

# Re: Call for Anti-Racist Action from Current Students

Making a concerted effort to dismantle institutional racism, colonialism, and systemic oppression within the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music.

We encourage all students to sign their names to this letter and write about their own experiences by filling out this form: <https://forms.gle/UbHtTq2ZVbqnc5mq6>

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# Open Letter

## **To the University of Toronto Faculty of Music Strategic Academic Planning Committee:**

We, the undersigned undergraduate students of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music echo alumni in calling on the Faculty to address historical and ongoing colonialism, racism and other systemic inequalities that have once again been brought to light by the world's most recent events.

Although tragic and shocking, the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd at the hands of police and former police are not unprecedented; rather, they are among the newest and most visible manifestations of the racism that plagues not only police forces, but virtually every facet of a society that has been built on the backs of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC). As the deaths of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, D'Andre Campbell and countless others remind us, this legacy of racism belongs to Canada as much as it does to the United States.

We recognize the role of music institutions, including this faculty, in perpetuating the racism that lies at the root of these horrific acts of violence. The classical music canon taught and performed within this and other institutions is inherently Eurocentric, and a failure to address and actively combat this bias will only promote the image of Western classical music as an exclusive art form, to the detriment of both the music and our society.

This issue is not necessarily exclusive to the academic teaching of Western art music either, as “academic jazz” has also been widely criticized for exploiting an artform which started out as a form of protest music. We recognize that the music we call jazz was born out of Black American musical traditions and that these traditions are inseparable from the music as a whole. Institutions like the University of Toronto have a responsibility to teach this music in a comprehensive manner that places the music in its proper historical context, with specific attention to race, class and gender. To ignore these important factors in the development of the music whitewashes its legacy and prevents us all from engaging with it on the deepest level possible.

In addition to the theoretical issues inherent in the institutional teaching of both classical and jazz music, there are several practical issues endemic to the Faculty of Music which need to be addressed—mainly the lack of diversity and underrepresentation of not only students, but staff and all forms of the curriculum. Courses are lacking content which examine the specific issues of race in music. Discussions centred around the history of jazz and influences of Black music are severely lacking, briefly covered and poorly taught. There is also an imbalance of the importance of jazz music when compared to classical, as jazz occupies a tiny space in the mandatory music history curriculum. The reason this

poses a problem is that prioritizing one aspect of music gives the illusion of superiority over other genres. Visiting artists are also repeatedly of a certain demographic. There is a lack of Black visiting artists, lecturers, performers and guests to the Faculty of Music.

While emphasizing the role of music in enforcing oppressive ideologies, we also acknowledge the capacity of music to change these narratives, and give voice to those who have been silenced. As part of a university with a leading international reputation, and located within the most diverse city in Canada, the University of Toronto Faculty of Music is uniquely situated to be a leader in transforming music education and performance from a system of oppression to a system of empowerment. As music students, and emerging performers, educators and leaders, we choose to be a part of this transformation, and we call on the rest of the faculty to join us in working to dismantle racism, colonialism, and all forms of systemic oppression, not only within our faculty, but within our city, nation and global community.

Sincerely,

The Undergraduate Students of the Faculty of Music.

**Please find our calls to action to the Faculty of Music on the next page.**

# Calls for Action

## Overall Curriculum

The current curriculum does not provide enough resources for students to learn about diverse forms of music. We propose that the following measures be implemented into current courses/programs so that students may be better educated on how racism is perpetuated in different forms of music:

- Discuss diverse composers and performers in Music History classes;
- Incorporate a lecture on race and music into the Lives in Music syllabus, potentially delivered by a musician in collaboration with the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office (ARCDO);
- Require students to take at least 0.5 credits of courses that engage with world music or music and race;
- Address how to perform and respect music from diverse cultures without appropriating; and
- Large ensemble conductors must learn and educate students about the historical and cultural context of the music that is being performed.

The music education program can:

- Incorporate discussions of social inequities in the classroom into the curriculum of all courses; and
- Encourage music education students to engage with diverse cultures by allowing them to take a world ensemble credit instead of a major ensemble for one year.

We would also like to suggest that new educational opportunities be created in order to further the discussion on race and music:

- Implement a mandatory African-American history for students in jazz;
- Include more undergraduate courses that discuss music and race, such as an introductory course to black musical forms, and/or an upper-year course dealing with issues surrounding race and music;
- Officially survey the student body on what new courses should be offered to the Faculty of Music's curriculum, and seriously consider student input; and

- Create more ensembles and workshops on performing Black musical forms, such as hip-hop and R&B.

## Jazz Curriculum

The jazz curriculum is also not absolved from having a linear scope and nature. We propose that the following measures be implemented into current courses and programs so that students may be better educated on how racism is perpetuated within the jazz community itself:

- Invite more Black artists to participate in the UofT Jazz Artists in Residence program. Visiting artists need to be more representative of the art form as a whole;
  - Year after year, UofT Jazz visiting artists are overwhelmingly white. Jazz is Black American Music, and all jazz students should be given the opportunity to work with a more representative group of musicians before they graduate.
- Invite more Black Toronto-based artists for Friday jazz masterclasses; and
- Hold a masterclass on how to play jazz in a manner that respects the origins of the music. Jazz is a genre that is rooted in African American musical traditions and the curriculum should be adjusted to acknowledge the past and continuous contributions of Black Americans.

