

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts on the importance of equity in our industry and at the educational level. Our current social climate demands a swift migration from reflection to action.

Let me begin by acknowledging that, as a white, cisgender man, I am sure I have been given opportunities others with more diverse backgrounds and equal talent may have not been offered or been able to afford. For me, this unearned privilege comes with the great responsibility to not only celebrate diversity in all the ways we are made diverse, but to promote conversation and action around issues of equity and inclusion in collaboration with students, teachers, and other industry professionals. This is something of which I am daily aware and regularly address as a teaching artist.

A good voice teacher quietly observes the singer who, through their performance, helps the teacher understand how they can best support them. In other words, the voice teacher must first and foremost serve as an *ally*. Given the personal relationships we develop with our students, we are uniquely poised to use our allyship as the catalyst for giving our students agency as singing artists.

In my private studio, I strive to create a safe space where each student can express their authentic self. This requires me to consistently model curiosity, allow myself to be vulnerable, and practice mindful presence and self care. In Fall 2020, the *NATS Journal of Singing* published an article I wrote outlining the scientific research behind these elements of teaching and how they can be applied in the voice studio. Beyond these baseline skills, I have taken the following steps to engage my students around issues of race, equity, and inclusion:

- I outline how smart audition repertoire can demonstrate that BIPOC actors can embody roles that were previously performed by white actors (where appropriate).
- I provide a regularly updated list of musicals written by BIPOC musical theatre writers (1921 - today) as a reference for choosing material, underscoring the importance of visibility.
- I assign listening and self-tape assignments that encourage incorporating music from a diverse array of sources.
- I have been entrusted with helping a male-identifying voice teacher work through a substantial vocal shift after taking testosterone.

I am grateful to my students and clients for being open to navigating these conversations, knowing open-hearted singing is the goal.

In the classroom, I nurture a similarly secure environment. It is not enough to say to a class “Your safety is of ultimate importance to me.” I recognize my privilege demands I live out that statement in every moment of my work, because I will not know who and how someone has been previously marginalized by a person in a position of power. I am also passionate about bringing

in educators and artists of different backgrounds and experiences so my students more clearly see themselves in the industry.

As a theatre professional, my collaborator of over 17 years, lyricist Tom Gualtieri, and I have launched a video project entitled “Draw the Circle Wide.” Through this project, we interview Broadway performers who, because of their race or experience, have been considered “Other.” We intercut their interviews with footage of us writing a tailor-made piece for each artist, putting them at the center of the story. The piece is then premiered on YouTube as a music video. Series 1 guest artists included Tony-award winner Ali Stroker (*Oklahoma!*), Jonathan Burke (*Inheritance*), Ryann Redmond (*Frozen*), and Cindy Cheung (“13 Reasons Why”). Series 2, which will be released in Fall 2021, features André De Shields (*Hadestown*), Aisha Jackson (*Frozen*), Ahmad Maksoud (*The Band’s Visit*), and L Morgan Lee (*A Strange Loop*).

I am currently writing a textbook for Routledge Publishers with my colleague Laura Josepher, focusing on the skills musical theatre performers need to possess for readings and workshops of new musicals. Because we are both white teaching artists, we are committed to interviewing a diverse array of industry professionals to help provide context for the tools we are sharing. We have also requested an inclusion specialist review our manuscript prior to publication so we can be made aware of any blind spots we might have.

I am also drafting an article for the NATS *Journal of Singing* entitled “Advocacy Through Repertoire Selection” with my colleagues Dr. Trineice Robinson-Martin (Princeton University) and Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz (University of Delaware). In it, we will discuss over-arching themes in practicing radical inclusion through repertoire selection in our particular areas of expertise: classical, musical theatre, and CCM (contemporary commercial music) styles.

I will continue to bring my ever-growing skills and humanity to the classroom and private studio so that young artists of all backgrounds and experiences can discover what makes them unique. For me, this has always been the role of the teacher, and it is that which makes the work a true vocation.