets used as a strange selling point, then it's a little uncomfortable. But when it opens people's minds as to what disabled people can do, then I'm all for it” (Frank).

She was born with neurosensory high-moderate/near-profound hearing loss. Although much of her music study may focus on finding adaptations for her disability, her compositional roots and what she focuses on when she composes do not necessarily reflect her experiences with the disability. “Is it an exaggeration to say that composers after Beethoven, the vast majority of them hearing, were forever changed by a deaf aesthetic?” Frank asks in an article written for *The New York Times*. She posits in this article that Beethoven encoded his deafness in his music, and that our modern idea of music has been seriously influenced by a major disability (Frank, “I Think Beethoven Encoded His Deafness in His Music”). While Frank is also an advocate for breaking down the stigma surrounding disabled people, she does not focus on it within her compositions. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

## Women Composers in Jazz

### I. Rationale for Inclusion

Jazz is uniquely equipped to teach all musical concepts because it allows students to learn the fundamentals like scales and general music performance concepts, but it is also exemplary for teaching things like rhythm, time, tempo, and syncopation. It has always been my belief that a jazz player can play classical, but if one is only classically trained, it is harder to make the transition to jazz. I posit that the most important reason jazz should be included in the curriculum is its ability to allow student creativity and “deviance” from the written work. Jazz started as an aural tradition, so many of the standards that are played today are just transcriptions of what used to be passed down from player to player. So much of what jazz encompasses requires a higher level of focus and commitment from students because generally, jazz is not instructor-led. Students are afforded much more autonomy in a jazz setting than in a conventional music rehearsal, and it is these moments where they make their own musical decisions that help them grow as musicians and people.

### II. Composers of Note

#### a. Carla Bley (1936-2023)

A free jazz movement icon, Carla Bley hailed from Oakland, California. Bley considered herself a music writer and composer first before anything else. Cormac Larkin, for *The Irish Times*, writes that Carla Bley is “a

woman who once described herself as 1 percent player, 99 percent composer” (Larkin). In her professional life, she had been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for music composition, as well as the German Jazz Trophy “A Life for Jazz” and the NEA Jazz Masters Award.

Her father, a musician himself, encouraged her to sing and play the piano. When she was seventeen, she moved to New York City and found work as a cigarette girl at Birdland, a jazz club that opened in 1949 (Chinen). During her lengthy career, she collaborated with many famous artists, arranging and composing music for George Russell, Jimmy Giuffre, Paul Bley, Robert Wyatt, Gary Burton, Art Farmer, and John Scofield, among others. In 1964, she helped found the Jazz Composers Guild, which became the leading professional organization for jazz musicians at the time. She did all this while releasing her own albums as well as leading her own band (Turner). To learn more, visit this [link](#).

b. Esperanza Spalding (stylized esperanza spalding) (b. 1984)

A bassist, singer, and jazz composer, esperanza spalding (also known in some circles as irma nejando) fuses what we know as jazz music with Brazilian and Argentinian folk songs, creating a new sub-genre that is enjoyed and studied by many. This is most notable on her 2008 album *Esperanza*. A high school dropout at the age of 16, spalding earned a GED and went on to earn a Bachelor of Music degree from Berklee College of Music. After graduating, she became Berklee’s youngest professor of music.



She has won many awards and accolades, the top being a Grammy Award for Best New Artist in 2011, a Grammy Award for Best Jazz Vocal Album in 2012 and 2018, and a Boston Jazz Society Scholarship (Hibler). She has played for President Barack Obama multiple times in her career, as well as toured with her own band, and performed with Herbie Hancock, Stevie Wonder, and Prince, among others. In 2017, Spalding was appointed Professor of Jazz Studies at Harvard University, but departed in 2022 because, in her words, “sadly, what I aspire to cultivate and activate in organized learning spaces is not (yet) aligned with Harvard’s priorities” (Walecki). To learn more, visit this [link](#).

c. Billie Holiday (1915-1959)

Billie Holiday, also known as Eleanora Fagan or Elinore Harris, was one of the most influential jazz singers of all time (Biography.com Editors). She and her mother struggled, as her father was mostly absent from their lives. Holiday had a troubled childhood and was sent to the House of Good Shepherd, a facility for troubled African-American girls in 1925. After being in and out of the facility, she and her mother moved to New York City, and at the beginning of the 1930s, Holiday began singing in local clubs. She is not necessarily known as a composer of music, as her performances are what deeply moved many, but some of the songs we know from her, such as God Bless the Child, were written by Holiday herself.

Early in her life, she became involved in music and was discovered at eighteen by producer John Hammond. He was the one who helped connect her with bandleader Benny Goodman, the “King of Swing,” and leader of the Benny Goodman Jazz Orchestra.

