

## Restorative Approaches in Jazz Education: Structural Initiatives for Cultivating Safe and Supportive Environments

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Music is often understood to be inherently good, powerfully bringing people together in safe and supportive spaces. But musical activity can generate many types of spaces and relationships, including harmful ones. As William Cheng acknowledges, “human relationships with music... resonate with the just *and* unjust relationships among people” and music can “heal or harm, bring people together or break communities apart.”<sup>1</sup> In music institutions, addressing harm can be uncomfortable, particularly for those who have not been aware that it has occurred. Widespread awareness of harm taking place in a community emerges, in many cases, only after it has come to light publicly. For those who have been harmed in music institutions, and for those who have witnessed how music organizations can foster harmful behavior and fracture community relationships, it is without question that harm in music settings is pervasive.

In recent years, especially since the #MeToo hashtag went viral in 2017 and made it seem safer for survivors to come forward, countless reports of sexual harassment in music contexts have been brought to light.<sup>2</sup> Many of these instances had long been “open secrets,” situations in which it was well known that harm was occurring but no action had been taken to address it.<sup>3</sup> In addition

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<sup>1</sup> William Cheng, *Loving Music Till It Hurts* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 5, emphasis mine.

<sup>2</sup> There are too many to name them all, but a few prominent examples of sexual harm allegations since 2017 include those against conductor James Levine of the Metropolitan Opera, Liang Wang and Matthew Muckey of the New York Philharmonic, R. Kelly, and, most recently, Sean “Diddy” Combs. In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, where I live and work, recent examples include allegations against pop artist Thomas Oliver, the deceased composer Jack Body, and a number of secondary-level music teachers whose stories made the national news.

<sup>3</sup> Open secrets about sexual and other types of harm persist because of structures of power that manifest in at least two types of situations. In one, individuals harming others are in powerful positions, bringing prestige (and income) to an organization and/or having the ability provide or withhold career prospects for others. In another, institutional systems designed to address harm (such as HR processes) end up supporting the status quo and its existing structures of power that perpetuate harm, instead of addressing the systemic elements that produce harmful environments. An indication that music institutions are perhaps understood as typical settings

(and often related) to sexual harm, harm in music institutions based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and other social categories is also common.<sup>4</sup> While individuals are responsible, so too are the systems they inhabit; behavioral norms and policies cultivate unsafe environments and help sustain them.<sup>5</sup> For example, processes for auditions, hiring, leadership development, and tenure can powerfully make an educational music environment more harmful or, alternatively, more supportive. In this article, I outline some of the ways that such harmful environments are maintained in jazz education and identify concrete strategies to foster safer spaces, in which students can thrive as they learn collectively with their instructors.

Vibraphonist, composer, and educator Sasha Berliner offered one of the clearest testimonies of gender-based harm in jazz spaces when she wrote “An Open Letter to Ethan Iverson (and the Rest of the Jazz Patriarchy)” and posted it to her website in 2017.<sup>6</sup> Both a critique and a call to action, Berliner’s open letter gives several examples of gender-based discrimination directed at her. She tells of university performance instructors lowering expectations for her in a group of comparably high-skilled musicians, of sexual harassment occurring at jam sessions, and of established musicians taking retribution against her for her refusals of their sexual advances. In her words:

If you turn away a male musician who is interested in you sexually and has been on the scene longer as to enhance credibility, then he can tell everyone (before they hear you for themselves) that he doesn’t like your playing—out of anger for you not being sexually compliant.<sup>7</sup>

In these and other examples, musicality is intertwined with gender in a way that centers cisgender men (cisgender men) while pushing women and people of all other genders to the periphery. In cases where women’s refusals of romantic or sexual advances of men have negative impact on their careers, Berliner

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for the persistence of unaddressed harm is the fact that such settings and subject matter feature in recent Hollywood films, e.g., *Whiplash* (2014) and *Tár* (2022).

<sup>4</sup> Colleen Renihan, John Spilker, and Trudi Wright, “Introduction: Radical Care,” in *Sound Pedagogy*, ed. Colleen Renihan, John Spilker, and Trudi Wright (University of Illinois Press, 2024).

<sup>5</sup> For an autoethnographic example in a university (but not a music) setting, see Lynn Fujiwara, “Racial Harm in a Predominantly White ‘Liberal’ University,” in *Presumed Incompetent II*, ed. Yolanda Flores Niemann, Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, and Carmen G. González (Utah State University Press, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Sasha Berliner, “An Open Letter to Ethan Iverson (and the Rest of the Jazz Patriarchy),” September 21, 2017, <https://www.sashaberlinermusic.com/an-open-letter-to-ethan-iverson-and-the-rest-of-jazz-patriarchy/>.

<sup>7</sup> Berliner, “An Open Letter.”

demonstrates how heteronormative misogyny is normalized to maintain what are often referred to as “boys clubs.”

A number of recent studies have detailed specific elements of jazz environments that generate gender-based harm, tying experiences like Berliner’s to systemic factors in jazz settings.<sup>8</sup> In a study of undergraduate jazz students in Australia, Clare Hall and Robert Burke demonstrate how longstanding hegemonic masculinities persist, strengthening gender inequities.<sup>9</sup> Kirenan Steiner and Alexandra Manfredo advocate for a more robust documentation of the experiences of women in higher jazz education, recognizing that raising awareness of the damaging impacts of negative experiences is an important element in moving toward greater equity.<sup>10</sup> Natalie Boeyink breaks down several elements of women’s experiences in higher jazz education. Her research not only analyzes women’s experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination, but also examines barriers related to curricula, repertoire, and stereotypes, as well as women’s perspectives on improvisation and the broader field of jazz performance. She offers practical solutions in several areas, including access to role models, pedagogical approaches, curriculum and repertoire choices, guest artists and festivals, and hiring practices.<sup>11</sup> These studies focus on settings that have been made unsafe due, in part, to the normalization of behaviors that serve to marginalize anyone not exhibiting traits associated with a narrow definition of masculinity. Hall and Burke, for example, describe a jazz masculinity