Students in the jazz program will draft a letter to their own faculty, in which they will outline program specific demands.

## Performance

To ensure that performances at the Faculty of Music are inclusive of diverse cultures, we call on the Faculty to:

- Invite and collaborate with Black composers and musicians every year;
- Program concerts of Black musical forms by guest artists; and
- Incorporate diverse guest artists into the noon hour series.

## Pedagogy, Faculty, and Staff

We echo the alumni's call for a commitment to allocating increased and ongoing funding towards regularly-occurring professional development training for faculty and staff in the fields of anti-oppression, workplace discrimination and harassment, and diverse pedagogy and curriculum-planning.

We specifically call on the faculty to:

- Request several [professional development workshops](#) throughout the year from ARCDO and make attendance for faculty and staff mandatory;
- Send staff and faculty delegates from the Faculty of Music to the [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(IDERD\) Conference](#), and have these delegates present their experiences during a subsequent meeting with faculty and staff;
- Train lecturers on how to discuss these issues, given that presentations based on race have been insensitively or incompletely delivered;
- Train instructors to identify and avoid cultural appropriation in music; and
- Ensure that counsellors at the faculty and U of T are well-versed in racial issues and available when students need an outlet to discuss racial issues.

In addition to training existing staff, we propose that the Faculty of Music:

- Hire diverse faculty capable of teaching and adjudicating diverse repertoire;
- Bring in more diverse guest lecturers/artists from the community and around the world (particularly for the Lives in Music course); and
- Invite diverse artists to conduct major ensembles, particularly for tunes or pieces from diverse cultures.

## Training and Resources for Students

Implementing new training and resources for students at the Faculty of Music is as much a part of dismantling anti-racist practices as implementing pedagogical and course-related initiatives. Insofar as student involvement is concerned, we call on the Faculty to:

- Actively work with the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office (ARCDO) to ensure that physical and online anti-racism training materials are easily accessible to all Faculty of Music students;
- Host an iteration of the [Race, Equity & Action Speaker Series](#) at Walter Hall or another major Faculty venue during the school year; and
- Ensure that, where appropriate, registrarial communiques to students advertise all existing on-campus events that address racism and discrimination, and encourage all students to attend.

In addition to the aforementioned student resources, we propose that the Faculty of Music:

- Establish new extracurricular events throughout the year, or provide the resources for the Faculty of Music Undergraduate Association (FMUA) to do so, that address racial and cultural discrimination in the music industry, including in employment, repertoire selection, teaching practices, and other sectors;
- Assist the FMUA in organizing Equity Town Halls at the Faculty of Music, which would give students the opportunity to gather for the purpose of discussing representation and diversity in the faculty, curriculum, and the student experience;
- Publicize a report summarizing the discussion and calls to action that are made at these town halls, and directly forward them to the Dean's Office;
- Incorporate learning sessions into their Orientation each year which discuss anti-racism and educate students on existing campus resources; and
- Ensure that the Faculty of Music Library's repertoire selection process is cognizant of the need to regularly purchase materials from a diverse range of composers, arrangers, and publishers. This applies to both classical and jazz streams.

## Increasing Avenues for Diverse Applicants

The Faculty consistently falls short of attracting diverse applicants. To support diverse applicants from a young age, we encourage the Faculty of Music to:

- Mandate a general outreach performance from every large ensemble once a year around the community in different local neighbourhoods in Toronto/GTA (i.e. lower-income schools, schools with small music programs, schools with diverse populations). These sessions should also provide an interactive and informative clinic to enhance engagement;
- Invite local music schools for tours of world music ensemble practices and/or performances;
- Create programs for faculty members to host seminars in local Toronto schools about non-European music forms;
- Compile and publish data of the ethnicity of students accepted each year to have transparent communication of the diversity of the student body; and
- Develop scholarships specifically for Black and Indigenous applicants.

We further recommend that the Faculty of Music incorporate a Black Student Application Program into their admission acceptance stream. It will include:

- The submission of a personal essay discussing any aspect of their experience as it relates to diversity in music. Applicants are encouraged to talk about their musical experiences outside classical and jazz genres; and
- Reviewal of the application by Black faculty, staff, and community members in addition to regular admission criteria.

There are precedents within the university for this type of application, including:

- UofT Medicine's Black Student Application Program: From one Black student in 2016 to 14 Black students in 2017; and
- U of T Law's Black Student Application Process: Black students will be able to apply starting in the 2020 application cycle.

## Conclusion

As a leading Canadian institution of Western classical and jazz music that prides itself on educating culturally aware and diverse alumni, the University of Toronto Faculty of Music must do more to address institutional racism, colonialism, and systemic oppression. Historically, art music is rooted in the exclusion of oppressed groups of people from educational, performative, and compositional settings. As a result of this exclusion, the contributions of BIPOC artists to art music are often dismissed—an issue that is not relegated to the past.

