

Clifton Boyd

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Department of Music
Faculty of Arts and Science
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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

2024– Assistant Professor, Department of Music, New York University
2022–24 Visiting Assistant Professor (tenure track), Department of Music, New York University

EDUCATION

2022 Ph.D., Music Theory, Yale University
 Dissertation: “Keep It Barbershop: Stylistic Preservation and Whiteness in the Barbershop Harmony Society”
 Committee: Ian Quinn (advisor), Michael Denning, Braxton D. Shelley, Michael E. Veal

2019 M.A., M.Phil., Music Theory, Yale University

2016 M.M., Music Theory, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

2014 B.M., Viola Performance and Music Theory (with high honors), University of Michigan

PUBLICATIONS

MONOGRAPH

in progress *Racial Dissonance: American Barbershop Harmony in the Age of Jim Crow*

JOURNAL ARTICLES

2023 “Barbershop’s Cautionary Tale for Academic Music Theory: A Response to Stephen Lett,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 45, no. 1: 120–24 (invited)

2022 “Working Collectively: Thoughts toward a Better Music Studies from the Project Spectrum Graduate Student Committee” (co-authored with Anna Beatrice Gatdula, Hyeonjin Park, Carlo Aguilar González, Sinem Eylem Arslan, Hanisha Kulothparan, Gerardo Lopez, Brian Veasna Sengdala, and Renata Yazzie), *American Music* 40, no. 4: 444–52 (Special Issue: Marking Forty Years of *American Music*) (invited)

2021 “Race, Retention, and Identity-Based Service in Music Theory,” *Theory and Practice* 46: 1–22 (invited)

2021 “Metrical Ambiguity in the Scherzo of Brahms’s String Sextet, Op. 18,” *Music Theory and Analysis* 8, no. 1: 41–59

BOOK CHAPTERS

2022 “Music Theory, Race, and the Barbershop Harmony Society,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Music Theory*, ed. J. Daniel Jenkins (New York: Oxford University Press) (advance online publication) (invited)

REVIEWS

2023 [Review of Philip Ewell, *On Music Theory, and Making Music More Welcoming for Everyone* \(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023\), *Music Theory Online* 29, no. 4](#) (co-authored with Jade Conlee)

SHORT-FORM ESSAYS

2024 “Strange Fruit, Familiar Tune,” in *Being Black in the Ivory: Truth-Telling about Racism in Higher Education*, ed. Shardé M. Davis (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press), 73–74 (invited)

2020 “Being a Black Ph.D. Student Following George Floyd’s Murder,” *Inside Higher Ed*, Career Advice, June 11

WORKS IN PROGRESS

— “Have You Got Good Barbershop Religion? Music Education, Evangelism, and Stylistic Gatekeeping in American Barbershop,” in the colloquy, “The Musicology of Education: From Text to Act to Acquisition” (essay under review of colloquy organizers)

— “The Hidden Politics of Public Music Theory,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 47, no. 1 (2025) (special issue on public music theory; invited)

— “Anche se piove la musica suona’: Virality and *impegno* in *tormentoni estivi*, 2016–19” (co-authored with Isabella Livorni)

FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, & GRANTS

FELLOWSHIPS

2022–23 Faculty Fellowship, Center for the Humanities, New York University
 2021–22 Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, American Council of Learned Societies
 2021–22 Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship (declined)
 2021–22 Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, Institute for Citizens & Scholars (declined)
 2021–22 Runner-Up, Robert Walser and Susan McClary Fellowship, Society for American Music
 2020–21 Howard Mayer Brown Fellowship, American Musicological Society
 2020 Margery Lowens Dissertation Research Fellowship, Society for American Music
 2020 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship (Italian), U.S. Department of Education
 2016–19 GSAS Dean’s Emerging Scholars Fellowship, Yale University

