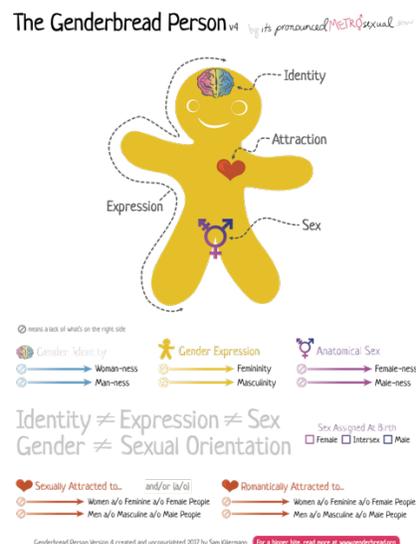
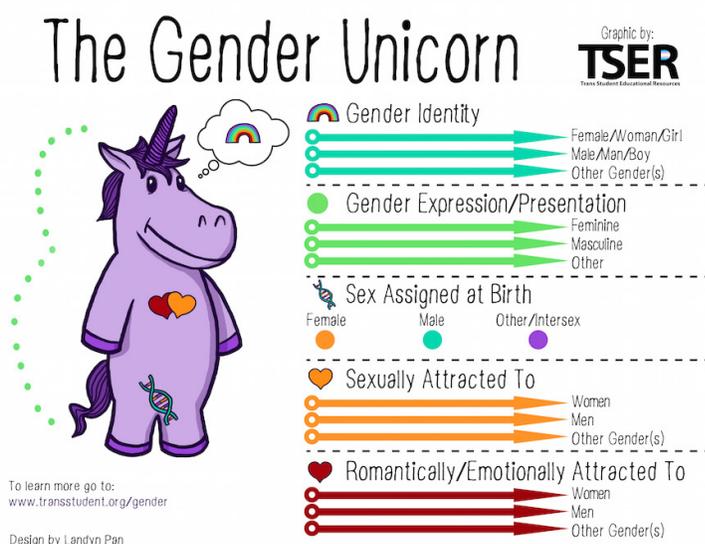


# Teaching Outside the Gender Binary: Working with Transgender and Gender Expansive Singers

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## But first a word about advocacy

- Music teachers should be advocates and allies for our transgender and non-binary students.
- We need to make the applied music studio, music classes, and rehearsal rooms safe spaces.
- The purpose of this presentation will be to remind you about the special considerations that music teachers should know to provide an inclusive atmosphere for transgender or gender expansive students, as well as some vocalises you might use to train singers who wish to change their voice types.
- The goals will include developing or refining a basic vocabulary of terminology specific to this population and helping to create an awareness and sensitivity for the needs of those students who are in transition.
- Successful work with these students depends on this knowledge and the desire to create a gender-neutral environment for learning.



## Creating a Gender-Neutral Learning Environment

- Non-heteronormative language is a must.
- Gender and sex are not synonymous terms.
  - Cisgender means that your assigned sex at birth is in agreement with your internal feeling about your own gender.
  - Transgender means that there is disagreement between the sex you were assigned at birth and your internal gender identity.
- There is also a difference between your gender identity and your gender expression.
- Many other terms fall under the transgender umbrella: Non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, and agender for example.
- Remember that pronouns matter. Never assume. The best way to know what pronouns someone prefers for themselves is to ask.
  - In addition to she/her/hers and he/him/his, it is perfectly acceptable to use they/them/theirs for a single individual if that is what they wish.
  - Some other pronouns coming into use such as ze/hir/hirs and may become more familiar with time.

## Open Communication

- Conversations with your students are necessary.
- Never assume that you know someone's gender identity or sexuality based on their appearance.
- Transition means different things to different people.
- It's not your job to ask them. Let them tell you.
- Do not ask personal things about anyone's transition. This includes surgeries and their "dead" name.
- Do not assume that everyone wishes to change their singing voice based on their gender presentation.
- Language is fluid! Avoid labels that have become obsolete such as AFAB/DFAB or AMAB/DMAB and MtF or FtM, because they presume that someone is actually not the gender they claim.

## One size does not fit all!

- Communication is key!
- Transgender Singers are individuals. There are several options for using your voice to sing.
- Trans woman (trans feminine, trans-femme) may use she/her/hers pronouns
  - May sing with baritone or tenor voice
  - May sing falsetto/countertenor and label as soprano or mezzo
- Trans man (trans masculine, trans-masc) may use he/him/his pronouns
  - No Testosterone – Sings mezzo soprano or soprano (probably)
  - After Testosterone – Sings tenor or baritone or countertenor
- Third Gender or Gender Fluid/Gender Expansive (Non-binary) – may use non-binary pronouns they/them/theirs or something else (You must ask!)
  - May sing with any voice type

