Self-Guided Walking Tour of Oberlin Conservatory of Music

Hello and welcome to the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. This guide is meant to provide you with some direction and information about the facilities you will see as you explore the Conservatory.

Before we get started, here are some highlights of Oberlin College and Conservatory:

**Highlights**

- Oberlin College was founded in 1833
  - First institution of higher education in America to adopt a policy to admit students of color (1835)
  - First institution to award bachelor’s degrees to women in a coeducational program (1841)
  - Since 1920, more Oberlin graduates have earned PhDs than the graduates of any other primarily baccalaureate college in America.

- Oberlin Conservatory was founded in 1865 and is the nation’s oldest continuously operating conservatory
  - Approximately 550 students and 75 faculty
  - Over 500 performances on campus each year
  - Over 30 student ensembles
  - 3 fully staged operas each year (fall, winter term, spring)
  - Student body is almost entirely undergraduate
  - Bibbins Hall and Warner Concert Hall were designed by Minoru Yamasaki (World Trade Center, King, Japanese garden), “neogothic formalism,” built 1964
  - Hours of the Conservatory: 7:30 am - 12 midnight

**How to use this guide:** Walking instructions will be indicated with the symbol (◆) at the beginning of the paragraph. Information regarding the facilities you see as you explore will be detailed following each set of walking instructions. We have also included a map of the Conservatory buildings and a campus-wide map for your reference.

The Conservatory is made up of 4 main buildings all interconnected through different hallways, breezeways, staircases or tunnels. Let’s get walking...

◆ Enter **Bibbins Hall** through the side entrance located in College Plaza (39 W College St., Oberlin, OH 44074) as indicated on the included map.

**Bibbins Hall**

Bibbins Hall is the main academic building within the Conservatory. Its three floors hold the majority of the classical music faculty’s studios including those for historical performance, voice, strings, woodwind, piano, and brass faculty. **The David H. Stull Recital Hall**, the newest Conservatory performance space (August 2013), is located on the third floor and serves as an intimate space for faculty and student recitals and small chamber group performances. It can
accommodate up to 120 people and features rotating items from one of our special collections in its outer display case. As with all of our halls, conservatory students have the capacity to reserve the space on an hourly basis for practice sessions, rehearsals, and/or recordings using audio and video recording equipment built into the hall, free of charge. The second floor (renovated in 2012) is primarily classroom spaces. The TIMARA sound studios and computer lab are in the basement, accessible through the stairwell in the West end of the building. Bibbins Hall also houses the Office of the Dean of the Conservatory and the Office of Concert Productions.

◆ Walk forward through Bibbins Hall and take the first hallway to your left. As you walk through this hallway you can see a Japanese-style garden outside to your right. When you come to the end of this hallway, stop; you have now entered the Conservatory Central Building. To your left is Kulas Recital Hall, directly ahead of you and to the right is an entrance to Warner Concert Hall, and to your immediate right is the Con Lounge, where you can sit a moment to read about a couple of our performance spaces. Also take some time to observe the student body, ask questions or join in a conversation, as this is a popular hangout area between classes.

Conservatory Central Building

The Conservatory Central Building is home to a wide array of spaces and facilities. It holds two of our on-site performance halls, Kulas Recital Hall and Warner Concert Hall, as well as our Conservatory Music Library, Audio Services Department, percussion faculty studio, large rehearsal spaces, student lounge, and student lockers. Each student is given a locker to keep their instrument and music within the Conservatory.

Kulas Recital Hall

Kulas Recital Hall seats approximately 148 people and hosts a variety of events including recitals, chamber concerts, studio classes, and master classes. It is also used as a lecture hall for some academic courses and guest lectures. It can also be reserved by conservatory students on an hourly basis for rehearsals, practice sessions, or recordings free of charge. Recording procedures are simple and equipment can be accessed easily in the sound booth at the back of the hall.

Feel free to take a peek inside the hall...but please be careful not to disturb a class, rehearsal or performance.

