



# **Making a Choice: Underrepresented Composers**



# Land Acknowledgement

Halton, as we know it today, is rich in the history and modern traditions of many First Nations and the Métis.

From the lands of the Anishinabe to the Attawandaron, the Haudenosaunee and the Métis, these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in Indigenous history.

When we stand on these treaty lands, we are in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters to honour and respect the four directions, lands, waters, plants, animals and ancestors that walked before us, and all of the wonderful elements of creation that exist.

We acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for being stewards of this traditional territory.



# Self Location

Grad student (2023-2024) at Wilfrid Laurier University,  
Faculty of Music, Master of Arts in Community Music

Co-Founder and Executive Director of non-profit  
Bandology, devoted to more music for more kids

Presentations at Midwest, Ontario MEA (x5), Ohio MEA,  
Vermont MEA



# Abstract

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For the past several decades, music education in schools, particularly middle and high schools, has focused on traditional wind band structures.

Whether wind ensembles, symphonic bands, jazz bands, small ensembles or other groups, the music education curriculum in Ontario features bands that use western-style woodwinds, brass and percussion instruments.

# Abstract

While there is change happening, with some music educators taking advantage of the wide variety of other types of instruments from the dozens of other countries that are not in Europe or North America, the current reality is that the curriculum and the funding in Ontario schools is focused on this western style of music making.

# Abstract

What is more up to individual teachers is the type of repertoire they select for their students.

Composers of wind band music are plentiful and varied, however, up until say the last 10-15 years, those composers tended to be male, white, old or possibly deceased, and probably American.

# Abstract

It's not surprising, but things are changing and so too should the wind band world. There are more and more composers from underrepresented demographics who are writing music that is just as interesting and challenging as previous generations. Why, then, are so many conductors choosing to program music created by people who are not representative of the students playing the music?



# Composers and Repertoire



# Current Repertoire/Composers

Resources for choosing repertoire:

- Festival syllabus
- Suggestions from suppliers
- Recommendations from colleagues
- Stumbling across it
- Research papers

# Current Repertoire/Composers

Gandhi, P. (2020). Composer representation in Canadian Wind Band Festival Lists. *Canadian Winds: The Journal of the Canadian Band Association*, 19(1), 25-29.

Pratik Gandhi

- freelance conductor, adjudicator and clinician
- B.Mus. in music education and M.Mus. in conducting, Western; PhD music, York (in progress)



# Current Repertoire/Composers

“festival lists were my most frequently-consulted resources”

“power dynamics and influence of festival lists in Canada”

“festivals, music publishers, retailers, and school music programs are deeply interconnected, and additions of titles to (or removals from) festival lists have far-reaching impacts”

(Gandhi 2020, 25)



# Current Repertoire/Composers

MusicFest Canada syllabus:

- used annually by more than one hundred and fifty bands at its own festival
- also used by hundreds more attending one of the
- this single list impacts the repertoire selections of more than twenty-five thousand band students every year

(Gandhi 2020, 25)

