

Brandeis
FALL 2023

CONCERT SERIES

Slosberg Music Center

Department of Music presents

Davy Rakowski's 65th Birthday Concert



Collage New Music David Hoose, Music Director

Sunday, October 1, 2023 | 3:00 p.m.

Slosberg Music Center | Brandeis University

Department of Music presents
Davy Rakowski's 65th Birthday Concert

Collage New Music

Frank Epstein, Founder | David Hoose, Music Director

Heather Braun, *Violin* | Sarah Brady, *Flute*

Jan Müller-Szeraws, *Cello* | Alexis Lanz, *Clarinet*

Christopher Oldfather, *Piano* | Craig McNutt, *Percussion*

David Hoose, *Conductor*

Sunday, October 1, 2023 | 3:00 p.m.

Slosberg Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Secondary Dominance, Etude No. 19 (1998)

David Rakowski
(b. 1958)

Frozen Pizza and Frozen Pitches (2023)*

Steven Weigt
(b. 1963)

Mumble Chords (2023)*

Sam Nichols
(b. 1972)

a more different S (2023)*

Tina Tallon
(b. 1990)

Rak 'em Up! (2023)*

Mark Berger
(b. 1977)

Thickly Settled (2011)

David Rakowski

q = 126-136

Sostenuto, flexible

Scherzo: Pipistrellosamente

- INTERMISSION -

Davy! Davy! (2023)*

Yu-Hui Chang

(b. 1970)

Spicy Paprika (2023)*

Talia Amar

(b. 1989)

Quasi Troppo Veloce (2023)*

Eric Chasalow

(b. 1955)

Kwazy Kwilt (2023)*

Laurie San Martin

(b. 1968)

burning through the cool firs (2023)*

John Aylward

(b. 1980)

Dream Logic (2017)

David Rakowski

Quick and paranoid

q = 126-136

q = c. 60

Fiery

Carefree

q = c. 132

q = 120-126

Poco liberamente, q = 90

*world premiere

Please join us for a post-concert reception in the lobby

ABOUT DAVID RAKOWSKI

An eminent composer and a beloved teacher, Professor **David Rakowski's** music has been noted for its originality, its explosive high energy, its visceral surface, its unusual and quirky turns, its meticulous attention to detail, and its unflinching sense of form and proportion. He writes both in large forms (ten concertos and seven symphonies) and small forms (200 published piano études and préludes, dozens of chamber works, nine song cycles, music for children). The most well-known and well-regarded music of his is a set of 100 high-energy piano études, which are regularly performed worldwide. He recently finished a set of 100 piano préludes, and a third piano concerto for pianist Geoffrey Burtleson. Professor Rakowski has received the Rome Prize, the Elise L. Stoecker Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (for "significant contributions to the chamber music repertory"), the Barlow Prize, two Fromm Foundation commissions, two Koussevitzky Foundation commissions, a Guggenheim fellowship, the Chevallion-Bonnaud Composition Prize from the Orléans International Piano Competition, and he has twice been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. He was the Maurice Abravanel Distinguished Visiting Composer at the University of Utah twice, a Master Artist at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and the Karel Husa Visiting Professor of Composition at the Ithaca College School of Music. In 2016, Professor Rakowski was elected as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Professor Rakowski was born and raised in St. Albans, Vermont, where he played trombone in high school and community bands, and keyboards in a rock band called the Silver Finger. Early musical challenges included taking pop songs off the radio for his band to play. He was his high school class's valedictorian and its Best Thespian. Professor Rakowski received his musical training at New England Conservatory, Princeton, and Tanglewood, where he studied with Robert Coely, John Heiss, Milton Babbitt, Paul Lansky, Peter Westergaard, and Luciano Berio. Nearly three decades ago, Professor Rakowski joined the composition faculty at the Brandeis Department of Music, where he is now the Walter W. Naumburg Professor of Composition. Prior to Brandeis, he taught at Stanford University and Columbia University. He has also taught as a guest professor/composer at Harvard University, New England Conservatory, and at various summer festivals. In 2009 he was awarded the Lerman-Neubauer Prize for Excellence in Teaching and Mentoring from Brandeis University.

Professor Rakowski's music is published by C.F. Peters New York, and recorded on Bridge, BMOP/sound, Albany, CRI, Americus, Ravello, Altissimo, Centaur, ECM, XAS, and Blue Griffin. He was an active typeface designer between 1989 and 1992, making largely shareware fonts.