Warner Concert Hall

Warner Concert Hall is a 496-seat concert and performance space that hosts everything from large ensemble concerts to chamber concerts, recitals, recording sessions, and other performances. This space is fully modular and almost everything in the room can be adjusted to accommodate the performer. The curtains and drapes are on individual tracks, allowing for acoustic adjustment. A built-in sound screen can be lowered or raised directly out of the stage floor to accommodate large ensembles or create a more intimate concert environment. The hall features two organs: a 44-stop Flentrop organ with 3,400 pipes, which is the second largest organ on campus and hangs above the stage, and the organ at the back of Warner, which was built in the style of the late 17th/early 18th century organs in the Zaragoza region of Spain. This instrument was built in 1989 by Gregory Harrold (his opus 11) of Los Angeles for the University
of California at Berkeley. The Spanish organ has one manual, 17 stops, 36 ranks, with 1,257 pipes. Just like Stull and Kulas Hall, it can be reserved without cost by conservatory students for rehearsals, practice sessions, or use for recording using the audio and video recording equipment built into the hall.

◆ Continue to follow the hallway to make a left turn. The Conservatory Library is immediately to your right. Go inside and look around while you read about the facility. Find the area for your instrument and see how many scores are available. Did you find a new piece?

Conservatory Library

The Conservatory Library, which was expanded in 1988 to house more material, offer students access to roughly 141,000 musical scores, 136,000 sound recordings, 68,000 books about music and 210 music periodical titles. Affiliation with the Ohio Link program provides students even further access by bringing together resources from 120 different libraries across the state of Ohio, including the State Library of Ohio. The library features listening rooms, study carrels, and a computer lab. It is open M-Thu from 8am – 11pm and 8am – 5:30pm on F. It is also open with additional afternoon hours on Saturday and Sunday.

◆ Exit the library and turn right to continue following the hallway. As you walk you will pass the large ensemble rehearsal spaces (C21/C25), Audio Services Department (C33), and percussion faculty studio (C38) on your left. You will pass the student lockers on your right. The floor slopes downward and plateaus in a small foyer. To your left is a building exit and elevator. Directly in front of you is the entrance to the Robertson Practice Room Facility. Remember this location, as you will be riding the elevator soon.

But for now, go and explore the Robertson Practice Room Facility. If you brought your instrument, feel free to find an open room and play for a while.

Robertson Practice Room Facility

This building houses individual practice rooms on the second and third floors. These spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis, but with 150 practice rooms it is rare that a student would be left without space to use at any given time. Most of our practice rooms are complete with a Steinway Parlor Grand piano and all rooms have windows. Oberlin is an all Steinway institution with the collection totaling more than 240 Steinway pianos in all. The Conservatory Professional Development office, Kulas Organ Center, and assigned practice rooms for harp, tuba, percussion, and double bass are located on the first floor. The Kulas Organ Center contains 14 of the 29 organs that can be found on campus. Many of the practice spaces in the Center also contain a harpsichord.

Attention Vocalists! The Otto B. Schoepfle Vocal Arts Center can be found on the third floor. This laboratory includes stroboscopic and fiber-optic instrumentation that can display four types of vocal analyses concurrently, allowing examination of both the function and the timbre of the artistic singing voice.

Attention Jazz Composers! Two workstations for writing music can be found on the third floor. The rooms feature a Mac mini and 43” computer monitor programmed with a full suite of music
notation software (Sibelius Ultimate, Dorico, ProTools, Cubase, etc.), a pair of speakers, audio interface, and an 88-key keyboard controller.

Attention Reed Instrumentalists! Individual reed-making rooms for the bassoon, oboe and clarinet studios can be found on the second floor.

◆ Take the elevator to the third floor. “Going up...ding...ding...third floor.” Exit the elevator into the McGregor Sky Bar and turn right. Head toward the double doors at the end of the room.

McGregor Sky Bar

The McGregor Sky Bar bridges the span between the Kohl Building and the rest of the Conservatory and offers students and faculty a great place to study or simply lounge in between classes. It features a small coffee and snack bar.

◆ Pass through the double doors into the Kohl Building. Look to your left and take a moment to see the National Medal of Arts, awarded to the Oberlin Conservatory in 2009. The Oberlin Conservatory of Music is the only professional music school to be so honored by President Obama.

Take the stairwell to your right down to the first floor, where you will enter the Wendell M. Logan Commons. Have a seat and read about what the Kohl Building offers.