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<sup>8</sup> Scholars have also addressed harm in non-jazz music education settings; see, e.g., Kimber Andrews, and Kristy Swift, eds., *Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and the Post-Secondary Music Class* (Routledge, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> Clare Hall and Robert Burke, “Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity in Australian Tertiary Jazz Education,” in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender*, ed. James Reddan, Monika Herzig, and Michael Kahr (Routledge, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Kirenan Steiner and Alexandra Manfredo, “In Her Own Words: Documenting the Current Realities of Women-in-Jazz,” in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender*, ed. James Reddan, Monika Herzig, and Michael Kahr (Routledge, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Natalie Boeyink, “Jazzwomen in Higher Education: Experience, Attitudes, and Personality Traits,” in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender*, ed. James Reddan, Monika Herzig, and Michael Kahr (Routledge, 2022), 355. Boeyink also suggests solutions for improving the experiences and success of women in university jazz programs. See Yoko Suzuki, “Two Strikes and the Double Negative: the Intersections of Gender and Race in the Cases of Female Jazz Saxophonists,” *Black Music Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 207–26, for a discussion of the experiences of female jazz saxophonists with regard to the intersection of gender and race; James Reddan, Monika Herzig, and Michael Kahr, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender* (Routledge, 2022) for a range of studies related to jazz and gender; and Kathleen M. McKeage, “Gender and Participation in High School and College Instrumental Jazz Ensembles,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 52, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 343–56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3345387>, for an earlier study.

constituted by “virtuosity, leadership, hostility, authority to be heard, and competitiveness,” which in their study contributed to a culture that excluded those not exhibiting those traits.<sup>12</sup>

Individuals in such settings who are not cishetero white men experience a requirement or pressure to conform to (musical) behaviors associated with majoritarian identities. Along these lines, Sara Ahmed, in a study of institutional diversity programs, likens inclusion in institutions (and in other social formations) to being “folded in” to existing norms: “To be included can thus be a way of sustaining and reproducing a politics of exclusion.”<sup>13</sup> I have heard reports from women jazz instructors in higher education that they have jokingly advised women students to “imagine that you’re a white alpha male” as a strategy to build confidence in performing improvised solos in university jazz environments, though they have indicated that they feel uncomfortable suggesting this to students.<sup>14</sup> Following Ahmed’s argument, to be truly included in many jazz settings perhaps requires limiting oneself to the forms of masculinity normalized in those settings and excluding all other forms of gendered behavior. Centering these narrowly-defined forms of masculinity typically also centers cisgender/heteronormativity, ableism, and, in many jazz education spaces, whiteness. Jazz spaces where sexist behaviors and structures are normalized thus also tend to propagate other forms of oppression, such as racism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia, among others.

As in any institution or organization where harm is pervasive, in music institutions it typically remain unaddressed. However, new efforts to confront harm have begun to take shape in recent years. After publishing her book *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, which analyzes the processes by which classical music in England remains white and middle-class, music scholar Anna Bull turned her attention to the broader issue of sexual harassment in higher education.<sup>15</sup> She co-founded the 1752 Group, a UK-based research consultancy and campaign organization dedicated to ending faculty sexual misconduct.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hall and Burke, “Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity,” 344.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 163. For a study of musical/social norms as related to exclusionary practices in institutions, see Aslan Rowlands, “Improvisational Inqueery: Inclusion, Intercorporeality, and the Classical Music Institution,” M.M. Thesis, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.25097105>.

<sup>14</sup> This anonymized anecdote is shared with permission.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Susan Oman and Anna Bull, “Joining up Well-being and Sexual Misconduct Data and Policy in HE: ‘To Stand in the Gap’ as a Feminist Approach,” *The Sociological Review* 70, no. 1 (2022): 21–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261211049024>. See also “The 1752 Group,” accessed October 10, 2024, <https://1752group.com/>.

Soundcheck Aotearoa and Safer Spaces in Music Education Aotearoa are two recent initiatives in Aotearoa New Zealand, where I live and work, that aim to train music professionals in sexual harm prevention.<sup>17</sup> In worlds of jazz and related musics, a significant number of interventions have been initiated by musicians that address not only the dearth of women and nonbinary individuals active in those worlds, but also the lack of environments that support those who are present. Some examples include: the We Have Voice Collective, a group of women and gender non-conforming musicians who established a code of conduct for safe(r) spaces in music in the wake of MeToo; Mutual Mentorship for Musicians (M<sup>3</sup>), a platform co-founded by Jen Shyu and Sara Sherpa to empower and increase visibility of women and non-binary musicians, particularly those of color, through non-hierarchical mentorship; and, notably, the Berklee Institute for Jazz and Gender Justice (hereafter, JGJ), founded by Terri Lyne Carrington in 2017, which has developed a comprehensive educational and community engagement program focused on addressing gender inequity and racial injustice, welcoming students of all gender and sexual identities.<sup>18</sup>

Writing based on her research as a scholar-in-residence at JGJ, Tracy McMullen describes the program's intersectional educational activities as grounded in Black feminist approaches that resonate with pianist Billy Taylor's definition of an "Afro-American value system" in jazz that prioritizes collectivity, care, and function.<sup>19</sup> She shows how university structures can overemphasize individualism (rather than the *collective* relationality of jazz), a competitive and unsupportive environment (rather than one in which musicians

<sup>17</sup> See also "Soundcheck Aotearoa," accessed October 10, 2024, <https://www.soundcheckaotearoa.co.nz/>; "Safer Spaces in Music Education Aotearoa," accessed October 10, 2024, <https://saferspaces.nz/>.

<sup>18</sup> "We Have Voice," accessed October 10, 2024 <https://too-many.org/>; "Mutual Mentorship for Musicians," accessed October 10, 2024, <https://mutualmentorshipformusicians.org/>; "Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice," Berklee College of Music, accessed October 10, 2024, <https://college.berklee.edu/jazz-gender-justice>. For a list of additional initiatives, see Kaitlyn Van Vleet, "Women in Jazz Music: A Hundred Years of Gender Disparity in Jazz Study and Performance (1920–2020)," *Jazz Education in Research and Practice* 2, no. 1 (2021): 211–27, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jazzeducrese.2.1.16>. Parallel initiatives have also launched in the spaces of jazz festivals, see Kristin McGee, "Gendered Interventions in European Jazz Festival Programming: Keychanges, Stars, and Alternative Networks," in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender*, ed. James Reddan, Monika Herzig, and Michael Kahr (Routledge, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> Tracy McMullen, "Jazz Education after 2017: The Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and the Pedagogical Lineage," *Jazz and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2021), 28, <https://doi.org/10.5406/jazzculture.4.2.0027>. For an additional partial list of African American musicians who have asserted and echoed the value system outlined by Taylor, see McMullen, "Jazz Education," 45n5.

care for one another), and a separation of musical sound from what it does in the world (rather than understanding the *function* of the music as actively moving people both in their bodies [e.g., dance] and in social action). In contrast, she sees JGJ as working to re-insert pedagogies that center the relationality embedded in how jazz is performed and learned (collectivity), the nurturing character of jazz modeled by generations of mentors grounded in a Black feminist ethic (care), and the notion that in jazz the music is always *doing* something in society, that it is always *for* something (function).<sup>20</sup> In its activities that counter “the dominant narrative of the music as a formal art that reaches perfection through competition between singular, heroic individuals, innovating and leaving their competitors behind,” JGJ opens up space for the widest participation in the music.<sup>21</sup> It does so across the spectrum of gender and with regard to other categories (e.g., race, sexuality, and ability) through which power is often harmfully exerted in jazz spaces.