PROGRAM NOTES

David Rakowski

Secondary Dominance, Étude No. 19 for piano (1998)

Secondary Dominance is my 19th piano étude, and it was written at the MacDowell Colony in Omicron studio. It's part of a sequence of six consecutive études written on intervals — this one apparently being about seconds (Thanks, Claude). It's fast and more than a little jittery, building to a climax in octaves in both hands. The ending is a non sequitur, because why not?

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Steven Weigt (PhD '01; Lecturer of Music, Boston University)

Frozen Pizza and Frozen Pitches for solo violin (2023)

Frozen Pizza and Frozen Pitches is an old-school, heavy metal guitar solo disguised as a solo violin piece.

In the spirit of Rakowski's études for piano, each of which is built around a particular compositional/technical device, this piece takes a restricted pitch vocabulary as a compositional premise. All twelve of the pitches in the piece—the open strings, the major thirds above them, and the major thirds above those major thirds—are locked (i.e., frozen) in their registers but are used in distinctive combinations to create a sense of harmonic change.

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Sam Nichols (PhD '06; Professor of Teaching, University of California, Davis)

Mumble Chords for solo cello (2023)

When I was little, around five or six years old, I had a habit where I would immediately—half consciously—repeat whatever it was I had just said, but I'd repeat it in a kind of strangled half-whisper. I have clear memories of doing this, and I don't remember why, exactly, I did it, but I think it was to try to hear what I was saying. I think that I wanted a chance to check over what I had said, to see if it felt right, if I actually believed it, and if it had been worth saying. This habit of mine, my constant mumbling and muttering, my messed-up echoes, drove my older siblings crazy. *Mumble Chords* uses a few ordinary, everyday musical materials to try to evoke a similar effect. As the piece continues, the broken-down echoes start to drift apart from the "regular" music.

This piece is dedicated, with mad respect, to Davy Rakowski. He's been unfailingly patient with me and his other students, past and present, no matter how much trouble we have spitting it out.

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Tina Tallon (MFA '13; Assistant Professor, University of Florida)
a more different S for solo flute (2023)

a more different S is dedicated to David Rakowski, my dear mentor and friend, on the occasion of his 65th birthday. Much of the piece is based on our shared love of Trogdor the Burninator, a dragon-like character from the hit Flash website/animated web comedy series *Homestar Runner*. Trogdor was introduced in the episode "Strong Bad Email #58 - Dragon" on January 13th, 2003, and was the subject of a short heavy metal song at the end of the episode sung by Strong Bad, a lucha libre wrestler (if this makes no sense, don't worry - come find me after the concert and I'll show you the video). In the years since, Trogdor has been featured in countless memes, multiple tabletop games, Guitar Hero, and Davy's wardrobe (in fact, he may even be wearing his Trogdor shirt as you read this).

The piece incorporates a number of musical materials from Strong Bad's Trogdor song, including a strong focus on repeated notes with interjected thirds, which, conveniently enough, is also a motive that features strongly in Davy's music. There are a number of other musical inside jokes and easter eggs strewn about, from rampant all-interval tetrachords to quotes from 'ludes and 'tudes. The title (and much of the gestural material in the opening section of the piece) comes from the beginning of Strong Bad's instructions about how to draw Trogdor: "To begin, draw an S (for snake! Or...dragon...ooooor...whatever). Next, we'll draw a more different S...."

I feel like both the conceit of a drawing tutorial and the tone of Strong Bad's instructions perfectly capture so many aspects of my time as Davy's student; because of my near-complete lack of compositional training upon entering the MFA program here at Brandeis, I needed some serious remedial education (Davy had been on sabbatical when I was admitted, so he had no idea what he was getting himself into). I will always appreciate the patience, humor, and enthusiasm with which he taught me all of the basics that a masters student should have already known, all the while encouraging me to chase after the weird sounds and bizarre collection of extramusical interests that would end up forming the bases for my current research and creative practice. Davy imagined things for me that I never could have imagined for myself at the time - I was too busy trying to figure out how to beam to show the beat - and I am

forever grateful that he never gave up on me, no matter how many compositional sketches I brought in that “looked like bad drawings of tonsils.”

Davy, Happy Birthday. It’s truly an honor to know majesty without ever having to have been bit in the face.

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Mark Berger (PhD ’12; Associate Professor of the Practice, Lydian String Quartet, Brandeis University)

Rak ‘em Up! for solo violin (2023)

Pitches are scattered like billiards balls across a wide registral space between the open D string and a very high A. They are gradually gathered up by the bow, swept down, eventually corralled into a compact space and then launched into a driving dance. Beginning with just the open D and A strings, the music drives onward, gradually expanding until fully chromatic, with a little appearance of the tone row from a famous Viennese school composer who was mentioned a few times during my composition lessons with Davy years ago. Happy birthday, Davy!