The good news is that this predicament can be improved. The first step in doing so is for the University of Toronto Faculty of Music to deconstruct notions of Eurocentrism and white supremacy surrounding Western classical and jazz music. Art music should be reflective of the diverse artists who teach, perform, and compose it. As current students at U of T Music, we recognize that a claim like ours will take time and effort to execute. In addition to our proposed changes to U of T Music's curriculum content, pedagogical practices, recruitment initiatives, and student-led activities, maintaining an open channel of communication between faculty, students, and staff is crucial to forging a new faculty-wide outlook on the intersection of music and issues of race. For all the great qualities art music possesses, it has been so far dispossessed of cultural acceptance.

In our opinion, redefining art music as a medium that highly values inclusivity and justice will more than justify the work needed to achieve this goal.

Signed,

Undergraduate students at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music

**Collected signatures from University of Toronto Faculty of Music students in support of this open letter will be appended below.**

# Signatures

- Adam Heagle, Fourth Year, Music History and Theory
- Leighton Harrell, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
  - I am currently the only black student in the Jazz program. It has been a lonely experience. It shouldn't be hard to hire a black visiting artist at least once every few years, considering this music is black music. We need a more in depth jazz history class, taught through a critical lens that engages with the racial, economic and cultural nuances of the music and its history in a meaningful way. More than anything I am just exhausted. I cannot put into words how hard it is to play this music and study it day after day without having black peers or faculty to talk to and play with.
- Grace, Second Year, Performance
  - Because classical music should be for everyone.
- Michelle Wang, Second Year, Music Education
- Ines Wong, Third Year, Music Education
- Alana Ngo, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Kristal Lee, First Year, Music Education
- Olivia Spahn-Vieira, Fourth Year, Vocal Performance
  - I believe that the Faculty of Music could be much more inclusive. We could start by hiring black and POC faculty members, encouraging the performance and study of repertoire by black composers, and actively listening to and appreciating music outside of the Western cannon.
- Mackenzie Kiemele, Fourth Year, Comprehensive Voice
- Tessa Prasuhn, Fourth Year, Comprehensive Classical Piano
- Kaitlyn Aquino, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Lian McMillan, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Anika Venkatesh, Second Year, Voice Performance
  - As a person of colour myself, I absolutely find my program specifically very white, and to cultivate ideals around whiteness. I believe the faculty, and the voice department especially, must make active and concrete actions that dismantle the valuing of whiteness in classical music over other races. The ratio of coloured to white students is alarming - in my year alone, I am one of five or six other coloured students in my program of almost 25. There are no black students in my year, and I believe one black student in all of voice undergrad as of 2020. Not only should this discrepancy be examined in terms of admissions, and faculty (which is I believe completely white for voice), but I believe it is important for the faculty of music to recognize the elitism, and subsequently, whiteness, that is

implied around music in a classical setting. I believe it would be extremely valuable for the faculty to reach out of our "professional" (ie. exclusive) bubble, and perform in and share music and knowledge of our faculty with communities of colour, in schools, and in more casual and accessible settings, in order to break down the exclusivity that many feel around classical music. I speak from experience when I say that the reason there may not be as many students of colour applying to music is that there is simply a lack of knowledge as result of culture, but also an absence of outreach from within the already existing music scene. There are systematic and cultural differences and barriers that students of colour face in the music world as well, from worrying about being employed as a darkskinned opera singer as there is most often biased preference to white/lighter singers, or worrying about not being taken seriously as a person of colour in a professional setting, with racial microaggressions and blatant racism very prevalent in many professional musical settings. All in all, I would like to see concrete actions taken by the faculty to address antiblackness, the upholding of white supremacy, and silencing of racial issues that take place within our EJB & 90 Wellesley, as well as in the music world we will all step into after our degrees.

- Benjamin Kersey, Second Year, Comprehensive
- Carina Shum, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Emma Della Rossa, Second Year, Music Education
- Lyndon Kwan, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Bailey, Fourth Year, Trumpet Performance
- Francesca Hauser, Second Year, Voice Performance
- Vanessa Ng, Second Year, Music Education
  - Post-Secondary institutions have the responsibility and obligation to be leaders against racism. Programming Raag Mala by Michael Colgrass was a mistake and the caption “Music of India through Western ears” should have been enough to deter anyone from choosing this piece (see [https://www.windrep.org/Raag\\_Mala](https://www.windrep.org/Raag_Mala)). The University of Toronto NEEDS to do better. Silence is compliance and it is not enough to simply stay idle as a bystander. We are taught at such a young age to not be bystanders and stand up to bullies so why can't UofT stand up to racism? The current status quo in our society is outright racist and unfair to marginalized communities so we must challenge it and be actively anti-racist. As Ijeoma Oluo wrote in So You Want to Talk About Race: “If you live in this system of white supremacy, you are either fighting the system or you are complicit.”
- Jacob Slous, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
- Alexis Bateman, Second Year, Music in Vocal Performance
  - I think it's important!
- Paolo Rosselli, ACP, Horn Performance

- Raquel Skilich, Third Year, Jazz Comprehensive
- Beverley Kwok, Second Year, Music Education
- Shin Yu Wang, Third Year, Horn Performance
- Hermione Tankard, First Year, Classical Voice Performance
  - Music should be able to be enjoyed and learned by everyone, and if people are facing racism within the faculty of music then they are being deprived of the chance to learn music in a safe and mentally stimulating environment.
- Nathan Gritter, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Camille Labonte, Second Year, Vocal Performance
- Lissy Meyerowitz, Third Year, Voice Performance
  - Enough is enough! Do something meaningful!
- Michael Selvaggi, Third Year, Composition
  - I'm signing this letter to address the lack of POC at the faculty, and hopefully encourage more efforts to increase diversity in the faculty.
- Emily Tam, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Chanel Chow, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Ben Yoon, Fourth Year, Music Education
  - I believe that just like everything in life, music must move forward, not only in terms of musical element but also ethical and social elements.