JGJ provides an exemplary model for how to work toward comprehensive change. Housed within Berklee College of Music, it has substantial financial and institutional support available to facilitate transformation. Most university jazz programs do not have the same financial resources, prestige, or institutional support to launch or revamp a program at the same scale; however, they do have access to mechanisms that, at least in theory, can assist in initiating change. Among the tools typically available to these jazz programs are university offices which seek to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) university-wide through a variety of programs and policies.<sup>22</sup> And yet, even considering the presence of these offices and the best intentions of faculty and administrators to address gender inequities and harm, jazz programs often continue to maintain student and faculty populations dominated by men (lacking diversity), provide disproportionately greater opportunities to men that compound their privilege in the field (lacking equity), and cultivate environments that are experienced as boys clubs (lacking inclusion).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> McMullen, “Jazz Education,” 38. With the term “functionality” McMullen, via Taylor, points to the music having a purpose.

<sup>21</sup> McMullen, “Jazz Education,” 37–38.

<sup>22</sup> For a brief history of DEI in U.S. higher education, with a celebratory narrative that also recognizes limitations to DEI programs, and written just before the U.S. Supreme court issued its ban on affirmative action programs in universities in 2023, see J. Brian Charles, “The Evolution of DEI,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 23, 2023, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-evolution-of-dei>. At the time of writing (early 2025), the DEI sector in the U.S., and elsewhere in the world, is in a state of flux, as the sector has been subject to numerous challenges from governments, legislative bodies, and judicial systems.

<sup>23</sup> For examples of how jazz programs are dominated by cismen, compound the privilege of cismen in the field, and cultivate boys clubs and other exclusive environments, see, e.g., Hall and

In the face of these persistent intersectional gender-based injustices in jazz education, this article takes a hopeful stance. In the sections that follow, I argue that positive change toward a more equitable and safer jazz education for students of all genders, with their many intersecting identities, is possible. I suggest that, even in settings with limited resources, structural initiatives that cultivate safer spaces, where students flourish, can be implemented. While I happen to be addressing a setting from Aotearoa New Zealand, in an institution where I work, I consider (and experience) this setting as participating in a broader sector of university jazz education, common across settler colonial and other societies characterized by dominant white cishetero patriarchal systems.<sup>24</sup> This sector of jazz education was largely inspired by approaches to teaching that began at the University of North Texas (UNT, then called North Texas State Teachers College), and continued at Indiana University and elsewhere as jazz education proliferated in the 1970s. Jazz programs in this legacy tend to be structured around teaching harmonic and melodic elements of improvisation, skills for big band performance, and performance of styles that feature in canonical jazz history (e.g., bebop, hard bop, and modal jazz, with others such as swing, Latin jazz, jazz-funk fusion, and New Orleans jazz in supporting roles).<sup>25</sup> At UNT, and in programs that followed its template, McMullen argues that,

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Burke, “Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity”; see also Chris Robinson, “A brief history of the origins of jazz’s sexism,” *Medium*, March 9, 2019, <https://medium.com/@CRMUSICWRITER/a-brief-history-of-the-origins-of-jazzs-sexism-3ee4278bcff0>. For a recent university-wide example of some shortcomings of DEI, see also Nicholas Confessore, “The University of Michigan Doubled Down on D.E.I. What Went Wrong?” *New York Times Magazine*, October 16, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/16/magazine/dei-university-michigan.html>. See also Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Duke University Press, 2012); Ariana González Stokas, *Reparative Universities: Why Diversity Alone Won't Solve Racism in Higher Ed* (Johns Hopkins University, 2023).

<sup>24</sup> Similar programs certainly exist beyond white settler colonial settings, with perhaps similar structures of gender injustice. Here, I limit the discussion to societies and institutions where dominances of whiteness, patriarchy, and heteronormativity intersect.

<sup>25</sup> Scholarly discourses on these types of jazz programs have highlighted their internal contradictions and their ambivalences towards the institutions of which they are a part, even as they have aligned themselves with the structures of those institutions. This alignment has often played out in modeling curricula and modes of teaching after the classical performance programs that often exist at the center of such institutions. See, e.g., Eitan Y. Wilf, *School for Cool: The Academic Jazz Program and the Paradox of Institutionalized Creativity* (University of Chicago Press, 2014); Kenneth Prouty, “The ‘Finite’ Art of Improvisation: Pedagogy and Power in Jazz Education,” *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, no. 1 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.21083/csieci.v4i1.346>; David Ake, “Jazz Training: John Coltrane and the Conservatory,” *Jazz Cultures* (University of California Press, 2002), 112-145.

white male musicians established a new lineage in de facto or de jure segregated colleges and universities where they could have a safe (for them) segregated space to translate the music into their terms.... This new lineage instantiated jazz education based on white male desires that placed Black students and female students on the outside.<sup>26</sup>

In short, I consider the Aotearoa New Zealand case to be in general continuity with these jazz programs, with similarities in gender and racial discrimination that can be identified relatively easily, alongside similarities in curriculum, canon, and modalities of teaching.

Recognizing these persistent challenges, and in the spirit of both preventing harm and fostering more broadly supportive environments in jazz education, the remainder of this article points to pedagogical practices grounded in restorative justice principles as part of a constellation of possible structural interventions. Restorative practices and perspectives, I suggest, are well suited to the collectivity, care, and function at the heart of jazz, in part because such practices are always designed to address both the needs of each individual in a group and the needs of a collective as a whole, much like the music itself.

#### RESTORATIVE APPROACHES, GROUNDED IN CARE

As this article has suggested so far, institutions of higher music education, including jazz institutions, have stubbornly resisted efforts to transform their harmful environments into ones where it is safe for students to learn while fully expressing the many facets of who they are. Dylan Robinson, in an open letter to music school leaders and faculty members, states that the small, incremental changes typically made have not been effective in “truly transform[ing] systems of music education into spaces where different epistemologies and values of music and world views are equally supported.”<sup>27</sup> While he sees that needed steps have been taken in terms of diversification of curriculum and hiring of Indigenous, Black, and other scholars and artists of color (he uses the acronym IBPOC), he recognizes that these types of changes are “additive” rather than structural, and they have thus not transformed institutions of music education.<sup>28</sup> In the face of institutional resistance to structural change, some educators have turned to pedagogies of care, recognising that “music, as it functions in higher

<sup>26</sup> Tracy McMullen, “The College Jazz Program as Tradition Making: Establishing a New Lineage in Jazz,” *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 27 (2023), 33.