The one thing that Billie Holiday may be most known for is her recording of *Strange Fruit*, even though it was not written by her. Originally written by Abel Meeropol, it was inspired by “... a 1930 photo that captured the lynching of two Black men in Indiana. The visceral image haunted him for days and prompted him to put pen to paper. After he published ‘Strange Fruit’ in a teacher’s union publication, Meeropol composed it into a song and passed it onto a nightclub owner, who then introduced it to Holiday” (Pak). During the mid-1930s, Billie Holiday sang for several records with Goodman, as well as appeared with Duke Ellington, the Count Basie Orchestra, and Artie Shaw. During her career, she broke down many barriers as she became one of the first black female vocalists to work with a white orchestra. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

## **Female Pop Icons (singer-songwriters)**

### **I. Rationale for Inclusion**

Today's musicians are what our students are listening to. So why would we, as teachers, not include their musical interests in our curriculum to help them understand what we are trying to teach? Rachel Ammons, for *That Music Teacher*, writes:

Popular music is something that can be surprisingly divisive within the music education community. People who don't support the use of it within the classroom have many reasons for their lack of support such as: 1) The subject material is inappropriate, 2) There's not as much value in popular music as in classical music, 3) You can't teach music standards with popular music (*That Music Teacher*).

First, it is the teacher's job to vet the music that students listen to and perform, and there are plenty of school-appropriate songs that are in the popular genre. Second, if popular music was not valuable, why would it be popular? Finally, my goal with this project is to not only make available the analysis of songs for academic consumption in a music theory classroom but also to show that popular music can be analyzed under the same guidelines as any classical piece. Ultimately, this music is just as important, if not more important, than classical music because it allows us to still teach the concepts we would normally teach,

but in a way that is more easily understood by young minds who have their fingers on the pulse of pop culture. Similar to jazz music, or any music that is not as commonly taught in school settings, when we include popular music that our students may listen to regularly, we are not only showing them that their interests are important and should be shared in the classroom, but that their music means something and is valid. The validation of our students' interests is more important than almost anything else.

## II. Composers of Note

### a. Dolly Parton (b. 1946)

Dolly Parton is best known for her genre shift between country and pop music, as well as combining the two styles. This paved the way for Taylor Swift (see below) to make a similar transition some 30 years later. She started performing live on the radio, playing guitar, and singing as a child, and as soon as she graduated high school, she moved to Nashville to pursue her dreams of a career in music (Gorlinski). Lorie Liebig writes for *American Songwriter* about Dolly's songwriting ability, "Dolly Parton is one of the most prolific songwriters in the history of modern music... Her ability to aptly describe immense emotion allows the complicated intensity to shine through... Parton has a way of writing songs that feel like a story told by a close friend" (Liebig).

A big part of her rise to fame was performing on Porter Wagoner's television show *The Porter Wagoner Show*, and she recorded songs with him before launching her solo career. She has won six Grammys, the Kennedy Center Honors, and the National Medal of Arts, and has been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

In addition to music, she owns Dollywood, a theme park near her hometown, and has written music for the Broadway musical *9 to 5*, based on her song by the same name. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

b. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter (b. 1981)

Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, also known as Queen Bey, achieved fame first with her rock and blues group Destiny's Child, then later launched a solo career. Within this time, she has secured 32 Grammy Awards since 2001 and has broken the mold to be the first Black woman to top the *Billboard* Country chart with her song *Texas Hold 'Em*. Her collaborators, specifically Andre "Dre" Christopher Lyon, have said about her songwriting, "She was 100 percent involved... She put her mind to the music and did her thing. If she had a melody idea, she came up with the words. If we had the words, she came up with the melody. She's a beast" (Muller).

More recently, Knowles-Carter has started a genre shift toward country music, opposite Parton and Swift. Her current album, *Cowboy Carter*, has topped the charts at No. 1, but is not her first deviation to country music.

She first released two singles from the album, *Texas Hold 'Em* and *16 Carriages*. Ultimately, “the album’s release in late March prompted a long-overdue discourse about the African American roots of country music” which has been present in other forms of music, especially jazz, but not necessarily country, since it has been dominated by white artists historically (“Beyoncé”).

In 2023, she concluded her Renaissance World Tour in October, and she held the record for the highest-grossing tour of all time until it was surpassed by Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

c. Taylor Swift (b. 1989)

Taylor Swift is one of the most decorated pop music stars of all time, who started her career as a country artist. Across her artistic career, she has released eleven albums, the most recent being *The Tortured Poets Department*, debuting in April of 2024. She has won 14 Grammys, 30 *Billboard* Music Awards, six Country Music Association Awards, and 35 American Music Awards, among other awards in smaller categories (Adams). Additionally, she was selected as *TIME*’s Person of the Year in 2023.

