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[Press Room](#)



Images of Dr. Robert Calonico are available for download from the Cal Performances [online press room](#)

**CAL PERFORMANCES ANNOUNCES**  
**DR. ROBERT CALONICO TO STEP DOWN**  
**BELOVED DIRECTOR OF BANDS TO RETIRE FROM UC BERKELEY**  
**AFTER 28 YEARS**

**Berkeley, December 6, 2017** — Cal Performances today announced that a beloved and enduring presence on the UC Berkeley campus, Dr. Robert Calonico, will retire from UC Berkeley in June, at the end of the 2017–18 school year. Calonico, 63, has been Director of Bands at the university since 1995, and was Director of UC Jazz Ensembles for five years before that. During his tenure, he brought the UC Jazz Big Band and combos to Hawaii, took more than 100 members of the Cal Band to Japan and China, and performed at Super Bowl 50, alongside Coldplay, Beyoncé, and the Youth Orchestra Los Angeles. The Cal Band has twice performed with the San Francisco Symphony Pops. Calonico is well known on campus for fostering a warm and inclusive environment within the UC Berkeley bands, and for working collaboratively with student leadership. UC Jazz

Ensembles and the Cal Band are part of Student Musical Activities at UC Berkeley, which is administered by Cal Performances. The University Wind Ensemble, also directed by Calonico, is a Department of Music ensemble.

“Bob Calonico’s expert musicianship, passion for education, and total dedication to his students and to the importance of music in the lives of generations of UC Berkeley band and wind ensemble members, is second to none,” said Matías Tarnopolsky, executive and artistic director of Cal Performances. “His sense of the vital role of music as part of Berkeley’s daily life—whether in the grand pageant of a sporting event or in the beautiful routine of a rehearsal—is an example to us all. We will miss his musicianship, his wisdom, and his sunny personality, but will forever keep at heart the example he has set and continues to set. We offer him our most heartfelt congratulations as he embarks on his next chapter.”

Calonico revived the University Wind Ensemble after a long period of dormancy between 1977 and 1995; the group is now active year round. He is credited for his interdisciplinary collaborations with UC Berkeley faculty, which have connected music with such fields as astronomy, history, physics, and literature. As a proponent of new music, Calonico has commissioned works by Berkeley Department of Music faculty and co-commissioned works by other well-known composers through member consortiums. The final Wind Ensemble concert of the academic year, with Calonico conducting, is planned for April 22 in Hertz Hall. In addition, for his last tour as Director of Bands, Calonico will travel with the Wind Ensemble to Croatia and Italy in May. A farewell event for him is in the works and will be announced at a later time. After that, Calonico hopes to keep music and his university friendships at the center of his life while in retirement, and to travel more extensively with his wife of 35 years, Sharon Calonico, a violinist and teacher. The couple have two grown children, Anthony and Elise, who reside in Southern California.

“The very best part of the job here at Cal has been working with the students—they are just really special,” said Calonico. “I learned a lot from them and I hope they learned something from me. I’m so proud of all of them.”

UC Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ said, “Bob Calonico’s career at Cal is defined by his care for and devotion to our students. Over the course of 28 years, thousands of young musicians benefited

from Bob's love, attention, and musicality. For all he has provided to the fortunate members of the Cal Band, and the University as a whole, he deserves our deepest respect, appreciation, and gratitude.”

Calonico was born and raised in Berkeley and attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate (class of 1976). His parents had met there as undergraduates in the late 1940s, and four of his five siblings are also Cal alumni. As a student, he was active as a clarinetist, playing in the marching band, the wind ensemble, the orchestra, and the contemporary chamber players, under the mentorship of UC Berkeley faculty and staff including Michael Senturia, James Berdahl, and Robert Briggs. As an undergraduate, he served as Student Director of the Cal Marching Band, getting an early taste of how the student-run ensemble functions. He first studied clarinet privately with the late Rudolph Tapiro, former principal clarinetist of the Oakland Symphony, and later with Rosario Mazzeo, a former member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Calonico continued his studies and earned a master's degree at Cal State University Hayward (now East Bay), studying with William Wohlmacher. He joined the musicians' union at age 18, and has remained active as a performer throughout his 28-year tenure at Cal, playing everything from television jingles to film soundtracks, and working with orchestras and in theater, ballet, opera, jazz, and chamber music. He later earned his doctorate in music education from Boston University. He is a longtime member of the National Association for Music Education, the College Band Directors National Association, and the California Music Educators Association, where he served as president from 2006–08. He also conducts the Danville Community Band.

“What's special about teaching music is that you're with a group of people who are all working towards a common goal. Team building, spirit, camaraderie are all really important,” Calonico reflected. “This is an important time in a person's development. When I think of the friends I made as a student here at Cal, those friendships have lasted a lifetime. The friendships my students make here will last a lifetime as well.”