The Mills College Music Department offers a unique undergraduate major in music that promotes a dynamic interaction between performance and improvisation, cultural studies, composition, and sound technology. We encourage our students to investigate and to play music from a broad spectrum of styles and traditions. Above all, the fostering of creativity, which can lead to innovative and even revolutionary ideas, lies at the core of our undergraduate music program.

Our students study composition, electronic music, and media technology with ground-breaking artists. They learn how to compose spontaneously with world-renowned improvisers, and to explore music from both the past and the present under the guidance of our outstanding performance faculty. They also examine the intersections of music and its myriad global, historical, and cultural contexts with passionate scholars.

Performance students work with top San Francisco Bay Area musicians and participate in a range of groups, including Early Music, Performance Collective (Chamber), and the Vocal, Percussion, Gamelan, African Drumming, Music Improvisation Ensemble, and Contemporary Performance Ensemble.

The Mills Music Department has stood at the forefront of experimental music and its allied arts and sciences for decades. Our program provides undergraduate women the opportunity to assume roles in music technology, recording engineering, and composition that were traditionally inaccessible to them. All music students at Mills can work in the recording facilities of our Center for Contemporary Music, a world-renowned facility for electronic and computer music that has played an influential role in the development of contemporary musical culture and is an important link in the long chain of innovation at Mills.

Just as all musical activities should be interrelated, music should not be isolated from other disciplines in the arts, the humanities, and the sciences. We therefore enthusiastically support interdisciplinary work and language study, and are committed to courses of study that fit the needs of students with special interests. In keeping with the liberal arts mission of the College, we also offer courses suitable for non-majors that not only introduce students to a wide variety of styles and repertory, but also place musical activity within the broader context of intellectual history and global culture.

Our undergraduates are encouraged to think critically, to collaborate, to explore and refine their creativity, to expand their vocabularies and techniques, and forge their own diverse paths.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand music within a broad cultural, political, social and intellectual context.
- Possess a knowledge of and openness to a diversity of musical styles and practices.
- Notate and read music proficiently. To achieve excellent musicianship skills (through sight singing and ear training.)
- Have a good grasp of Western music theory and history, demonstrated by analyses of scores and research papers on music history.
- Demonstrate technical mastery of her instrument or discipline, and a comprehensive knowledge of its styles and repertoire, past and present, and to have learned and developed improvisation skills in addition to studying the standard repertory. (for performers)
- Demonstrate the ability to write music, technical skills in the use of electronic and recording media, and an understanding of how to use these skills for creative ends. (for composers)