Princeton University

Honors Faculty Members Receiving Emeritus Status

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The biographical sketches were written by staff and colleagues in the departments of those honored.
Born and raised in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, Scott Burnham was initially self-taught in music, performing not the classical music of Mozart and Beethoven at the piano but the classic rock of the 1960s and 1970s on a Hammond organ in the basement of his family home. A course in music appreciation at a local community college introduced him to the canon of works that would come to define his career as one of the preeminent analysts and interpreters of music from the 18th and 19th centuries. Borrowing scores by Beethoven from the college library, Scott learned how to read music, although his sensitivity to and sympathy for the feelings and meanings behind the notes must be inborn.

Scott attended Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio, where he began his training in composition and music theory while also pursuing a minor in German, and graduated summa cum laude. He earned his master’s degree at the Yale School of Music, focusing on composition, and his Ph.D. in music theory and analysis from Brandeis University under the direction of Allan Keiler. His dissertation, which became the basis for a pair of seminal articles, revived interest in the aesthetics and analyses of nineteenth-century German theorist and critic Adolf Bernhard Marx; his lucid translations of Marx’s rather gnarled prose continue to fuel scholarship in the field of historical music theory and analysis. Indeed, Scott pioneered a more historically informed approach to music theory, bringing together the otherwise often separate fields of music history, theory, composition, and criticism.

While finishing his doctoral degree, Scott worked for a year at a day school in Connecticut, teaching Latin, English, music theory, and physical education to middle school students. His first academic appointment was as a visiting professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where he offered graduate seminars in the history of music theory and in music analysis.

Scott came to Princeton in 1989. His appointment bridged the two sides of the music department, composition and music history, and also helped to create new opportunities for students to delve into music theory. He quickly established himself as a superlative teacher of both
undergraduate and graduate students, a critical but kind mentor within the department, a generous colleague across campus, and a formidable but warm presence in the broader disciplines of music history and theory.

While continuing to publish now canonic articles on the history of theory, analysis, and criticism, Scott turned to the music of Beethoven — especially during his so-called “middle” or “heroic” period. His first book, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton University Press, 1995), won the prestigious Wallace Berry Award from the Society for Music Theory as the outstanding book in music theory. He has, in sum, published nearly 50 articles, most focusing on the music of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. He also edited and translated the writings of A. B. Marx in *Musical Form in the Age of Beethoven* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), coedited (with Michael Steinberg) *Beethoven and His World* (Princeton University Press, 2000), and compiled a selection of his own writings in *Sounding Values: Selected Essays* (Ashgate, 2010) for the Contemporary Thinkers on Critical Musicology series. Notable awards supported his research, including fellowships from the National Humanities Center and Guggenheim Foundation. In 2013, his monograph, *Mozart’s Grace* (Princeton University Press), won the Otto Kinkeldey Award from the American Musicological Society for a musicological book of exceptional merit.

Scott’s own grace on stage has made him a sought-after speaker, and he has delivered hundreds of preconcert talks, hosted dozens of radio programs, and given scores of public lectures and keynote addresses on campus, around the country, and abroad. His undergraduate courses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music, including Mozart and Beethoven, consistently boast some of highest enrollments in the department, and his graduate seminars on music criticism and analysis, the history of theory, and aesthetics attract students from both music history and composition. Scott has advised at least 20 dissertations as first reader, innumerable undergraduate theses, and championed an exchange program in music analysis between Oxford and Princeton universities. He also team-taught the signature humanities sequence, HUM 218–219, for three years, supervised the course in 2015, and served a year as interim director of its sponsoring program, the Society of Fellows.
Known across campus for his collegiality, Scott sits on the Task Force on the Future of the Humanities, the Executive Committee for the Council of the Humanities, and the Executive Committee for the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in the Humanities. He served on the Committee on Committees, the Internal Review Committee for the Princeton Writing Program, and the Grading Committee. Scott has also led a Princeton Alumni Association trip, lectured for the University in Salzburg, and participated in the Creative Arts Retreat with the Lewis Center for the Arts. His extensive service was recognized and honored in 2013 with the Howard T. Behrman Award for Distinguished Achievement in the Humanities at Princeton. Within the music department, he served for two terms as chair, three years as director of graduate studies (once in music history, twice in composition), three years as departmental representative, and four years as a freshman/sophomore adviser. Scott has proven himself an especially effective champion of his colleagues: nearly half of the faculty members in the Department of Music have come up for, and been granted, tenure and reappointment under his watch.

Scott also serves — and leads — the disciplines of music theory and history. He has been a member of the advisory boards of three leading peer-reviewed journals, been a member of the publications committee of the American Musicological Society, and chaired the program committee for its annual meeting. His evaluation as an external reviewer has been sought by the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, the University of Virginia, the American Academy in Berlin, the National Humanities Center, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the MacArthur Foundation.

Scott leaves Princeton with emeritus status to take a distinguished appointment at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where he will continue to teach graduate seminars and devote himself to a new book on the music of Franz Schubert. Although he may thus escape some of the duties that pressed upon his time here, he will never slip loose the bonds of our enduring affection.