<sup>27</sup> Dylan Robinson, “To All Who Should Be Concerned,” *Intersections* 39, no. 1 (2019), 137. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1075347ar>.

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, “To All,” 137.

education, can be a profoundly *uncaring* place.”<sup>29</sup> In the introduction to their recent edited volume *Sound Pedagogy*, Colleen Renihan, John Spilker, and Trudi Wright outline how the uncaring nature of higher music education is related to the intersecting oppressions of imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism, ableism, colonization, and patriarchy, some of which Robinson also identifies as structuring elements of schools and departments of music.<sup>30</sup> Of note, they demonstrate that characteristics from Tema Okun’s definition of “white supremacy culture”—the concentration of power, individualism, perfectionism, and progress—are typically shared by music education programs in higher education.<sup>31</sup> It is no coincidence that notions of collectivity, care, and function, as understood by McMullen in her study of JGJ’s alignment with Black feminist values, stand in direct contrast to white supremacy culture as described by Okun, intertwined as racism is with sexism and misogyny. Renihan, Spilker, Wright, and their collaborators argue that uncaring environments are generated by many intersecting forms of oppression, and that care pedagogies can intervene to keep oppressive systems out of music education spaces.

Jazz programs in the U.S. and in other white settler colonial environments often demonstrate the coexistence of an uncaring music education and multifaceted oppression in the difficulties they have recruiting women as well as Black, Indigenous, and other students of the global majority. Among the obstacles to these students enrolling are their systemic exclusion in secondary music education settings, as well as the prevalence of what Dan DiPiero calls the “white-masculinist technology that performs various functions to reinforce

<sup>29</sup> Renihan, Spilker, and Wright, “Introduction,” 4 (emphasis in original).

<sup>30</sup> Renihan, Spilker, and Wright, “Introduction,” 3. They reference the following, among others: Patricia Shehan Campbell, David E. Myers, and Edward W. Sarath, “Transforming Music Study from Its Foundations: A Manifesto for Progressive Change in the Undergraduate Preparation of Music Majors,” *College Music Society*, November 2014, edited January 2016, <https://www.music.org/pdf/pubs/tfumm/TFUMM.pdf>; Loren Kajikawa, “The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in U.S. Schools and Departments of Music,” in *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines*, ed. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Luke Charles Harris, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and George Lipsitz (University of California Press, 2019); Philip Ewell, *On Music Theory, and Making Music More Welcoming for Everyone* (University of Michigan Press, 2023); William Cheng, *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good* (University of Michigan Press, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Tema Okun, “White Supremacy Culture,” accessed October 3, 2024, [https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun\\_-\\_white\\_sup\\_culture.pdf](https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf). With Okun’s permission, this essay was adapted in Emily Yee Clare, Emil Briones, Kira Page, and Philippe Angers-Trottier, *White Supremacy Culture in Organizations*, adapting Tema Okun (Centre des Organismes Communautaires, 2019), [https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/white\\_supremacy\\_culture\\_in\\_organizations\\_0.pdf](https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/white_supremacy_culture_in_organizations_0.pdf).

patriarchal jazz cultures and white supremacy” in various elements of university jazz programs.<sup>32</sup> While gender has often been the most striking category for exclusion in jazz and jazz education spaces, leaders such as Carrington recognize that sexism intersects with racism and other forms of oppression, so they need all to be dealt with. In her words, the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice is committed to “educate with gender justice *and* racial justice as guiding principles.”<sup>33</sup> Carrington and other educators, such as the editors of *Sound Pedagogy*, understand that the most impactful interventions are those grounded in care that account for intersecting forms of injustice and thus (ideally) avoid unintentionally reinscribing one form of oppression or another.

In my work in jazz leadership at the New Zealand School of Music—Te Kōkī (NZSM), I turned to another approach steeped in intersectionality in order to foreground collectivity and care: restorative justice. Restorative justice is a form of activism that focuses on repairing relationships rather than inflicting punishment as a response to harm. As the field has grown, restorative practitioners have developed concrete frameworks for communities to practice ways of living well together. When harm or conflict occurs, restorative justice addresses it by bringing together those who caused the harm, those affected by the harm, and impacted members of the community. Together, these individuals collaboratively generate ways to move forward where no further harm is done to any party. Restorative justice practitioners and scholars around the world have developed practical processes for when conflict and harm occur. Detailed facilitated formats (with flexibility to suit each situation) have emerged from this research and practice, and have powerfully repaired harm in institutional and criminal settings.<sup>34</sup> Restorative approaches have also been applied in educational settings to prevent harm by building restorative relationships.<sup>35</sup> Resonating with pedagogical principles developed in other fields, restorative practices involve being attentive to the needs of all individuals *and* of the collective, approaching individuals holistically and with dignity, balancing power, and reducing

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<sup>32</sup> Dan DiPiero, “Race, Gender, and Jazz School: Chord-Scale Theory as White Masculine Technology,” *Jazz and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2023), 53, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5406/25784773.6.1.03>.

<sup>33</sup> Terri Lyne Carrington, “Black Lives Matter,” accessed October 3, 2024, <https://college.berklee.edu/jazz-gender-justice/black-lives-matter>. JGJ’s intersectional Black feminist approach to jazz education is outlined in McMullen, “Jazz Education,” 41–43.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Sarah Roth Shank, “Institutionalizing Restorative Justice in New Zealand’s Criminal Justice System: Gains, Losses and Challenges for the Future” (PhD diss., Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.14195555.v1>.