Kohl Building

The Kohl Building is the newest Conservatory building on campus (May 2010) and is primarily used for the Jazz Studies majors. The building has earned a gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating, as developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. The third floor is primarily office space for Musicology and Composition faculty and provides access, along with the outdoor stairwell running the entire height of the west side of the building, to the rooftop terrace. Many of the jazz faculty members have their individual studios on the second floor, which also features a computer lab and individual practice rooms, each with in-room recording and playback capabilities. The first floor offers a very diverse array of spaces including combo group rehearsal rooms with in-room recording and playback capabilities, percussion practice rooms and the Clonick Recording Studio located at the South end of the building. This state-of-the-art recording facility made possible by a gift from Joseph Clonick, an Oberlin Alumnus Class of 1957, is the main rehearsal space for the Oberlin Jazz Ensemble and can be used by students on a reservation basis or rented for professional performances or recording productions. Notable performers in this space include Stevie Wonder, Wayne Shorter, and Esperanza Spalding. The Kohl Building also houses three permanent collections: the James and Susan Neumann Jazz Collection of more than 100,000 jazz recordings, as well as posters, ephemera, and iconography; the Selch Collection of American Music History with nearly 700 instruments and 6,000 rare books and artworks; and the Milton J. and Mona C. Hinton Collection including date books, correspondence, financial records, artifacts, newspaper clippings, photographs, audio and moving image materials, and additional ephemera.
Exit the building through the double doors on the first floor and to your right you can see College Plaza and the entrance you used to Bibbins Hall. This concludes the tour of the main Conservatory buildings. We hope you enjoyed the tour! But wait, there’s more...

There are several other facilities of interest for musicians at Oberlin College and Conservatory including Finney Chapel, Fairchild Chapel, Hall Auditorium, and the Cat in the Cream Coffeehouse that can be located on the campus map included in this packet. We have given you some information on these facilities below:

**Finney Chapel**

With seating for 1,200 people, Finney Chapel is the largest performance space on campus. When completed in 1908, the chapel became noted for its excellent acoustics. Artist Recital Series, Oberlin Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra performances take place here along with a wide variety of events and convocations. It houses a Fisk Opus 116 organ, the largest organ on campus, which was dedicated in 2001.

Take a chance and peek in using the stage door entrance located at the rear of the building. Please be careful not to disturb an event, rehearsal or performance.

**Fairchild Chapel**

The centerpiece of Bosworth Hall is Fairchild Chapel, a 150-seat facility that features a pipe organ based on building principles of the early 17th century. The space hosts a myriad of musical shows: recitals for the Historical Performance department, as well as other in areas, various on-campus *a cappella* concerts, and performances by Collegium Musicum, a choir in the medieval and early religious music tradition.

**Hall Auditorium**

Hall Auditorium seats 500 people and hosts our main stage Opera Theater performances, as well as large-scale theater productions and dance performances. Oberlin Conservatory produces three fully staged operas every year, which provide the opportunity for vocalists to perform lead opera roles and instrumentalists to play in the pit orchestra as undergraduate students. These widely popular events draw students, residents, faculty and staff to Hall to see the performances.

**Cat in the Cream Coffeehouse**

The Cat in the Cream is a coffeehouse-style venue run entirely by students. Here you’ll find classic coffeehouse entertainment - folk music, jazz, and poetry readings, for example - interspersed with improv and sketch comedy, student theater productions, dance, and storytelling. Bookings showcase homegrown talent as well as nationally and internationally renowned acts. Reasonably priced coffees, teas, and juices, along with the Cat’s famous giant cookies, make this a favorite gathering place. It also hosts Jazz Forum performances on most Fridays at noon.
Birenbaum Innovation and Performance Space

William and Helen Birenbaum Innovation and Performance Space, or simply the Birenbaum, is a club-like, subterranean venue in the Hotel at Oberlin. Built in 2016, the Birenbaum accommodates more than 100 guests. By day it serves as a teaching space; by night it features conservatory performances and events.

Looking for some fun after all that exercise? Play a quick game at the Bowling Lanes next to the Cat in the Cream Coffeehouse, catch a movie at the Apollo Theatre, or grab a quick bite to eat in one of the restaurants downtown.