

SMT Committee on Diversity: A Statement of Purpose

The SMT Committee on Diversity seeks to promote the diversity – of race and ethnicity, culture, values, and points of view – within the society. To this end, the committee fosters thought on and provides support for: an environment supportive of racially and ethnically diverse communities within the society, the production of knowledge from distinctive viewpoints, the recruitment and training of minority graduate students, and the study of music from underrepresented groups. While the Committee on Diversity acknowledges issues of gender and sexuality as being of paramount importance to our society, we feel that these issues are best addressed by their relevant groups: the Committee for the Status on Women, and the Queer Resource Group. Whereas the Committee on Diversity is committed to working with these two entities, our primary focus remains on issues of ethnic and racial diversity within the SMT. This is in accordance with our founding charge from the President of the SMT in 1992, Robert Gauldin, and reflects the understanding of the voting members of the SMT who approved the creation of our committee. As the discipline of music theory grows in scope and breadth, the Committee on Diversity seeks to increase the ethnic diversity of our society and maintain dynamic spaces for scholars from diverse backgrounds, while nurturing the scholarship of music from people of various socio-economic backgrounds. The activities of the committee come in various forms, which in the past have included, but are not limited to, the following:

- Organizing relevant colloquia, special sessions (both formal and informal), and other such events, at national meetings and elsewhere.
- Funding for conference attendance and society membership through the SMT Minority Travel Grant and the SMT International Travel Grant.
- Creating media for voicing concerns about diversity in the SMT.
- Offering a network of individuals to mentor ethnically diverse members of the SMT.
- Providing a liaison to diversity committees in regional societies and connecting with similar committees in societies such as the American Musicological Society, the Society for Ethnomusicology, among others.

Special sessions hosted by the committee have addressed a broad range of topics, and currently constitute the most visible medium for its work. In these sessions, society members and guests have discussed general issues such as the analytical canon, musical symbolism across cultures, the effects of postcolonialism and globalism, as well as focused topics such as African rhythms in contemporary Western art music, gamelan theories, mashups, and Middle-Eastern music theories. These special sessions have opened up comparative frameworks to stimulate dialogue among and about diverse populations and issues.

The SMT Minority Travel Grant and the SMT International Travel Grant provide funding for membership in the society and for travel to the national conference. Up to five grants are awarded by the committee each year. Applicants need not be SMT members, and theorists at all stages of their careers are encouraged to apply, though preference is given to junior faculty and graduate students. The committee considers financial need and research interest within the field of music theory in evaluating the applications. The SMT invites theorists belonging to ethnic minorities – defined here on the basis of the majority of current SMT members – to apply for Minority Travel Grants, while theorists who reside outside the United States and Canada are invited to apply for International Travel Grants.

The committee also aims to support the SMT community by addressing issues of power and privilege through mentoring, networking, and other interpersonal relationships, both within the society and between our society and others. The committee actively challenges the de facto marginalization of non-traditional subject matters and the scholars who work on these topics. In the past the committee has invited scholars from historically black colleges and universities to participate in the society's national meetings and special sessions. The committee will continue this effort in order to encourage meaningful links with these scholars, establish broader scholarly communities, and expand the constituency of the Society for Music Theory.