## Special Considerations for Opera or Choral Directors and Other Classroom teachers

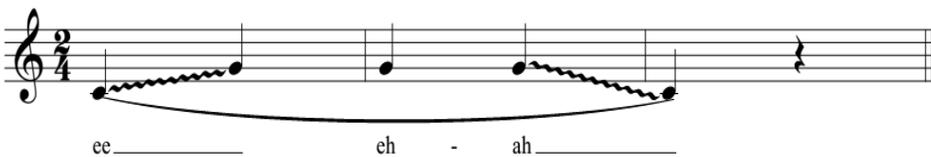
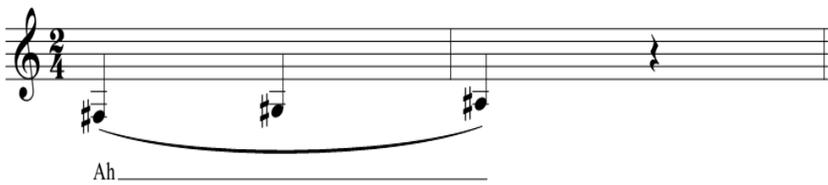
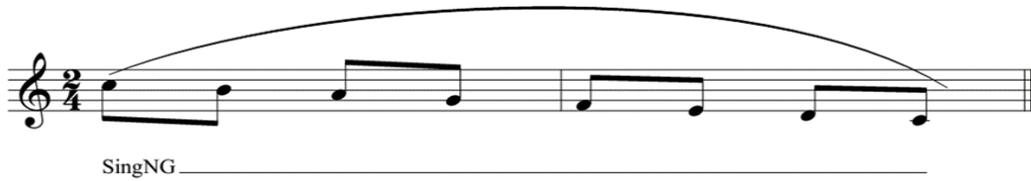
- Normalize introductions with pronouns, then use the correct pronouns. If you make a mistake, apologize and move on.
- Any voice that can sing the part deserves a chance to be cast regardless of the gender expression of the person auditioning. Using costumes and make-up are long respected traditions.
- Avoid pairing by gender for staging or dancing.
- Avoid terms that imply only binary genders like 'girl-friend' or 'boy-friend', or ladies and gentlemen, etc.
- Please call for sections in rehearsals rather than 'men' or 'women'. You might have a woman in the tenor or baritone section or a man in the soprano or alto section.
- To be inclusive, change the names of choirs to get rid of gender designations, such as 'women's choir' or 'men's glee'.
- Find concert attire that is gender neutral or give more than 2 choices.

## The Effects of Hormones on the Singing Voice

- Estrogen therapy for a post-adolescent trans woman will make no change in the voice.
- These individuals may choose to feminize the voice in both speech and singing. Many times a speech therapist may be needed to accomplish this change because fundamental frequency and resonance changes will likely be necessary.
- If this individual wishes to sing alto or soprano, training Mode 2\* (lighter mechanism) will be necessary. Some individuals are more successful than others in this process.
- Some trans women are perfectly comfortable singing with their tenor or bass voices, even while presenting in a feminine way.

\*The use of falsetto and chest voice can be triggering to some trans women.  
Try using Mode 1 and Mode 2 or heavy or light mechanism.

## Vocalises to help with training Mode 2



- Testosterone therapy for a trans man will make a profound and permanent change in the pitch of the speaking and singing voice.
- The Mode 1 range usually increases and the soprano or alto range will be drastically diminished. Mode 2 production may be unavailable for a while.
- Because of the permanent nature of these changes, some trans men choose not to use hormone therapy because they may wish to keep their soprano or alto voices even while presenting in a masculine way.
- Due to the diminished range early in the treatment, checking in often with the singer who has shared this information with you is important.

Vocalises to help with training the Testosterone changed or changing voice

ee - - - - ah

ee \_\_\_\_\_ eh \_\_\_\_\_ ee \_\_\_\_\_ eh \_\_\_\_\_ ee \_\_\_\_\_

My boat \_\_\_\_\_ is wet

ah - oh - ah \_\_\_\_\_

Bel - la sig - no - - - - ra

(b)oo \_\_\_\_\_ (k)

oo \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Selected Resources

- Aguirre, R. (2018). Finding the trans voice: A review of the literature on accommodating transgender singers. Update: *Applications of Research in Music Education*, 8755123318772561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123318772561>
- Becker, K., Khan, S. ud D., & Zimman, L. (2014). Voice quality variation across gender identities. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 135(4), 2424–2424.
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- Sims., L. (2018) Is There a Voice Pedagogy for Transgender Singers? Taking the Gender out of Voice Classification. *The Voice Foundation Newsletter - The Voice*. Volume 23, Issue 3.

## Online resources

- <http://www.transstudent.org/definitions>
- <https://voicefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Transgender-Terms.pdf>
- [https://blurringthebinary.com/?fbclid=IwAR3oE4FzQRct\\_6iK8hasSNB-\\_kwh-pL5AYt9FsRLdAHbH8HtQCkXOOUSi84](https://blurringthebinary.com/?fbclid=IwAR3oE4FzQRct_6iK8hasSNB-_kwh-pL5AYt9FsRLdAHbH8HtQCkXOOUSi84)
- <https://keyoft.com>
- Loraine Sims, Interview with Lucia Lucas <https://youtu.be/YcDsVGXtnl8>
- Loraine Sims, Interview with Holden Madagame <https://youtu.be/uja29wsuq-c>
- Loraine Sims, LSU Science Café - Teaching Lucas—Training Transgender Voices. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1PjdabDCtQ&t=9s>
- Loraine Sims, Trans Voices Festival - Teaching Lucas: A Transgender Singer's Vocal Journey from Soprano to Tenor. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-gDMh15feI&t=2048s>

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