

# Introduction to ACT 22.2

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**T**he 32nd Colloquium of the MayDay Group (MDG32) was originally scheduled to be hosted at the University of Oregon in June 2020 in conjunction with the 4th Symposium for LGBTQ Studies and Music Education (QMUE4). Planning committees of both organizations were excited about the possibilities of a joint event and the opportunities for collective work around justice and equity to have further reach and scope. As the world went into lockdown in March 2020, the steering committees of both conferences made the decision to postpone the event a full year with the hopes that the severity of the pandemic would diminish enough for us to gather again in 2021. After careful consideration of the health and safety of presenters and potential participants, the planning committees later decided to proceed with the colloquium as a virtual event from the 29th of June to the 1st of July 2021. Following the murder of George Floyd in June 2020, members of the MayDay Group rewrote an action ideal around anti-oppressive actions and issued a new call for proposals for the virtual event:

**We engage in anti-oppressive actions that challenge and oppose injustices, including white supremacy and cultural elitism, and contribute to equitable experiences in teaching, learning, and musicing.**

As reflective agents of social change, we create, sustain, and contribute to ways of knowing, doing, and using music in order to address, transform, and/or embrace the conditions of our world. Musical activity and educational conventions—dynamic, living processes rife with power asymmetries and individual and collective biases—develop within diverse contexts and communities of practice. All participants in the teaching and learning process bring a knowledge base that has the potential to extend benefit to one another.

MDG32 presenters were asked to consider the following questions:

- How can music educators expose and oppose structures, curricula, policies, discourse, and actions in educational institutions, spaces, and communities that are detrimental to supporting an equitable, inclusive, diverse, and just environment for teaching, learning, and musicing?
- What are actionable ways in which we can educate ourselves and each other on anti-racism and decolonization in musical and pedagogical spaces?
- In what ways might democratic modes of interaction including polyvocality be a conduit to sharing power in music teaching and learning?
- How can music educators intentionally explore and express diverse ideas related to equality and privilege that stem from identity constructions such as class, ability, race, sexual orientation, age, gender, sex, ethnicity, and religion and their intersectionalities?

A more broadly written call for proposals was advertised for the QMUE4 symposium, centered around LGBTQ identity. Presenters for that symposium were asked to consider the following questions:

- How is LGBTQ identity reflected in the diverse ways that we make music as human beings?
- In what unique ways does music participation enrich the lives of LGBTQ individuals?
- In what ways can music education enrich the lives of LGBTQ teachers and students?
- In what ways can we support LGBTQ teachers and students to reach musical self-fulfillment or maximize their musical potential?
- How do LGBTQ topics intersect with issues related to identity, such as socio-economic status, ability, race, sexual orientation, age, gender, sex, ethnicity, and religion?
- How can we work towards increased accessibility and equity in music curricula for all music learners?
- How can we create continuously developing and sustainable partnerships for musical activity within our local communities that promote and support LGBTQ persons?

Fifty-five participants drew upon these prompts to generate 45 peer-reviewed presentations for the MDG32 Colloquium / QMUE4 Symposium, which took place virtually over a period of three days. Planning committee members for both groups designed a schedule that helped (1) accommodate participants across multiple time zones, (2) limited the amount of synchronous on-screen time each day, and

(3) provided focused opportunities for questions and discourse among colleagues. Presenters prepared pre-recorded asynchronous 20-minute presentations in order to share primary content with participants two weeks prior to the live event. This allowed participants at the conferences to focus on questions and conversation during the one-hour synchronous meeting blocks. Each one-hour block showcased three presentations with related/intersecting themes. Each presenter was allotted fifteen minutes for a brief synopsis of their paper and time for questions and responses. At the end of three fifteen-minute presentations, a facilitator moderated an additional fifteen-minute discussion during which attendees could ask further questions, explore intersections among the three individual presentations, and consider possibilities for future research. Following the synchronous event, presenters were encouraged to rework their papers for submission to an issue dedicated to the themes of the MDG32 Colloquium and QMUE4 Symposium.

