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Practicing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Singing Voice Studio

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ABSTRACT

Music programs in higher education systems have historically operated from a Eurocentric point of view, and many programs still endorse an outdated hierarchy that places classical music above all other genres. Despite the inherent cultural and artistic value of American popular music, the United States lags behind other countries in granting popular music study a meaningful place in higher educational models. While significant structural changes to ensure that all genres of music receive equal attention and resources within university music programs develop, the authors have compiled a list of tools voice teachers can use to practice increased equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) within our singing voice studios. These include (1) embracing intentional pedagogical practices; (2) avoiding cultural appropriation or cultural approximation; (3) continuing to seek education; (4) acknowledging our areas of excellence, knowing what is beyond the scope of our expertise, and having the courage to ask for help; (5) naming courses and programs accurately; and (6) developing an equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging statement for the voice studio. As a form of combating systemic exclusion, voice teachers can take meaningful steps to foster a racially, ethnically, culturally, and musically inclusive singing voice studio.

KEYWORDS

Voice studio; CCM singing; antiracist; diversity; inclusion; belonging; applied pedagogy

Introduction

One of the most significant events of 2020 was the inhumane killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, at the hands of a white police officer. The horrific murder was recorded on video and watched by millions of people on social media. Witnessing Floyd beg for his last breath while he was asphyxiated sparked a global response to racial injustice led by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) social justice movement. The BLM movement was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Treyvon Martin's murderer, with an agenda for increased racial awareness and demand for organizational reform. The outcry over Floyd's death brought attention to the BLM movement tantamount to "a pandemic within a pandemic," (Stolberg 2020), made more urgent by the simultaneous threat of the COVID-19 global health pandemic. As music has always been and continues to be a powerful lens through which cultures may be examined, understood, and amplified,

we, music educators, must recognize our responsibilities to both identify and reckon with the inherent cultural biases that operate within our academic systems. As music educators, our job is to teach culture through the study of music composition and interpretation. In order for our teaching spaces to promote the value of and respect for diverse cultures, we must examine how equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) are operating in our voice studios.

The authors are proud members of the voice teaching community and regular contributors to the field of CCM (contemporary commercial music) voice pedagogy. We represent a diversity of perspectives including race, country of origin, training, education, age, professional experience, independent studio/university teaching, and genres of expertise. Our intention within this article is to call upon our voice teaching community to examine our pedagogical habits through the lens of contemporary social justice. The concept of “decolonizing” the historically Eurocentric music classroom is being widely discussed in the fields of music education (Attas 2019; Attas and Walker 2019; Hess 2015; Lovesey 2017), dance (Thomas 2019), ethnomusicology (Chavez and Skelchy 2019), and acting and spoken voice (Oram 2019, 2021; Coronel, Springfield, and Moser 2020; Ginther 2015). However, the concept of decolonizing the singing voice studio is not yet being widely discussed in the United States within the singing voice community, and we are missing an opportunity to revise and update our best pedagogical practices. This article is intended for the voice teacher (particularly the singing voice teacher) who implicitly or explicitly promotes the principle that musical genres are ensconced within a hierarchy. Because many university music programs are inherently Eurocentric, there remains an implied “whiteness” to perpetuating a model that prioritizes the music of a predominantly elite Western European culture. “Whiteness” is “not a racial identity but a construct of the actions and performances of [w]hite privilege” (Lynch 2018, 21; DiAngelo 2010; Lensmire 2010), a construct which has been developed “based on oppression, power, and falsehoods” (Lynch 2018, 21; Du Bois [1920]1999; Leonardo 2002). There is a direct connection between systemic Eurocentrism and systemic racism, particularly in academia (Araújo and Maeso 2015; Cabrera, Franklin, and Watson 2017; Leonardo 2002; Lynch 2018; Nichols 2010). We acknowledge that striving for change within a structurally Eurocentric university system is challenging, but new paths can be formed. This article encourages individual acts of decolonization in the voice studio, which require the inclusion of genres and cultures beyond Western European classical music.

