

## DIVERSITY & EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN OF RSCM AMERICA

### Summary of work:

- We seek to serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves, and to respect the dignity of every human being.
- RSCM America acknowledges its complicity in perpetuating systems of injustice by marginalizing the work of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), nonbinary, trans, and women musicians. We further understand that compounding intersectionality of identities exacerbates these injustices and calls us to be ever vigilant.
- We seek to celebrate the fullness of the sacred music repertoire and all its creators, leaders, and practitioners.
- To support our shared vision, RSCM America is committed to providing resources and guidelines, with accompanying repertoire and staffing benchmarks, for training courses and RSCM America affiliates.

---

### Representation in Programming and Staffing

An Acknowledgment of Systemic Injustice by RSCM America

*“I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also.” (1 Corinthians 14:15)*

*“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)*

The Royal School of Church Music in America has been a frequent perpetuator of churchwide gender and race disparities in the past, and most of these inequities persist to this day. Historically, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), nonbinary, transgender, and women musicians have not been afforded the same privileges of exposure and inclusion in leadership roles that cisgender white men enjoy, and this is our loss as church musicians. It is urgent that we address this blind spot, considering the ever-diversifying demographics of our parishes, choirs, and training courses. This lack of representation must be corrected if RSCM America is to truly fulfill its organizational mission and be the servants that God calls us to be.

We acknowledge that underrepresented composers have also been marginalized by the systemic injustice that we strive to address. The musical contributions of these composers must be included in our lives and liturgies.

Fortunately, there are several diversity databases in progress that should help rectify these imbalances—including [A Great Host of Women Composers Database](#) from [A Great Host of Composers](#), currently being published in quarterly installments in *The Journal of the Association of Anglican Musicians* for the three-year lectionary (Fall 2020–Summer 2023), as well as the [Choral Works Database](#) from the [Institute for Composer Diversity](#). Any church musician seeking to expand their repertoire should feel encouraged to explore these and future databases. It is our

responsibility while exploring new repertoire to mindfully gather contextual information, both for ourselves and for our choirs/listeners, giving these pieces more thoughtful attention, scholarship, and prayer than we have given in the past.

As we move forward in faith, it should be understood that suggested guidelines are not meant to punish, nor are they intended to restrict creativity. They are rather intended to open new and exciting artistic avenues and to demonstrate to our choristers that there is a place for everyone in church music, now and in the future.

These benchmarks are meant to help accelerate our field into a more equitable future and to protect us from unwittingly perpetuating these same injustices in the future. However, since this is an exercise limited by our current knowledge and situation, and by our ever-expanding awareness of the fullness of the sacred music repertoire, **we suggest that any guidelines be reviewed at least once every two years** to ensure that their language and values remain relevant.

---

We propose that two guidelines be put into place in future seasons, defined as beginning in August/September and concluding with the summer training courses:

## 1. Repertoire Guidelines

The first of these guidelines is that, beginning in 2021–2022, at least 10-20% of the pieces of music\* offered in a season should be by nonbinary, trans, or women composers, and 10-20% by BIPOC composers. **Overlaps between these categories are possible and encouraged.**

In each subsequent year, the total percentage should increase by 10%, so that **by the 2024–25 season, at least 50% of all the pieces of choral music programmed should be by BIPOC, nonbinary, trans, and women composers.** It goes without saying that this is a minimum standard, and programs wishing to include a higher percentage than the minimum are welcome and encouraged to do so.

In addition, we urge music leaders and clergy to explore the full breadth of denominational resources that are available, including texts by BIPOC, nonbinary, trans, and women authors when choosing hymns, anthems, and prayers for all services.

*\*Note that, for the purposes of these guidelines, a “piece of choral music” is a single publishable artistic statement, meaning that a pair of Evening Canticles, a setting of the Mass Ordinary, or a set of Responses counts as one piece. While Anglican chants and hymn tunes can be wonderful displays of artistic expression, they fall outside the purview of these guidelines. That said, we encourage the exploration of Anglican chants and hymn tunes by historically underrepresented demographics, as well as instrumental works.*

## 2. Musicians & Collaboration

There is an abundance of excellence amongst BIPOC, nonbinary, trans, and women musicians actively working in our field. In addition to these persons being invaluable additions to one's music staff, they will also build the culture of radical hospitality and welcome that we are called to establish and maintain.

When considering guest musicians, conductors, organists, choral scholars, interns, and soloists, music leadership should include BIPOC, nonbinary, trans, and women musicians. Beginning in the 2021–22 season, at least 20% of those engaged should represent these historically underrepresented diversities.

In each subsequent year, the percentage should increase by 10% so that **by the 2024–25 season, at least 50% of those engaged should represent these historically underrepresented diversities.** As previously stated, overlap within these demographics is possible and desired, and consideration should be given to achieving both racial and gender equity.

---

## ACTION PLAN

### Phase 1: Research and Development (September 2020 and ongoing)

- Workshops at National Course
- Development of Resources
  - Leadership conference
  - Database beginnings: Repertoire guide
  - Existing resources:
    - A Great Host of Women Composers
      - Database: <https://tinyurl.com/y52oemcy>;
      - [www.greathostcomposers.org](http://www.greathostcomposers.org)
    - Choral Music of Black Composers: <https://www.mlagmusic.com/>
    - The Institute for Composer Diversity: <https://composerdiversity.com>
    - Music Departments of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)

### Phase 2: Board Approval (October 22, 2021)

- RSCM America Board adopts both statement & bullets (electronic ballot)

**RSCM America Diversity and Equity Committee**

Katie Burk

*RSCM America Board*

*Organ Scholar, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Portland, OR*

Arreon Harley-Emerson

*RSCM America Board*

*Director of Music & Operations, The Choir School of Delaware, Wilmington, DE*

Michael Kleinschmidt

*Course Co-Manager, RSCM Pacific Northwest*

*Canon for Cathedral Music, Saint Mark's Cathedral, Seattle, WA*

Susan Jane Matthews

*RSCM America Board*

*Director of Music, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Burlingame, CA*

Arwen Myers

*Course Co-Manager, RSCM Pacific Northwest*

*Director of Communications & Marketing, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Portland, OR*

Thomas Sheehan

*Music and Liturgy Co-Manager, RSCM King's College Course*

*Organist & Associate Director of Music, Washington National Cathedral, Washington, DC*

Michael Smith

*RSCM America Board*

*Minister of Music, St Thomas' Whitmarsh, Fort Washington, PA*