The Department of Music offers students the opportunity to study with innovative musicians, passionate educators, and world-renowned performers.

Music 142r - Foundations of Modern Jazz
with internationally acclaimed Afro-Cuban musician, Yosvany Terry.

This course is designed to familiarize students with the key structural elements in West African music and how to recognize them in modern jazz. Students will be given tools that will allow them to demonstrate these key concepts in both their improvisational work and assigned compositional exercises.

Music 177r - Creative Music: Advanced Ensemble Workshop with jazz legend Vijay Iyer.

This course is an intensive, research-oriented workshop environment for advanced composer-improvisers. Through critical listening, readings, term papers, and collaborative musical projects, students will engage with a range of contemporary musical perspectives and practices.

Music 189r - Chamber Music with Bradetich Artist-in-Residence, the Parker Quartet.

Through auditions students will be divided into chamber ensembles and have weekly coachings with members of the Parker Quartet. Pre-formed ensembles are encouraged and will be accommodated as much as possible. Students will be expected to rehearse between each coaching and to participate in chamber music studio classes throughout the semester.

University Ensembles

- Music 10 Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra
- Music 14 Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum
- Music 15 Harvard Glee Club
- Music 16 Radcliffe Choral Society
- Music 18 Harvard Jazz Band

These courses may be taken repeatedly, but to receive credit each course must be taken in the Fall and Spring semesters consecutively. A maximum of four semesters (two years) may be counted as credit towards the degree.

Harvard Music Scene

With over 45 music groups to choose from, it is no surprise that Harvard’s campus has a very active music scene. In addition to events sponsored by the Department of Music, the Office for the Arts and the Office of Student Life support artistic endeavors on campus. From choirs to jazz bands to opera to chamber orchestras to dance, there’s something for everyone! There are a wide variety of curricular and extra-curricular performance opportunities for all students, whether they choose to concentrate in music or not. Plan to attend an upcoming event, or go online to learn more about the various organizations!

“J have been fortunate enough to conduct pit orchestras, music direct everything from Bernstein to Jason Robert Brown, and compose my own. How am I qualified to do any of that? I’m not. But Harvard’s support system is so brilliant, you’re never far from a world-renowned conductor, composer, or director. The most consistent and familiar feeling of my Harvard experience has been coming home from rehearsal, and only thinking: ‘I’m the luckiest girl in the world. Why do I get to do all this?’”

Madeline Smith ’14

The concentration in Music exposes students to a wide variety of musical styles, sounds, and musical traditions in order to develop their critical understanding of music in diverse cultural and historical contexts. Although the Department of Music is not in itself a school of music with a performance department, all of our courses support the intellectual development of musicians, and many of our courses incorporate or focus on performance.

Students are encouraged to participate (with credit) in faculty-led ensembles in orchestra, chorus, and jazz. We offer a wide range of introductory and advanced courses in music theory, composition, historical musicology, and ethnomusicology, in addition to many courses that incorporate or focus on musical performance. Offered on a rotating basis, our courses reflect the specialties of our academic faculty: eighteenth-century material culture, diaspora studies and migration, opera, jazz, music and politics, early music, musical theater, music and media, improvisation, hip hop, musicology from around the world, history of the book, film, American and European modernism, music and cognition, music and ecology, new music of the 21st-century, and cross-cultural composition.

We train thinking musicians. Our course offerings often engage music in a wider cultural context, linking musical works with works of art, literature, or with philosophical and scientific questions. Students choose their own pathways through these course offerings, creating a mix of introductory and advanced courses that best reflect their musical interests and aspirations. Our graduates go on to careers in music performance and music scholarship, as well as careers in journalism, medicine, law, social service, and arts administration, among many other fields.

Contact Us

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Find Us

The Music Building, including John Knowles Paine Concert Hall and the Ludi Music Library, are located directly behind the Science Center in Harvard’s North Yard.