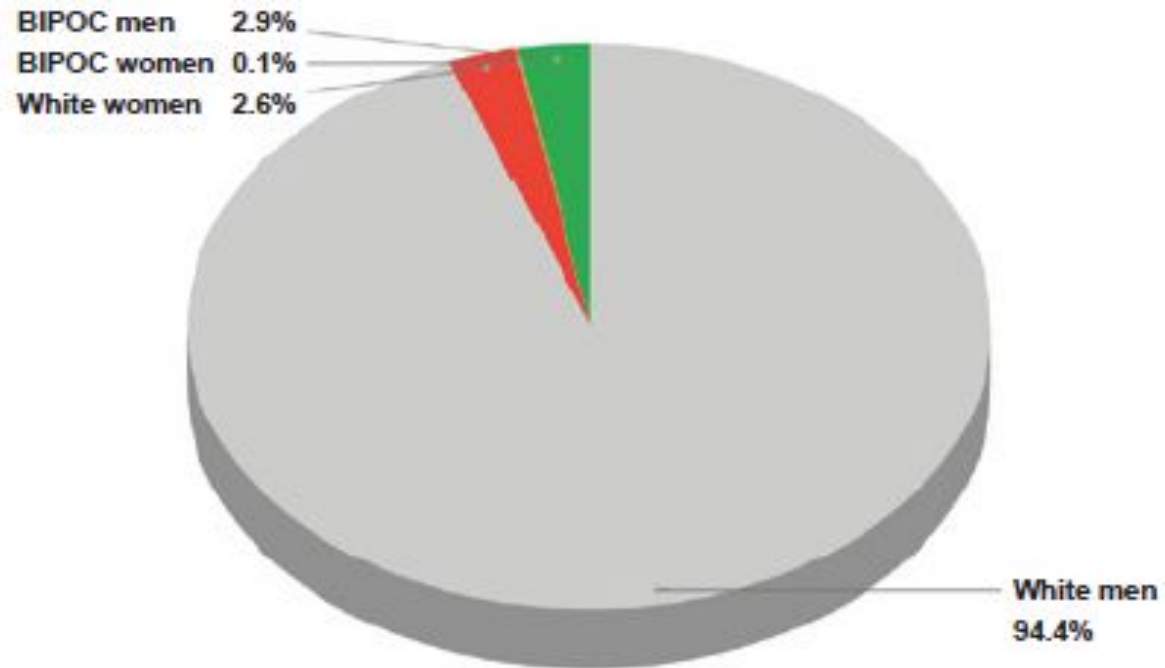
# Current Repertoire/Composers

**TABLE 1: COMPOSER REPRESENTATION BY FESTIVAL**

Festival	Level	Works	CAN	CAN%	Fem	Fem%	BIPOC	BIPOC%	WOC	WOC%
MusicFest Canada	all	93	48	52	9	10	5	5	3	3
St. John's Northwest Rotary	all	221	63	29	13	6	6	3	2	1
Atlantic Festivals of Music	all	332	36	11	9	3	13	4	1	0
Ontario Band Association	all	299	36	12	14	5	14	5	4	1
Manitoba Band Association	all	178	8	4	4	2	5	3	0	0
Optimist Band Festival	all	74	11	15	5	7	6	8	1	1
Alberta Band Association	all	50	12	24	6	12	5	10	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>1247</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>

