

The music department at the University of St. Thomas affirms that Black Lives Matter. We are devastated by the inhumane murder of people of color in our country, including the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery to name only a few. We are aware of the systemic racism woven into the fabric of our society, including our university. We affirm the dignity of all humans, and we renew our commitment to anti-racism in our actions, our teaching and our music-making. We acknowledge our past shortcomings in dismantling racism and aim to do better. We recognize our position of privilege as a predominantly White faculty, staff and student body and wish to use this platform to contribute to the healing of our communities.

Music departments in the U.S. have long histories of elevating Western European and White music traditions above those of other peoples and practices. This is a result of systemic policies that have gone largely unquestioned. The Center for the Common Good at the University of St. Thomas asks the citizens of our learning community to take action to bring about meaningful social change. In the spirit of this invitation, the music department commits to:

- create a Diversity Committee for the music department. This committee will review current pedagogical and performance practices, curriculum, repertoire selection and departmental culture to identify and facilitate implementation of needed changes in order to promote an anti-racist teaching and learning environment. The intended outcomes of the committee will be to honor BIPOC (Black, Brown, Indigenous, People of Color) through our words/music/deeds.
- help all faculty, staff and students learn how to identify and avoid cultural appropriation.

We will also explore initiatives including but not limited to:

- the development of community engagement with and offer support to the St. Paul and Minneapolis BIPOC communities and schools.
- hosting of guest artists, lectures, or concert series with a racial justice theme.
- the commissioning and programming of pieces by BIPOC composers.
- collaboration with other St. Thomas colleges/schools to create interdepartmental events with anti-racist focus.
- student convocation meetings dedicated to anti-racism in music.
- scholarship opportunities exclusively for BIPOC students.

In our ensembles, lessons, and music classes, we commit to:

- exploration of a composer's identity through the lenses of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability.
- learn and teach a variety of performance styles (tone, timbre, approaches, techniques), not only traditions based in Western European practices.
- work with White faculty, staff and students to help them understand their privilege, and the need to decenter Whiteness in music education, thereby also modeling for BIPOC students and community members the critical importance of this disposition in education.
- emphasize the importance of culturally responsive teaching (i.e. not making assumptions based on race, first language, socioeconomic situation - instead, truly getting to know one's students)

We ask to be held accountable to these commitments by our colleagues and students. This process will require vigilance as it is crucial to create the world we desire - one that values all life.