The link between music and culture is explained by Johnson (1997), who states that “music is central, quite literally, to what culture sounds like, an essential part of its raw material and one of its most vital means of continued expression and representation” (2). In the voice studio, we have the opportunity to either amplify or silence racial and cultural identity, and this responsibility must be wielded with careful intention. The status quo model in higher education systems, which places European classical music and culture at the center and labels all other musical genres and cultures as *other*, does not represent musical and cultural equity. Wicks (1998) explains that there is a “glaring inequity of excluding the study of a majority of the world’s musical tradition—especially the popular traditions of our own country—and of not acknowledging what this exclusion must mean to the social groups in which the music developed” (1). To exclude music is to exclude culture, and by extension, to exclude music is to exclude people.

To effect change, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the current academic system. There is a Eurocentric, elitist, and racist system in place in many higher educational music departments, and this system does not reflect the values of modern American culture. Wicks (1998) explains, “Given the enormous academic resources and power now controlled by the elite traditionalists, it is unlikely that change will occur from within music departments” (1). However, individuals have the power to incite significant and lasting social change. A resounding example is Rosa Parks, who chose not to give up her seat to a white person on an Alabama bus in 1955. While recognizing that just as George Floyd was not the first unarmed Black person to be murdered by the police, we also acknowledge that Rosa Parks was not the first person to be arrested for not giving up her seat on a bus. However, as Floyd and Parks prove, individuals can serve as catalysts for larger social movements, and the power of that spark should not be underestimated. Johnson (1997) explains, “The real work of concrete change must happen at the local levels and not be dictated from above” (4). In music education, significant and lasting social change may begin at the level of the voice teacher. This paper will present recommendations to foster a racially, ethnically, culturally, and musically inclusive voice studio.

Examining White Fragility, Implicit Bias, and Culpability in the Singing Voice Studio

As voice teachers, we have a professional responsibility to consider the large-scale cultural reckoning of racism in the context of the voice studio. Anecdotally, there has been some resistance to such an examination. We acknowledge that individuals may fear that the actions of one person are futile when faced with the scale and rigidity of systemic exclusion that exists within university structures. We have witnessed arguments including “there are no current problems with racism in the studio,” “no one here is racist,” or “there are already special programs to encourage diversity in the studio.” Lynch describes these common perceptions as part of a “post-racial society ideology” on race relations, or the incorrect perception that racism no longer exists (Lynch 2018, 24; Jupp, Berry, and Lensmire 2016; Tanner 2017). In order to move forward with action to promote social justice, we must examine white fragility, implicit bias, and culpability in the voice studio.

“Why Fix It If It’s Not Broken?”

Some voice teachers may believe that there is nothing wrong with the current hierarchical system which places classical music at the center and labels all other music as *other*. Lynch (2018) explains that “choosing the system of privilege and power that [w]hitenedness represents is often done so unconsciously” because “Whiteness is normative; the standard to which all other behaviors are judged” (22). When the unconscious choice is questioned, there may be another layer of resistance, which DiAngelo (2018) characterizes as “arguing, denying, and avoiding,” which are “common emotional reactions that white people have [...] when our assumptions and behaviors are challenged” (119). However, challenging the Eurocentric model is long overdue. Aside from the ethically questionable practice of charging money to educate thousands of classical singers each year so that they may enter a job market that will likely never recoup the

cost of such an education, there are larger social implications for sustaining a Eurocentric hierarchy. Placing European classical music at the center of our educational systems in the United States and labeling American popular music as *other*, alienates American music, and by extension, American culture. When one considers that the majority of American popular music has its roots in African American musical styles, such as slave songs, blues, spirituals, gospel, and jazz, it is clear that in the United States, race, music, and culture are inextricably intertwined. Excluding American popular music from formal educational models perpetuates racial segregation using musical style as a proxy for race. Kendi (2019) would characterize the Eurocentric musical status quo as “cultural racism,” defined as “one who is creating a cultural standard and imposing a cultural hierarchy among racial groups” (81). Hierarchies, by definition, require dominance and exclusion. In the twenty-first century, is it appropriate that white affluent Western European culture should be the American “cultural standard” for formal music education? Kendi encourages the actions of the “cultural antiracist,” defined as “one who is rejecting cultural standards and equalizing cultural differences among racial groups” (81). In the voice studio, practicing cultural antiracism would mean that all genres are equally worthy of study and respect. In music education, practicing cultural antiracism would immediately end any genre-based hierarchies.