It is true that classical music was heavily influenced and dominated by white males but that is not an excuse to not research and expand our repertoires focusing on music by people of color, LGBTQ, and female composers. Not to mention focusing on diversities of guests artists and performers or featuring and showcasing the diversified students we have at the faculty of music, during concerts AND masterclasses.

If a major institution like U of T doesn't address the problem and make a change as soon as possible, I am not sure if classical music has a future.

We must think out of the box and challenge ourselves to explore what's beyond what we already know and have experienced.

I beg you, please move forward.

Oh by the way if you haven't watched a great video that my dear colleague, Khadija made addressing this problem, here is the link

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=share&v=HHbf1ZeDWas>

Best,

Ben

- Elisabeth Ritthaler, Music Comprehensive
- Fionn Ling, Second Year, Jazz Performance
  - Jazz and Jazz-influenced music has always been tied to and driven by black culture. U of T must do a better job at acknowledging this by focusing more on the cultural roots of the music by inviting more musicians of colour for settings such as the Friday Masterclass and the artist in residence. It is impossible to learn about jazz without diving deep into its history and it's origins from slavery and development through systematic racism which continues to influence jazz to this day.
- Jordana Kleiner, Second Year, Flute Performance
- Aidan McConnell, Third Year, Jazz Performance
- Naomi Wong, First Year, Piano Performance
- George Theodorakopoulos, Third Year, Voice Performance
- Simone Viola, Third Year, History/Theory
- Evan Dalling, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
- Mia Zheng, Second Year, Music Education
- Carina Chan, Third Year, Music Education
  - BLM is very important to this international country. Every lives matter. Everyone should treat each other equally. I wish our faculty would be able to perform concerts that composed by different black musicians around the world, to show their music is still viewed as important to the music world.
- Piper Shiels, First Year, Music Education
  - We need to take action and call out systemic racism when we see it. I feel like this is a great start to make sure that the Fac is a safe and welcoming place for all, regardless of the colour of their skin. I 100% agree with everything said in the letter and I hope that enough of us sign this and that it will make a difference for the coming years.
- Emily Parker, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Sarah Mole, Second Year, Vocal Performance
- Yoshi Maclear Wall, Second Year, Jazz Education - Bass
- Leandra Dahm, Second Year, Voice Performance
- Elijah Goldstein, Second Year, History, Theory and Culture
- Shaked Danieli, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Ching-Hei Chan, First Year, Composition
- Melody Li, Second Year, Bachelor of Music, Music Education
  - The arts have always been an important part of activism; by looking at art, one can see what is of current importance to civil society. Thus, there needs to be a strong effort to decentre racism, colonialism, and systemic oppression, both conscious and subconscious, within the Faculty of Music. This must be done not with a top-down approach, but with a community-oriented approach which amplifies BIPOC voices (e.g. inviting BIPOC speakers instead of speaking ourselves where possible); even if we have the best of intentions, if we try to speak for these marginalised

groups, then we are missing the big picture and engaging in a very performative type of inclusivity.

- Emma Colette Moss, Fourth Year, Composition
- Julia D'Ascanio, First Year, Jazz Voice Performance
- Jonah Nung, Second Year, Music Education
- Solivan Lau, Fourth Year, Music Education
  - I am very grateful for a progressive education in Toronto; however, there is need for change in our education system to provide an equitable experience for all communities.

Our education system is built on foundational issues of racism, colonialism, and systemic oppression. As a school community, we all must work to demolish and reconstruct our education that explores ways to amplify the voices of marginalized communities and provide an accessible platform of inclusion.

I am hoping this letter gives the University of Toronto to an opportunity to acknowledge systematic issues of race in our institution and work to provide meaningful change for the future.