RESEARCH AWARDS AND GRANTS

2023–25	Working Group Grant (with Sarah Louden), Center for the Humanities, New York University
2023	Cluster Initiative Collaborative Grant, Office of Inclusion, Arts and Science, New York University
2021	Dena Epstein Award for Archival and Library Research in American Music, Music Library Association
2020	Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration (RITM) Research and Conference Travel Award, Yale University
2019	Grand Central Red Caps Scholarship, Barbershop Harmony Society
2019	MacMillan Center International Conference Travel Grant (2x), Yale University
2018–19	Graduate Student Assembly Conference Travel Fellowship (3x), Yale University
2018	Research Grant, Four Freshmen Music Foundation
2014	Minority Travel Grant, Society for Music Theory

OTHER AWARDS AND HONORS

2023–24	Teaching Advancement Grant (with Sarah Louden), Center for Faculty Advancement, New York University
2020	Student Grant for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (on behalf of the Grant Hagan Society), Yale University
2018, 2020	MPOWER Artist Grant (on behalf of Project Spectrum) (2x), Sphinx Organization
2014–16	Supplemental Academic Award, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music
2014	James B. Angell Scholar, University of Michigan
2011–14	Merit-based music scholarship, University of Michigan
2010–14	Tradition Scholarship, University of Michigan

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

2024	“Uncovering (Anti-)Blackness in American Barbershop Harmony,” Department of Music and Theater Arts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, March 7
2023	“Listening for Unsung Heroes: Black Life during Barbershop’s Segregated Era, 1938–1963,” Colloquium Series, Department of Music, Columbia University, New York, NY, April 14
2022	“Methodology and Identity: A (Black) Music Theorist’s Perspective,” for “Music Theory and Ethnomusicology: Towards Methodological Synergy,” SMT Committee on Race and Ethnicity, SMT World Music Analysis Interest Group, and SEM Music Analysis Special Interest Group; AMS/SEM/SMT Joint Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, November 10–13
2021	<p>“‘Stay in Your Own Backyard’: Race, Purity, and the Cost of ‘Keeping it Barbershop’”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musicology Colloquium Series, Department of Music, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, April 30 (online) • Visiting Artist & Scholars Series, Department of Music, Utah State University, Logan, UT, January 29 (online) • Colloquium Series, Department of Music, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, November 5, 2020 (online)

- 2021 “Equity and Activism in the Arts: The Case of Music Studies,” Caine Scholars for Excellence Program, Utah State University, Logan, UT, March 11 (online)
- 2021 “The Role of the Privileged: Labor, Service, and How to Be an Effective Ally” (for Project Spectrum’s keynote address, “After ‘Reframing Music Theory’: Doing the Work”), Music Theory Society of New York State Annual Meeting, online, August 9
- 2020 “Presses and Journals Receiving SMT Publication Awards, 1999–2018” (for roundtable, “SMT Award Demographics, Past and Present”), Scholars for Social Responsibility Interest Group, Society for Music Theory Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, November 7–10
- 2019 “Harmony and Voice Leading in the Music of The Four Freshmen, 1955–1961,” Four Freshmen Annual Convention, South Bend, IN, October 18–20

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2023 “Music in the Blood: Race Pseudoscience in Barbershop Harmony,” American Musicological Society and Society for Music Theory Joint Annual Meeting, Denver, CO, November 9–12
- 2023 “Black Barbershop by Another Name: Gatekeeping and Genre in Close Harmony,” Theorizing African American Music, University of Colorado, Denver, CO, November 8
- 2021 “Barbershop Harmony, Racial Dissonance: The Case of ‘Project N’”
- American Musicological Society Annual Meeting, online, November 11–12, 20–21
 - American Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico, October 7–10
- 2021 “Race, Recreation, and Family in the Barbershop Harmony Society,” Association for the Study of African American Life and History Annual Meeting, online, September 13–30
- 2021 “‘What Are We Trying to Preserve?’ Race, Segregation, and Music Theory in the Barbershop Harmony Society”
- International Association for the Study of Popular Music–United States Annual Meeting, online, May 19–22, 2021 (originally scheduled for May 2020)
 - Society for Music Theory Annual Meeting, online, November 7–8, 14–15, 2020
- 2020 “*Everyone* in Harmony? Preservation, Inclusivity and Musical Style in the Barbershop Harmony Society,” Society for American Music Annual Meeting, online, July 16–18
- 2019 “The Imposition of Meter in John Adams’s *Shaker Loops*”
- Society for Music Theory Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, November 7–10
 - Music Theory Midwest Annual Meeting, London, ON, Canada, May 18–19, 2018
- 2019 “‘Anche se piove la musica suona’: Satire and *impegno* in Recent *tormentoni estivi*” (co-authored with Isabella Livorni)

