ARTS

"He said the way my blue eyes shined, put those Georgia stars to shame that night"
TIM MCGRAW TAYLOR SWIFT

Windham-Campbell festival celebrates writing, invites readers in

BY ANGELINA KOVALCHUK
STAFF REPORTER



ANGELINA KOVALCHUK / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Eight writers from across the globe were awarded for poetry, fiction, nonfiction and drama last week in the annual festival, which also featured various events on campus to connect the writers with the audience.

Lovers of all things literary gathered on campus last week to celebrate eight writers in readings, lecturers and conversations.

The annual Windham-Campbell Festival, founded by Donald Windham in memory of his partner Sandy M. Campbell, honors writers in poetry, fiction, nonfiction and drama from all over the world and supports their work with an unrestricted grant of $175,000. This year's festival took place from Sept. 15 to Sept. 18.

"The mission of the prizes is to support writers and give them enough recognition and money and time to write," Michael Kelleher, the festival's director, said in a phone interview. "It's also to create an event here in the New Haven community that's open and free to everybody, that celebrates writing, great writers and great conversations."

According to Kelleher, 120 writers are nominated every year for the prizes. In a year-long process, over 80 people on several selection committees narrow that number down to the eight writers that ultimately receive the prize.

This year's prizes were awarded to Gwendoline Riley and Adam Ehrlich Sachs in fiction, Lucy Sante and Kei Miller in nonfiction, Christina Anderson DRA '11 and S. Shakthidharan in drama and Joyelle McSweeney and Karen Solie in poetry.

The prize ceremony and annual lecture took place on Wednesday, Sept. 16, at the Yale Center for British Art. Barbara Rockenbach, the University librarian, introduced the prizes and spoke on their importance.

"We believe that ideas deserve room to develop, and that people need spaces where they can encounter perspectives beyond their own," Rockenbach said. "We preserve the words of those who came before us, and also make possible the scholarship and literature that's yet to come."

The guest lecturer, award-winning author Yiyun Li, was the Windham-Campbell fiction recipient in 2020. In a speech, titled "Why I Write," Li reflected on her philosophy of writing and the influence of the past on a writer's craft.

"The present is only a point, which has no part. The future is a hypothesis. The past is not to be kept alive, but to be kept close," Li said in her closing remarks. "To write is an action of carrying the past as close as possible to the present."

The festival also featured an array of formal and informal events designed to connect audiences with the writers through their interests.

"Each writer is really a unique individual with a unique worldview and a unique way of thinking," Kelleher said. "So we always try to create events that are based on who these individuals are and what gets them excited."

Events included morning readings and conversations between the writers and guest academics, as well as a staged reading of the drama awardees' plays performed by students at the David Geffen School of Drama.

"We want it to be a convivial place where people meet and talk and speak and commune in person, and I think that's a really important aspect of life that seems in our internet age to be rapidly disappearing," Kelleher said.

According to Kelleher, the festival also brings the writers to the Cooperative Arts and Humanities Public High School in New Haven to host writing workshops for the students.

"We've always been very mindful of reaching out to the community," Kelleher said.

The first Windham-Campbell Prizes were awarded in 2013.

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Despite disaffiliation, Baker's Dozen draws big crowd to first concert

BY SIMRAN RANDHAWA
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Harvest Wine Bar and Restaurant was filled to the brim on Thursday night as crowds arrived for the Baker's Dozen's first public performance this fall — in spite of the all-male a capella group's disaffiliation from Yale following controversy last year.

Due to their disaffiliation, the Baker's Dozen is no longer one of the a cappella groups managed by Yale's Singing Group Council and is not listed on the official Yale a cappella rush website.

"We are an independent singing group," the group said in a statement to the News. "We are excited at the prospect of new singers."

University spokesperson Tina Posterli wrote in an email to the News that the a cappella group cannot be affiliated with Yale because it violated hazing policies.

"This conduct undermines the integrity of student life, endangers individuals, and is inconsistent with the mission, vision, and values of Yale University." Posterli wrote. "As a result, the Baker's Dozen will not be eligible to re-register as a Yale College student organization until all current members have graduated. The group is also required to pay for the property damage it caused."