- Tyler Hastings, Fourth Year, Theory and History
  - The lack of diversity and representation for BIPOC in the music community stem from issues beyond those in higher learning. Young people of lesser means and marginalized identities experience music and music education differently. As an institution of music education, the Faculty of Music at U of T must actively fight against the systemic barriers that limit access to music education to select groups of people.
- Hannah O'Connor, Second Year, Music Education
- Charlotte Goss, Second Year, Music
- Christina Kant, Third Year, Performance
- Bien Carandang, Third Year, Bass Trombone Performance
- Miguel Esteban, Fourth Year, Piano Performance
- Martina Ortiz Luis, First Year, Classical Voice Performance
- Claire Latosinsky, Fourth Year, Voice Performance (Classical)
- Ben Kubica, First Year, Jazz
- Dermot O'Halloran, Fourth Year, Jazz Comprehensive
- Ambrose Venio, Second Year, Jazz Performance
  - I think many if not all of the actions posed on this open letter should be taken. As a student I feel as though a large portion of knowledge and context on racial issues and Black history was not provided or adequately suggested, encouraged or addressed during my first year. This context is necessary in all respects and should be mandatory. Members of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto are obligated to recognize privilege and educate accordingly.
- Steven Noronha, Second Year, Jazz Comprehensive Studies

- Anna Ding, Third Year, Performance
- Tyler Adams, Third Year, Music Education
- Hannah Semeniuk, Second Year, Music Education, Piano
- Nathania-Rose Chan, Fourth Year, Voice Performance
- Keith Barstow, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
- Rowyn Campbell, Third Year, Comprehensive
- Yue (Ray) Sun, Third Year, Jazz Performance
  - I'm signing this open letter because I believe the Faculty of Music should dismantle its obvious institutional racism, colonialism, and systemic oppression. Performative "support" is not enough. In fact, it's insulting. Stop doing nothing and actually take action while communicating/listening to the students.
- Emily Rocha, Fourth Year, Classical Voice Performance
- Abby Erwied, Fourth Year, Comprehensive Trombone
- Maddy Battista, Fourth Year, Voice Performance
- Christopher Jones, Fourth Year, Saxophone Performance
- Ben Storm, Third Year, Trombone Performance
- Amelia McNiven Fontani, Third Year, Violin Performance
- David Hodgson, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
- Joshua Sparks, Third Year, Jazz Performance
- Mark Gerlaj, Second Year, Jazz Comprehensive
- Sophia Khan, Third Year, Jazz Comprehensive
- Catherine Wang, Fourth Year, History and Theory
- Abigail Sinclair, Third Year, Voice Performance
- Jake Laur, Second Year, Jazz - Comprehensive
  - Music has and will always be the universal language and trying to restrict that to the colonial concept of race theory is both negligent and self destructive. Every voice belongs in our program, that should be the beauty of higher education.
- Mattaus Gretzinger, Second Year, BMus
  - I have noticed a distressing lack of acknowledgement of black musicians/black music in our curriculum, particularly in HMU111. Our music program itself has an embarrassing lack of black faculty and students, as well as the Friday masterclass series. I hope that the academic planning committee acknowledges this call to action and for this program to begin acknowledging black music as much as it should!
- Carly Naimer, Third Year, Voice Performance
- Michael Nunes, Third Year, Composition
- Matthew Chan, Third Year, Viola Performance
- Jocelyn Chong, Second Year, Bachelor of Music in Performance
- Katharine Chiu, Fourth Year, Composition
- Victoria Yuan, Second Year, Comprehensive
- Sunny Zhai, Second Year, Music Performance
- Jacob Valcheff, Incoming ACP Student, Advanced Certificate in Performance

- Peter Kang, First Year, Jazz Performance
- Tom Mclaughn, First Year, Music
- Rosemonde Desjardins, Fourth Year, Voice Performance
- Maria Bayato, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Elizabeth Legierski, Fourth Year, Voice Performance
- Olivia Tenn, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Diyara Toktamyssova, Fourth Year, Comprehensive
- Emily Ninavaie, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Evan Ng, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
- Walter Chan, Second Year, Jazz Education
- Peter Le, Second Year, Bachelor of Performance in Classical Guitar
- Thomas Steele, Fourth Year, Jazz Education
- Sarah Richardson, First Year, Voice performance
- Julie Wang, Third Year, Music Education
- Arthur Podpora, First Year, Music Ed.
- Abigail Mathew, Fourth Year, Jazz Voice Performance
- Mira Riselli, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
- Carol Mak, Fourth Year, Comprehensive, Voice
- Antoś Blonski Mendez, Second Year, Jazz Vocal Comprehensive
- Salena Harriman, Fourth Year, Voice Performance
- Sher Yao, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Heather Huynh, Third Year, Music Education
  - Racism is a global issue, and we are being willfully ignorant if we pretend that the Faculty of Music does not uphold white supremacist values and customs. We will not stand for antiblackness in a space that claims to pride itself on diversity and inclusivity.
- Tim Schrader, First Year, Vocal Performance
  - Justice
- Alejandro Izquierdo, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Matias Recharte, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Britton-René Collins, Fourth Year, Performance
  - As one of only a small number of black students in the Faculty of Music, I would love to see a Faculty of Music scholarship specifically for black musicians that suffer financially. Due to a history of slavery, systemic racism, and oppression, many black families/individuals are unable to pay for a higher education. A scholarship made to tackle this issue would show that the Faculty of Music believes in inclusion and the right for musicians in the black community to learn and grow. Creating a scholarship for black musicians at the Faculty of Music would enable more black musicians to study and thrive at the University of Toronto. It can feel lonely to sit in a classroom and be the only black person, or one of the only black people, in the room. There is no excuse for an institution (especially of this calibre) to not actively pursue a more diverse demographic.
- Arthur Li, Fourth Year, Theory and History
- Priscilla Menezes, Second Year, Music Education

