

# Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2022



Faculty Meeting  
April the Twenty-Ninth  
Two Thousand and Twenty Two





beloved dogs. Here is what she calls her “Litany of

place for her to return to her scholarly interests, especially in pursuit of Magdalena of Freiburg and other medieval mystics. So, with Lalie and Hanno by her side, Kate will cross the Atlantic. We hope she will hold us in her heart just as legions of Skidmore students and faculty will keep her, her example, her legacy of superb teaching and fascinating scholarship and dedicated citizenship near. In these four lines from a commemorative sonnet by poet, friend, and former colleague Jay Rogoff, we gain a glimpse into Kate's past Freiburgian life that holds all best wishes for the future:

I recall how you, in that clear winter air,  
led us in foot-thick snow through the Black Forest  
till, atop the mountain, we surveyed a frost-  
filled world, with cups of cocoa as our nectar,  
cakes our ambrosia.

Kate, *Alles Gute* and *Tchuss! Herzliche  
Glückwünsche! Viel Glück für Ihre Zukunft!* This

capital district – most notably as rehearsal director for Northeast Ballet Company’s production of “Cinderella” and Annual productions of “The Nutcracker”. In 2013 and 2014, Mary was the producer, director, choreography, and faculty advisor for “Sprit of Life: Celebrating 150 Years of the Arts in Saratoga” for the Saratoga Arts Festival. She presented excerpts of a work entitled “Black Dress” for the Committee of Independent Colleges and Universities 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet at the NY State Museum in Albany, as well as a performance of her work “Genesis” at a Gubernatorial Inauguration Celebration at The Egg in Albany, and a donor appreciation banquet at Gotham Hall in N.Y.C. Her work has also been presented at the Union College Bicentennial Celebration in Schenectady NY, The Union College Steinmetz Symposium, Schenectady Community College, Fulton Montgomery Community College, Schenectady County Arts Festival and the Saratoga Arts Festival.

Mary’s contribution to the department and the institution cannot be discussed without recognizing her deep loyalty and commitment as a member of the Skidmore community. Mary’s reputation always preceded her as a faculty member deeply dedicated to service. Even when personal obligations came up, she never missed a college event, performance, or even a faculty meeting throughout her career. Mary was also the first to step up to volunteer to participate in service to the department: celebration weekend, admissions events, advising, hiring committees, SEE-Beyond awards, the list goes on and on. Mary’s CV is filled with a plethora of service, much more than can be described in this citation, and much of which has allowed the Skidmore Dance Department to become what it is today. Mary is truly a model of what departmental and institutional service and citizenship entails.

While Mary beautifully embodied the teacher/scholar/service model for faculty members, possibly her most lasting legacy in the department will be her kindness. Mary genuinely cared for each and every faculty member, staff member, and student who stepped foot into the dance studios. She was the first person to ask ‘how are you doing’ each afternoon (not morning, as she’s a night owl), and to check in to ask about your family. Mary loves her two talented adult children, Erica and Michael, beautiful art, photography, and the joy of finding a great deal in consignment fashion. We wish her all the best in her

retirement and hope her life continues to be full of all of all the things she loves.

Lynda Erbs, class of ’04, sent this tribute to Mary:

Martha Graham said, “Practice means to perform, over and over again in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire.” Looking back, I didn’t realize at the time that you were teaching us how to be better humans in this world. You were preparing us to be strong and independent yet also focused and compassionate. I cannot say thank you enough to Mary for her love and dedication to me not only as a student, but as part of my family. Her motherly love envelops me to this day, and I continue to channel her fortitude in the face of challenge. I only hope that the incoming generations will have the opportunity to experience such relationships as these.

Mary, we send you with gratitude as you move into your next phase of life!

**W**hen you step across the threshold into the Printmaking studio at Skidmore, you enter a powerful transformative space—one that Kate Leavitt has masterfully crafted for decades. Beloved teacher, passionate artist, and trusted colleague, Kate has been a mainstay in the Department of Art for over 30 years.

