

Dear College Voice Faculty,

Hello, my name is Jake Buckley. I am a senior music business major and vocalist at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. I am reaching out to advocate for a more diverse pool of composers for student vocal repertoire.

One of the reasons I feel that it is so important to implement a more diverse repertoire is that even to this day, there are still “firsts” happening within music. In 2021, Dr. Kimberly Archer, a professor at SIUE, became the first woman to have a piece of music commissioned for a presidential inauguration. A performance of her composition by the United States Marine Band can be found [here](#). While these firsts are still happening, it is important that the next generation of musicians see themselves represented within their repertoire so they too can be inspired to break barriers and have their own firsts.

Much of the canon vocal repertoire was created in a predominantly white, European society during times of discrimination and segregation, preventing non-white and female composers from having their compositional contributions included in the canon. It is important to recognize the historical biases that prevented their inclusion in the musical canon. By supplementing the existing canon with pieces by diverse composers, we can help to recognize the work done by more composers and reinforce the fact that music is for everyone and by everyone.

The SIUE vocal department faculty came up with a way of implementing this into our work by requiring students to have at least 1 diversity piece each semester by a composer who is living, LGBTQ+, non-white, or non-male. This has helped to introduce new composers and pieces to our studio classes while still preserving the pieces out of the standard voice repertoire, like the 24 Italian Songs and Arias. The qualifications set by the faculty on what is considered a diversity piece are quite broad, so it is interesting to see which pieces students will choose. I have provided some examples of different SIUE students performing their diversity pieces below.

[Link 1](#) [Link 2](#) [Link 3](#) [Link 4](#) [Link 5](#) [Link 6](#)

I appreciate your time and your attention. I hope my email can help to encourage you to consider implementing a system of your own that encourages you and your students to continue exploring music beyond the current canon. Let’s continue to fill the world with beautiful music and encourage everyone to partake in it.

Sincerely,

Jake Buckley