- American Musicological Society Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, October 31–November 3
- Viral Italian Sounds, University of California, Berkeley, CA, May 9–10

INVITED PARTICIPATION IN PANELS, ROUNDTABLES, AND WORKSHOPS

- 2024 Conversation with Matthew D. Morrison (author of *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States*), Seminar in American Studies, Columbia University, April 3
- 2024 Panelist, “Colors of Italy: Exploring Race and Identities through Music,” Consulate General of Italy in New York, February 8
- 2024 Respondent, Ann Morning on *An Ugly Word: Rethinking Race in Italy and the United States*, Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, New York University, January 31
- 2023 Panelist, “Reimagining the Music Theory Curriculum: A Cross-School Collaboration Towards Anti-Racism, Decolonization, and Globalization at NYU” (annual NYU/AMS lecture), New York University, New York, NY, May 1
- 2023 Accelerator Workshop Participant, “A Music Theory Curriculum for the 21st Century,” Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, January 19–20
- 2022 Panelist, “An Ugly Word: Rethinking ‘Race’ In Italy—and Worldwide” (book event for Ann Morning), NYU Abu Dhabi Institute in New York, October 11
- 2022 Panelist, “Let’s Start From the Beginning: Equity in Music Theory and History,” Longy School of Music of Bard College, Cambridge, MA, March 1 (online)
- 2021 Discussant, “White Stories, Black Histories, and Desegregating the Music Curriculum,” lecture by Philip A. Ewell, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, October 19 (online)
- 2021 Respondent, “Jim Crow and Zip Coon: Racial Stereotypes in American Popular Music,” lecture by Susan Hellauer, Music Before 1800, April 11 (online)
- 2021 Participant (on behalf of the Society for Music Theory), Intention Foundry, American Council of Learned Societies, April 8–9 (online)
- 2021 Panelist, “Young and Bold: Examples of Youth Activism and Early Successes in Student-Led Initiatives,” SphinxConnect 2021: Unity, Sphinx Organization, January 28–30 (online)

CONFERENCES, PANELS, & WORKSHOPS ORGANIZED

- 2022 Co-Organizer (until May 2022), “In Discomfort,” symposium organized by Project Spectrum (founder and co-chair), pre-conference to the American Musicological Society, Society for Music Theory, and Society for Ethnomusicology Joint Annual Meeting, November 9–10

- 2021 Lead Organizer and Presenter, “Segregated Voices: Oppression and Self-Determination in the Jim Crow Era,” conference session, American Musicological Society Annual Meeting, online, November 11–12, 20–21
- 2021 Co-Organizer and Chair, “Scholars as Community Activists: Abolition and Anti-Racism in Practice,” workshop organized by Project Spectrum (founder and co-chair) in collaboration with the Jacksonville Community Action Committee, Society for Music Theory Annual Meeting, online, November 4–7 (invited)
- 2020 Co-Organizer and Moderator, “Diversifying Music Academia: Building the Coalition,” symposium organized by Project Spectrum (founder and committee member), virtual pre-conference to the American Musicological Society and Society for Music Theory Joint Annual Meeting, October 11, 18, 25, & November 1
- 2020 Co-Organizer and Panelist, “After ‘Reframing Music Theory’: Doing the Work,” panel organized by Project Spectrum (founder and committee member), keynote address for the Music Theory Society of New York State Annual Meeting, online, July (invited)
- 2018 Co-Organizer and Moderator, “Diversifying Music Academia: Strengthening the Pipeline,” symposium organized by Project Spectrum (founder and chair), pre-conference to the American Musicological Society and Society for Music Theory Joint Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX, October 31–November 1

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

- 2024 (spring) Critical Work in Race and Music Theory (graduate)
 2022 (fall) Race and Vocal Harmony in the United States (undergraduate)

YALE UNIVERSITY (Instructor of Record)