<sup>35</sup> Lindsey Pointer, Kathleen McGoey, and Haley Farrar, *The Little Book of Restorative Teaching Tools: Games, Activities and Simulations for Understanding Restorative Justice Practices* (Good Books, 2020); Katherine Evans and Dorothy Vaandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools* (Good Books, 2016).

possibilities for abuses of power.<sup>36</sup> When I began to work with members of the restorative justice community in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, I immediately sensed that this attentiveness to both individuals and the collective would make these practices well suited to cultivating supportive environments in jazz education spaces.<sup>37</sup>

I moved to Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington in 2016 after I had been hired as a faculty member in the Music Studies program at NZSM to teach required jazz history classes and other courses related to my research. In 2020 I became the Jazz Performance Program Director, having been asked in part due to my activities as an artist (saxophonist/multi-instrumentalist, composer) and to my familiarity with the skills taught in university jazz performance curricula. Here, I observed dynamics common in jazz settings, particularly with regard to gender, race, and sexuality. In 2019, 93% of the 70 students in the program identified as cismen, and all permanent and adjunct faculty members were straight, white, cisgender men, other than me (a queer and white cisgender man) and one woman of color who had recently begun leading a group workshop for vocalists every other week.<sup>38</sup> I offer this data not to suggest that all straight white men are harmful, as I am of the conviction anyone can cultivate a supportive environment of care and generative of collectivity for a wide range of individuals, regardless

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<sup>36</sup> McMullen, Taylor, and Carrington all offer examples of pedagogical principles that resonate with restorative approaches. The critical pedagogies of scholars such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks also share much in common with restorative practices. I have outlined some of the relationships between restorative approaches and music elsewhere; see Dave Wilson, "On Music, Relationships, and Making Music Spaces Safer for Everyone; Part III: Restorative approaches to musical-relational conflict," SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music, May 22, 2024, accessed February 20, 2025, <https://sounz.org.nz/articles/music-relationships-and-making-music-spaces-safer-everyone-1>. See also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Bloomsbury Academic, [1968] 2018); bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (Routledge, 1994); Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, "Kindness as Universal Design: Rethinking the College Music Classroom from Within," in *Sound Pedagogy: Radical Care in Music*, ed. Colleen Renihan, John Spilker, and Trudi Wright (University of Illinois Press, 2024).

<sup>37</sup> I was trained in restorative justice facilitation by Aspen Restorative Consulting, a restorative justice company founded and led by Haley Farrar; see "Aspen Restorative Consulting," accessed October 25, 2024, <https://www.aspenrestorativeconsulting.com/>.

<sup>38</sup> Students' sexualities, especially in environments of heteronormativity such as those typical of university jazz programs, are often not presented unless they align with heterosexual norms, so this intersecting element of oppression evades measure through university data metrics, which rely on how students identify in their university student profiles. With regard to the teaching profile of the program, the principal vocal teacher was a straight, white, cisman. For more on singing as a gendered area of jazz practice, see Lara Pellegrinelli, "Separated at 'Birth': Singing and the History of Jazz," in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* ed. Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (Duke University Press, 2008).

of their gender, race, sexuality, or any other category of identity (just like anyone can cultivate an environment of harm regardless of their identity). Rather, I suggest that the environment of this program, similar to many jazz programs, constituted a narrow but dominant bandwidth both of life experience and of ways of being in the world (and ways of being, musically) amongst the program's teachers and students.

I stepped into the role believing that the music flourishes when individuals of a range of identities are involved in making it, akin to what George Lewis has called the “new complexity.”<sup>39</sup> Additionally, this jazz program was at quite a different starting point than JGJ in terms of resources and possibilities for institutional program-building. Aside from the fact that we were not led by an internationally known musician like Terri Lyne Carrington, we, like many jazz programs in university schools of music, did not have the budget or institutional support required to launch an initiative at the scale of JGJ. But the need for change was similar to what Robinson and the editors of *Sound Pedagogy* had identified in their analyses of institutions of higher music education. The program director role allowed for some, even if limited, agency to respond to that need. In the absence of institutional resources, I looked to find common ground with colleagues so that we could together identify areas for possible development of initiatives that were systemic, grounded in care pedagogies, and generative of a collective approach to the music rather than an individualistic one. Among colleagues there was a shared desire to cultivate a focus on the communal elements of how the music is performed, which requires, as McMullen notes when describing Billy Taylor's experience, the “nurturing care of mentors” as a key element in creating “a jazz world of camaraderie, not ruthless competition.”<sup>40</sup> In addition, performative or tokenistic diversity work would not make a difference without, as Carrington has stated, “everyone rolling up their sleeves, digging in, widening their viewpoints, further stretching their

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<sup>39</sup> Referring to the powerful possibilities in bringing together people with a wide variety of identities and experiences, Lewis moves away from politicized and fraught discourses of “diversity,” instead borrowing and extending a term describing the music of composers like Richard Barrett, Brian Ferneyhough, and Michael Finnissy. He writes: “Multiplication of perspectives means multiplication of possibilities’ [referencing philosopher Arnold I. Davidson]... I fear that diversity discourse leads us to a prosthetics of inclusion—like a clunky metal knee replacement.” George Lewis, “New Music Decolonization in Eight Difficult Steps,” *Van Outernational*, 2020, <https://www.van-outernational.com/lewis-en/>. See also George Lewis, “George Lewis – Composer and Trombonist,” interview by David Norville and Shea Scruggs, *Black Music Seen*, Black Orchestral Network, September 19, 2024, <https://blackorchestralnetwork.podbean.com/e/george-lewis-composer-trombonist/>.

<sup>40</sup> McMullen, “Jazz Education,” 39.

compassion and understanding that this must be addressed and changed in order for their daughters and sons to have a better, more equitable world to live in.”<sup>41</sup>

In that spirit of finding common ground and digging in, faculty and staff colleagues and I worked to develop a number of intersectional initiatives to address gender inequity and injustice. I focus here on three of those initiatives, specific to jazz performance and education environments, whose restorative principles could be applied in other educational settings. These initiatives are just a few of many, together designed to cultivate safe and supportive environments that avoid the pitfalls of isolated DEI projects, such as the introduction of tokenism rather than structural change, or the inadvertent maintenance of existing status quo social hierarchies.<sup>42</sup> Rather than serving as cookie-cutter recommendations for others to emulate in their own contexts, they are examples of applying intersectional restorative justice principles to address the needs of a particular jazz education setting.

#### RESTORATIVE INITIATIVES IN A JAZZ PROGRAM

The first initiative was the most straightforward. We hired a number of women to teach in the program, making it the first time a woman instrumentalist instructor had taught in the program in at least six years. The teaching staff in the program at the start of my stint as program director included permanent faculty members who were all straight, white cismen (from New Zealand and around the British Commonwealth), and a set of adjunct instructors called Artist Teachers in the same identity categories, teaching individual instrument/voice lessons and leading small ensembles (combos) and some of the large ensembles (e.g., big bands, a guitar ensemble) on precarious term-by-term contracts, as well as the ciswoman adjunct instructor mentioned above, who was leading a group vocalists’ workshop every other week. Other than her, no female-presenting or nonbinary instructor was teaching any class in individual or group performance, theory, or improvisation.<sup>43</sup> A number of qualified women instrumentalists were

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in McMullen, “Jazz Education,” 40; see also Terri Lyne Carrington, “Sexism in Jazz: Being Agents of Change,” *Huffington Post*, April 10, 2017, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/sexism-in-jazz-agents-of-change\\_b\\_58ebfab1e4b0ca64d9187879](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/sexism-in-jazz-agents-of-change_b_58ebfab1e4b0ca64d9187879).