Last fall, the letters "ATB," a phrase associated with the s inging group, were found etched into the restored Morse lipstick statue and written in chalk on the surrounding area.

Thursday's performance marked a new chapter for the group as members performed a diverse repertoire for a crowd that included rushees.

Songs ranged from the old Irish tune "Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye" to Fountain Wayne's "Stacy's Mom" — a song the audience sang alongside to. Audience members cheered on members, colloquially known as the frogs, as they conducted party tricks, told jokes and performed difficult passagios.

On its website, the Baker's Dozen describes itself as "far more than a typical singing group" and, "above all, a group of friends."

Like Yale-affiliated a cappella groups, the Baker's Dozen typically tours during winter and spring break and will resume that tradition, according to its statement to the News.

The group also maintains the "BD Haus" on 373 Crown St., which its website describes as both its social hub and a home for some of its members.

The Baker's Dozen was founded in 1947.

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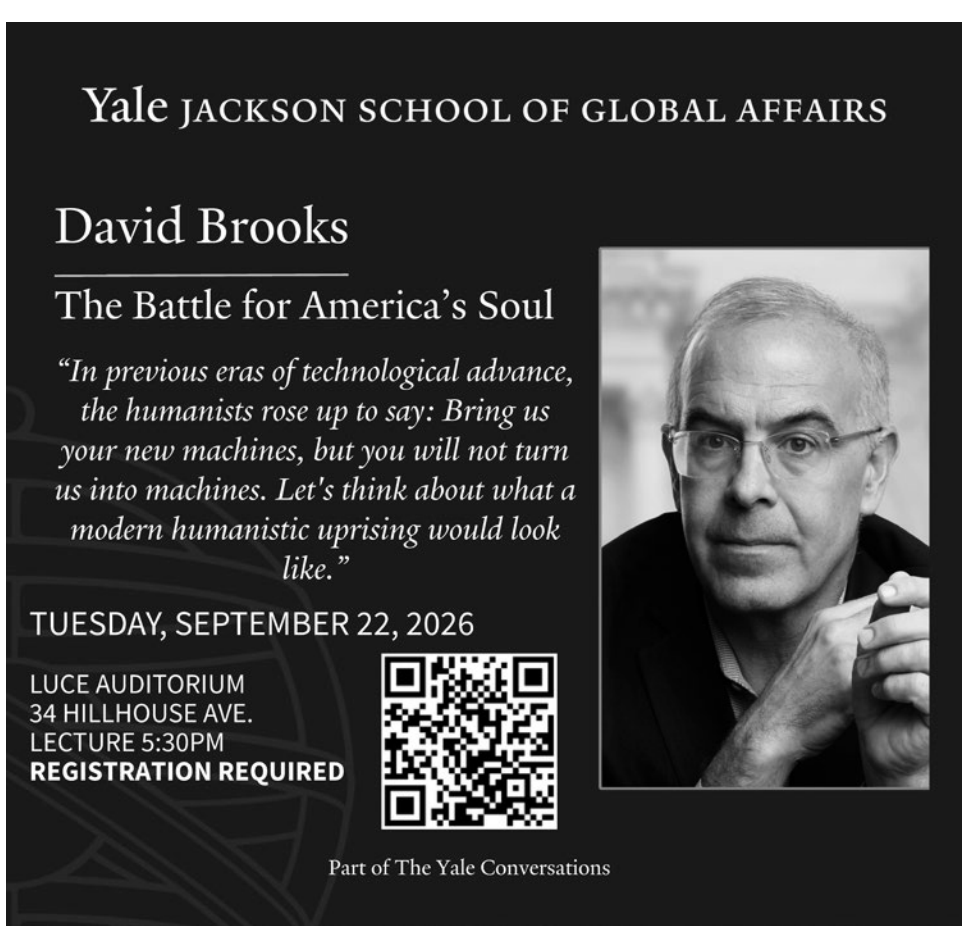



ILLUSTRATION BY NELLIE KENNEY
Dozens attended the a cappella group's Thursday performance, its first of this fall. The group cannot be a registered student organization anymore because it violated Yale's hazing policies, a University spokesperson told the News.