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Erin Gee (Professor of Composition, Brandeis University)

Davy for solo bass flute (2023)

The recorded voice part is improvised from many of the phonemes from Davy Rakowski’s fantastic name and the flute part grew out of that. Happy Birthday, Davy!

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David Rakowski

Thickly Settled for clarinet, violin, violoncello and piano (2011)

Thickly Settled was written for Boston Musica Viva on a commission from Catherine and Paul Bittenweiser. I had grown a little tired of writing for Pierrot Ensemble (it’s what everyone wants), so in this piece I left out the flute. The “thickly settled” title is a reference to road signs you see in Massachusetts when a rural area becomes more populous. In this piece, it refers to the beginning gesture of deedle deedle chords with other things emerging. The middle movement is a traditional slow movement with some strummed piano chords, and the finale is a scherzo marked “pipistrellosamente”, fractured Italian for “battily”. It goes pretty fast.

Yu-Hui Chang (PhD '01; Victor and Gwendolyn Beinfeld Professor of Music, Brandeis University)

Davy! Davy! for solo piano (2023)

In the spirit of Davy's brilliant piano études, *Davy! Davy!* is inspired by one of Davy's ring tones on his phone. (For any who've heard it, you know which one that is.) The quirkiness and the urgency of this ring tone drives this étude forward, which ends with an embedded birthday message – "Happy Birthday to You!"

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Talia Amar (PhD '20; Composition Faculty, Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance)

Spicy Paprika for solo flute (2023)

During my final year of Graduate studies at Brandeis in 2017, I planned to do a solo piano recital featuring the music of some of my teachers over the years. I asked Davy if he had a piece I could include, and it just so happened that he was working on a new book of Preludes on the theme of Spices. Instead of just picking one, Davy dedicated the first one to me - prelude no. 71 "Paprika".

When I was asked to write a piece for Davy's birthday celebration, I knew right away that it has to be connected to the "Paprika" he dedicated to me. I chose a few motives from this prelude and included them in my piece, for example a "going down" figuration.

The piano recital unfortunately didn't happen since I got an academic job offer in Israel and ended up leaving MA earlier than expected. This always felt like an open ending to me, so I was thankful for the opportunity to complete the cadence by composing this piece for Davy.

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Eric Chasalow (Irving G. Fine Professor of Music, Brandeis University)

Quasi Troppo Veloce for solo violin (2023)

I thought about Davy's etudes and wrote this piece. It's really really fast.

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Laurie San Martin (PhD '03; Professor of Music, University of California, Davis)

Kwazy Kwilt for solo piano (2023)

Kwazy Kwilt is a short mash up, made out of select piano etudes by my teacher David Rakowski. Davy's music had a big impact on me when I first heard it in the late '90s. Relistening to his piano etudes makes me realize just how important to me this music has been: it's affected me really deeply. Composition lessons with Davy were fun, and frequently hilarious. At the time, back in the '90s, I might have been distracted by his engagingly wacky exterior. But Davy's perceptive clarity and generosity as a teacher affected me in ways that I'm still unpacking. I vividly recall specific moments from our individual composition lessons. It wasn't just about what Davy offered: how he did it, the way in which he taught, made it possible for me to hear him, and learn. What I got from these lessons was so rich: a chance to appreciate craft, meaning, and beauty. These are things I carry with me still, years later.

Kwazy Kwilt is built up from small moments borrowed from several of Davy's early etudes.

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John Aylward (PhD '08; Associate Professor, Clark University)
burning through the cool firs for solo cello (2023)

It was an honor to compose a piece for Davy's birthday concert. I've known Davy for just over twenty years, and his music and teaching have meant a great deal to me. One thing I've always loved about Davy is his great taste in literature and poetry. You can get acquainted with so many brilliant authors just by listening to his text settings. Both the title of this tribute, *Burning Through the Cool Firs*, and some of the musical material come from one of my favorite of Davy's art songs.

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David Rakowski
Dream Logic for flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano/melodica/toy piano, and percussion (2017)

Dream Logic was written for the New York New Music Ensemble when I was at Yaddo in 2017. I borrowed (stole) the large concept for it from Carter's *Eight Études and a Fantasy*. Thus there are six very compact movements, each of which approaches something obsessively, followed by a broader final movement that brings back some of the material from the earlier movements. The fourth movement begins with one of my piano préludes and develops the material in a different way. The poor pianist has to play melodica and toy piano in addition to the piano.