<sup>42</sup> For examples of how diversity initiatives diversity initiatives alone often serve to maintain the status quo, see Nancy Leong, *Identity Capitalists: The Powerful Insiders Who Exploit Diversity to Maintain Inequality* (Stanford University Press, 2021). For examples of faculty-level diversity initiatives with such negative impacts, see Sara Ahmed, *Complaint!* (Duke University Press, 2021), 65–67.

<sup>43</sup> This had been the case for several years to that point.

active in the community of musicians living in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington at the time, though none of them were among the Artist Teachers being hired annually to teach in the jazz performance program.

In the absence of institutional resources to create new faculty positions that could lead to more permanent change, the most immediate way to diversify the learning experience of students was to hire new women instrumentalists and composers in Artist Teacher roles.<sup>44</sup> In the process of implementing a new curriculum structure, I worked closely with the School Manager (a non-academic role similar to a business manager, whose responsibilities include monitoring adjunct teaching budgets) to first identify several areas lacking sufficient teaching staff and then create new Artist Teacher positions to staff those areas with minimal budgetary implications. I consulted heavily with colleagues on permanent faculty and with current adjuncts to fill the new positions in various areas of the program's teaching. As a rule, we did not replace any of the current Artist Teachers but used the new curriculum and budget structure to, as a first step, expand the number of Artist Teachers. Hiring women to teach some of the combo classes required of all students ensured that everyone took part in a performance class led by someone other than a white hetero cisman. Most of this work involved many unglamorous hours dealing with spreadsheets and having lengthy conversations about pedagogy with colleagues as we built trust with one another about developing the teaching profile of the program.

In some ways this initiative simply diversified the teaching staff of the program without eliminating the risks of tokenism. Other risks also remained, including the negative impacts of persistent social norms in which certain forms of masculinity are celebrated and other gendered behaviors are marginalized or shamed.<sup>45</sup> We mitigated these risks in a few ways. The women we hired, simply by being present in the space, increased the likelihood that more students might identify with their instructors' experiences in terms of gender. They also, alongside men we hired, helped generate an environment more broadly

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<sup>44</sup> This is one of the key premises of this article: that some change is possible even in the absence of significant institutional resources. I acknowledge that creating precarious work environments can add exponentially exploitative dynamics for individuals of minoritised genders, individuals of different abilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and Black, Indigenous and other individuals of the global majority. Though this created a precarious work environment for these instructors, no new permanent (i.e., tenure-track) positions were projected to be created, and in the program director role I was not able to successfully propose a new permanent position, though not for a lack of trying.

<sup>45</sup> This is in reference to the exclusionary forms of inclusion identified in Ahmed, *On Being Included*.

supportive for students.<sup>46</sup> All of these teachers had demonstrated intuitive ways of fostering supportive educational spaces, but we recognized that some professional development could further bolster their effectiveness in the classroom. So we designed both formal and informal ways of mentoring Artist Teachers as they acclimated to teaching at the university level for the first time.

It was also clear to colleagues and I that a significant element of cultivating an inclusive environment where students of all genders could thrive was doing so among students themselves. The addition of women instructors did not guarantee change. For example, we continued to receive reports from women and nonbinary students that their learning spaces were dominated by the voices of straight white men, particularly in their jazz combo ensemble classes. The tendencies of these men to dictate the musical direction of their combos replicates jazz's gendered dynamics that lead to career barriers for non-cismen as well as forms of harm such as those outlined by Berliner, Boeyink, and others mentioned above.<sup>47</sup> In addressing the domination of certain individual voices and silencing of others in student spaces (which suggests that collectivity and care were not broadly experienced in those spaces), it seemed that strategies grounded in restorative justice principles could be effective.

One way to understand restorative justice principles is through a model called the Social Discipline Window (Figure 1).<sup>48</sup> It describes four approaches to relationships in a group, along axes of increasing levels of support and increasing levels of expectations for behavior. Environments with high expectations for behavior and low support are punitive, while those with low expectations for behavior and high support are permissive. Settings with low expectations and low support are neglectful, while those with high expectations and high support are restorative, because they cultivate environments that are both nurturing *and* have clear behavioral expectations.

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<sup>46</sup> The Artist Teachers we hired at that time were only ciswomen and cismen. In the years since that time, other instructors have been hired whose gender identity does not conform to a man/woman binary.

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Berliner, "An Open Letter"; Boeyink "Jazzwomen in Higher Education"; Steiner and Manfredo, "In Her Own Words"; and Hall and Burke, "Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity."

<sup>48</sup> Ted Wachtel, "Restorative Justice in Everyday Life: Beyond the Formal Ritual," paper presentation at the Reshaping Australian Institutions Conference: Restorative Justice and Civil Society, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, February 16–18, 1999, <https://www.iirp.edu/eforum-archive/4221-restorative-justice-in-everyday-life-beyond-the-formal-ritual>; see also Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel, "In Pursuit of Paradigm: A Theory of Restorative Justice," *Restorative Practices EForum*, August 12, 2003, <https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/paradigm.pdf>.

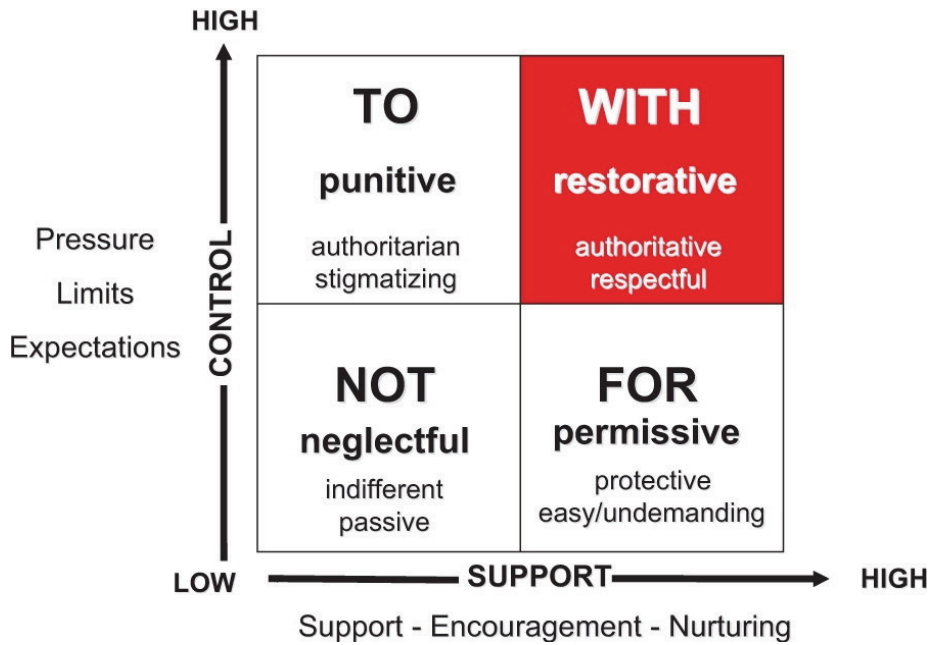


Figure 1. The Social Discipline Window (adapted from Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel). Used with permission of International Institute for Restorative Practices.

