

ThoughtLuck #4. A workshopping meeting about AMVA, in words and in actions.

The infant-stage description and pillars presented to ThoughtLuck:

Asian Musical Voices of America (AMVA) is centered on the Asian diasporic experience in classical music and devoted to community-building and activism for transformational change.

Together,

1. We build community within the Asian Diaspora working and creating in classical music.
2. We educate ourselves on the ways structural racism is present in classical music.
3. We engage in activism to dismantle structural racism, promote equity, and lift up BIPOC musical voices working and creating within the field.

Feedback:

The terms and intent of these messages need to be clearer and more specific.

“Diaspora”: A potentially problematic word, given the connotations--historical association with involuntary dispersion. Also, it may not be appropriate with Asian Americans with families who have lived in the U.S. for many generations. Perhaps the term can be empowering if we choose to redefine it, but even so, including “Asian diaspora” as a subpoint and not the introductory sentence might be more aligned with AMVA’s vision, which is arguably less about our personal identities and more about community building. That said, the “Asian” component of AMVA is essential. Julia proposed an alternative opening statement:

Asian Musical Voices of America (AMVA) is devoted to community-building and activism for transformational change, in music and [our communities across the country]. As members of the Asian-American community, we...

Another question is that of AMVA’s audience--who we aim to reach. A “large tent” idea might be noble, but render itself impractical. We should consider how open AMVA seeks to be. Tsuru for Solidarity, for example, is more specific in its description:

“Tsuru for Solidarity is a nonviolent, direct action project of Japanese American social justice advocates working to end detention sites and support front-line immigrant and refugee communities that are being targeted by racist, inhumane immigration policies....”

“Classical Music”: Another term we should consider. Several educators had input on curriculum developments and the idea of expanding “classical music.”

Teaching music theory: how to make a curriculum more inclusive, when presented with the following issues:

1. Theory teachers don’t feel qualified on multiple levels to teach what they don’t know (e.g. African American vernacular music).
2. Historically, some students haven’t responded respectfully to “world music” (i.e. Music of Ghana or Music of Iran) courses. This makes teachers reluctant to teach the music of their cultural heritages.
3. Students often attend conservatory with a narrow focus on winning jobs or other competitions. It’s difficult to provoke them to diversify their interests.

Notwithstanding the above points, educators have noticed a difference in student interest in the last decade.

Also, considering the nature of theory as structure or framework, encouraging students to apply the same theory to different musical examples is an excellent pedagogical tool, because “ultimately music theory is about expanding listening.” A complimentary method to this: ask students to create their own theoretical models.

Because the aforementioned discussion has been centered on wordsmithing, which is a long-term process, we move to the topic of AMVA’s future activities:

1. Collecting ideas from panels and other events we attend, thinking about what we liked and what we missed. Using those experiences as models for AMVA’s events. (For example, one conference presented a flowchart for processing micro-aggressions--*did this happen? yes/no.*)
2. More public panels and talks like the one with DBR, Eunbi Kim, and Stanford Thompson.
3. Cross-disciplinary collaborations focused on the Asian American experience--similar to the very first AMVA event at the Asian American Writers Workshop.
4. KEEP SENDING US YOUR IDEAS :)

LINKS:

<https://www.amazon.com/Building-StoryBrand-Clarify-Message-Customers-ebook/dp/B06XFJ2IGR>

<https://www.artequity.org/bipoc-in-pwi>

<https://tsuruforsolidarity.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/BlackTheatreUnited/videos/1134638006920218>