- I am signing this open letter as I believe that it clearly addresses ways in which the Faculty of Music can make change in all areas, spanning from course content to faculty and more. Systemic racism in the music industry, specifically in music institutions as a whole, is a very prevalent global issue, as can be clearly seen through some of the recently created instagram accounts such as "operairacist", "composingiracist", "orchestraisracist", etc. Evidently, this issue is not specific to UofT, meaning that all music institutions have a role to play and a responsibility to acknowledge and take steps to change the pervasive elements of systemic racism that are present. Music students and faculty members, more now than ever, must think critically about how the systems that they are a part of can be oppressive. We must consider things like what we program, why we program it, what we teach, who teaches it, what we place greater importance on, unspoken musical hierarchy's, etc. Specifically in the voice department, there have been numerous calls for diversity and more BIPOC representation, not only in the student body, but also on faculty. The call to action outlines many ways in which the Faculty of Music can address what is happening, some of these may be short-term goals which can be implemented quickly, while others, such as faculty and program changes, may take years. However, it is important for there to be an element of transparency, where students know that the call has been acknowledged, and are provided with information outlining what exactly the Faculty of Music is planning to do, what action is being planned, and what the realistic timeline to see action in particular areas is. It is essential that all professors, regardless of subject area, reflect on how they can try to combat elements of white supremacy in their respective subject areas, which can look like anything from a simple acknowledgement of the issues to their field to an attempt to center voices of BIPOC musicians. There have been many articles written regarding classical music dying out, being outdated, etc. In a field many have argued is "stuck in the past", music institutions are currently being presented with the opportunity to move forward by making the necessary changes that will create an environment that reflects the diversity present in the world. I encourage all to closely read this call to action, and for the Faculty of Music to, at some point, ease student concerns by publishing an outline of their response and plans for the future.
- Rayna Crandlemire, Third Year, Voice Performance
- Gabrielle Eber, Fourth Year, Bassoon Performance
- Sydney Chiu, Fourth Year, Music Ed
- Else Sather, Third Year, Cello Performance
- Alexa Frankian, Third Year, Voice Performance
  - Classical Music and Opera are such beautiful art forms and that should include everyone from learning, to performing, to teaching within The University of Toronto Faculty of Music.

- Addy Sanchez, Fourth Year, Violin performance
  - Systematically music is an economically driven profession to go into. Because of deeply rooted oppression for POC a lot of the times opportunities are simply not accessible for youth. The FMUA gets Large donations every year. I think a portion of the untouched yearly donations should not be budgeted for daily snacks nor personal fmua wifi, but instead funds should be focused in underprivileged areas such as elementary/ high schools, so that all children can get acquainted with music regardless their economic class or race.
- Alessia Signorella, Second Year, Music Education
  - Listen to your students that have tried to get change started at this faculty and do better.
- Malou Gloria, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Breanne Dharmai, Fourth Year, Music Education
- Gordon Mok, Fourth Year, Piano Comprehensive
  - I've been neglected and segregated for years before attending here, and from this all of what I've experienced said that the system will never help you, since you don't belong. I sign this in hopes that it will help others; as for me it is far too late, but I hope no one else will ever go through the same pain that I've gone through. Someone else shall have their chance at being heard.
- Stephane Martin Demers, Fourth Year, Piano Comprehensive

Upon entering the University of Toronto Faculty of Music for the first time, the lack of diverse representation among the student body in the classical and jazz departments came as no surprise to me. Frankly, as a mixed-race (Black and Caucasian) music student majoring in classical piano, I was sure that race would separate me from my peers within the faculty. It is my belief that U of T Music's lackluster treatment of racial topics within music reinforces this lack of diversity, and our own blind acceptance of this long-outdated ideal.

This problem extends far beyond U of T Music. Unfortunately, in many conservatories and music schools, classical and jazz music operate within the confines of racial and cultural boundaries. Music educators, composers, teachers, and performers have grown accustomed to this status quo. What happens when the status quo turns out to be flawed, even misguided? Well, then it becomes time for U of T Music to re-evaluate their current practices and devise new approaches to education and pedagogy.

U of T Music has much to be proud for. However, a lack of concern for making the eradication of racism, oppression, and colonialism a priority within the faculty has tarnished its pride and prestige. Seeing this ambitious goal come to fruition will take the expertise of the Dean, the Associate Dean, the Strategic Academic Planning

Committee, the Registrar, faculty, administrative staff, and students. Dean McLean, I strongly urge you to take all the proposals in this document into consideration and implement an appropriate plan of action for the future.