Upon arriving at Skidmore, Kate invigorated the Printmaking area, quickly demonstrating its vitality and relevance. She created a sanctuary, an orderly creative space that sparked a lively student community. It is a safe space—one where everyone carries responsibility for the success of the collective venture—everyone shares ideas, lends a hand, and exchanges information about techniques and processes. Together, they maintain an impeccably clean workspace, cherish mutual respect, and develop their individual creative voices. Kate’s printshop community provides a catalyst. Enormous creative energy rises, percolates, and flows out with the students as they traverse the rest of the Art department. Kate is a strong presence—described by her students as intelligent, exquisitely dependable, principled,

resourceful, and kind. There is laughter in the studio, thoughtful discussion, intense critiques, and resolute standards. It is a mix of professionalism and kinship that is unique to her printshop.

A painter and a printmaker, Kate earned a BFA Degree from the University of Southern Maine, Portland. She received an MA degree in Printmaking and an MFA in Painting from the State University of New York, Albany. In addition, Kate earned the title of Master Printer from one of the leading Lithography programs in the world—the Tamarind Institute—in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she served as Senior Printer. As an alumna of this program, she is among a small, prestigious group of highly skilled master printers.

Kate is a phenomenal teacher and mentor—her pas aero,

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in Oneonta, New York. She has also actively participated in regional exhibitions throughout the Capital District and beyond. Kate is very active at professional conferences and regularly participates in consulting, research, and development within the field of digital printmaking and the solar plate intaglio printmaking technology. She has lectured at Rhode Island School of Design, as well as other locations highly respected in the studio art community. Kate is a member of the prestigious group of printmakers SAGA. The inclusion of her work in two recent printmaking books as well as in professional print portfolios illustrates her professional standing in the field. Kate has also actively written grants and has been quite successful in obtaining funding for her research projects. She has invested time and resources in developing her digital printmaking work. She has enthusiastically retrained herself, building on her strong education as a traditional printmaker by adding exciting contemporary developments in tools, materials, and processes.

In addition to strong commitments to teaching and her creative practice, Kate has given exceptional service to the college and her colleagues. On the college level, she has served on a wide range of committees including CAFR, CAS, CFG, Admissions and Student Aid, Athletic Council, and CAPT/ATC. A colleague shared these reflections on the time spent with Kate on ATC:

*"I will always remember fondly my time serving with Kate on CAPT/ATC. When I joined CAPT, Kate was on it and she was doing a 'second tour,' having served on CAPT just a year or two previously. Everyone on CAPT/ATC has to read files 'out of their field,' and given the diversity of disciplines, that can be challenging. The performing and plastic arts are as different from the scholarship publishing disciplines as one can imagine. I soon became impressed with the skill and critical sensibilities that Kate brought to reading and discussing the scholarship and teaching in even the most recondite literature. She became a model and a measure for me in what to demand of myself. That's a rare thing to come across in life, and*

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are legendary and unparalleled. Examples abound, from her co-design of the team-taught Introduction to International Affairs; to the details of a meticulously

quipped with a B.A. from Ohio University and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Rutgers University (where he studied under Paul Davidson, founder of the American school of Post Keynesian Economics), Roy Rotheim joined Skidmore's economics department in 1980. A full professor since 1993, Roy twice served the economics department as chair and also chaired the Business and Management Department along the way. In his 42 years of service his never-tiring curiosity of mind and genuine humanity have inspired the intellectual growth and maturity of generations of students and lastingly shaped the distinctively collegial culture in the economics department.

While the economics discipline is enthralled with the idea of a general equilibrium across the economy, supposedly attained by the infamous "invisible hand", Roy's dissertation title "Foundations of Nonequilibrium Analysis" captures the thrust of his life-

subgroup that conceived, wrote, and implemented the foundation of that curriculum LS1 “The Human Experience” (which later morphed into Human Dilemmas). Roy was an outside member of the English Department group that wrote the grant which supported the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. Roy served on the Curriculum Committee when the College switched from the course unit to the semester hour system. Roy then chaired CEPP for the second major overhaul of the College’s Curriculum in the 1980s. He also chaired CAFR, twice, including the one year where legend has it that the committee met for 72 times.

