Resolution Upon the Retirement of Professor of Music Janet Schmalfeldt
Adopted by the faculty of Arts and Sciences of Tufts University
May 15, 2013

The members of the Music Department and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Tufts University hereby record our most warm appreciation to Professor Janet Schmalfeldt, who will retire on December 31, 2013 after a research leave.

Professor Schmalfeldt arrived at Tufts in 1995, and has been a vibrant musical and intellectual force here since the moment she set foot in the classroom and/or walked onto the concert stage as a pianist. She brought to Tufts her ample experience and award-winning teaching record at McGill University and Yale University. She was hired at the Associate Professor level, and received tenure at Tufts in 1997. She also served in visiting capacities (during Tufts leaves) as Associate Professor at Harvard University and Visiting Professor at the Orpheus Academy in Ghent, Belgium. In 2011, she was promoted to Professor of Music at Tufts.

We, her Tufts colleagues, think of Janet Schmalfeldt as the finest and most dynamic teaching music theorist in the field. Her courses in Western music theory—the core three-semester heart of our music major—have become legendary at Tufts for their exacting demands as well as their whirlwind execution and warm, involved performances, often featuring collaborations with student musicians. She has also offered innovative seminars for advanced majors and graduate students in Analytic and Cultural Studies in Nineteenth-Century European Music, Analytic and Cultural Studies in Twentieth-Century Music, and Studies in Schenkerian Technique; for non-majors, she repeatedly offered courses on the music of Beethoven and created an Analysis for Performance course in our department. Schmalfeldt’s research specialties include the music of Alban Berg; culture, form, and process in nineteenth-century music; and Heinrich Schenker’s analytical techniques.

Professor Schmalfeldt’s work has been a scholarly beacon in the field of music theory for over three decades, especially since the publication of her first book Berg’s Wozzeck: Harmonic Language and Dramatic Design (Yale University Press, 1983; rave reviews in nine peer journals in the 1980s). An avowed expert on twentieth-century compositional concerns, she turned her attention in the years between the Berg analysis and now to a substantial series of articles concentrating primarily on form and process in nineteenth-century music. Her much-admired studies of works by Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, and Schumann, as well as a signature article concerning Henry Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas have led to the recent release of her much-anticipated work, In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music (Oxford Studies in Music Theory. Oxford University Press, 2011). As partial testimony to the book’s significance, it received two major awards: the 2012 ASCAP – Deems Taylor Award and the 2012 Wallace Berry Award from the Society for Music Theory. One reviewer encapsulates the impact of this book, and Professor Schmalfeldt’s entire scholarly oeuvre, describing “the pleasure of experiencing canonic piece after canonic piece through the exceptionally insightful and musical mind of a seasoned musician—one who has lived with, pondered, taught, and in many cases, played these pieces for years.”

With Professor Schmalfeldt, scholarship blends imperceptibly with teaching and service; every music major who has completed a degree at Tufts since the mid-1990s has worked closely with her in the
context of her essential courses in tonal theory. Her devotion to each student’s success is a marvel to behold; her careful comments on student exercises and compositions have often been more voluminous than the exercises themselves. Additionally, Professor Schmalfeldt has selflessly directed her energies to M.A. thesis advising and reading (more than thirty projects in music theory, composition, and musicology since 1997), advising in excess of twenty senior honors theses, senior recital projects, and summer scholars studies, and to coaching student performers in classroom contexts and in preparation for public events. Her dedication to students—characterized by disciplined care matched with personal warmth and understanding—is unparalleled in our experience. It is not unusual to meet Prof. Schmalfeldt in the hallway after class looking more like she’s just come from a workout at the Tisch Fitness Center than from a bout with music analysis. In fact, Schmalfeldt is so vigorously committed to the music she shares with students and colleagues that she’ll probably have an analysis of THIS ready before it’s even over…[cue for QX to begin performance of dedicatory piece for string quartet; circa 2’15”]

(live music)

[That was “Parting Phrases By Twos and Fours,” composed in honor of Janet Schmalfeldt by John McDonald for this occasion—May 15, 2013—and performed by QX; Jae Cosmos Lee, Rohan Gregory, violins; Peter Sulski, viola; Jan Müller Szeraws, cello]

Similarly strong is Professor Schmalfeldt’s record of service at Tufts and to the profession. She was President of the New England Conference of Music Theorists from 1993 to 1995, and subsequently Vice President of the Society for Music Theory from 1995 to 1997. Shortly after earning tenure at Tufts, she took on the presidency of the Society for Music Theory (1997-99), a gargantuan and highly visible responsibility. She remains extraordinarily active in both NECMT and SMT. At Tufts, Professor Schmalfeldt served as Music Department Chair from 2003 to 2006, as Interim Chair in Spring 2011, and has volunteered for myriad search committees and departmental working groups during her eighteen-year Tufts career. Additionally, she served on the Educational Policy Committee from 1995 to 2000, and has been a member of the Faculty research Awards Committee since 2010, serving as Chair in 2011-12. In short, Professor Schmalfeldt has been an active participant and positive influence on the Tufts University academic community and the greater community in her profession for three decades.

We wish her the great success we know she will enjoy as Visiting Professor of Music at the University of Chicago in the spring of 2014, and in subsequent visiting positions she may assume as Tufts Professor of Music Emerita.

So be it stated that this resolution be reproduced, and our overflowing emotions be smeared, upon the minutes of the faculty of Arts and Sciences and that a copy of the resolution and musical score be presented to Professor Schmalfeldt.

Respectfully submitted,

John McDonald
Tufts University Professor of Music and Music Department Chair
May 10, 2013