“But I’m Not Racist”

In response to the BLM movement, two major monographs have been voraciously consumed by white Americans: *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, and *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. Both works begin with the premise that no one believes that they are racist, least of all white people. DiAngelo calls this the “good/bad binary,” a “false dichotomy” wherein racism is “reduced to simple, isolated, and extreme acts of prejudice” (DiAngelo 2018, 71–72). Kendi contends that it is not enough to be *not racist*, one must actively be *anti-racist*. The *not racist* label has been proudly claimed by Donald Trump and Richard Spencer. Kendi cautions that there is too much “neutrality” and passivity in the term (Kendi 2019, 9). The antidote to racism is “anti-racism,” described as one who actively confronts racial inequities and policies. DiAngelo’s and Kendi’s works build off of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s *Racism Without Racists*, which contends that “color-blind racism” actually perpetuates racism because meaningful dialogue about race is not possible if we are “blind” to race (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

Kendi, DiAngelo, and Bonilla-Silva make convincing arguments that we are all complicit in perpetuating racism, but if individuals do the work of recognizing implicit and unconscious bias, there is hope that systems may be changed over time. In the voice studio, perpetuating the status quo hierarchy is akin to being *not racist*. Being *not racist* might also manifest as criticizing or dismissing unfamiliar genres, avoiding repertoire that might have racial implications, assigning students of color the same repertoire as their white vocal counterparts without exception, assigning students of color a racially-limited repertoire, allowing white students to perform repertoire that requires a lived experience as a person of color, mimicking the sound of a gospel singer rather than encouraging the emergence of a native sound rooted in the culture of gospel music, applying a classical opera sound to a jazz standard, assuming that all Black women are naturally great belters, and so on. Once we have come to terms with our own fragility and culpability as voice

teachers, we may then examine what it is to actively practice antiracism in the voice studio.

Tokenism As Inclusion

Nate Holder's (2020) timely poem "If I were a racist" includes a stanza, "If I were a racist,/ I'd make you think including one brown face,/Would be enough./Diversity. Inclusion" (1). Tokenism, or the mere symbolic effort made to promote the appearance of inclusivity, has often been celebrated as proof of equity, inclusion, and belonging. There has been much interest in bolstering the inclusion of people of color in classical music and other formalized concert programming. Special scholarships, foundations, initiatives, and programs have rushed to build so-called *inclusion*. The appearance of artists or composers of color is only one aspect of inclusion: representation. Representation is an important component, considering the United States' long history of anti-Blackness. Still, representation is only the beginning of the journey toward equity, inclusion, and belonging.

The European system of music notation is used for the quantification, qualification, dissemination, and performance of what is considered *high* art. Therefore, if the idea of inclusion is limited to those who read and write within a Eurocentric compositional framework, then this form of inclusion focuses on bringing more people of color into European classical music and culture. By definition, many musical and cultural markers of color are absent in European classical music styles. Alper (2007) argues that "the rhythms and melodies heard in many popular music vocal styles cannot be sufficiently created through standard notation. Many blues-influenced vocals are intentionally sung behind, and around, the beat in ways that make the use of standard notation untenable" (160). To simply add music of all cultures to the standardized Eurocentric modalities of notation, composition, and performance could omit many of the identifying signifiers of authentic cultural performance. If one must abandon one's native culture and musical identity to be included, how can that inclusion be called anything but tokenism? Kendi (2019) calls such tokenism "assimilationist," defined as "expressing the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioral enrichment programs to develop that racial group." Instead, Kendi encourages the antiracist "idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing" (24). True inclusion, which paves the way for equity and belonging in the voice studio manifests as respecting and celebrating all varieties of music, cultures, and people without hierarchy.

"The System Is the Real Problem"

Despite a significant shift in cultural and musical values in the past 70 years, the design of music programs in higher education has not fundamentally adapted to reflect current values. Johnson (1997) explains:

Philosophically and aesthetically, or perhaps just out of ignorance and fear, these faculties cling to the idea of one music – classical music – against all the rest, refusing to give up their sense of a privileged position even at the risk of damaging the very thing they imagine they are defending. If this situation were translated into virtually any other field it would sound incredible, pathetic and even laughable. (3)

If the culture and values within psychology, medicine, or computer science had remained unchanged since 1950, the disciplines would not only be irrelevant, but they would also be obsolete. To avoid obsolescence, music educational models must adapt and change.