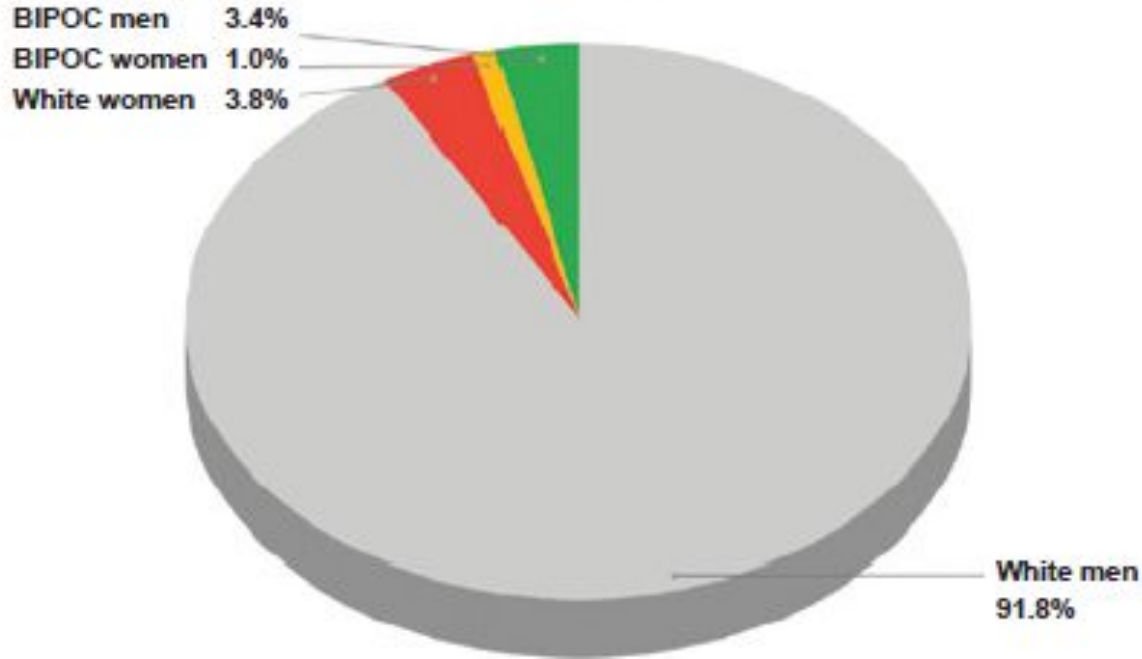
# Current Repertoire/Composers

FIGURE 2A: Composer Representation  
in US festival lists



# Current Repertoire/Composers

FIGURE 2B: Composer Representation  
in Canadian festival lists



# Current Repertoire/Composers

Gandhi, P., and Hopkins, M. (2022). Building Back Better: Using Principles of Equity and Inclusion to Populate the MusicFest Canada Concert Band Syllabus. *Canadian Winds* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2022): 13-16.

Dr. Mark Hopkins

- Conductor, professor at Acadia
- B.Mus. Ed. U of T; B. Ed. Western; M.Mus. Conducting Calgary; D.M.A. Wind Conducting New England Conservatory

# Current Repertoire/Composers

## MusicFest Repertoire Equity Committee (MFREC)

- committee of 13
- two-stage approach to revising the syllabus
- subtractive phase, removing works
- additive phase, re-populating the list
- more reflective of pedagogical philosophies
- 34 new titles to the syllabus
- more pieces on the Canadian repertoire list

# Current Repertoire/Composers

“Is the work’s composer, title, concept, or source material problematic in some way?”

Does the work use actual musical material from an artist, group, tradition, or culture of which the composer/arranger is an outsider?

Does the work attempt to depict or evoke a tradition or culture of which the composer is an outsider, especially by using musical tropes or stereotypes?”

(Gandhi and Hopkins 2022, 14)



# Recent Repertoire Lists

# Finding Diverse Composers

Canadian sources:

[Canadian Wind Repertoire, 2006-2021](#)

[OBA Provincial Band Festival 2024 program](#)

[OBA Golden Horseshoe Music Festival 2024 program](#)

[MusicFest Nationals](#)

[Bandology Composer Spotlights](#)





# Canadian Wind Repertoire

Gandhi, P. 2021. Canadian Wind Repertoire, 2006-2021, [cdnwindrep.ampd.yorku.ca](https://cdnwindrep.ampd.yorku.ca)

- 44 Canadian composers
- 6 women
- sorted by region, institution, affiliation, publisher
- not sorted by BIPOC, Indigenous, LGBTQ+

# OBA Provincial Band Festival

## [OBA Provincial Band Festival 2024 program](#)

- 152 bands from 118 schools (Feb 2024)
- bands must choose one piece from either OBA or MusicFest syllabus (MusicFest states one piece must be from a Canadian composer)
- program does not indicate Canadian composers
- OBA syllabus contains 18 Canadian composers



# Golden Horseshoe Music Festival

[OBA Golden Horseshoe Music Festival 2024 program](#)

- 103 bands from 80 schools (Feb 2024)
- recommends using OBA or MusicFest syllabus (MusicFest states one piece must be from a Canadian composer)
- program indicates Canadian composers



# MusicFest Nationals

## MusicFest Nationals

- 135 bands from 102 schools (May 2023)
- bands competing at MusicFest must play one piece from a Canadian composer and one piece from the syllabus (can choose both)
- 28 Canadian composers on the 2024 syllabus

