Rebalancing the Music Canon Project

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IAML Congress 2021

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Aims

This open-access music data project aims to make works by un(der)-represented people more discoverable, decenter the musical canon, and make data-driven music scholarship more diverse and inclusive. The nature of this project is iterative and is being used as a way to teach students about transcription and encoding.

Scope

- Incipit index currently has 140 incipits from the works of 25 composers
- Initial works selected from Music Theory Examples by Women
- Women composers active during 18th-21st centuries
- Black, Latinx, and Asian composers (DEIJ collection work)
- Locally significant composers (e.g. T.J. Anderson, Rosalyn Brogue)
Distribution of Incipits

The graph illustrates the distribution of incipits across gender identity and race/ethnicity over the years. The x-axis represents the year of birth, ranging from 1700 to 2000. The y-axis shows gender identity, distinguishing between woman and man. The race/ethnicity categories include Asian, Black, Latinx, and White, each represented by different colors. The sizes of the circles indicate the frequency of incipits.
Project Links

Project site: https://rebalancing-music-canon.com/

GitHub repository: https://github.com/annakijas1/rebalancing-music-canon

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Project Beginnings

2017-2019 (Boston College)

- Transcription and encoding of a selection of musical works from the Music Theory Examples by Women (MTEW) project
- Intended to apply for a digital humanities focused grant to support the work
- Ran into issues - lack of support and engagement, correcting OMR and transcriptions was labor intensive

2020-Present (Tufts University)

- Covid-19 pandemic presented opportunity to create remote-work options for our library student workers
- Re-envisioned project to focus on creating incipits from works by underrepresented composers in our own local music library collection
Project Contributors

Student Contributors at Tufts University

- Ismenia Ginebra (Spring 2020-current), undergraduate
- Chelsea Hong (Spring 2020), undergraduate
- Simon K. Perry (Spring 2021), undergraduate
- Delilah Righter (Spring 2020-current), undergraduate
- Victoria K. Rose (Spring 2021-current), undergraduate
- Joanna Strogatz (Spring 2021-current), undergraduate
- Sebastian Tringale (Spring 2020-current), undergraduate
- Hailing Wang (Spring 2020), undergraduate
- Phillip G. Wright (Spring 2021-current), graduate

Additional thanks to Raffaele Viglianti, Martin Albrecht-Hohmaier, and the MEI Pedagogy Interest Group for their feedback and support of this project
Project Ethos

Minimal computing philosophy

- “Computing done under some set of significant constraints of hardware, software, education, network capacity, power, or other factors.” (https://go-dh.github.io/mincomp/)

Open-source tools

- Atom XML Editor - https://atom.io/
- GitHub Pages - https://pages.github.com/
- Jekyll - https://jekyllrb.com/
- MuseScore - https://musescore.org/
- Verovio - https://www.verovio.org

Details on Technical Aspects page: https://rebalancing-music-canon.com/technical/
Pedagogy and Training

- Created project documentation and tutorials
- Met virtually with students to introduce them to the project
  - Demonstrated use of MuseScore notation software
  - Reviewed transcription guidelines
  - Walked through a transcription
- Communicate via regular updates
- Meet (virtual/in-person) to check-in and continue trainings
- Created instructions for content creation on Jekyll site
Overview of Process

Spring 2020-2021

● **Students are responsible for**
  ○ Incipit transcription with MuseScore Notation Software
  ○ Incipits review in MuseScore against source

● **Anna is responsible for**
  ○ Exporting from MuseScore as MusicXML
  ○ Reviewing and correcting MusicXML with Verovio Editor tool
  ○ Enhancing metadata in MEI XML
  ○ Creating Markdown files for GitHub repository
  ○ Reviewing incipit pages rendered in GitHub
Overview of Process

Spring 2021-Present

- Graduate student supports Anna in
  - enhancing metadata for incipits in MEI XML
  - correcting incipits in the MEI XML
  - creating Markdown pages for incipits and composers that display incipit details and render the notation
  - using GitHub desktop and workflows
Teaching through the project

Examples and exercises introduce students to

- Enhancing metadata in MEI XML
- Correcting incipits directly in MEI XML
- Creating content in Markdown
- Working in a workspace via GitHub desktop and Atom XML Editor

Project Instructions: [https://github.com/annakijas1/rebalancing-music-canon/wiki](https://github.com/annakijas1/rebalancing-music-canon/wiki)
Transcription & Encoding Workflow

Step 1
- Transcribe
- Review & Correct
- Export MusicXML

Step 2
- MusicXML
  - Option A: Verovio
  - MEI file
  - Option B: MEI Garage
  - MEI file

Step 3
- Enhance Metadata
- Review & Correct
- Push to GitHub
Incipit Transcription

Caprice Étude
op. 7, no. 3

Andante maestoso

Teresa Carreño
MusicXML viewed in Verovio Editor
<meiHead>
  <fileDesc>
    <titleStmt>
      <!—Verify the title of the work and corresponding opus and number if available—>
      <title>Ballade</title>
      <title type="subordinate">Op. 36, No. 5</title>
    </titleStmt>
    <!—Verify the name of the composer—>
    <persName role="composer">Agathe Backer-Grøndahl</persName>
    <!—Add the name(s) of the transcriber and reviewer—>
    <persName role="transcriber">Delilah Righter</persName>
    <persName role="transcriber">Simon K. Perry</persName>
    <persName role="reviewer">Simon K. Perry</persName>
  </titleStmt>
  <pubStmt>
    <!—add the publisher info—>
    <publisher>Rebalancing the Music Canon</publisher>
    <!—The date is automatically generated when file is exported from MuseScore—>
    <date isodate="2021-05-07" type="encoding-date">2021-05-07</date>
    <!—add the info about how the incipits can be used—>
    <availability>
      <useRestrict>The incipits are provided for educational use only and are not to be used commercially. Incipits are assigned a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.</useRestrict>
    </availability>
    <!—add the URL to the site—>
    <identifier>
      <ref target="https://rebalancing-music-canon.com/"/>
    </identifier>
  </pubStmt>
</fileDesc>
Incipit of Teresa Carreño’s Caprice étude, op. 7 in Rebalancing the Music Canon. https://rebalancing-music-canon.com/carreno-caprice-etude/
Considerations and Issues

- Formatting and rendering issues going from MusicXML to MEI
  - Work-around is to create a static image (png) file
- Manual review and creation of content pages
  - Each incipit file (MuseScore and MEI XML) is reviewed manually
  - Each composer and incipit page is created manually
Next steps

- Ongoing student training in MEI XML and GitHub workflows
- Showcasing the incipit index to interested faculty, students, and staff
- Exploring ways to connect incipits with items in library catalog
- Identifying additional pedagogical uses
  - Offer workshops
  - Bring music encoding into music courses
- Promoting project at future conferences and including student voices