The ability to sing and play music is one of God’s choicest gifts to His people. Music enriches our lives, cheers our dark days, rouses our emotions and stimulates our intellect. Whether you sing alto in a choir, play tuba in a band or play the piano in your spare time, there are opportunities at Calvin College to “make a joyful noise!”

Music for Enjoyment or Credit

You don’t have to be a music major to participate in Calvin’s musical ensembles or study music privately. Each ensemble meets for regular rehearsals and participates in several concerts every year. In addition to performing on campus, many ensembles perform at area churches and schools and enjoy short Midwestern tours. Most ensembles award college credit to members and conduct major tours throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

Vocal Music Ensembles

The Campus Choir is a mixed-voice choir that performs choral music related to Christian worship across many cultures and throughout history. It rehearses four times per week and is open to qualified students from any class level.

Capella is Calvin’s concert choir. The group of about 50 advanced singers rehearses four times per week and sings major choral literature from various traditions. One year of experience in a college choir is normally required.

The Gospel Choir sings music from African-American traditions and participates regularly in local worship services. This group meets weekly for a two-hour rehearsal. Membership is open to students, faculty, staff and alumni.

The Oratorio Chorus is a large chorus of students and community members. The Oratorio Society presents Handel’s Messiah annually in December and one other major oratorio every spring. Members attend a two-hour rehearsal every week.

The Women’s Chorale is a women’s honor choir made up of students from every class level who meet three times a week for rehearsal. This group performs challenging treble repertoire in regular concerts and choral festivals and also participates in local worship services.

Instrumental Music Ensembles

The Calvin College Band is committed to performing the finest music available for winds and percussion. Membership is limited to a set instrumentation and is open to all students who meet the demands of musicianship. The group rehearses four times per week.

The Calvin College Orchestra is a symphony orchestra with a full wind section. It rehearses four times per week and performs major symphonic literature at regular concerts. The orchestra also presents an annual concerto program each spring with student soloists.
The Flute Choir meets two hours per week for rehearsal. This unique ensemble offers members an opportunity to play more diverse literature for the flute. This group participates in worship services and presents an annual concert.

The Handbell Ensemble, consisting of up to 12 members, meets for one two-hour rehearsal each week. The ensemble contributes to local worship services and performs an annual concert.

The Jazz Band is a full big band made up of students from all class levels. The band rehearsestwo hours once a week and participates in one concert each semester.

The Knollcrest Band meets three times per week and is open to all students who play a wind or percussion instrument. The band plays a variety of chamber wind and concert band literature.

Collegium Musicum is an ensemble for the study and performance of Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music, using early instruments (and often vocals) appropriate to these eras. It rehearses two hours per week and presents a concert each semester.

Individual Study

Students at Calvin may study privately for an additional fee. The instructors are full-time faculty members or professional musicians from the area, many of them members of the Grand Rapids Symphony.

Instruction is available for brass, classical guitar, organ, percussion, piano, strings, voice and woodwinds.

Core Courses in Music

Any of the following courses can be taken to fulfill Calvin’s core curriculum requirements for a fine arts course.

The Enjoyment of Music (103) is an introductory course focused on exploring musical styles from various historical eras. This class is open to students of all class levels with any sort of musical background.

Introduction to Music (105) offers a broad introduction to the art of music, to the variety of its repertoire and to rudimentary technical vocabulary. Some background in the study of music is assumed.

American Music (106) surveys American music, both secular and sacred, emphasizing folk, classical and popular music from a variety of American musical traditions.

World Music (107) studies the musical cultures of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the Americas, with a focus on their various musical styles (traditional and contemporary) and the role of music in these cultures.

Popular Music (203) focuses on the development of popular genres such as folk, blues, musicals, jazz, rock and hip-hop styles, with attention to musical and cultural details.

Hymnology (236) explores the ways in which music is used in the church, criteria for judging church music and the role that church music plays in worship and personal enjoyment.

Music and Community (238) is an experiential analysis of the power of music in contemporary society. Students learn how music embodies their present lifestyle by analyzing the various roles for music in their lives.

Music Degree Programs

The Music Department offers several versions of a music major, as well as a music minor, in our liberal arts program, leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree; students can concentrate on music theory and composition, music history, performance or music in worship. Our professional program for music teachers (k-12) leads to the Bachelor of Music Education degree, with either a vocal or instrumental concentration.

For further information, please contact:

Music Department
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(616) 526-6253
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For additional information about the college or to arrange a campus visit, please contact:

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3201 Burton St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4388
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(616) 526-6106
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Consult the Calvin College Web site for general and departmental information: www.calvin.edu.

Calvin does not discriminate with regard to age, race, color, national origin, gender or disability in any of its educational programs or other activities.