

In 2018, Longy School of Music of Bard College committed to the bold goal of dramatically changing the kinds of music that we experience on our campus. **We embarked on a three-year initiative to track the diversity of the repertoire performed and studied at the school, with the intention of ensuring that 25% of this music would be created by composers who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), women, LGBTQ+ and living.** Our aim was for all constituents of the Longy community to consistently and intentionally bring forward the voices of artists who have been historically under-represented at American music conservatories. We did so understanding that a) our community members would have a variety of perspectives, pro, con and situated between these two poles, and b) there was a danger of people completing the assignment solely because there was a rule, rather than assessing the meaning of the exercise. “ We also understood the urgency of the moment in time, and we knew that if we waited for the perfect way forward, for total consensus in our community or the exact “right” circumstance, we might be waiting forever. We chose forward motion and action over hesitation and worry. We chose to learn as we went, to improve along the way and to be accountable to ourselves, each other, and our community with a goal that could be tracked and analyzed quantitatively.

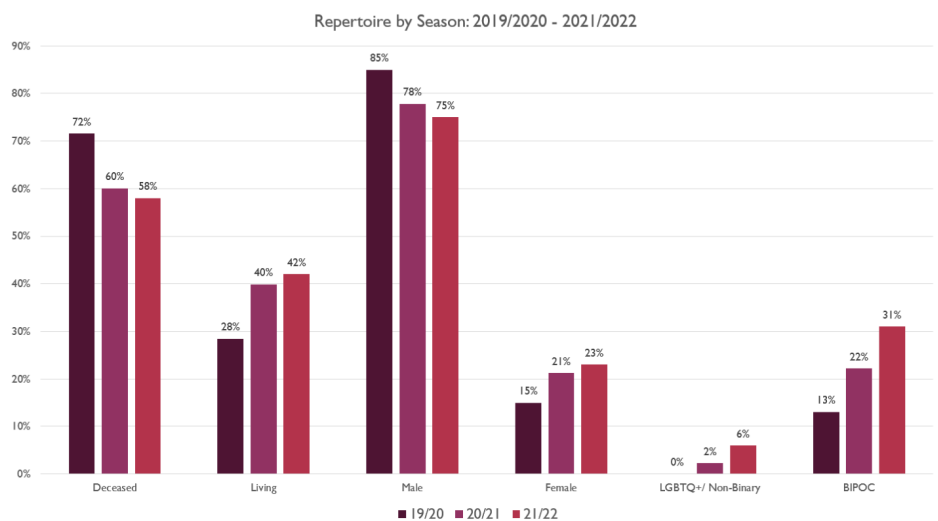
For too long, many American conservatories and performing arts institutions have operated on outdated and exclusive notions of excellence and belonging; they have been the arbiters of what constitutes worthwhile art and who gets to make it. At Longy, we have challenged this historical truth for well over a decade. **In 2018, we wanted to more boldly resist marching along with a conservatory system that has both unwittingly and intentionally silenced the voices of BIPOC, women, and LGBTQ+ people while favoring a shortlist of mostly white, mostly European, often male “great” composers.** We wanted to stop robbing our musical community and our audiences of the wealth of diverse possible musical voices and experiences.

At the end of the academic year 2021-22, we analyzed the data that had resulted from three years of pursuing our goal. Here, we share some of what we learned.

It is important to know that over the

three years of the initiative, Longy supported the repertoire goal with a consistent and relevant series of workshops, convenings and professional development. The *why* of the pursuit was of equal or greater importance to any achieving of the numeric goal, and so we chose to pursue the repertoire goal and the question of *why* simultaneously. This decision was a crucial point in our learning. While some colleagues discouraged us from setting an ambitious goal before our full community was completely onboard or had spent enough time considering the challenge, we decided to move ahead anyway. Fully aware of the risks noted above, we found that changing behavior (encouraging the community to choose repertoire that may have initially been unfamiliar to them or that they felt was taking time away from more important repertoire) was often a stimulus to deepening understanding (having the conviction that this repertoire is important and exciting, and that performing it is vital to our humanity). **We found that setting an ambitious goal and supporting it properly with resources and opportunities to discuss, try, discover, challenge and learn from each other was an effective way to change deeper patterns of both belief and past practice.** The data that we share here illuminates a period of learning and transformation at Longy, during which our goal sparked deep conversations about priorities and how to implement systemic change.

