Is the Western Classical Music Field Truly Evolving In terms of Diversity?

Lorin Green  
*University of New Mexico*

James Walker  
*University of New Mexico*

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Is the Western Classical Music Field Truly Evolving In terms of Diversity?
Lorin Green, Master’s Student, Music Performance: Flute, University of New Mexico
Jimmy Walter, Master’s Student, Music Performance: Flute, University of New Mexico

The terms Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion have become trend words within many fields recently but especially within the arts. Surprisingly, institutions, organizations, and ensembles within the field of western classical music have released profound statements regarding their role in ‘diversifying’ classical music, yet there has not been much change within the practices and systems of the field. The field of western classical music has continued to be a field that is Eurocentric in more than one domain. According to a nationwide study conducted by the League of American Orchestras, the professional orchestral field remains to be occupied majorly by white males with African Americans making up 1.8 percent of orchestras nationwide and Hispanics making up 2.5 percent. In 2019, the top 10 most programmed composers were all white European men. Out of the top 100 conductors in the world, only eight are women. Through study of musician rosters, season repertoire, and guest conductor lists from 6 different orchestras around the world, we gathered evidence of this continuous trend of stagnation within the field. We chose to gather research on orchestras specifically as they are one of the longest standing entities within the classical music field and therefore are seen to be the pinnacle of classical music. So, finding results that orchestras are not showing proof of development and growth supports the hypothesis that the field of western classical music is not evolving as much as we think. Why, in 2021, are we still seeing such obvious evidence that the western classical music field is not diverse, equitable, or inclusive? The DEI initiatives that are being created to help with this issue are simply not working. And this is due to institutions, organizations, and ensembles trying to make quick fixes such as a “Night of Women Composers” or an “Evening of Black Musicians” rather than delving into the curriculum, standard repertoire canon, and systemic practices that feed into this tradition of exclusivity and supremacy. Only when this issue is addressed thoroughly and properly will the western classical music field be truly diverse.