- 2020 (spring) Elementary Musicianship II
 2019 (fall) Elementary Studies in Analysis and Model Composition II
 2019 (spring) Elementary Studies in Analysis and Model Composition I
 2018 (fall) Elementary Musicianship I

INDIANA UNIVERSITY JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC (Teaching Assistant)

- 2016 (spring) Musical Skills II
 2015 (fall) Musical Skills IV
 2015 (spring) Music Theory and Literature II
 2014 (fall) Music Theory and Literature I

SPHINX PERFORMANCE ACADEMY, SPHINX ORGANIZATION (Instructor of Record)

- 2016–17 Proposed and developed curriculum to introduce music theory fundamentals during (summers) two-week string quartet summer camp for Black and Latinx musicians ages 12–17 (two sessions each summer)

INVITED GUEST LECTURES

- 2024 Presenter and discussant on music theory and structural racism, History of Music Theory (course taught by Nathan Lam), Eastman School of Music, March 5 (online)
- 2023 Presenter and discussant on barbershop music theory and culture, Analytical Perspectives (course taught by Jonathan A. Gómez), University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, March 2 (online)
- 2021 “Harmony and Form in Stevie Wonder’s ‘Overjoyed’” and “Toward Dismantling the White Racial Frame,” Popular Music Recorded by African Americans (course taught by Walter Everett), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, October 25 (online); Analysis of Pop-Rock Music (Everett), October 15, 2020 (online)
- 2021 Presenter and discussant on race in music theory scholarship, Proseminar in Music Theory (course taught by Edward Klorman), McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada, September 28 (online)
- 2021 Presentation (in Italian) on Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, Italian through Opera and Film (course taught by Anna Iacovella), Yale University, New Haven, CT, September 21
- 2021 “From Barbershop to the Beach Boys: Brian Wilson’s Vocal Influences,” The Beach Boys in American Culture and Counterculture (course taught by Daniel Harrison), Yale University, New Haven, CT, March 17 (online)
- 2021 Presenter and discussant on “Critical Work in Race and Music Theory,” Music Theory Proseminar (course taught by Ellie M. Hisama), Columbia University, New York, NY, February 22 (online)
- 2021 “Harmony and Form in Stevie Wonder’s ‘Overjoyed,’” Music Theory III (course taught by Sara Bakker), Utah State University, Logan, UT, February 5 (online)
- 2021 Discussant on music theory and culture in the Barbershop Harmony Society, Contemporary Pop A Cappella (course taught by Timothy Chenette), Utah State University, Logan, UT, February 1 (online)

RELATED EXPERIENCE

PROFESSIONAL

- 2018–20 Fellow, Office for Graduate Student Development and Diversity, Yale University
2016–17 Assistant Concert Producer, “Africa into Jazz/Jazz into Africa” Concert Series, Yale University
- 2016 Senior Strings Semi-Finalist Liaison, Grand Prize Liaison; M-Prize Competition, University of Michigan
- 2015–17 Semi-Finalist/Finalist Liaison, 18th–20th Annual Sphinx Competitions

MENTORSHIP

- 2018–20 Mentor, Office for Graduate Student Development and Diversity, Yale University
2015–17 Dorm Parent, Sphinx Performance Academy (string quartet camp)
2013 High School Boys Counselor, Interlochen Arts Camp

- 2011–14 Mentor, Ypsilanti Youth Orchestra (Saturday-morning music program)
- Taught beginning and intermediate strings classes for children ages 5–15

CREATIVE

- 2010–16 Arranger/orchestrator (soundcloud.com/cliffviola)
- Studied orchestration with Paul Schoenfeld (University of Michigan; 2012, 2014) and Aaron Travers (Indiana University Jacobs School of Music; 2015–16)

