

~ Society for Asian Music Position Statement ~  
July, 2020

We are all bearing witness to an unprecedented moment in human history. As a global pandemic sweeps across a planet in the midst of a climate crisis, multiple cross-cutting legacies of colonialism, racism, layers of privilege, and systemic biases have created and continue to perpetuate deep-rooted social injustices. These injustices are now being laid bare, most powerfully by the Black Lives Matter movement that began in the United States. People, so long silenced, are rightly demanding to be seen and heard. This is a moment for us all to stop, listen, reflect, and make meaningful change.

Members of the Society for Asian Music (SAM) Board of Directors have watched and learned from the Black Lives Matter protests and related decolonization movements around the world. Some of us have participated in these protests; all of us have reflected on the roles that ethnomusicologists have played in perpetuating racist and other discriminatory discourses in our fieldwork practices, in our conference interactions, and on the pages of our journal.

SAM has made a practice of refashioning itself over time in response to changing conditions. We began life organizing performances of Asian music for the Asia Society in New York, moved into publishing scholarship about Asia in our journal, *Asian Music*, became an ancillary organization of the Society for Ethnomusicology, and most recently established a program of small grants and professional development workshops that benefit the next generation of scholars of Asian music. Now, in 2020, the Board believes it is time for SAM to reorient once again and work more assiduously to address injustice and decolonize perspectives on the musics of Asia.

As a non-profit scholarly organization incorporated in the United States whose work focuses on the music and dance of Asia, broadly defined, SAM commits to respecting and listening to the diverse voices of scholars/cultural practitioners, regardless of their positionalities, given the divergent ethnic/cultural aspects of research into “Asia.” To this end, we are currently assessing *all aspects* of our operations, both external and internal.

Externally we are committed to the following:

- Condemning forcefully the injustices perpetrated against the global Asian community, especially in the form of violence committed against ethnic minorities in Asia and against Asians and Asian Americans in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Promoting anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-discriminatory practices in who represents “Asian music,” who does the scholarship, how they conduct fieldwork, and what is written in our publications
- Educating scholars of Asian music about the history and dominance of colonial, racist, and unjust practices in academic theories, publications, and citation practices
- Supporting young scholars of color who study the musics of Asia
- Decentering the whiteness of our disciplines

Internally we are reviewing the following:

- Our organizational structure
- Our nomination and election procedures
- Our editorial and peer reviewing practices for the journal
- Our event programming and scholarship/prize awarding
- Our social media presence

We are committed to changing any/all of our operational practices that are predicated on explicit or implicit bias.

We are actively reflecting on practices that relate to questions of decolonization and the work of BIPOC scholars within and related to SAM, attempting to identify current practices that are working well, clarifying practices that should be improved, and considering how the resources of SAM can be used to further support scholars from underrepresented communities. Initial ideas include providing funding and mentoring support for North America-based students to attend professional meetings; funding BIPOC scholars to present research at conferences, and/or organizing virtual gatherings on specific topics that foreground research by scholars from underrepresented communities.

Acknowledging that we still have much work to do, we are actively reviewing concrete measures and consulting with our membership. We will post further details on our website < <https://asianmusic.info/> > in early October with an aim to discuss proposed measures during our annual general membership meeting.

Respectfully and collaboratively,

*The Society for Asian Music Board of Directors*

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