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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO DIVERSITY

Over my career of professional teaching, I have taught in a wide range of settings (in order of prevalence): community colleges, religious universities/liberal arts colleges, research institutions, conservatories, private/applied lessons, and master classes. While teaching in this diverse array of institutions, I am sensitive to *whom* I am teaching, I observe *how* my students learn, and thus I am able to teach *and reach* a wide variety of learners from an equally wide array of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds – whether they are one with a learning disability filling a GE requirement at a community college or a prize-winning conservatory student that has had every privilege provided them. As an educator in music, I strive to impart to my students ways in which they can employ their developing skills towards social transformation.

To reach the gamut of learners I encounter, I have a three-pronged approach: 1) I accommodate their learning patterns and creative backgrounds, 2) I motivate them to be self -resourceful, -reliant, and -aware, 3) and I contextualize my curricula and pedagogy, both contemporaneously and historically, to empower my students with artistic and entrepreneurial purpose. Moreover, I have designed ways to convey course materials effectively through a variety of classroom techniques while calling attention to the historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts relevant to making music.

Roughly half of my teaching experience has been with traditional music majors. The other half of my experience is with students who are less prepared for academic demands, and who often feel actively disenfranchised from higher education. While teaching audio and music production in the commercial sphere for example, I encounter dozens of students of this type, who often possess widely varied technological competencies. For the beginners, I reinforce that anyone can be creative if given the space, time, concepts, and skills. For intermediates, I create project-oriented activities that engage the instrumental skills they have with the technology. I try to mentor the advanced students through questioning their aesthetic stance and whom they are trying to reach and how their music may be a function of social transformation through their engagement with their local community.

From a recruiting and retention standpoint, I have encountered many students who have been threatened (if not suckered outright) by for-profit career schools (with mountains of debt to follow) that promise a job in a field in which turning a buck is difficult at best. I try to channel these students to community colleges or reputable four-year institutions with concomitant advice to avert crushing debt. This approach affords them a better chance at a well-rounded education that can lead to employment opportunities both within and outside their fields.

In my life as a composer-performer, social justice figures into my creativity. For example, my developing multi-media work/opera, the *California Tableaux Project*, is more timely than ever with respect to our current presidential administration. *CTP* synthesizes music, spoken word, video and dance to celebrate California's cultural crossings *and interrogate the forces that wish to dismantle its diversity*. *CTP* looks back into early California history, as seen through the eyes of the infamous Sir Francis Drake; draws on post-Gold Rush short stories that question policy such as the Chinese Exclusion Act; reframes popular song (such as Led Zeppelin's

“Immigrant Song” – in Spanish!) to address issues of cultural appropriation; interpolates native and multinational folk songs to remind us of indigenous heritages; and sets poetry and prose by California authors and poets to bring the past into the present. This project aims to counteract a historical amnesia that forgets California was Native land; was invaded first by the Spanish, then the English; was occupied, farmed, mined, and worked by Mestizo, Mexican, Chinese, Chilean, Peruvian, French, German, and African-American peoples. This project then seeks to highlight and question what it means to be “American”.

As a professional educator and musician, my work to promote progressive change does not stop at the teaching institution, nor at the edge of the concert stage. I situate myself in the community at large. For example, I have facilitated in concerts for underserved elementary school children, such as those in downtown Cleveland, Ohio. I collaborate with like-minded musicians to expose rural communities to music that would be otherwise unheard or considered through initiatives such as the Native Scholars Program at the La Jolla Reservation in Southern California. Finally, I have facilitated and taught in after-school arts enrichment programs serving largely immigrant and low-income schoolchildren in Downtown San Diego.

In closing, I was the first in my family to graduate from college. Thus, my commitment to creating educational opportunity and access is more than philosophical – it is also personal.