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Inclusive Music Education in the U.S. and East Asia: Creating Positive Learning and Performance Opportunities for All

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Abstract

Diversity can be defined on many different axes, such as gender, race, culture and age, and all of these challenge music educators to find creative answers to the question: "How do we create a more inclusive music education system?" Inclusive music education can benefit potential students by giving them more opportunities, just as it benefits the community by providing more cultural outlets and the music world overall by bringing in new voices, yet even in the 21st century, there remains a lack of diversity in music education and organizations. One aspect of providing more learning and performance opportunities in different is understanding which axes of diversity are most crucial to a given region. This paper addresses diversity in the U.S. and East Asia and explores several examples of education programs, conferences, competitions and in the United States and East Asia. Furthermore, I will discuss best practices regarding how we can design and create an inclusive music education program and how to support this kind of music education. Recently, classical music institutions have made progress towards creating models and goals for diversity and developing new programs that incorporate musicians and educators who are from underrepresented groups and minorities. Some music institutions now include minority composers' music in audition materials, and music competitions include diverse repertoire according to race and gender. It is important to note, however, that in places like East Asia, inclusivity can be achieved in different ways compared to the U.S., and in fact the notion of diversity must some degree be targeted to each culture. For example, the Korean government has funded and created programs and provided services and music education opportunities to refugees from North Korea and to multicultural families who are quite a minority within the decidedly homogenous Korean society. Regardless of these regional nuances, however, creating positive musical learning and performance opportunities for all will help to make every society more diverse and inclusive.