One of the strategies for building relationships in restorative frameworks is called a connection circle or, sometimes, simply a circle. Connection circles offer a concrete framework for a group’s members to design ways that they want to be well together, in terms of how individuals’ behavior can attend to the needs of each individual and of the group. A circle allows for individuals in a group to express what they need to be supported, and it enables a group to come to a consensus on behavioral standards. In a facilitated format, connection circles begin with each person in a group voluntarily committing to certain actions, such as listening respectfully, speaking honorably and only when it is one’s turn, and not sharing anything from the circle with people outside of it after it comes to a close. Then, going around the circle one-by-one, each person responds to a question posed by the facilitator (or can decline to speak). The group proceeds through a few rounds of questions designed to build trust incrementally and that allow participants to share what they need from the group as it goes about its

activities, potentially enabling the group to establish shared values, if it desires to do so.<sup>49</sup>

At NZSM, we first attempted to address male students' dominance in combo classes and other program spaces by implementing once-per-term all-student training sessions on professional respect, delivered by trained social workers on university staff. This had some positive impact as students gained awareness and relational skills in setting healthy boundaries and respecting the boundaries of others, but many hierarchies in student spaces remained unaddressed. With the support of the team of social workers, and in discussion with members of the teaching staff, we decided to facilitate connection circles in the combo classes at the start of a term. By this time I had been trained as a restorative facilitator, so the lead social worker and I, alongside two teaching colleagues, co-designed a circle structure for the combo classes. I first facilitated the circle with the combo teachers and trained them in how to facilitate this circle with students. We then conducted a circle with each jazz combo (five to eight students each) in the program on the first day of the semester. The questions, which we designed to suit the jazz combo environment, asked each student to express what their work (e.g., their singing, their listening, their playing, their musical-interpersonal interaction) looked like when they felt supported, and to share what they needed in order to feel that they were included in a combo group.

In the circles I facilitated, I observed a flattening of the hierarchy in action. Each person, regardless of their musical experience or training, was allotted the same platform to have a voice. Individuals with tendencies to dominate a space agreed not to interrupt others (high expectations for behavior), and in so doing willingly gave space to those who might be reticent to speak up (high support). Those who preferred not to speak were allowed to pass, but, in many of our circles, everyone chose to speak. In the circle, their contributions collectively shaped how group interaction—verbally, musically, in every way—would proceed in that particular musical ensemble during the term. This was a shift from previous semesters, in which some students felt disempowered with regard to shaping their ensemble environments, other than in reacting to and reporting unjust behavior after it had occurred. With the introduction of circles, we witnessed individuals of dominant identities and positionalities listen and

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<sup>49</sup> For more on connection circles, see, e.g., Barry Stewart, Mark Wedge, and Kay Pranis, *Peacemaking Circles: From Conflict to Community* (Living Justice Press, 2003); and Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, *Circle Forward*, revised edition (Living Justice Press, 2020).

understand the desires of those who found it challenging to voice their perspectives due to gendered and other structural constraints.

I was inspired by the implementations of circles that term. In my casual observations, the combo classes during the term had notably fewer challenges related to gender and other hierarchy-related dynamics. But circles are not a one-time cure-all for environments in need of repair. They need to recur as a tool for a collective of people to habitually nurture its space, the individuals in it, and the group as a whole. If connection circles become a habit of a collective, such as a jazz combo program, that collective can establish familiar paths to cultivating a restorative environment characterised by high expectations for behavior and high levels of support for all. The colleagues leading the combo program have continued to implement connection circles to this end, providing students with recurring opportunities to practice the ways they want to relate to one another in their ensembles and in their broader music communities.

For the third initiative, we changed a performance assessment procedure that had been perpetuating systemic inequity. Every semester, end-of-term performance assessments required students to perform with or as part of a rhythm section, which they formed themselves by asking peers to volunteer their time and labor. This worked well for the more skilled players and vocalists, and for those with privileged dominant identities, who had established social networks among others with the same skill sets and/or identities. Students outside these networks had less access to the more experienced rhythm section players, and so they tended to perform their assessments with less experienced musicians. This typically held their performance back, and semester after semester they tended to receive lower grades, grow less musically, and remain perpetually outside the circles of more proficient players. In addition, the rhythm section players with more experience, or who played instruments with fewer players available (especially bass players in this case), typically volunteered to play ten or more assessments to support their peers. When it came time for their own assessment, their physical and mental wellbeing had suffered. In my first semester as program director, a woman who was a first-year student approached me in tears at an all-program performance workshop one week before her assessment, telling me she had no rhythm section to play with her. After I walked with her to approach a kind fourth-year rhythm section player who helped her form a group (an individual solution, not a systematic change), I shared this incident with colleagues, and we decided we needed to alter the program requirements.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> This anonymized anecdote is shared with permission.

First, I sat down with the School Manager and described this problem to her. As a woman who had recognized the gender-based systemic discrimination occurring in this case, she was inspired to help address this problem. She also knew the budget lines that paid experienced classical piano accompanists for every performance assessment in the classical performance program each semester provided a precedent for the jazz program to do the same. We managed to implement a system in which we hired house rhythm sections composed of recent graduates and third- and fourth-year students via a standard university hourly employment contract commonly used for individuals at those levels. In consultation with the other permanent faculty, I chose the players for each rhythm section, with the criteria of having the musical skills to support students and exhibiting kindness and professional conduct. We tried to hire rhythm sections comprising individuals with a range of experiences regarding their genders and other identity categories as well.