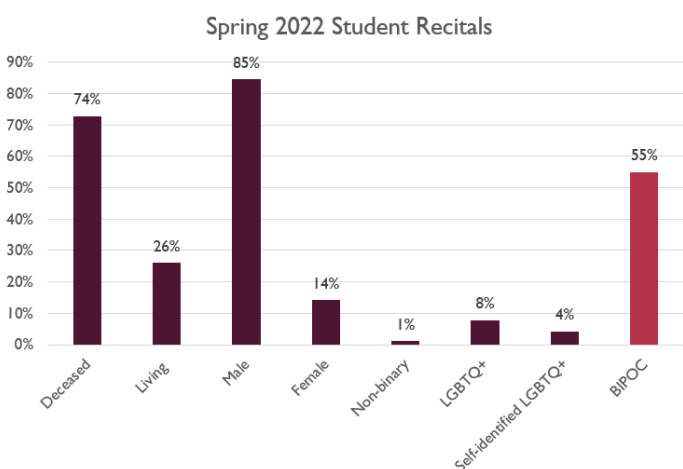
Below, the graph illustrates how over the three years, Longy moved from a narrower version of musical representation (deceased, male, gender-conforming, white) to a more expansive and vibrant musical experience (living, female, nonbinary, BIPOC).



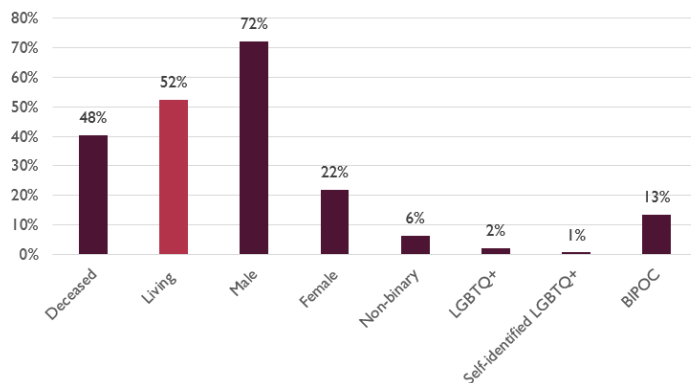
We learned much from the actual process of tracking data. For example, we counted a three-minute piece equally with a thirty-minute piece. This raised important questions as to how we view time spent on the repertoire studied and performed at the school, and the investment our community makes in an expanded and truly inclusive vision of the world. As well, the tracking of LGBTQ+-identifying and nonbinary composers was often erroneously conflated, and not collected during the first year of implementation; this made it difficult to have a fully accurate read on any school-wide progress. While neither of these two issues has an easy solution, as we move forward with our efforts, we intend to adapt our methods and commit to making use of these learning points.

Our tracking reveals the effect of multiple years of institutional focus and attendant resources devoted towards performing works that had not traditionally been adequately represented. **It shows where significant strides were made**—moving from 13% to 31% representation of BIPOC composers, for example, **and where significant work remains to be done**—representing women’s compositional voices has become a visible area of need for renewed focus.

In addition to these overall trends, it is illuminating to view a snapshot in time. The charts highlight how different groups within the Longy community approached the challenge in Spring 2022. Here, it is revealing that while all groups approached the work with a slightly different focus, each found a way into the challenge that contributed to the institution-wide goal. For example, students overwhelmingly represented BIPOC composers in their recital programming, completely flipping the paradigm of “mostly white.”

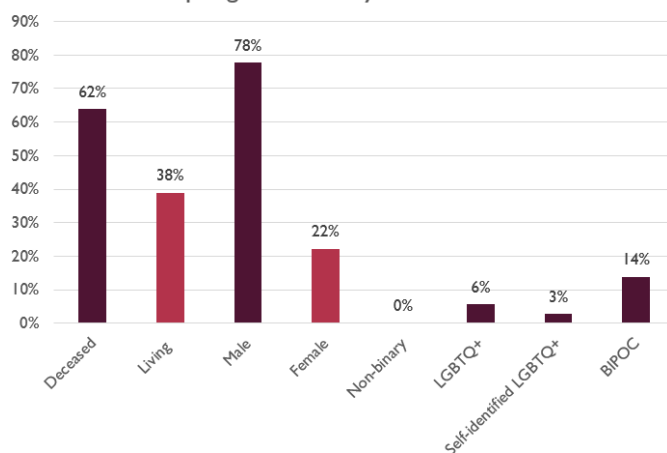


Spring 2022 Class/Department Performances



Likewise, the data shows that departmental performances showed the most movement towards presenting living composers.

Spring 2022 Faculty Recitals



Finally, Faculty Artist Recitals trended towards showing the strongest commitment to presenting women composers.

**These snapshots all reveal a tremendous commitment to championing the work and artistry of those voices who have been neglected or suppressed within the standard conservatory culture for too long.** While the members of the Longy community are proud of our important first step, we recognize that this data is a stimulus for further evolution rather than a completion point. Above all, we take this moment to recommit to the continued effort.

We thank all of the faculty, staff, students, guests and the school leadership who were a part of this pursuit and of this data-gathering. Our report reflects multiple years of work, self-discovery, vulnerability and course-correction. As we look to what lies ahead, we will take this adaptive learning and meet it with openness and humility to continue to dismantle oppressive assumptions and systems within our school community and workplace. We commit to creating a new goal for Longy with the start of our 2023–2024 season because **the challenges are urgent and the time is now for bold aspirations.**