As to volunteering in the local community, Roy has been a member of the Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council’s board of directors, a promoter of the EOC’s annual Thanksgiving “Adopt-a-Family” program, where Skidmore’s contribution has been over a quarter of a million dollars, and has worked as cook and server in the organization’s soup kitchen for decades. In 2007, he became the first-ever recipient of the EOC’s “Community Recognition Award.” At Skidmore, Roy was the Quadracci Chair in Social Responsibility from 2004 until 2009.

The entire Economics Department offers the warmest of congratulations to Roy on his retirement. As he will remain in the area, we are sincerely hoping that he will continue to be part of the department he has profoundly helped to shape; intellectually, socially, spiritually, and as the department’s memory and spring of wisdom.

**W**ith fondness but with heavy hearts, we honor Distinguished Artist-in-Residence Jan Vinci and her illustrious 36-year teaching career at Skidmore College. After completing performance degrees at Bowling Green University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, Jan became the first woman to receive a DMA in Flute Performance from the Julliard School. Since then, she has concertized nationally and internationally, served both her profession and her college, championed the creation, performance, and recording of new music, and above all, lovingly nurtured generations of Skidmore students.

Jan has performed nationally and internationally as recitalist, concerto soloist and chamber musician, including at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall,

Symphony Space, and Merkin Hall. She was the winner of England’s International Electro-Acoustic Music Performance Competition and recipient of the Classical Recording Foundation Award, which praised Jan as “a true champion of flute music [who] applies herself with a courageous and adventuresome attitude.” Collaboration has been key to Jan’s musical career, and both as performer and teacher she has taken a special joy in chamber music--having founded such groups as Iridescence, Percussia, and Tritonis. Her CD project, “American FluteScape: A Tapestry of Premieres and Classics” was named “a winner of a disc” by *Fanfare* and lauded by *Flutist Quarterly*: “Vinci plays with a generous, gorgeous sound, exceptional rhythmic vitality, and tons of character.” Jan’s other Albany Records CDs--“Five Premieres: Chamber Works with Guitar” and “Celebration of the New” (with Skidmore colleagues Joel Brown and Pola Baytelman, respectively), and “Global FluteScape: Premieres and Rare Gems”--were similarly acclaimed, and together point to Jan’s energetic dedication to new music.

Jan has also been actively engaged in regional and national societies, including the National Flute Association, the Flute New Music Consortium Panel, and the NY Flute Club, for which she served as president. These activities are eclipsed, however, by her extensive departmental service here at Skidmore. Service in the Music Department can be intense, and Jan has always contributed with generosity and grace. She has served as both Associate Chair and Artist-in-Residence Head. She was pivotal to the development and ongoing revisions of our Performance Handbook. She adjudicated our annual Filene Scholarship Competition and frequently went the extra mile for Admissions--for instance, representing Skidmore at NYSSMA and MMEA conferences. She has also helped to administer private lessons scholarships for current students. She organized numerous Flute, Wind, and Brass Festivals at Skidmore--the latter of which led to the formation of the Skidmore Concert Band. And she founded--and for nineteen years directed--the Skidmore Summer Flute Institute. And all of this in addition to run-of-the-mill Music Department service--not least of all, governance and departmental deliberations that she has engaged with good sense and a refreshingly straightforward candor.