Institutional change is the ideal solution to racial, cultural, and musical injustice. Chavez and Skelchy (2019) call for “Decolonization for music studies” which includes “(1) decentering western art music as the focus of music studies, 2) listening to and implementing indigenous and non-Eurocentric methodologies and knowledge systems, and 3) implementing decolonizing approaches in the classroom and in research practice” (118). It is true that to make changes in the voice studio may feel insignificant compared to the scale of institutional change required to address systemic exclusion. We (the authors of this article) concede that addressing the system is essential, but it is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, the focus is on empowering individual voice teachers to examine our own teaching philosophies and to practice intentional antiracism within our voice studios. The hope is that individual actions will inspire others and promote dialogue, which, on a larger scale, will give rise to institutional change.

Recommendations

To begin to shift the culture of music education toward a “better-integrated, cross-cultural, multi-stylistic approach to historic and current musical practices,” which would engage and build “upon the students’ own musical language[s],” cultures, and identities (Johnson 1997, 5), voice teachers can utilize antiracist tools within our studios. These include (1) embracing intentional pedagogical practices; (2) avoiding cultural appropriation or cultural approximation; (3) continuing to seek education; (4) acknowledging our areas of excellence, knowing what is beyond the scope of our expertise, and having the courage to ask for help; (5) naming courses and programs accurately; and (6) developing an equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging statement for the voice studio. As a form of combating systemic exclusion, voice teachers can take meaningful steps to foster a racially, ethnically, culturally, and musically inclusive voice studio.

Embracing Intentional Pedagogical Practices

Embracing intentional pedagogical practices specifically refers to two interconnected philosophical changes: (a) shifting to a nonhierarchical model of study and (b) expanding to include more genres of study. Hess (2015) unabashedly calls for an end to the hierarchical organization of music study in favor of a comparative “musics” model which would emphasize “the interconnectedness between the musics and the contexts of the musics” in order to “bring the intersections of race, class, gender, dis/ability, and nation to the forefront and focus on the way that these fluid categories intersect with each other.” Hess argues that this would allow “different musical traditions to inform each other” (341). Not only does a comparative model validate all genres of music as equally worthy of study, but it may also empower students to request to study musics associated with their identities and cultural heritage. Hess explains that if these musics are arranged “rhizomatically” (nonhierarchically) and provided with deep cultural context, this allows for and

encourages “cross-cultural comparisons in ways that facilitate meaningful interconnections for the students,” and creates “a web of the social context from which the music emerges” (Hess 2015, 342). Western European classical music could, of course, be included in this web, and imbued with cultural context for a more meaningful understanding of the music. Classical music is, after all, a diverse umbrella genre in and of itself, spanning from Gregorian chant to opera to dodecaphony, and beyond. In an independent voice studio, studying music rhizomatically could manifest as studying a wide variety of genres, with repertoire customized for each student. In university voice studios with stricter stylistic guidelines for repertoire, this could manifest as requiring one “out of the mainstream” song each semester with a required research component to inform cultural context and authenticate performance practices. In a musical theatre program, this might include one rock song. In a classical program, this might include one musical theatre or gospel song. In a popular music program, this might include a song from another culture or in another language. If students are empowered to select this “out of the mainstream” song, they may select songs that honor their roots, and affirm their sense of belonging in the voice studio. This practice also allows teachers to model curiosity and interest in a wider variety of genres, supplanting the outdated Eurocentric hierarchy.

Avoiding Cultural Appropriation or Cultural Approximation

Popular music in the United States has a long history of cultural appropriation, wherein the dominant (white) culture profits from the artistic output of the oppressed (Black) culture (Lott 2013). Countless examples may be seen in minstrelsy, ragtime, blues, jazz, and other musical styles and performance practices captured in race records collections. Headlam (2002) explains that historically, “the white entertainment industry cashes in on appropriated versions of largely [B]lack musical styles by appealing to the mass audience, altering the context and leaving the original performers and writers with little or no compensation and/or acknowledgment” (183). Headlam identifies that “altering the context” is a key component to this exploitative pattern. As voice teachers are expanding our voice studios to include more musical genres, the key to avoiding cultural appropriation is to maintain the cultural context in which the music was created. This may be achieved through careful cultural research.