- Julia Araiche, Fourth Year, Percussion Performance
- Brooklyn Bohach, Fourth Year, Jazz Performance
  - The Faculty of Music strategic academic planning committee (The Faculty) should be grateful to receive a letter that identifies how The Faculty participates in and perpetuates racism, colonialism, and systemic oppression. Furthermore, The Faculty should see it as an act of generosity that the letter writers have outlined the first steps that must be taken by The Faculty in order to chart a new path forward. It is now the Faculty of Music's turn to put in the work to implement these Calls for Action and live up to its core values of "diversity," "equity of opportunity," and "health and well-being" of students, faculty, librarians, and staff.
  - As a student in the Jazz Area, I feel that I have been failed by this institution in terms of learning critical and respectful engagement with Black American Music, particularly as a white person. Instead, I have witnessed Professors speak about "reverse racism" by Black jazz musicians towards white jazz musicians, reinforce anti-Black stereotypes, and state that conversations around race were "taking up" valuable class time. I hope that The Faculty, and the Jazz Area in particular, uses this moment in time as an opportunity for deep reflection and subsequent action.
- Kristian Lo, Third Year, Artist Diploma
  - I want to add that while many of us understand that there are faculty and staff who are actively trying to diversify and aid in this call to action, and have been for a while, the Faculty is still an institution that is has enforced, still reinforces and prioritizes Eurocentric ideals. A call to action is not a condemnation of individuals, but a movement that is asking an institution to become better than it was. I hope that while we do move forward in undoing our anti-blackness and amplifying black voices we must also continue working on decolonizing our education system and do more than just acknowledge our privilege to be on their land.
- Ciara Wheeler, Fourth Year, Oboe Performance
  - It is impossible not to notice how steeped the [classical] music world is in tradition; traditions started and perpetuated by, for the most part, white men. Many of these traditions are clearly influenced by their founders in that they are Eurocentric (i.e. pretty exclusively white) and as a community, we haven't really questioned or challenged them in any widespread way (that I am aware of) in literally hundreds of years. I think that it's past time to start doing

this, and as a widely known institution, U of T has a chance, and a responsibility, of actually influencing change.

- Annika Telenius, Third Year, Bachelor of Music in Performance

## Signatures from Non-Faculty of Music Undergraduate Students

- Renee Fajardo, Masters, Opera
  - I am signing this letter because I strongly agree with the aforementioned proposals that will be strong, concrete actions in the long road to racial justice that we must all be actively part of. I also believe that the very students that the University serves should also be active and included in the creation of new programs and policies that will inevitably shape our education and careers. As an IBPOC artist myself, I strongly urge the Faculty to first and foremost find definitive ways to regularly train its students, faculty and staff to converse about diversity and racial justice, creating safe, aware, proactive and inclusive spaces in classrooms and rehearsals spaces. I also think that the Faculty should more actively endorse, encourage support for, attend events from and, where possible, collaborate with companies and organisations currently making strides towards diversity and racial justice such as: 1) External professional companies like Amplified Opera, Re:NAISSANCE Opera and ArtsPond 2) Initiatives by alumni, students and faculty such as the 'Educating the Future Singer Post-COVID 19' of Women on the Verge that has held space for Black vocal artists and educators to speak about their reality and the possible changes they feel should happen 3) Existing organisations in the greater U of T community such as the Equity and Advocacy Committee, the Race and Ethnicity Caucus and the International Students' Caucus Lastly, I urge that individual faculty members take, if they haven't already, personal, independent and consistent action to support and encourage support for initiatives such as those mentioned above, as well as acknowledge their responsibility in creating safe and equitable spaces in their group and one-to-one classes. In acknowledging this responsibility, individual teachers must actively and consistently seek education and training in order to hold space for conversing tactfully and compassionately with their students about issues of diversity and racial justice.
- Destiny Mae Ramos-Alleyne, Third Year, Sociology and Critical Studies in Equity and Solidarity
- Anne Katherine Dionne, M.Mus., LL.B., Alumna, current PhD student
  - (I am signing this letter because I was not aware of the Call to Action authored by graduate students and alumni until after it was submitted.) The Faculty's "Viewbook" states, among other things,

that U of T Music: is situated in a "diverse and dynamic community"; values "excellence and equity of opportunity"; is "transculturally transformative"; and fosters a "responsibility to create positive change". While highly aspirational, the reality (evidenced by the privileging of the Western musical canon in the curriculum and by the continued hiring/promotion of a predominantly White, classically trained faculty) demonstrates that the Viewbook's content is largely a fiction. Who - and what - does U of T Music want to be? If U of T Music sincerely aspires to live up to the phrases quoted in the preceding paragraph, then it is imperative that it adopt immediate, concrete, actionable plans to redress inequalities and exclusiveness rooted in, and promoted by, the Faculty's current curricular content, structures, and practises. (Some could easily be addressed by a commitment to hire, support, and promote faculty from diverse communities; granting equal credit to World Music ensembles; requiring student participation in World Music ensembles; ensuring that course content include more than a token mention of music/composers/performance practices of non-European Western art canon; allowing for flexible entry standards, for example, for students who may not have benefited from private instrument lessons throughout high school; re-thinking what constitutes deservingness for scholarship monies, etc.) We can only truly be educated when we have the benefit of being exposed to diverse views. U of T Music is at a cross-roads. Today presents an opportunity to become a leader in a new model of music training and education - one that truly reflects the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Such an educational offering would truly be transculturally transformative and one that creates positive change. There are many ways to achieve "excellence". Clinging to the status quo serves relatively few, if any. Instead of writing platitudes in the "Viewbook", be the change. A.K. Dionne, Class of 2000