ABOUT COLLAGE NEW MUSIC

Praised by the Boston Musical Intelligencer as “among the finest artists of contemporary (or any other) music,” the musicians of **Collage New Music** include some of the most outstanding instrumentalists and singers skilled in the musical intricacies, technical virtuosity, and emotional depth that new music requires. The ensemble includes some of the East Coast’s finest musicians, including members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra and the area’s extraordinary freelance community. Guest performers who have appeared with Collage represent a who’s-who of brilliant artists, including conductors Seiji Ozawa and Gunther Schuller, jazz trumpeter Clark Terry, violist Roger Tapping, pop vocalist Cory Dargel, actors Vanessa Redgrave and Walter van Dyck, and singers Tony Arnold, Janna Baty, Judith Bettina, Charles Blandy, Janet Brown, Ilana Davidson, William Hite, Dominique Labelle, Mary Mackenzie, and Susan Narucki.

Collage’s five decades of compelling music-making have placed it as a leader among adventurous ensembles that nurture that vital intersection of composer, performer and listener. The ensemble’s repertoire, both wide and deep, reaches from classical twentieth century works, to extraordinary less-known older works, and to marvelous, brand-new creations of American composers. Its diverse programs include solo repertoire, music for larger ensembles, theatrical works, fully-staged chamber operas, and music with extensive electronics.

Collage New Music champions both young and established composers, and it has become a passionate advocate for the music of Donald Sur, Andrew Imbrie, Elliott Carter, Charles Fussell, Fred Lerdaahl, John Heiss, John Harbison, Stephen Hartke, and many other American composers. The ensemble appears on the New World, Koch, and Albany labels, and its recording of Harbison’s *Mottetti di Montale* was a 2005 Grammy Nominee for Best Performance by a Small Ensemble. Each season, Collage also hosts a different emerging Composer-in-Residence, and hosts its Collage Composers Colloquium, a day-long examination of young composers’ music.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DAVY!

Birthday messages from Davy's former students:

Dear Davey,

After all these years, I just keep repeating "the idea".

I briefly join in chorus here to roundly laud your service to me personally as my teacher at Brandeis, which was of inestimable worth to me then, and always, especially with that most pragmatic and shrewdest of all mottos you ingrained in me which I keep framed in a plaque over my desk to this day: JWWTFT !

Very best birthday wishes from Berlin.

- Jeremy Woodruff (MA '98)

Happy 65th Birthday, Davy! In our first lesson you made clear the I was never to let composition class get in the way of "Beer Night". I never did, and never will! While I'm sorry to have to miss this event, I'll be sure to tip back a glass in your honor. Cheers!

- Richard Belcastro (MFA '00)

Davy,

Thank you for writing music that embodies your personality—quirky, clever, and unpredictable.

Thank you for making learning fun, both in and out of the classroom.

And thank you for helping so many students find and develop their musical talent and passion.

Happy Birthday!

- Paul Anderson (PhD '04)

Happy Birthday, Davy! I still remember that I got 'Brutto' and 'Bello' stamps on my compositions (with red ink!) - many fond memories from the first year at Brandeis. Thank you for your excellent instructions and all the support. I wish you many more years of happiness, good health and prosperity.

- Yoko Nakatani (PhD '05)

Happy 65th, Davy!

Thank you for sharing your artistry, excellence, friendship and time with me over the years.

It is an honor, a pleasure and a privilege to not only study with you, but to befriend you and to enjoy your works, old and new, over the years.

We are all lucky to know you and to have you in our lives as we have benefitted greatly from your insights and advice.

- Derek Hurst (PhD '06)

Happy Birthday, Davy! I think of you often when I look at student work and think, "I need some of those rubber stamps Davy had!" Concise, witty, and always a little unexpected. Your deft blend of compositional wisdom and humor has left a deep impression on how I understand music--and life. Thank you!

- Peter McMurray (MFA '08)

Davy, you once wrote to me about your esteem for Marty, saying: "It is beyond belief what I learned from him, even just as his colleague. And from the examples of his music." In honor of your 65th, Davy, I write to say: It is beyond belief what I learned from you. And from the examples of your music.

- Rick Beaudoin (PhD '08)

Happy Birthday Davy! I wish I could be there at your birthday concert to celebrate in person. You have done a tremendous job over the years to make the Brandeis composition program one of the best. I have many fond memories from lessons and independent studies with you (including our sometimes humorous investigations of orchestra pieces of Richter and Dittersdorf, compared with Haydn and Mozart, if you remember). We are behind you all in the current situation, whatever it takes!