A more common, and perhaps more insidious manifestation of cultural appropriation is cultural approximation, which in music, is defined as an imitation of a particular sound without understanding the culture, context, and history of the music (Robinson-Martin 2021). Headlam (2002) gives an example of “musicians,” who “have continually regenerated themselves by ‘returning to the roots’ of the music—the original blues and gospel expression.” Unfortunately, “the original performers and creators of the expression and its social meanings tend to be left behind in such cultural transactions” (161). The expression (sound) and its social meaning (cultural context) are intertwined. As students and teachers listen to new genres of music, we must listen for stylistic vocal components, but also understand *what* these particular vocal sounds are expressing and *why*.

Another way that cultural approximation can manifest in the voice studio is through a sanitizing of the vocal sound. One common misstep is using “pure” Italian vowels for all styles of music, even those which are based in dialect or informal diction. Another sanitizing tool is replacing colloquial text with formal text, such as “I *cain’t* say no” (Hammerstein, *Oklahoma*) erroneously performed as “I *can’t* say no.” Headlam cautions that one should avoid the following “pop alterations” of blues and gospel music which flatten “texture, emotion, and expression:” (1) purifying vocal quality with less “noise” in the sound making the timbre closer to classical music, (2) smoothing out the vocal line removing nuances and ornamental figures used in blues and gospel expression, and (3) squaring off rhythms and phrase length curtailing ambiguities and fluidity (Headlam 2002, 185). In essence, these changes remove cultural markers and whitewash the vocal sound, decimating the cultural integrity of the music.

Another pitfall of cultural approximation is when a singer moves outside their genre(s) of expertise and makes absolutely no fundamental changes to their sound. The mismatching of vocal sound and musical style rings false for listeners, and those who identify with the music being (poorly) approximated are justifiably offended. A recent example is German operatic tenor Jonas Kaufmann’s recording of the pop/R&B hit by Mariah Carey and Walter Afanasieff, “All I want for Christmas is you” (Kaufmann 2020). Kaufmann makes no changes to his vocal sound, and the result is as culturally tone-deaf as one might imagine Mariah Carey singing an R&B-infused Don José in *Carmen* would be. Kaufmann is not marketing himself as the next big pop/R&B sensation; he is just an opera singer expressing appreciation. Even if it was not the most culturally sensitive choice that Kaufmann could have made, Carey gave legal permission for his cover of her song, and she is benefitting from the royalties that it earns. The danger, from an appropriation standpoint, is if teachers of singing hear Kaufmann’s rendition and proclaim it to be the *proper* way of performing the song. If Kaufmann’s operatic style within “All I want for Christmas is you” is celebrated as the new standard and Carey’s original style is eclipsed by Kaufmann’s, that would be cultural appropriation through cultural approximation. In order to avoid cultural approximation, the signature components of the vocal sound within a given genre must be studied in as much detail as the culture which gave rise to the music itself. Maintaining the integrity of both the vocal sound and the genre/culture are essential components to avoiding cultural appropriation and cultural approximation.

Continuing to Seek Education

Due to the historically Eurocentric system of university music training, most singing voice teachers specialize in only a handful of musical genres. Opening up voice studios to include music suggested by a diverse student body will require learning new musical genres and cultures. To do nothing to expand beyond the preexisting knowledge of each teacher, is, as DiAngelo (2018) explains, “the default of the current system,” which is “designed to reproduce racial inequality.” She states that the antidote to perpetuating systemic exclusion is that “we must never consider ourselves finished with our learning” (153). She explains that continuing to learn is challenging, life-long, and not always pretty, but also essential to align “professed values” and “real action” (154). If, as voice teachers, our professed values are to bolster equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in our voice studios, we must continue to learn about new music and cultures. We must ensure that we know about our own culture

and the music we grew up with, even if those are not the styles we are currently teaching. We can learn *with* our students, or even better, we can learn *from* our students.

Acknowledging Our Areas of Excellence, Knowing What is Beyond the Scope of Our Expertise, and Having the Courage to Ask for Help

It would be impractical to suggest that voice teachers should become experts in *all* genres of music. For example, teachers specializing in contemporary commercial music (CCM) genres rarely teach classical singing and vice versa. Nevertheless, the authors are suggesting that all teachers should consider our own native culture and see if there are genres of music that we are indeed experts of but perhaps did not study formally in historically Eurocentric music programs. Then, teachers are encouraged to expand our respect for and familiarity with genres of music beyond our native cultures, through careful study of history, culture, and vocal aesthetics. Over time, a teacher's area of excellence may expand to include some new genres of music. However, teachers should continue to be aware of and articulate what is beyond the scope of our expertise. Instead of trying to become an expert of every musical genre outside of our cultural identities, teachers could refer students to a native expert or hire that native expert for a studio masterclass. This practice not only bolsters collaboration in the spirit of Hess's comparative musics model, but also amplifies native expert voices.

