

Open Letter on Antiracist Actions Within SMT

In the first 10 days after publishing on July 29, 2020, this letter received more than 900 signatures. Since the rate of signing has lowered, we are no longer updating the letter as of August 20, 2020. Thank you for your support!

At the Plenary Session of the Society for Music Theory's 2019 meeting, Philip Ewell, Yayoi Uno Everett, Ellie Hisama, and Joseph Straus powerfully demonstrated how systemic racism, sexism, and ableism animate musical discourse. They spoke not only with candor and wisdom, but also with exceptional courage. The *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*, in Volume 12, has just published a number of vitriolic responses to a single aspect of one presentation—under the pretense of scholarly debate, no less—and the ensuing scandal has diverted our field's focus from the structural critiques made in the plenary. The journal's violation of academic standards of peer review, its singling out of Prof. Ewell while denying him a chance to respond, and [the language of many of its essays](#) constitute anti-Black racism. These actions provide further evidence of the structural force of white supremacy in our discipline. While this episode is the most recent, and perhaps the most illustrative, the treatment Prof. Ewell received from the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* is only the latest instance of systemic racism that marginalized Society members have faced for many years.

We applaud the [recent statement](#) of the Executive Board of the Society for Music Theory. To aid the Executive Board in their aim to “determine further actions,” we the undersigned advocate for the following:

1. A public statement from the President, authorized by the Executive Board and in accordance with the Policy on Public Statements, that SMT acknowledges the following three points: (a) that American music theory is historically rooted in white supremacy, the racist idea that whites are superior to nonwhites, (b) that these white supremacist roots have resulted in racist policies that have benefitted whites and whiteness while disadvantaging nonwhites and nonwhiteness, and (c) that these racist policies have resulted in injustices suffered by BIPOC at all stages of their careers. Further, we call upon the President, with the authorization of the Executive Board, to apologize to all BIPOC who have suffered such injustices, without equivocation.
2. A demonstration of support by the Society for the graduate students of the University of North Texas Department of Music History, Theory, and Ethnomusicology in their [call for accountability](#). We recommend that this support take the form of a letter to UNT Press demanding a full and truthful account of recent editorial processes at the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*. This account should include information pertaining to which authors submitted works through the call for responses and which were invited to

participate individually, a description of the peer review process, details of which members of the editorial board, advisory board, and journal staff viewed submissions before publication, and an explanation of how certain authors were able to separate their roles as academic advisors to the editorial staff from their roles as authors.

3. The establishment of an Ombudsperson position or committee that advocates on behalf of those disadvantaged by imbalances of power in cases of conflict and misconduct related to journal editing, publications, conferences, governance, and teaching, since SMT has a role to play in promoting its policies for all members in all professional situations.
4. A statement that calls upon Society members to resign from the editorial board of the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*, as the journal's recent comportment is incompatible with the SMT Policy on Ethics.
5. An amendment to the SMT Policy on Harassment, as it pertains to publication, to apply to members' behavior in all their scholarly endeavors, not only in SMT publications, discussion groups, and interest group interactions.
6. A censure of the advisory board of the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*, pursuant to relevant portions of the SMT Mission Statement, Policy on Ethics, and Policy on Harassment, as the Society's policies have no meaning if violations do not invite censure. In particular, the Policy on Harassment states that "cases of proven offenses" will result in "revocation of membership and honors."
7. That all members of the society, as individuals, confront the ways we ourselves have sustained systems of racism and sexism through our own scholarship and pedagogy. The adoption of the above points is not a substitute for this self-reflection. That self-reflection will be aided by recent studies and works on antiracism, such as those [Harvard has compiled](#) and those in the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#). Members affiliated with an institution of higher learning can likely contact staff members dedicated to antiracist training and pedagogy. [Project Spectrum's keynote address at the 2020 MTSNYS conference](#) also outlines important steps that individual theorists can take toward enacting change in our field.

It is only through acknowledgment and sustained, careful reflection that we can truly begin to address these issues as an academic community. As a starting point, each music theorist must ask themselves: What books and articles do I read? What scholars do I cite in my own research? What music do I analyze in my research and in my classes? What readings do I assign in my classes? What interest groups am I involved with? What committees do I serve on and what is the racial and gender makeup of those committees? What students do I mentor? In short, we all need to ask ourselves: What have I done as an individual to perpetuate existing white supremacist systems of power and inequity in our field? Probing these questions in our work individually is essential to our collective reckoning.