A number of the more proficient instrumentalists among the students initially resisted this model, and many asked us if they could instead perform with their friends. We took this feedback to heart and gave third- and fourth-year students the option to choose their own players, though we were wary of the risks posed to the wellbeing of those volunteering. For the first- and second-year students who had requested to play with their friends, we acknowledged the relational discomfort that might come from playing with musicians they didn't know well. But we encouraged them by telling them they would likely perform better when playing with hired rhythm section musicians and potentially enjoy the experience to a greater degree. With this new approach, barriers were removed for students who were less socially positioned to recruit a highly-skilled rhythm section. This system continued after I stepped down from the program director position, morphing into different forms as student needs changed, and it is an initiative the School Manager and I look back on fondly in the history of our collaborative work.

Taken together, these and a number of other initiatives correlated with the increase in the percentage of female and gender non-conforming jazz majors from 7% in 2019 to a peak of 33% in 2023, out of an average (mean) of 74 total jazz performance majors during that period.<sup>51</sup> Part of this increase had to do with retention of women and gender non-confirming students from year to year. In addition, news about positive experiences of women in the program and about women instrumentalists serving as Artist Teachers began to spread within the

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<sup>51</sup> This data comes from university enrollment records, where students self-identify as either male, female, or gender non-conforming. The total number of jazz majors ranged from a low of 68 students in 2022 to a high of 84 students in 2021.

tight-knit network of New Zealand high school music teachers and among high school students and parents. This shift in reputation may have also impacted decisions for students to enroll in the program. Though we do not have evidence to demonstrate that the initiatives directly caused an increase in participation in the program across a wider gender spectrum, these numbers indicate a potential correlation between the initiatives and an increase in non-cismale participation. But even if there is a correlation, the peak at 33% suggests that these efforts were only able to partially address the systemic, institutional, and societal barriers to a broader participation in jazz across spectrums of gender and other intersecting identities.

All three of these initiatives were grounded in restorative values of providing high levels of support *and* having high expectations for behavior. Hiring the additional Artist Teachers (providing support) was accompanied by training and mentorship (providing a high bar for the quality of their work). Training students in relational skills and implementing connection circles allowed all involved parties to define shared expectations and support one another. By hiring rhythm sections for assessments, we increased support for students of all experience levels and raised expectations both in terms of their performance skills and actions towards one another. With these and other interventions flowing in confluence with one another, we saw a reduction of the risks inherent in isolated DEI initiatives such as tokenism and the inadvertent perpetuation of harmful environments.

Though we saw positive impact as a result of these initiatives, each had its imperfections. For example, the cohort of new Artist Teachers, by definition, had little to no experience teaching at the university level and had high needs for training and mentorship. While we did provide that, we did not have the staffing capacity to do so to the extent many Artist Teachers felt they needed, and some expressed that they lacked adequate support. The majority of students and Artist Teachers embraced the connection circles, but that has not been universal. Even though circles are always fully voluntary, the power dynamics inherent in educational spaces are still present, and there is a possibility that some individuals may have participated in a begrudging or disingenuous manner. The effectiveness of circles in building trust and restorative relationships may have thus been limited. Administering the rhythm sections for assessments has also been challenging, as coordinating schedules and arranging the hiring of players is a time-intensive task for an already overworked administrative team.

These imperfections notwithstanding, the three examples also represent how we implemented interrelated approaches that were broad enough to begin destabilizing harmful hierarchies that had been shaped not only by sexism, but also by racism, homophobia, and other intersecting forms of discrimination. By

focusing on care and collectivity in developing strategic interventions into the institutional systems within which we did have agency, we were able to begin addressing the intersectionally unjust structures that have shaped jazz education. In taking these first small, and sometimes imperfect, steps on a longer journey toward just and equitable educational experiences, we have been able to catch glimpses of, to extend the words of JGJ, what jazz might sound like without patriarchy and the other forms of oppression with which it intersects.<sup>52</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: AN INVITATION

In early 2023, after I had stepped down from the program director position, one of the young women among the jazz majors came to my office hours for help on an essay, and I made small talk by asking her how things were going for her overall in her studies. She shared joyfully that she was loving her experience and had been bragging to her secondary-school siblings about how great her teachers are. Hearing this was encouraging, as it provided a glimpse of a world of jazz without patriarchy, and some concrete evidence that these intersectional initiatives were producing positive results. But the barriers to ending discrimination persist. In 2024 the incoming class of jazz majors had just one woman, and the overall jazz program student body was 88% white. (For comparison, from 2019 to 2024 the overall student population at the university was between 65% and 70% white.) The systemic gendered, heteronormative, whiteness-centric obstacles to participating in this music remain prevalent. Initiatives in university and other professional environments are attempting to intervene in systems where the impacts of injustice and inequity are significant and ongoing.

Because harm based on gender, sexuality, race, and other intersecting categories for belonging pervades jazz worlds, interventions for justice need to be similarly pervasive.<sup>53</sup> This article aims to provide encouragement towards channelling effort and energy into making change at a systemic level, even where resources might be limited. It outlines the need for restorative approaches and care-based pedagogies in addressing injustice at the site of a university jazz program, and it tells the stories of some of our collaborative attempts to strategically intervene in systems that perpetuate injustices. Guided by commitments to the collectivity and community care at the heart of jazz, and

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<sup>52</sup> See “Berklee Institute.”

<sup>53</sup> For a related argument focused on broader public education in the U.S., see Jennifer Gale de Saxe, “Complicating Resistance: Intersectionality, Liberation, and Democracy,” in *Educating for Critical Consciousness*, ed. George Yancy (Routledge, 2019).

grounded in practical strategies to cultivate restorative environments that combine high expectations with high support, effective systemic change in jazz environments is possible. These efforts are needed in every setting where the music lives, and can be implemented by any range of individuals. In addition to those in higher education, people can draw on these principles to cultivate justice from any number of positions: as high school teachers, concert promoters, venue owners, managers, employees of festival organizations, journalists and others in media, parents of young musicians, and, of course, musicians themselves.

In a sense, this article is an invitation to you, the reader, to participate in expanding what jazz might look and sound like by joining a global, collective effort to strategically dismantle prevailing structures of injustice. Regardless of your own identity, there are ways that you can contribute to this effort to make jazz worlds, which are interrelated with all of the worlds we live in, into places of healing and liberation rather than places of harm and limitation. For those motivated to pursue this work, keep your eyes and ears open for others in your community who want to think and act in restorative ways steeped in care. Build trust with one another, learn together, and think deeply together about how you might intervene in concrete ways that address structural injustices in your particular community, even at what might seem like a small scale. Your cultivation of collectivity and care, regardless of whether it seems significant or not, will have an impact on the lives of those involved in the creation of the music. Your action joins you to the efforts of others everywhere, working together to bring jazz spaces closer to the heart of what the music is all about.

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