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MEDIA REVIEWS

Institute for Composer Diversity, https://www.composerdiversity.com/

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Launched in 2018, the Institute for Composer Diversity (ICD) emerged as an initiative that aimed to challenge the canonical repertoire, advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in Western-composed classical music. Although the ICD is housed by the School of Music at the State University of New York at Fredonia, the enterprise is funded by individual and institutional contributors, among them the Sphinx Organization through the 2020 Sphinx Venture Fund and New Music USA through its 2022 Organizational Development Fund. The ICD's website, however, is not just an online platform for the ICD; instead, it is the Institute itself—together with the people that make it possible.

Although offering a large variety of resources, the ICD's sitemap is well-designed and easy to navigate. It requires a minimum of web browsing knowledge, which facilitates the initiative's aim of diversity through accessibility. The ICD's motto "Search. Program. Perform. Repeat." gives a hint of the Institute's purpose: "To encourage the discovery, study, and performance of music written by composers from historically excluded groups."[1] To that end, the ICD offers five databases: the Composer Diversity Database, the Art Song Database, the Choral Works Database, the Orchestra Database, and the Wind Band Database. Inclusion of composers and works are suggested by the public (which includes the composers themselves and third-party submitters) via an online form. To be included, two requirements should be met: Positive consent for inclusion by the composer (including verification of the information) and completeness. The Composer Diversity Database is oriented to display individual composers filtered by five advanced criteria: Gender identity and sexual/romantic orientation, demographics (ethnicities), genre (i.e., orchestra, wind band, etc.), subgenre, and the composer's location. The other four databases revolve around works. However, the search tool combines works' specificities criteria (for instance, the Art Song Database has as a filter for the vocal register) and composers' identities criteria.

These powerful databases include more than 2,200 composers and almost 10,000 individual works (as stated in the 2021 annual report). Nonetheless, they are far from complete, which is not necessarily undesirable. On the one hand, there are still many composers missing, especially historical composers from outside the United States that have had a presence in North America (e.g., Asian or Latin American composers). On the other, the ICD acknowledges that its databases are in permanent construction. There are always fresh composers developing their catalogs who are yet to join. This is the principle that the ICD articulates as "there is more to come!" (as stated at the top of each database webpage). Such a principle resonates well with the fact that DEI is also always under construction: As peoples and their conditions change, DEI strategies should adapt—a characteristic that is antithetical to the dogmatic and exclusive nature of the Western-composed classical music canon.

Although databases are the ICD's main asset, the Institute also offers other useful resources. I want to highlight three of them: The analytical report, the best practices guidelines, and the "Outside Resources" page. The analytical report is dedicated to orchestral repertoire performed in the United States. It is comprehensive (as it analyzes and compares the programming data of 2015–18 to the 2019–22 data with an average sample of 106 professional orchestras in the United States), intelligible, and equally important, open access (no subscription or payment is required). The ICD's data visualization is effective and neatly demonstrates through quantitative means that the canon is not only a discursive formation but an actual statistical reality. Moreover, the best practice guidelines for improving

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[1]"Who We Are," Institute for Composer Diversity, accessed December 7, 2022, https://www.composerdiversity.com/about.

DEI in music repertoire include reasonable strategies to program more diversely and equitably—strategies like distributing new repertoire throughout the season or establishing DEI goals before starting to program. These guidelines, I consider, should be carefully observed by any cultural institution that programs Western-composed classical music. Finally, the outside resources page includes links to a series of organizations that also advocate for non-hegemonic repertoire inclusion (like the Women's Philharmonic Advocacy, which also produces its own Repertoire Report).[2] Such compilations are normally found on a university's music library website.[3] After seeing the usefulness of the filters in the ICD's databases, I wish a comprehensive database of resources on diversity and underrepresentation for music could be created. This would not necessarily be a task for the ICD, but for other parties interested in DEI.

Cross-referencing among ICD databases could improve. As a scholar from South America, I am interested in repertoire from there, specifically orchestral works. Using the Composer Diversity Database, I searched for Colombian composers. I found composers that I already knew but others that I did not, for which I was grateful. However, some expected names were missing. Then, I checked the Orchestra Database and found those absent names with their works carefully listed: It was like using a twenty-first century Daniels' *Orchestral Music*.[4] After realizing that it was a matter of cross-referencing, I decided to look for South American composers using the Orchestra Database, but this filter is not available in the case of the works databases. Indeed, the works databases have a location criteria filter, but it is based on residency (where composers live in the United States) and not origin (the country where they come from)—in contrast to the composers database. This is a downside, as in the case of my search, because it was not possible to look for orchestral composers that are from Colombia. Despite being situated just above the location criteria, the demographic criteria are insufficient for more nuanced searches as they conflate broad identities like "Latinx" and "Latin American" while omitting specific countries of origin. This exposes the limitations of the database: A powerful tool for use within the United States that needs revision to truly have global utility for both musical institutions and researchers.

After my own experience with the database, I talked to some of my colleagues, including conductors and executives in charge of programming both from the United States and Latin America. They confirmed that they still use the Daniels, they know well the ICD's resources (although they do not use them to program but to learn from), and especially that they learn about new works by word of mouth. This is how the ICD's resources become central to scholars and educators committed to DEI. Programming is a demanding task that requires experience, knowledge, and time, the latter being extremely limited within understaffed institutions. In this context, the central opportunity for scholars and educators is one of dissemination—not of disseminating the existence of the tool or a set of chosen works, but rather of giving time to our students to explore the non-canonical repertoire and to socialize it within our classes (framed as a student-centered approach or as cooperative learning) to actively use the tools for DEI projects. Similarly, student's exploratory projects (and our own explorations of the databases) may lead us researchers to contribute to the ICD itself. The ICD's "there is more to come!" principle and the fact that the website is not a mere window for the initiative but rather the Institute itself invites us to contribute collectively to their task, to suggest names, works, and give recommendations for improvement, making the Institute for Composer Diversity an open center for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Sebastián Wanumen Jiménez (he/him—él) is interested in the intersection of sound and music with a variety of topics of Colombia, among them, twentieth-century performances and performativity, the internal conflict and its memorialization, and gender and sexuality at the Barranquilla's Carnival. Sebastián enjoys researching, teaching, and writing for Boston University (where he is currently a PhD candidate in musicology and ethnomusicology), Universidad del Norte (Barranquilla), the Colombian National Symphony Orchestra (as program annotator), and other institutions and collectives.

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[2]Visit the WPA at: https://wophil.org/2022-23-repertoire-report/.

[3]Some of those libraries are the Yale Music Library, the University of Pittsburg Music Library, the Juilliard Library, or the Rowan University Library.

[4]Or its equivalent web version, the Daniels' Orchestral Music Online.