This document was collaboratively authored by eight music theorists who identify as white: Edward Klorman, Stephen Lett, Rachel Lumsden, Mitch Ohriner, Cora S. Palfy, Nathan Pell, Chris Segall, and Daniel Shanahan. As is too often the case, white racial activism relies on uncredited labor by BIPOC. This document has benefitted from criticism, editing, and authorship by Philip Ewell, Anna Gawboy, Jennifer Iverson, Vivian Luong, and Toru Momii. Its failings rest with the initial authors.

We also believe that there is broad support within the music theory community and beyond for the views expressed in this letter. If you would like to show your solidarity, please add your name by filling out the form found at the following link [*no longer active*].

Signed,

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Alexander Morgan, New York
Landon Morrison, Harvard University
Brian Moseley, SUNY Buffalo
Imani Danielle Mosley, University of Florida
Tahirih Motazedian, Vassar College
Andre Mount, Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam
Reinaldo Moya , Augsburg University, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Dorian Mueller, University of Michigan
Stephen Muir, University of Leeds, UK
Scott Murphy, University of Kansas
Alana Murphy, CUNY Graduate Center/ RILM
Barbara Murphy, University of Tennessee-Knoxville
Nancy Murphy, University of Houston
Estelle Murphy, Maynooth University, Ireland
Derek J. Myler, Eastman School of Music
Robert Nance, University of North Texas
Jessica Narum, Baldwin Wallace University
Meghan Naxer, Oregon State University
Jocelyn Neal, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Severine Neff, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Emeritus
Dr. Lisa Neher, Portland, OR
Christoph Neidhöfer, McGill University
Trevor R. Nelson, Eastman School of Music--University of Rochester
Anna Rose Nelson, University of Michigan
Joshua Neumann , University of Florida
Bryce Newcomer, Xavier University
Neil Newton, Los Angeles, CA
Patrick Nickleson, Queen's University
Demi Nicks, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Maggie Nicks, Florida State University
Jack Haig Nighan, Indiana University
Drew Nobile, University of Oregon
Michael Norris, Victoria University of Wellington
Felipe Ledesma Núñez, Harvard University
Shaugn O'Donnell, The City College, CUNY
William O'Hara, Gettysburg College
Russell O'Rourke, Columbia University
Jennifer Oates, Queens College, CUNY
Chelsea Oden, University of Oregon
Judith Ofcarcik, Fort Hays State University
Mitch Ohriner, University of Denver
Hideaki Onishi, Singapore
Dani Van Oort, University of North Texas
Michael Oravitz, University of Northern Colorado
Jeremy Orosz, University of Memphis
David Orvek, Indiana University
Mariam Osman, Indiana University
Anna-Elena Pääkkölä, Åbo Akademi University, Finland
Kirsten Paige, Stanford University
Cora S. Palfy, Elon University
James Palmer, Vancouver, Canada
Jinny Park, Indiana University
Hyeonjin Park, UCLA
Joon Park, University of Arkansas
Sarah Parkin, London, UK
Laurel Parsons, University of Alberta
Daniel Partridge, Portland State University
Morgan Patrick, Northwestern University
Andrew Pau, Oberlin College & Conservatory
William Pearson, DePauw University
Robert D. Pearson, Emory University
Jacy Pedersen, University of Cincinnati
Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, University of Ottawa
Crystal Peebles, Ithaca College
Nathan Pell, The Graduate Center, CUNY
Rich Pellegrin, University of Florida
Anna C. Peloso, Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music
Naomi Perley, RILM

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Lukas Perry, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester
Becky Perry, Lawrence University
V Spike Peterson, University of Arizona
Marie-Ève Piché, McGill University
Marcelle Pierson, University of Pittsburgh
Miriam Piilonen, Northwestern University
John R. Pippen, Colorado State University
Chad Polk, Cleveland Institute of Music
Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey, University of Oxford
Mariana Poole, Elon University
Ève Poudrier, University of British Columbia
Andrew S. Powell, Independent Scholar (University of Kansas alum)
Sarah Pozderac-Chenevey, Independent scholar, Akron, OH
Roxane Prevost, University of Ottawa
Simon Prosser, The Graduate Center, CUNY
Jasbir Puar, Rutgers University
Joel Puckett, Peabody Conservatory, Johns Hopkins University
Katherine Pukinskis, Amherst College
Michael Puri, University of Virginia
Ian Quinn, Yale University
Steven Rahn, University of Texas at Austin
Shanika Ranasinghe, Royal Holloway, University of London
Richard Randall, Carnegie Mellon University
Jacob Reed, University of Chicago
S. Alexander Reed, Associate Professor, Ithaca College
John S. Reef, Nazareth College
Sam Reenan, Eastman School of Music
Alan Reese, Cleveland Institute of Music
Alex Rehding, Harvard University
Samuel Reich, Denison University/University of Cincinnati
Molly Reid, Appalachian State University
Connor Reinman, Indiana University
Christopher Reynolds, UC Davis
Anne-Marie Reynolds, Juilliard School
Adam Ricci, UNC Greensboro
Mark Richardson, East Carolina University
Melanie Richter-Montpetit, University of Sussex
Deborah Rifkin, Ithaca College

