

Princeton University

Honors Faculty Members
Receiving Emeritus Status



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colleagues in the departments of those honored.

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Faculty Members Receiving Emeritus Status

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Peter Jeffery



Peter Jeffery is one of the pre-eminent medieval musicologists of our time, a scholar of extraordinary erudition and wisdom, an inspiring teacher to his students at Princeton University and elsewhere, and a human being whose often unassuming demeanor belies the thoughtful, scrupulously honest, and rigorously critical intelligence that his colleagues and friends have treasured over the years.

Peter's accomplishments in musical and historical scholarship are many and varied. Recently he has become best known for the sensational unraveling of the forgery of a letter attributed to St. Clement of Alexandria, in his dauntingly erudite and painstakingly researched monograph *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled: Imagined Rituals of Sex, Death, and Madness in a Biblical Forgery* (2006).

Within musicology, Peter's most significant contributions have been in the realm of chant scholarship. In a series of landmark articles—each a model of critical, source-based scholarship—he has explored the history of Christian chant during the first millennium from a number of fresh and arresting perspectives. He has proved himself a wizard in discovering new evidence that can be brought to bear on old problems, and his rare ability to think outside the proverbial box has prompted significant methodological breakthroughs.

The breathtaking methodological originality that has characterized Peter's work has been most visibly evident in his landmark monograph *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethno-*

musicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant (1992), which does exactly what the title promises—namely, explore the manifold ways in which chant scholarship can benefit from methods and insights developed in the study of non-Western and noncanonical musical cultures. This provocative book is widely read and discussed in graduate seminars across the United States and Europe, and has galvanized interest in what might otherwise appear to be a relatively antiquarian area of musicological enquiry.

Born in New York City in 1953, Peter received a B.A. from Brooklyn College of the City University of New York in 1975 and went on to pursue graduate study in music at Princeton University. His Ph.D. thesis, for which he received the doctorate in 1980, was a study of the autograph manuscripts of the 17th-century Italian opera composer Francesco Cavalli. Throughout the years he has underlined his appreciation of the scholarly core values that were the hallmark of the Princeton Department of Music in those days, notably, the crucial importance of primary source research. These are values that he has been at pains to pass on to new generations of students in his graduate seminars, even when the changing winds of scholarly fashion seemed to diminish their perceived importance.

Peter taught for nearly 10 years at the University of Delaware (1984–94), and became the William H. Scheide Professor of Music History in the music department at Princeton in 1994. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 2000, and has taught at Harvard University and Boston University as a visiting professor. He has received wide recognition for his contributions to musical scholarship. In 1984, Peter was awarded the Alfred Einstein Award of the American Musicological Society for his article “The Introduction of Psalmody into the Roman Mass by Pope Celestine I (422–432): Reinterpreting a Passage in the Liber Pontificalis.” Barely three years later, in 1987, he was a recipient of a

MacArthur Fellowship (popularly known as “genius award”) from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Peter has made himself indispensable to the Princeton Department of Music in many ways, seen and unseen, and while his retirement will cause his colleagues sadness, at the same time we wish him well in this next part of life’s journey as he joins the music faculty at the University of Notre Dame. As a scholar, colleague, and friend, it will be a long time before we will have in our midst a colleague who is so vital and inspiring a force.