

SongFest

Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

At SongFest we believe in a world where equal opportunity is possible for all.

We recognize that when all people feel seen, heard, and respected for who they are, that learning deepens, teaching becomes more meaningful, and all those who work together, grow together. We are committed to establishing inclusive and equitable practices that allow staff, faculty, board and students to draw on their varied experiences and perspectives, equipping the next generation to claim their future place in the music world. In turn, these practices will lift up our organization and make it stronger.

For too long the classical music industry has allowed the obvious issues that pervade our spaces, particularly those of discrimination on the basis of race and gender, to be put off. The following is a list of actionable steps that will involve every aspect of our work. Some can and will be immediately adopted, and some will require training, work over time, and a deeper reckoning to implement. Therefore, we are committed to this beginning, and we intend to follow through with hard work. As SongFest has been a training ground for artists who share their love of song across the world, we hope that the results of these steps will radiate across our industry for years to come.

Policy: Actionable Steps

- 1) We are committed to serving our community without prejudice to *Ethnicity, race, culture; sexual orientation, gender, people who are differently abled; national origin; education, socio-economic status; religious non-religious beliefs* or any other group that makes up our population.
- 2) We promise to move forward with humility and an open mind, to listen, and keep trying when mistakes are made.
- 3) In hiring or appointing new faculty, administrative staff, or board members, we will be following best practices for making sure that these communities better reflect the makeup of the population we serve.
- 4) Audiences: we will commit to continue to produce programs which include repertoire and languages from diverse communities in Los Angeles County. Recent past programs have included **“Voice of the Spirit”** A conversation with four internationally renowned African American Opera singers: Florence Quivar, George Shirley, Dr. Ollie Watts Davis, and Dr. Katherine Jolly. These singers and pedagogues discuss their musical heritage and upbringing, the Negro Spiritual, and the performance practice of this important music.

VIEW: **“Voice of the Spirit”** songfest.us/june-17-spirit

- 5) Lecture: Directions that need to happen to welcome all to the table in art song. The United State of American Song: songfest.us/june-16-guth-no-login
- 6) We are committed to setting up sessions by an outside specialist who can help analyze where we are, teach us these best practices for better outcomes, and check-in on progress at pivotal moments in our growth.
- 7) We understand that many qualified students do not consider SongFest an option because they cannot afford to attend and therefore don't even apply. Therefore, we will search for new funding partners to put in place more scholarship opportunities for students from underserved backgrounds.
- 8) We acknowledge that by the time students are in college many of the opportunities to seek students from diverse backgrounds are already gone. Therefore, when our high school program can be re-implemented (in 2023) we will look to recruit faculty and students and implement programming with an eye towards equity.
- 9) The SongFest Composer Mentorship program will launch June of 2022, a reinvention of our successful 2004 program and the yearly commission program, featuring commissioned works (**REENA ESMAIL** (2019) & **GABRIELA FRANK** (2013) This program will specifically seek to right the lopsided nature of our industry on the creation side and will invite four emerging female composers, with a preference for BIPOC artists to attend on full fellowships.
- 10) In January 2021, SongFest launched **"The Songs of Unity and Hope."** This fifteen-hour video features songs and poetry from 60 countries, in 40 languages, performed by SongFest alumni, faculty as well as guest artists worldwide. The videos and accompanying program book can be found at www.songfest.us/sf25. We will continue this unique project with the intention of including all peoples worldwide. [Download our interactive program book.](#) View the entire program, divided into 12 segments on [YouTube](#)

We will continue and expand the January 2021 Global SongFest project **"The Songs of Unity and Hope"** to include all peoples and languages around the globe.

SongFest was created with love for our community, and we see that we have an opportunity to expand the conversation and lead with open hearts. May we work towards creating something that truly reflects the whole of who we are: a complex, diverse, and loving community of storytellers.

**Approved by the SongFest Board of Directors Sept 18, 2021