Steven Rings, University of Chicago
Marianna Ritchey, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Blake Ritchie, Rutgers University
S R I Rizvi, Sahibganj College, Sahibganj, Jharkhand, India
Malia Jade Roberson, California State University, Channel Islands
Brian Robison, Northeastern University
Theresa Rochowski , University of West Georgia
Joti Rockwell, Pomona College
Stephen Rodgers, University of Oregon
Lynne Rogers, Mannes School of Music at The New School
Jillian C. Rogers, Indiana University
Allyson Rogers, McGill University
J. Griffith Rollefson, University College Cork
Ashley Rolon-Marlowe, Hunter College, CUNY
Jena Root, Youngstown State University (Ohio)
Adam Rosado, Iona College
Rachel Rosenman, Harvard University
Joshua Rosner, McGill University
Martin Ross, Western University
Jade Roth, McGill University
Paul N Roth, University of San Diego California
Katrina Roush, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Charles Roush, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Toby W. Rush, University of Dayton
Declan Ryan, DePaul University School of Music
Eron F. S. , Eastman School of Music
Siavash Sabetrohani, University of Chicago
Siavash Sabetrohani , University of Chicago
Alex Sallade, The Ohio State University
Keith Salley, Shenandoah University
Mark Sallmen, University of Toronto
Cristina Saltos , University of Texas at Austin
Frank Samarotto , Indiana University Bloomington
Lanier Sammons, California State University, Monterey Bay
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Olga Sánchez-Kisielewska, University of Chicago
Felicia Sandler, New England Conservatory
Giorgio Sanguinetti, University of Rome "Tor Vergata"
Matthew Leslie Santana, UC San Diego

Matthew C. Saunders, Lakeland Community College (Kirtland, Ohio)
Isaac Schankler, Cal Poly Pomona
Andrew Schartmann, New England Conservatory
James Schippers, Michigan State University
Alexandria Schneider, University of Kansas
Katherine Schofield, King's College London
Peter Schubert, McGill University
Matthew D. M. Schullman, University of Oklahoma (Norman)
Scott Schumann, Central Michigan University
Emily Schwitzgebel, Northwestern University
Travis Scott, Xavier University of Louisiana
Jo Collinson Scott, Reader in Music, University of the West of Scotland
Derek B. Scott, University of Leeds, UK
Tyler M. Secor, University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music
Chris Segall, University of Cincinnati
Kate Sekula, University of Science and Arts of Education
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Douglas Shadle, Vanderbilt University
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Daniel Shanahan, The Ohio State University
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Joel T. Shelton, Elon University
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Christopher Sherwood-Gabrielson, University of Michigan
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Daniel Stevens, University of Delaware
Bryan Stevens, University of North Texas
Joseph Stiefel, Indiana University
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Nicholas Stoia, Duke University
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Chris Stover, University of Oslo
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Blake Taylor, University of Connecticut
Emma Taylor, The Hartt School at the University of Hartford
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Wilfrido Terrazas, University of California, San Diego
Loretta Terrigno, The Juilliard School
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Robert Gross, Board Certified Music Therapist, Denton, TX
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Alexis Millares Thomson, University of Toronto
Emmi Tinajero, University of North Texas
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Isabel Tweraser, Florida State University
Kristian Twombly, Chair, St Cloud State University
Dr. Finn Upham, McGill University, Schulich School of Music
Elizabeth Randell Upton, UCLA
Diane Urista, Cleveland Institute of Music
Stephanie Venturino, Eastman School of Music
Vivek Virani, University of North Texas
Samantha Waddell, Michigan State University

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Steve Waksman, Smith College
Daniel K.S. Walden, University of Oxford
Kristen Wallentinsen, Rutgers University
Zachary Wallmark, University of Oregon
Levi Walls, University of North Texas
Robert Walser, Case Western Reserve University
Jordan Walsh, University of Texas at Austin
Aleisha Ward, National Library of New Zealand
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Lindsay Warrenburg, Boston, MA
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