## The Papers

**Juliet Hess** troubles and extends activist music education by drawing on the concepts of nomadism, territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization from Deleuze and Guattari (2005/1987) to consider what they describe as “lines of flight—creative lines that reveal open spaces.” Drawing upon research conducted for her book, *Music Education for Social Change*, Hess reveals the paradox of what might constitute a line of flight when activism shapes the curriculum. She points out that activism, which sometimes is “flexible and nomadic in a real-world context,” can become regimented when institutionalized. As such, Hess warns that “when we fail to subject radical action to critique...we risk reinscribing oppressive discourses.”

**Jody Stark** explores several complicating factors that impact White music teachers as they work towards decolonizing their teaching practices. Drawing from data collected over a period of two years, Stark considers the positionally and framing of the dialogue she encountered with eight elementary music teachers from a city on the Canadian prairies. She focuses specifically on the discourses of multiculturalism, the claiming of good intentions, the appetite for spectacle and consumption implicit in a Western extractivist worldview, and teaching “works” or “pieces” rather than human practices. Drawing on Dylan Robinson’s (2020) work,

Stark promotes a process of allyship and working in dialogue to disrupt the normative processes of our discipline.

Through an historical analysis, **William Southerland** explores how LGBTQ+ choruses in the United States have played an important role in the development of queer movement culture. He points out that the historical development of the LGBTQ+ choral movement in the United States demonstrates how processes of cultural institutionalization reproduce social inequalities. Advocating for a more critical analysis of the LGBTQ+ choral community, Southerland, suggests that such a musicological approach may help music educators interrogate and identify discrepancies between the benevolent intent and the complicated, sometimes inverted power embedded in music institutions and their impact on participants, communities, and culture.

**Jessica McKiernan** and **Colleen McNickle** conducted a study that documented the experience of one women's choir as they examined their identity as an ensemble and the suitability of their gendered name in reflecting that perceived identity. Though they initially intended to explore the name of an ensemble, they instead unearthed several systemic issues within choral ensembles. Drawing on an intersectional feminist framework, they define, address, and problematize ideas surrounding empowerment, shared experiences, and gender essentialism and advocate for choral music educators to interrogate practices in gendered ensembles to determine if their ensembles are truly inclusive to singers of a variety of gender identities.

These four papers are representative of the deep discourse and meaningful engagement of our communities at the MDG32 Colloquium and QMUE4 Symposium. Those in attendance expressed feeling challenged, inspired, and hopeful by the important work that was presented—something that was truly needed in the middle of a global pandemic and amidst a year of racial reckoning. Participants spoke of a sense that a shift was occurring in our field and that perhaps some of the demands and work of our previous colloquia and symposia might actually be coming to fruition. Could it be that we were witnessing actual progress? The answer is yes. However, two years later we continue to witness a highly organized backlash to the gains made for sexual, gender, and racial diversity. There has been a concerted effort to overturn voting rights, reproductive rights, trans rights, gay rights as well as to install highly oppressive legislation among local and national governments around the world. The banning of books, the restrictions on research

related to as well as workshops that support the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the systematic erasure of counter narratives by Black, Indigenous, and people of color have contributed to a need for renewed efforts by both organizations to challenge, critique, and push the field of music education further.

At MDG32, the MayDay Group adopted a newly revised set of eight action ideals. Since then, two colloquia have occurred to address two of these ideals: MDG33, hosted at the University of Windsor in Canada, looked at the role of Technology and Digital Media, and MDG34, hosted at the Universidad Veracruzana in Xalapa, Mexico looked at Collaborations Across Cultures. Both provided robust critical discussions on topics that addressed issues of access, justice, and equity. There are many inequities in the world that continue to need addressing, especially in light of recent legislative actions. That is why I am excited to announce that a 5th Symposium for LGBTQ Studies and Music Education will be held in Chicago from June 24–26, 2024, co-sponsored by the University of Illinois Chicago and Northwestern University. The goal of this symposium is to gather music teachers, students, performers, researchers, activists, and community organizers to critically challenge taken-for-granted norms and to propose action towards change within musical spaces. And of course, the MayDay Group will also offer an opportunity to engage in meaningful discourse around the action ideal on Theory and Philosophy at its 35th Colloquium to be held June 9–12, 2024, at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. Be on the lookout for both calls for proposals. We hope you will join us.

## References

- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 2005/1987. *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press.
- Robinson, Dylan. 2020. *Hungry listening: Resonant theory for Indigenous sound studies*. University of Minnesota Press.