

The University of Vermont

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September 20, 2018

To: Prof. Paul Besaw, Chair, Department of Music and Dance
From: Sylvia Parker, Senior Lecturer, Department of Music and Dance
Re: Promotion of David Feurzeig to the rank Full Professor

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sylvia Parker".

This letter concerns the promotion to Full Professor of David Feurzeig in the Department of Music and Dance. I have observed and interacted with David his entire time as a UVM faculty member. I highly recommend him for promotion.

David is endlessly competent, enthusiastic, and creative. His class syllabi always include innovations. He prepares new handouts for nearly every session to supplement class textbooks. He has introduced new elements into our traditional music theory courses and offered lesson plans and quizzes to teachers of other sections. For example, he created several lessons on Sibelius computer music notation software and distributed those lessons to the rest of us to use. He promoted the idea of quick timed fluency quizzes on basic music notation within our first semesters of the music theory curriculum and provided the quizzes for the rest of us to use if we'd like.

While I have observed David's teaching of traditional music theory courses many times in the past and am very familiar with his style and the course content, I chose recently to visit a class I had not seen before, music composition. The day I observed, the main activity was to perform improvisational pieces students had composed using creative and non-traditional notation. Their "scores" included instructions such as the name of a mode, a section of "free jazz, general chaos," "loud getting softer," a few unspecified pitches with an upward gesture, three pictures of triangles, a section to be performed with an "open feel." These students have all taken courses in traditional music notation, but here David was pushing them to imagine non-traditional sounds and forms, and not to be limited by their knowledge of "correct" notation. Following each performance, he led a discussion and then a second performance benefiting from those ideas. The students all participated in playing, listening, and discussing each other's work. By coincidence (or more likely by plan), the instrumentation for each piece was two instruments from the class and also piano, which he himself played. He plays very well, and was able to inject excitement into the improvisation that they were hearing/playing/composing—whether they were actually aware of his own expertise or not. The final portion of the class focused on an innovative piece by a famous composer that the students hadn't known before. Composed note for note on the staff, unlike the improvised pieces these students are working on at the moment, the ideas are similar to those in their projects. According to the syllabus, this is one of several projects that will lead to a final composition to be performed in a public concert.

Beyond the classroom, David pursues many activities that benefit UVM. He is an active faculty Union member and intensely involved with its issues. He has twice brought guest artists to UVM on the Burack Distinguished Lecture series (Steve Reich in 2011 and Tod Machover in 2016). He is a first rate pianist and performed on the monstrously difficult Lane Series Fall 2016 concert of music for two pianos and percussion.

Off campus, his works have been performed by the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, the Burlington Chamber Orchestra, and in New York and international venues as well. He has recently completed a CD, soon to be published, of his own compositions.

Within the department, he is always deeply engaged with the ideas discussed in faculty meetings, and frequently offers insights that others may not have thought of. He participates actively in matters concerning the theory area. He serves on departmental committees. He currently heads the new Music Technology and Business concentration. He routinely accompanies student auditions and recitals on the piano as needed.

Based on the quality and creativity of his teaching, his professional development, and his service to the department and the university, I strongly favor his promotion to Full Professor.