



May 23, 2021

Open Letter

To the University of Toronto Faculty of Music:

We, the undersigned students and organization(s) from the University of Toronto, call on the Faculty of Music to address the historical and ongoing misogyny and systemic inequalities which have once again been brought to light. In the wake of the recent outcry on social media regarding allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct, **it is clear that serious action is needed to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the University community.**

Issues surrounding sexual assault and harassment in Universities and the music community are not new; rather, they are part of a larger problem in which perpetrators face no consequences for their harmful actions. In a [recent study published by Statistics Canada](#), over 70% of students “witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours in a postsecondary setting in 2019.” Less than one in ten people who experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours reported the harassment, with several citing “a lack of knowledge about what to do or a mistrust in how the school would handle the situation.” It is also imperative to note that such an issue is prevalent within the worldwide music industry; an [article by Business Insider](#) suggests that such incidents are, unfortunately, more prevalent within the music community due to “cultural factors and unique windows of opportunity.” As an [article by The Atlantic](#) aptly states: “[s]exual misconduct has long been a problem in professional classical music.”

The University of Toronto is no exception; as evidenced by the outcry from students, this institution is part of the problem. Processes surrounding the reporting and investigating of harassment cases have been clouded in confusion and mistrust. Fear of reprisal from perpetrators who wield vast influence and have no financial barriers has only further added the burden to victims.

This is unacceptable. Enough is enough; there is no excuse for how the Faculty of Music has allowed an unsafe environment to fester and grow through its silence and lack of action in addressing these issues. **Silence is complicity**; the lack of commitment to action shows a lack of care regarding students’ safety and well-being.

As initial requests, we call upon the University of Toronto to do the following:

1. To make concrete, transparent, and public commitments to actions that prioritize and enhance student safety, with emphasis on open communication between Administration, Faculty, and students;
2. To instigate an external and impartial review which investigates the issues within the Faculty of Music that contribute to a culture of misogyny, of fear of speaking out against sexual misconduct, and of systemic power abuse;
3. To implement mandatory consent training in collaboration with the Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre for Faculty, Staff, and students which clarifies appropriate boundaries and procedures for reporting harassment;
4. To add the role of an in-house Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer within the Faculty of Music.

Internal acknowledgements of outcry are only the first step towards positive change. Public silence, lack of action, and lack of transparency have eroded trust in the institution's commitment to upholding the *Statement of Commitment* as outlined in the *Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment [December 12, 2019]*, wherein:

“All members of the University of Toronto [...] community should have the ability to study, work, and live in a campus environment free from Sexual Violence, including Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment.”

Should the institution try to silence us again by refusing to commit to action, we are prepared to continue fighting for our right to a safe environment. **We are artists; we know how to make ourselves heard in the public sphere.**

While we recognize that the Faculty of Music is part of a larger problem that affects the global community, we also recognize the institution's ability to instigate positive change. As the leading music program in Canada - and as an institution set within the most diverse city in Canada - **the University of Toronto Faculty of Music has the potential to become a world leader in breaking through the systemic inequalities which plague the music industry.** We as students choose to stand against oppression and inequality; we hope that by taking action, the Faculty of Music will stand with us as a driving force for positive change.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Members of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music