# Bandology Composer Spotlights

## [Composer Spotlights](#)

- 57 composers profiled with URL links
- 24 Canadian composers
- 38 female composers
- 30 BIPOC composers
- 2 Indigenous composers
- 3 LGBTQ+ composers

# Finding Diverse Composers

International sources:

[Wind Repertory Project](#)

[Institute for Composer Diversity](#)

[ColourFULL Music](#)

[And We Were Heard](#)





# Wind Repertory Project

## [Wind Repertory Project](#)

- ability for a variety of searches
- by level (100-6000)
- 19 types of ensembles
- 46 types of form and style of band rep
- 77 categories of composers by nationality and by Female, African-American, Black, Asian-American, Native American, Hispanic, LGBT, Pulitzer Prize winners



# Institute for Composer Diversity

## [Institute for Composer Diversity](#)

- ability for a variety of searches
- gender identity
- sexual orientation
- BIPOC (broken out into 8 demographic groups)
- country of residence
- living vs. dead
- different types of ensembles



# ColourFULL Music

## ColourFULL Music

- 23 options of pre-selected programs chosen by a variety of conductors
  - composer, country, level, publisher, video link
- can sort by beginner and advanced wind bands
- examples of pieces with predominance in melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, timbre, concept



# And We Were Heard

## [And We Were Heard](#)

- three types of searches
- by level (100-600) for wind band
- flexible and adaptable music
- orchestra



# Next Steps



# Making a Choice

What to choose?

How to choose?

Grade level, flex band

Types of music: festival, marches, lyrical, soundtracks, traditional, jazz, chorales, etc.

<b>Composer</b>	<b>Piece</b>	<b>Diverse because:</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<a href="#"><u>William Owens</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Tambora!</u></a>	Black, American, clapping	0.5
<a href="#"><u>Randall Standridge</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Blackbeard</u></a>	LGBTQIA+, American	0.5
<a href="#"><u>Cait Nishimura</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Ready to Fly</u></a>	Canadian, woman, BIPOC, local, young (b.1991)	1
<a href="#"><u>Jodie Blackshaw</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Whirlwind</u></a>	Woman, Australia, founder of ColourFULL Music	1
<a href="#"><u>Jay Coles</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Dystopia</u></a>	Black, American, young (b.1995), flex band	1
<a href="#"><u>Jennifer Jolley</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Son of a Gun</u></a>	Women, American	1
<a href="#"><u>Matt Neufeld</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>The Haunted Mansion</u></a>	Canadian, Winnipeg, flex band	1
<a href="#"><u>Carol Brittin Chambers</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Rhythmania!</u></a>	Woman, Texas, clapping, flex band	1.5
<a href="#"><u>Goto Yo</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Star Fantasy</u></a>	Japanese, arranged music for anime, interesting solos	1.5



# Next Steps

Be thoughtful

Be deliberate

Ask for student recommendations and feedback

Read, research and listen!

Share! Send your rep recommendations to

[lisa@bandology.ca](mailto:lisa@bandology.ca)



**Make good  
choices!**

# Citations

Gandhi, P. (2020). Composer representation in Canadian Wind Band Festival Lists. *Canadian Winds: The Journal of the Canadian Band Association*, 19(1), 25-29.

<https://libproxy.wlu.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.wlu.ca/scholarly-journals/composer-representation-canadian-wind-band/docview/2613092618/se-2>

Gandhi, P., and Hopkins, M. (2022). Building Back Better: Using Principles of Equity and Inclusion to Populate the MusicFest Canada Concert Band Syllabus. *Canadian Winds* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2022): 13-16.

<https://libproxy.wlu.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.wlu.ca/scholarly-journals/building-back-better-using-principles-equality/docview/2923447330/se-2?accountid=15090>

# Online Resources

[Canadian Wind Repertoire, 2006-2021](#)

[OBA Provincial Band Festival 2024 program](#)

[OBA Golden Horseshoe Music Festival 2024 program](#)

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