The practice of referring-out is already prevalent among CCM voice teachers. Benson interviewed 26 CCM voice teachers, and many reported that they commonly refer their students not only to experts in other modalities (such as bodywork) but also to other style specialists beyond the primary teacher's area of excellence (Benson 2020, 209). African American choreographer Camille A. Brown proudly hired Afro Haitian/Afro Cuban dance consultant Maxine Montilus while choreographing the Tony Award-winning 2017 Broadway revival of *Once on this Island*. Brown explains that she had African dance training but wanted to "immerse" herself "even deeper" in Afro Haitian and Afro Cuban dance, so she could know and understand the "origin" and "honor the culture" as she infused her own "choreographic voice" (Brown 2019). Referring-out or hiring-in are ways to "interrupt racism" through a demonstration of "our curiosity and humility" (DiAngelo 2018, 143), which as DiAngelo describes, is ultimately "more important than managing how we think we look to others" (129). Singing teachers do not have to be native experts in all styles. Leaning on the expertise of colleagues can improve the learning experience for both teachers and students. Put simply, employing the skills of native experts to support students' learning is a win-win.

Naming Courses and Genres Accurately

Institutions are designed to reinforce the status quo hierarchy placing Western European classical music at the center of music education in collegiate programs. Hess (2015) explains that the "privileging of Western classical music marginalizes all 'other' musics, effectively arranging them around the Western classical center in such a way that affirms and reinforces racial hierarchies" (338). One simple yet powerful step toward a rhizomatically organized comparative musics model is to label courses, genres, and eventually, programs of study, accurately. The term "music" must be reclaimed and

reserved for use only when referring to *all* music. Currently, many music departments offer “music appreciation” courses, implying that *all music* will be included, or at least, *all music that is valued in this department*. In reality, music appreciation courses are traditionally limited to Western European classical music appreciation. This is also true of “music theory” classes, which Wicks (1998) argues would be more suitably called “Theory of Music in the Elite Western-European Tradition” (1). The same may be said of “voice lessons.” If there are genre limitations within the course, a more accurate title would include the genre, such as “classical voice lessons” or “musical theatre voice lessons.” As voice teachers, we can determine how our own courses are labeled, and we can engage in dialogue with our colleagues about how to accurately title courses in our collegiate programs.

The label “CCM” (contemporary commercial music), was coined and championed by Jeannette LoVetri (2002, 2008) and has empowered voice teachers with a name to encompass all musical styles with performance practices that fall outside of the recognized voice production associated with Western European classical art music. CCM replaced the previously undesirable and historically pejorative term “nonclassical.” At the time, the coining of the new term was essential to affirm the value of CCM within the Eurocentric hierarchy, particularly as it was gaining a foothold within academia. However, because the term was created in response to Eurocentrism, the term CCM may affirm and reinforce the Eurocentric hierarchy and maintain musical *otherness* (Hess 2015, 338). Positioning “CCM” in contrast to “classical” fortifies a problematic false binary, implying that CCM and classical musics are equal in scale and scope. If we affirm that musical genre acts as the representation of culture (Johnson 1997), classical music represents the cultures of Western Europe circa 1400–2000. By contrast, CCM represents *all* of the other cultures, corresponding to hundreds of thousands of musical genres. Dividing all music into the two categories of “classical” and “CCM” is akin to dividing all the world’s languages into “English” and “everything else.” Within this false binary, all cultural identity is lost. It is beyond the scope of this article to suggest a term to replace CCM. However, it is important to note that outside of academia, most teachers use specific style descriptors, such as folk, heavy metal, or K-Pop, rather than the enormous umbrella term “CCM.” Listing specific styles allows teachers to articulate and preserve cultural identity and reduces the sense of musical *otherness* associated with the “CCM” label.

