General Remarks
The Sacred Music Department offers education of the highest quality and broadest scope to Sacred Music majors who aspire to be leaders of the future.

The department is inter-denominational and seeks to explore the excellence of various traditions of sacred music. The faculty have wide experience and expertise in such traditions as Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed, Roman Catholic, the Synagogue and Temple tradition, and others.

The curricula at both undergraduate and graduate levels aim, on the one hand, to explore how familiar tradition can be blended with unfamiliar contemporary creativity in choral, congregational, and instrumental music for worship and, on the other hand, to provide a balanced study of theoretical matters and practical concerns. Technique, repertoire, and performance practice are therefore considered with theology, Biblical and post-Biblical religious history, and the development and practice of liturgy and worship.

Underlying all the offerings of the department is the understanding that sacred music is neither an optional extra nor merely a spiritual entertainment within the service of the church. It is rather an essential part of the liturgy and worship and therefore must have integrity and quality appropriate for its twin functions of carrying the Word of God to us, and our words of praise to God.

Undergirding the sacred music program are the offerings of the other Westminster academic and performance departments, the specialized collections containing sacred music materials in Talbott Library, and the vast network of affiliate churches in the greater New York-Philadelphia metropolitan area in which Westminster students are enabled to gain personal experience of a wide range of sacred music practice.

Sacred Music Lab
All full-time undergraduate Sacred Music majors are expected to enroll in and meet the requirements for SM 511 Sacred Music Lab to a total of eight semesters. All full-time graduate Sacred Music majors are expected to enroll in and meet the requirements for SM 511 Sacred Music Lab to a total of two semesters. Grading is “P” (satisfactory) or “U” (unsatisfactory).

Handbell Program
The Westminster handbell program was instituted in 1979 to fill the need to train church musicians in the art of handbell ringing. It became the first curriculum of handbell ringing in an institution of higher learning. Concert Handbell Choir I, open to students by audition, goes on tour annually, has appeared on national television, and has five recordings to its credit.

Jubilee Singers
The Westminster Jubilee Singers is an auditioned ensemble dedicated to the performance of repertoire from the rich body of sacred music from the African-American tradition. Jubilee Singers performs regularly on- and off-campus.

Sacred Music Internship
All undergraduate Sacred Music majors are placed in local churches during the junior year as part of the requirement for church field education. The placement decision is made at the end of the sophomore year to permit planning over the summer before employment begins in the fall. Church field education gives the opportunity for students to exercise their skills in a church setting under faculty supervision and guidance.

Sacred Music Major: Undergraduate
The undergraduate sacred music program is designed for students who are preparing for professional careers in church music. The curriculum provides courses in theological, liturgical, sociological, and practical dimensions of music ministry and requires at least one year of supervised field education in an affiliate church.

Sacred Music Major: Graduate
The graduate sacred music program provides advanced training for church musicians from a wide variety of educational, professional, and denominational backgrounds. It is expected that applicants for this program will bring a thorough grounding of musical knowledge and significant experience in full- or part-time music ministry. The curriculum includes general as well as specialized courses in sacred music studies, theology, history, musicology, and applied skills.

Special Performance Option for Graduate Students
Graduate applicants who have outstanding promise in sacred music as conductors but who have limited backgrounds in voice, organ or piano may apply for special consideration as performers in an instrumental field not normally part of the graduate sacred music program. A candidate should have an undergraduate major or emphasis or the equivalent on the instrument. A recommendation from the undergraduate applied music instructor is required. The candidate will audition for a committee composed of an associate dean, the faculty chair, and an appropriate member of the Westminster Conservatory faculty.

An admitted student will choose an instrumental teacher with whom to study, subject to the approval of the auditioning committee. The student is required to complete satisfactorily the equivalent of two semesters of study (at least 12 hours of lessons per semester) and to present a 30-minute recital under the instrumental teacher’s supervision. All fees and expenses for this study are separate from those charged by the college and are the responsibility of the student. The requirement of three semesters of voice, organ or piano study, with satisfactory completion of an appropriate jury, remains for a student admitted under this option, but audition and recital requirements in these areas are waived.

Princeton Theological Seminary
A reciprocal arrangement with Princeton Theological Seminary allows Westminster graduate students to take certain courses offered by the Seminary. Enrollment in such courses is arranged after consultation with Sacred Music faculty. Speer Library at the Seminary, housing one of the nation’s most important theological collections, is another invaluable resource for Westminster students.

Faculty
Steve Pilkington • Associate Professor, Sacred Music, and Director of Chapel, 1992. B.A., St. Olaf College; M.M., University of Illinois; Ph.D., Drew University.