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2017-18 Concentration Information

About the Department

The Music Concentration is highly individualized, making it possible for students with diverse backgrounds and interests to flourish in the concentration. All students should confer with the Director of Undergraduate Studies at the outset of their concentration or joint concentration in order to develop an overall plan for fulfillment of requirements.

Basic Requirements: 10 courses

- Two terms of Concentration Tutorial
- One term of Advanced Tutorial
- Seven terms of electives in Music

Honors Eligibility Requirements: 12 courses

- Basic Requirements
- Two terms of Senior Tutorial
- Thesis: May be an original composition, a senior recital, or a written thesis

Joint Concentration Requirements: 8 courses

- Two terms of Concentration Tutorial
- Six terms of electives in Music
- Thesis: May be an original composition, a senior recital, or a written thesis

Secondary Requirements: 8 courses

- Any courses offered in Music with the exceptions noted in the Undergraduate Handbook section on Secondary Fields
Funding for Undergraduates

In 2017, the Department of Music awarded over $300,000 in Fellowships and Prizes to support travel, language study, fieldwork, performance, dissertation writing, and archival research by graduate and undergraduate students at Harvard.

Travel, Study and Performance Awards

- **John Knowles Paine Fellowships**: made available to music concentrators in their senior year (for study during the summer following graduation).
- **Davison Fellowships**: provides financial support for students engaged in short projects relating to music that require travel away from Harvard University.
- **John Green Fellowships**: in support of excellence in musical composition.
- **Parker Quartet Guest Artist Award**: open to all Harvard instrumentalists who are interested in collaborating and performing with the Parker Quartet as part of their Blodgett Chamber Music Series.

Composition Prizes

- **Blodgett Composition Competition**: string quartet competition for a piece to be performed by the Parker String Quartet during their regular season at Paine Hall.
- **The Bohemians (New York Musicians Club)**: monetary prize given to an individual for original musical composition for one or two instruments.
- **Francis Boott Prize**: monetary prize given to the writer of the best composition in concerted vocal music. The prize is offered for the best composition for chorus of not less than three nor more than eight parts, either a capella or with accompaniment for piano, organ, or small instrumental ensemble, requiring not more than ten minutes for performance.
- **George Arthur Knight Prize**: monetary prize offered for the best composition in instrumental music, preference to be given to compositions for string quartet or trio, though works with piano accompaniment may compete.
- **Hugh F. MacColl Request**: monetary prize awarded for original musical compositions.

Exciting New Courses!

**Exploring Leonard Bernstein’s Young People’s Concerts**

Carol Oja

Focuses on the Young People’s Concerts of the New York Philharmonic as famously led by Leonard Bernstein and broadcast on CBS television. Taught in conjunction with the New York Philharmonic Archive, class will visit New York City to attend concerts and conduct interviews with subscribers of the Philharmonic who experienced the YPC as children.

Music, Theater, and Dance of South Asia

Richard Wolf

The course will examine vernacular musical forms ranging from tribal music in South India to Nepali drumming to folk song of Northern Pakistan. Part of the course will be devoted to the vigorous literature on classical dance in relation to courtiership and nationalism.

Carmen and the Art of Seduction

Federico Coetsee, John T. Hamilton, and Lisa Parkes

The seminar centers on Bizet’s Carmen, the opera that shocked 19th-century Europe for its bold expression of seduction and sexuality. Further consideration is given to historical precedents and consequences, from Mozart’s Don Giovanni to Strauss’s Salome, including Wagner’s Tristan and Isolde and Parsifal as counter-examples of non-seduction.

Music and Power: Politics and the Collective Voice

Katherine Palczynski

This course builds a framework for understanding how a community of voices can come together in singing, chanting, and other modes of musical and vocal performance to shift the flow of a movement, time, idea, protest, or identity. We will take our material from real events, ranging from the 1960s to the present.

21st Century Ensemble Workshop

Claire Chase

This course is a workshop for the creation of rigorous new models for collectives, ensembles, and organizations that perform and present 21st century music. New repertories and new organizational practices will be explored in a laboratory format that includes pop-up concerts, community events, and a final group performance.