Developing an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) Statement for the Voice Studio

The BLM movement has motivated many universities, colleges, and even departments to craft official statements of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. Voice teachers are expected to promote the values espoused by these statements and to practice them within teaching spaces. They may be included in course syllabi or voice studio mission statements. An even more meaningful step is to adapt these institutional-level statements for the voice studio. We offer this studio-level EDIB statement as a template:

My voice studio is a safe space where you can fully express yourself without fear of being made to feel unwelcome or unsafe because of your race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, size, gender expression, immigration status, socio-economic background, mental health, physical ability, neurodiversity, country of origin, cultural heritage, or native language.

Though we may not always agree, we will respect each other's personhood and existence in order to build a strong community and sense of belonging for all.

Taking the above EDIB statement and contextualizing it within singing pedagogy, we offer this studio-level EDIB statement extension as a template:

As it pertains to music, my voice studio is a safe space where you can fully express yourself without fear of being made to feel unwelcome or unsafe because of your current skill level, personal vocal sound, musical heritage, or musical preferences, as well as your current familiarity with the repertoire being studied, knowledge of its history, and understanding of Western European music notation and theory. We will respect and honor each other's unique voices in order to build a strong community and sense of belonging for all.

At first glance, these musical statements may seem trivial when compared to differences such as neurodiversity or socio-economic background, but there has been a long-standing Eurocentric practice of marginalizing other musics in our institutions of higher education. Music has been used as a means to discriminate against cultures and musical preferences have been weaponized. Music *is* culture, and both genres and voices are tightly tied to identity. Within the voice studio EDIB statement, voice teachers can formally proclaim that we will not perpetuate Eurocentrism. When such a statement appears in a syllabus, it makes it clear that all students are not just welcomed but entitled to a sense of belonging. They can understand that the unique vocal identity that they bring to the studio will be seen, respected, and celebrated. They will learn and grow, but where they have come from will be honored, and never used to exclude them. This puts Hess's (2015) rhizomatic comparative musics model into policy form, allowing for students to interconnect in meaningful ways, which honor roots and cultures far beyond Europe. An equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging statement put into the context of voice study may be a transformative tool in creating an intentional learning environment that not only claims to value but also defines how to *practice* equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in the voice studio.

Conclusion

This article is offered as a starting point to empower individuals to actively engage in antiracist pedagogical practices within their voice studios. However, a larger call to action for the entire voice teaching community is warranted. More research is needed in the burgeoning field of antiracist voice pedagogy in order to catch up to other disciplines. In our global society, genre-equity, cultural-equity, and antiracist voice pedagogy should become regular staples of voice conference panels, presentations, and workshops. In addition, there is little published research on the student experience in one-to-one teaching in the United States, and both qualitative and quantitative studies would significantly enrich the development of best pedagogical practices.

The time has come for action. Both singing voice students and voice teachers are harmed by the Eurocentric model when their own cultures and identities are disrespected, disparaged, or ignored. It is no longer enough to claim that being passively "not racist" is good enough. "Color-blindness" and "tokenism as inclusion" are outdated concepts that perpetuate injustice. If we continue to prioritize Western European art music above all others, we deny the musical representation of American culture (and its

African American roots), and we perpetuate the suppression of every cultural identity that is not white, elite, and European. Hess (2015) explains:

When we acknowledge and honor students' cultural perspectives and affinities, we give them a firm foundation from which to explore the perspectives (and musics) of their classmates – perspectives which may, in fact, be unfamiliar, but will help students develop a deeper understanding of one another. (342)

In formal voice study, providing a sense of belonging for all students requires that all musics and cultures are seen and valued.

While we work toward systemic change, individuals can take action to shift music department learning cultures toward what Johnson (1997) describes as “crossroads and meeting grounds, not cloisters or museums.” He contends that “educational programs must be rooted in present practice and still be flexible enough to continue to adapt to the inevitability of change” (4). As voice teachers, we have a responsibility to dismantle Eurocentrism in our studios through intentional antiracist practices. These include (1) embracing intentional pedagogical practices; (2) avoiding cultural appropriation or cultural approximation; (3) continuing to seek education; (4) acknowledging our areas of excellence, knowing what is beyond the scope of our expertise, and having the courage to ask for help; (5) naming courses and programs accurately and (6) developing an equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging statement for the voice studio. Teachers curate the learning environment of our voice studios and we can choose to create a culture in which both students and teachers feel safe to share their identities through music, to take risks, to learn, to fail, to succeed, and ultimately, to thrive.

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