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

COMMITTEES

- 2023–26 Member-at-Large, Council, American Musicological Society
- 2022– Affiliate Board, Project Spectrum
- 2022–24 SMT-40 Dissertation Fellowship Committee, Society for Music Theory
- Chair, 2023–24
- 2022–23 Program Committee, Music Theory Society of New York State Annual Meeting (2023), New York University, New York, NY
- 2021–23 Eileen Southern Travel Fund Committee (formerly the Committee on Cultural Diversity), American Musicological Society
- 2021 Program Committee, Society for American Music Annual Meeting (2022), Tucson, AZ
- 2020– Engaged Music Theory Working Group
- Blog Post Editor, 2022–; Mentor, Publication Program, 2023–
- 2017–22 Founder, [Project Spectrum](#)
- Graduate student–led coalition committed to increasing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in music academia
 - Biennial national symposia starting in 2018; publications in *Current Musicology* (2021), *Theory and Practice* (2021), and *American Music* (2023)
 - Chair, 2017–19; Co-Chair, 2021–22
 - Oversaw organization of national symposium, “Diversifying Music Academia: Strengthening the Pipeline” (2018)
- 2017–20 Committee on Race and Ethnicity, Society for Music Theory
- Mentorship Coordinator, 2019–20 (50+ participants total)

EDITORIAL BOARDS

- 2022–25 Scholarship and Research, *College Music Symposium*

PEER REVIEW

College Music Symposium (2x), *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy*, *Intégral*, *Music Theory and Analysis*, *Open Access Musicology*, *Theory and Practice*

SESSIONS CHAIRED

- 2023 “Isochrony,” Music Theory Society of New York State Annual Meeting, New York University, New York, NY, April 1–2
- 2022 “Appropriation and the Designs of White Identity,” AMS/SEM/SMT Joint Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, November 10–13

MENTORSHIP

2021– Mentor, Proposal Mentoring Program, Committee on the Status of Women, Society for Music Theory

SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

2024 Colloquium Panelist (final oral examination), Sheila Bowers (B.A., Gallatin)
 2023–25 Co-Convener (with Sarah Louden), “Music Theory for Whom? A Comprehensive Reform of Music Theory Curricula Across NYU” (working group), Department of Music (FAS) and Music and Performing Arts Professions (Steinhardt)

- Supported by a Center for the Humanities Working Group Grant and a Teaching Advancement Grant

2023– Mentor (2x), Proud to be First (program for first-generation sophomores), College of Arts and Science

2023–24 Faculty Advisor, Graduate Student Conference, Department of Music
 2023 Second Reader, Soraya Garcia (M.A. thesis, Italian Studies)
 2023 Workshop Leader (CV and Cover Letters), Faculty First Look, Faculty of Arts and Science

2022– Organizer, Professional Development Workshops for Graduate Students, Department of Music

- Preparing for the Academic Job Market (2022, ’23); Dissertation Proposal Workshop (2024); Conference Abstract Workshop (2024)

YALE UNIVERSITY

2019–22 Co-Founder, [Grant Hagan Society](#), Department of Music

- Graduate student-led affinity group for people of color
- Co-Chair, 2019–20

2019–21 Co-Founder, Fellowship Application Working Group, Department of Music

- Co-Convener, 2019–20

2018 Website Co-Manager, Graduate Music Symposium, Department of Music
 2016–20 Professional Development Committee, Department of Music

- Chair, 2017–19

2016–17 Guest Lecture Committee, Department of Music

INDIANA UNIVERSITY JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

2016 Session Chair (“Romantic Forms”), GTA Annual Research Symposium
 2015–16 Circulation Manager, *Indiana Theory Review*
 2015–16 Treasurer, Graduate Theory Association (GTA)
 2015 Program Committee, GTA Annual Research Symposium
 2015 Hospitality Chair, GTA Annual Research Symposium

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Musicological Society
 American Studies Association
 Association for the Study of African American Life and History
 International Association for the Study of Popular Music–United States

Music Theory Society of New York State
Society for American Music
Society for Music Theory

LANGUAGES

English: native
Italian: fluent (Certificate of Knowledge of the Italian Language, Level C1, CELI 4)
German: reading knowledge

SELECT PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

2016–18	Yale Camerata Chamber Chorus, Yale Institute of Sacred Music
2015–16	University Singers (chamber choir), Indiana University Jacobs School of Music
2014–15	Symphony Orchestra, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music
2010–14	University Philharmonia and Symphony Orchestras, University of Michigan

REFERENCES

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