She describes her songwriting style in three different ways: Fountain Pen Songs, Glitter Gel Pen Songs, and Quill Pen Songs. In her acceptance speech at the Nashville Songwriter Awards in September 2022, she described each.

On Fountain Pen Songs: “[They try to] paint a vivid picture of a situation, down to the chipped paint on the door frame and the incense dust on

the vinyl shelf... Taking a common phrase and flipping its meaning. Placing yourself and whoever is listening right there in the room where it all happened. The love, the loss, everything. The songs I categorize in this style sound like confessions scribbled and sealed in an envelope, but too brutally honest to ever send.” On Glitter Gel Pen Songs: “Frivolous, carefree, bouncy, syncopated perfectly to the beat, Glitter Gel Pen lyrics don’t care if you don’t take them seriously because they don’t take themselves seriously. Glitter Gel Pen lyrics are the drunk girl at the party who tells you that you look like an angel in the bathroom. It’s what we need every once in a while in these fraught times in which we live.” On Quill Pen Songs: If my lyrics sound like a letter written by Emily Dickinson’s great-grandmother while sewing a lace curtain, that’s me writing in the Quill genre... [it’s as] If I was inspired to write it after reading Charlotte Brontë or after watching a movie where everyone is wearing poet shirts and corsets” (“Taylor Swift Accepts Songwriter-Artist of the Decade at the Nashville Songwriter Awards”).

The biggest catalyst event in Swift’s career sparked controversy when Scooter Braun purchased her entire library of masters, which, up to that point, included her self-titled album *Taylor Swift*, *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, *Red*, *1989*, and *Reputation*. Swift states in a post on Tumblr, “I learned about Scooter Braun’s purchase of my masters as it was announced to the world” (taylorswift). When Taylor Swift’s record label and owner Scott Borchetta sold her masters to Braun, he refused to sell them back to her without his name being attached as a producer so he could still earn royalties. Since then,

she has re-released four of the six original masters and renamed them with (*Taylor's Version*), as well as created new cover art.

Most recently, Swift has made history with her Eras Tour, which has grossed more than one billion dollars in revenue, setting a worldwide record, considering she will only have been touring for a little under two years once the Eras Tour finishes in December 2024. To learn more, visit this [link](#).



### Chapter 3

#### Where We Will Be

There are so many categories not mentioned here that are deserving of recognition, namely, neurodivergence and location of residence/birth. There are so many composers whose compositions are informed by their environments and surroundings, and I believe that music theory educators would benefit greatly from having this information readily available to teach. Additionally, speaking from personal experience, I am greatly influenced in my work by my ADHD, a diagnosis I just recently received within the last two years. It is not common for women to be diagnosed with ADD or ADHD as children and looking back I see so many signs that were overlooked. One of the first pieces I composed, titled *Discomposure*, is a piece written for solo piano that aurally depicts the feeling of having an anxiety attack. This mental breakdown is due to being overwhelmed, mainly by my racing thoughts and inability to act on my ever-lengthening to-do list.

Based on the databases that I assessed during my research; I concluded that the categories that I have selected will be the most beneficial for what music theory educators need on a day-to-day basis. Having been exposed to music theory for so long, I have seen many changes in the right direction, but we are still in need of so much change and reform in terms of curriculum and standards.

I find a need to address once again Phillip Ewell's call to action for a music theory revolution. He calls us to engage in curriculum reform, decolonize music theory, pursue research and scholarship in non-Western traditions and contributions from marginalized groups, and acknowledge and dismantle implicit biases in ourselves and the institutions we serve. To go even

further, our students, after we are bold enough to take the first steps, will be encouraged to do the same and should be held to the same standards. We want to be ethical practitioners of music theory and teach our students to be as well.

Throughout the research process for this thesis, the source that always stood out to me the most was Ellie Hisama's article "Getting to Count." Her accounts of women unable to find an accepting place in what I thought was such a large field were revelatory for me and have continued to inspire me throughout this project. She states her position much better than I ever would be able to when she writes:

Can music theory be a place where all people, including female, queer, non-binary, BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color], and disabled people, feel supported and their interests encouraged? Does it provide a space in which we, and our work, matter? From my many talks with people who wrestle with a field that does not want them and with others who have left the field altogether for a more satisfying line of work, I am certain that not all found a space in which they get to count (Hisama).

The first and foremost reason why I started this research was to carve out a space for who I am, how I identify, and to fortify myself and others in my position in what seems like such a cold field of study, from both inside and out. When has music lacked emotion? Never. When has music theory lacked emotion? When it abandoned the women Hisama interviewed, and countless others because they did not fit the mold. This is why we must strive for greater progress and must commit to facing the music. This is why I am committed to advocating for a brighter future for all those who come after me in this profession and field of study.

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