- Mateo Menalo, Fourth Year, Paramedicine
- Massimo Guida, Graduate, class of 2019, D.M.A. in Composition
- Veronica Axenova, Graduate, History and Theory
- Alexa Belgrave, Graduate, Class of 2018, Jazz Performance
- Caleb Klager, Graduate, Class of 2020, Jazz Performance
- Chiara Culmone, Alumni, Music Education
- William Carn, Faculty, Jazz Performance
- Grace Ma, Fourth Year, Double Major in English and Environmental Science
- Jennifer Dufton, Fifth Year, Cinema Studies
- Nick Fraser, Faculty, Faculty of Music, Jazz
  - Music and music education in the classical realm have long been a bastion of white supremacy. Likewise, Jazz education has long been plagued with the erasure of the founding voices of the art form. As a faculty member at UofT, I support all of the proposed measures and hope that they are implemented immediately.

- Dominique Lalama, Alumni, Jazz
  - U of t jazz is the opposite of inclusive. It has a history of racial inequality and oppression. U of T needs to actively reach out to schools with more diversity and go on visits to schools that have multiple races of students. They need to audition and accept more people of colour. They need to employ more teachers of colour. White man dominance has to stop here. Everyone else feels insignificant and under represented.
- Anna Carneiro, Third Year, International Relations
- Stephanie Sarker, Second Year, Kinesiology
  - Advocate for anti-racism in all aspects of the Faculty of Music and actively promote BIPOC inclusion in all programs (especially voice studies).
- Madeleine Ertel, Graduated, Jazz Performance
- Lindsay Connolly, Second Year, Opera Diploma
- Abigail Chase, Fourth Year, Book & Media Studies
- Annie MacKillican, Alumni, Indigenous Studies
- Alexandra Delle Donne, Second Year Masters, Historical Voice Performance
  - Educate musicians in the importance of black influence in music. During my undergraduate degree this is something that was never discussed. I would have to do my own research about this topic. Introduce new instructors to educate us on this topic, you bring in guest speakers all the time, just apply more diversity. For the singers, introduce pieces of music that can be sung or performed, or bring in artists who can perform that music so that we are being exposed to it.
- Molly, Graduate student, Information
- Nona Jalali, Third Year, Linguistics
- Lucy Nesbitt, Graduate, BMus Horn Performance
  - This is an incredibly important moment in history where we are amidst global change on injustices that date back to the very foundation of the civilization we are in. Every single one of us must do our part to engage in this growth to ensure that a new, more functional system come forth and creates the spaces required for everyone to exist equitably. It is the responsibility of institutions, like UofT, to make the changes required (as listed in the open letter) to at least begin toward creating an environment where all students will learn equally. More than that, this faculty is shaping artists. Do not ever forget that artists shape and soothe the voices of society. We are responsible for creating art with power, and we cannot possibly do that without being educated about the role of race in our society.
- Morgan Reid, First Year, Doctor of Musical Arts
  - As a graduate of the Masters performance program, and a student entering the Doctoral program, I believe this letter contains fantastic points on how we can move forward with diversifying and

decolonizing our curricula, as well as amplifying the voices of BIPOC creatives in our industry. It is, in many ways, merely a starting point for the work that we must do at various levels, but these actions insist on required transparency and accountability on these avenues towards greater change. I sincerely hope that all of us, students and faculty, take this time to reflect on and address what work we must do, assess our own privileges, listen to the experiences of others who are speaking out, and educate ourselves on being actively anti-racist and opposing the systemic problems rooted deep in our industry.

- Angelli McGuigan, Third Year, Humanities
- Alessia Vitali, Alumni Grad 2020 and incoming Grad student, UofT Opera
- Christopher Young, Graduate, Class of 2020, Music Education
  - When music and the arts are restricted to the dogmatic nature of institutions, it becomes easy to influence what is held as 'the standard.' Classical music is historically whitewashed and male-dominated. An institution that upholds this eurocentric principle does not only promote elitism in the arts but parallels colonialism by alienating and eliminating anything that does not correspond to this standard. 'Diversity' should not be used as a label to appear as inclusive. By labelling the word in such capacities, it becomes an example of tokenism. Inclusivity involves an integration of our differences and equal representation and value within the curriculum and in the performing world.
  - Unfortunately, some of the hardest and important conversations that I had at U of T took place within the smallest classes. The university has the capacity to address the topics of social inequities, diversity, and cultural representation in the classroom. Though, I felt frustrated and disappointed that these crucial lessons were not presented in the compulsory courses we had to take within this institution. Rather, the biggest lessons are left to be discovered hiding in the smallest of settings.
  - I believe that representation of BIPOC in music today is the most diverse it has ever been, historically. This is not the impression I have received from music within institutionalized environments, especially in the Faculty of Music. The current music education system is too comfortable within its own past traditions, isolating itself from our evolving cultures and society.
  - It is long overdue for the University of Toronto to start practicing what they preach.
- Brittany Craig, Graduated 2020, Jazz Comprehensive
- Olivia LaPointe, Graduate, BMus Vocal Performance
- Sierra Ward-Bond, Graduate, Class of 2020, Voice Performance
- Tara Davidson, Music, Jazz Performance