As a young teacher at Skidmore, Jan got some advice that is unfortunately common and narrow-minded. She shouldn’t be *teaching*, her mentor told her: she should

be out concertizing, building a *career*. But what Jan saw--and subsequently embodied, even in the course of many distinguished achievements on stage and on record--is that teaching *is* a career, and more so, a calling. (Indeed, thirty-six years at Skidmore might seem like quite a teaching career--but in fact, Jan started teaching flute in 7th grade!) This dedication is clear in the pride and fondness with which Jan speaks of her students. And it is clear in how they speak of her, often citing both her high standards and her gentleness, patience, and care. One student wrote, "It is a rare combination for someone to be an outstanding player, musician, teacher, and human being. Jan is all of those things." Another, recalling an overly confident but ultimately underprepared audition for Jan's Flute Choir, describes Jan's reaction as "the most unexpected but nicest rejection I've [ever] received." Jan also respected her students' individuality--"[she] didn't care to pump out a bunch of mini Jans"--even as she instilled a respect for excellence and for tradition--"When I came to Skidmore, I was just a person who really loved to play the flute. Because of Jan's mentorship, I left Skidmore [four years later] as a true flautist." Jan's teaching has focused on private instruction and chamber music but has also included

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As Pat Oles noted, “Walzer studied having babies, getting and being divorced, and negotiating the college years, all normative experiences framed by changing definitions of gender, family, marriage and work. Walzer was drawn to the tensions, doubts, trade-offs and conflicts her subjects experienced and she settled into their stories about how they came to understand themselves and the social spaces they occupied. She had the courage to lead her subjects through revealing discussions of difficult, uncertain experiences and she described those experiences with empathy without sacrificing a critical sociological perspective.”

Some of the same gifts that made her a special teacher made Susan an incisive researcher and wonderful colleague. Again, Pat Oles: “Walzer’s special talent is being able to sit still and listen with warmth, interest and without judgment, not so much to develop an understanding of that person or situation (although she does) but rather to develop an understanding with that person. Her approach is profoundly collaborative, She makes her sociological imagination visible, available and of use to her subjects, allowing them to clarify or confirm, but also to consider the implications for their lives. This is a skill, a formal element of her work as an ethnographer, an ethical commitment, and one reason her works rings so true. It is also a feature of her work with students.”

Susan chipped in more than her fair share of service in a wide range of activities including the following: the Committee on Academic Standing, the Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights, the Tenure Review Board, the Women’s Studies Committee, the Institutional Review Board, the Assessment Steering Committee, the Higher Education Opportunity Program orientation, Honor Code workshops, the Masters of Liberal Studies program and the University Without Walls program. She has been a member of numerous professional associations, a reviewer for some 20 journals and publishers, and served on the editorial board of three academic journals.

After the dean and the department colluded to compel Susan to serve as department chair, she became an energetic and astute leader who worked strenuously on our collective behalf, navigated rough waters, and made some difficult but crucial decisions. “Susan had an amazing rapport with more irascible faculty members,” another long-time colleague Sue Bender recalled. “She has that wicked sense of humor that carries her through so many situations with good grace.

Though Susan reveled in a good laugh at our collective foibles, she sought to be both honest and kind in all her interactions with both faculty and students.”

Such grace, however, never kept her from having difficult conversations and saying hard things to people who needed to hear them. Indeed, she has a kind of uncanny calm, resolute firmness, and dialogical virtuosity in such moments.

After her term as chair ended, her valuable leadership in the department did not. Indeed, we might consider creating a new award based on Susan. It would be called the Dr. Susan Walzer Award for Sage Ex-department Chair-ship. (The fact that she would never accept it is one reason why she deserves it!) Susan has always been fully present and available for her successors in the chair’s office, offering encouragement and insight, and only the tiniest hint of glee that she is no longer sitting in the chair’s chair.

Because of her strong service record, methodological skills, and scholarly expertise, Susan was commissioned by then Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs Susan Kress to study faculty culture. This led to qualitative research on the experience, the highs and lows, of faculty at Skidmore and several revealing papers that shaped discussions, practice and policy on campus.

Her most lasting contributions were not associated with any formal tasks, committees or titles, though. Her long-time colleague Bill Fox put it well: “Susan is intelligent, wise, principled, and I have turned to her more than to any other colle-4 (d)-14egu2 (a)-4 (g)12 4 (us)-

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