- Jeff Roberts (PhD '08)

Happy Birthday, Davy! Thanks for sharing your creative wisdom and wonderful music!

- Jeremy Spindler (PhD '11)

Sakes alive, you're 65! Happy Birthday, Davy! Thanks for your dedicated mentorship and compositional prowess.

- Christian Gentry (PhD '12)

Dear Davy,

Happy 65th! You are an amazing composer and teacher. I look back fondly on my time at Brandeis and the opportunity to study with you. I wish you continued health and happiness.

- Nathaniel Eschler (PhD '12)

Hi Davy! Wishing you a happy 65th Birthday from Athens, Georgia! Best wishes from Peter, Allyn, Trystan, and Kwyn (and the cats, P.B. and J.)

- Peter Van Zandt Lane (PhD '13)

Dear Davy,

Many happy wishes for your 65th birthday. Writing a paper recently, I came by notes you gave me as my dissertation advisor which brought a smile to my face. Your famous sense of humor and wit also made your comments during

composition lessons extra piercing. With a quick glance at a composition draft, you helped me cut through drifting and unneeded musical material (which I probably thought was divinely inspired...). I also remember how each of your premiers was a festive and exciting event for us grad students, as I am sure it is now. Here is to many more brilliant premiers, inspiring music, and many years of wonderful teaching. Happy birthday.

- Yohanan Chendler (PhD '13)

Happy birthday Davy, and very best wishes for the next chapter of your life!

- Rebecca Sacks (MFA '14)

Dear Davy, you're one of the funniest and kindest composition teachers I've ever known! Congratulations on your Birthday Concert, it must be amazing:) I'm sending you and Beth the best wishes:)

- Yiguo Yan (MFA '14) from Shanghai

Tanti auguri Davy, I hope one day your Italian will be as good as your music!

- Michele Zaccagnini (PhD '14)

Davy, you're not getting older - you're just getting more distinguished. Happy 65th Birthday!

- Seunghee Lee (PhD '14)

Happy birthday, Davy! Looking forward to many years of music, hats, and memes to come.

- Travis Alford (PhD '14)

Dear Davy,

Thank you for being one of the best parts of my Brandeis experience! During the time I was working on my Ph.D dissertation, your thoroughness, insightfulness, responsiveness, and, most wonderfully, your honesty, helped me complete my work (a rather ambitious one, I believed) in a way I felt deeply meaningful and satisfying.

And thank you for being you - the witty, generous, and, again, honest and ferociously authentic (how rare is this quality in our world today!) you! I cannot begin to express how much I admire and appreciate all of these!

- Mu-Xuan Lin (PhD '16)

Happy Birthday Davy! I think of you every time I see a pickle!

- Emily Koh (PhD '17)

Happy Birthday, Davy! Wish you all the best and success in the concert. Stay safe and healthy.

- Chin-Shuo Wu (MFA '19)

Happy birthday Davy! Thank you for all the support and inspiration!

- Inga Chinilina (MFA '19)

Happy birthday, Davy! Thanks for your witty, inspiring music, for all your insight and guidance over the years, and for constantly reminding us that studying music can be fun (and even silly) along the way. May you have many great years ahead of you!

- Joseph Sowa (PhD '19)

Hey Davy! Thank you for always being so dependable, be it for advice, a musical example from the literature, or a new snack food!

- Todd Kitchen (PhD '21)

Tanti Auguri Dottor Zio Davino! Un grande abbraccio da Giuseppe e Giuliana.

- Giuseppe Desiato (PhD '23)

ABOUT THE BRANDEIS CONCERT SERIES

The **Brandeis Department of Music** presents over 60 concerts each year in the Slosberg Recital Hall—a one of a kind acoustical gem—as well as locations across the Brandeis campus. Featuring:

Marquee Concerts: An exceptional series of professional performances that feature faculty and visiting artists, including the legendary Lydian String Quartet and the internationally acclaimed musicians of MusicUnitesUS.

Student Concerts: Outstanding student ensembles and music majors perform music ranging from the renaissance and early Baroque eras to improvisational jazz and the rhythms of Ghana.

Music at Mandel: The Department of Music and the Mandel Center for the Humanities (MCH) host 5-7 FREE lunchtime concerts throughout the year in the stunning MCH Atrium.

Brand New Music: Professional and student performers showcase contemporary works from Brandeis student, faculty, and alumni composers.

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Brandeis

FALL 2023

CONCERT SERIES

Slosberg Music Center

UP NEXT:



Annual Irving Fine Tribute Concert

Saturday, October 7th, 7:30 p.m.



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