

# Recognizing Brown Alumni Cultural Celebrities

by Richard Kostelanetz



Name an undergraduate alumnus who headed a university equal to Brown for a decade?

Another who currently hosts a nationally syndicated talk show?

Another who heads a major federal entity?

A major early influence on feminist literary criticism not only for her writings but as the sole compiler of four massive volumes of critical commentary on modern women writers?

The current president of a NYC university?

The author of the most Surrealist novel ever published in America, in addition to other books acknowledged in literary histories?

The sometime president of Bucknell University and then the chief executive officer of a national park for the performing arts?

A classmate of Joe Paterno's (1950) who published early critical appreciations of *"Negro American Authors"* (1968), *Richard Wright* (1969), and *Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives*

(1975).

A 1919 valedictorian who published a few novels and many stories while working as a physician and briefly as the superintendent of International Hospital in New York's Harlem before his death at 37?

A currently working Los Angeles actor, at Brown a football fullback, who previously starred with such prominent avant-garde New York theater companies as the Living Theater, the Open Theater, and the Ontological-Hysteric Theater.

The keyboardist in Country Joe & the Fish when they played at Woodstock?

The retired president of a major US state university for two decades?

Two mathematicians so prominent that theories bear their names, one of whom has taught for a half-century at the University of Pennsylvania, the other for decades at universities in New Jersey and Quebec?

An avant-garde filmmaker prominent in the mid-1960s before he did something else?

A major scholar of natives Canadians and thus a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

A painter who had retrospectives in major museums in Paris, Tokyo, London, and Berlin?

Two current National Public Radio feature-program stars, one visibly brighter than the other?

An NRP news reporter nationally audible for three decades?

The retired long-time curator of Islamic art at major American art museum?

A pioneering video artist whose work is remembered and

sometimes re-exhibited decades later?

The courageous investigative newspaper reporter uniquely famous for risking incarceration as he exposed American intelligence agencies?

The historic president of Midwestern colleges who, having copublished an undergraduate literary journal banned from the Brown campus in the mid-1920s, founded in 1938 a venerable perfect-bound literary review that still appears?

The current chief editors of the yet more venerable *Poetry* magazine and the *New York Times Book Review*?

A 1980s pioneer in the diagnosis of AIDS and the identification of its highly particular causes, a New York professor of microbiology and dermatology, who incidentally owns a distinguished collection of visual art?

The late Bell Labs mathematician incidentally credited with coining such terms as bit, byte, and software?

A Yale Ph.D. who founded a libertarian "journal of politics and society"?

The recipient of several masters degrees, a law degree, and a medical degree, who has practiced both psychiatry and law, in addition to publishing his fiction.

A *Britannica* designee whose indubitably innovative work is acknowledged in the critical histories of literature, visual arts, and music, as well as identified under those three headings in the awesomely compendious (but still incomplete) Wikipedia list of "Brown University people, known as Brunonians"? (Don't laugh.)

A poet, critic, and musician with an LP record some decades ago, more recently known as a prominent theorist of cyberspace?

The holder of a named chair at Harvard Law whose wife incidentally is a nationally visible politician?

The Faulkner chair professor at the University of Mississippi?

The sometime president of a New England women's college?

A distinguished literary translator of texts initially in French, Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese?

The current "rector" of an Oxford college who, while still an American citizen, accepted, no joke, British knighthood (call 'im "Sir")?

The founder of an independent institute devoted to the study of Ayn Rand?

A professor with a venerable named chair at Columbia University in English and Comparative Literature, notwithstanding three Brown degrees?

The president for two decades of a New York literary-industrial book publisher that still survives.

The founders of four august small eponymous literary publishers?

Five authors winning Pulitzer prizes?

A remarkably active producer (not director) of independent (not Hollywood) films?

The author of more famously original sentences than anyone else ever in American literature?

The publisher/editor of an early 1970s radical arts journal so esteemed that its entire contents were reprinted four decades later?

A pioneering transsexual interviewed solo by *Playboy* mag?

The director for four decades of a prominent American ensemble performing early music?

Two Hollywood screenwriters who copped an Academy Award?

Perhaps the world's most prominent photographer of solar eclipses?

Four veteran literary writers publishing over a dozen books apiece with trade publishers?

Two pioneering directors of audaciously personal documentary films, one of which reportedly taught the other at a New England university other than Brown?

A composer long based in Rome, Italy, an early proponent of live electronic music, whose 1988 acoustic memorial to *Kristallnacht* was sponsored and simultaneously broadcast by public radio stations in Denmark, Austria, Italy, Holland, and Germany.

A media documentarian whose film with six discrete soundtracks in six different languages is acknowledged in *Britannica*, who produced a symposium about the 1960s for American Public Radio, whose audio composition of and about the sound of his native New York City was commissioned by Westdeutscher Rundfunk for distribution around the world in its *Metropolis* series.

A co-founding writer/editor of the feminist classic *Our Bodies, Ourselves*?

A West Coast screenwriter and film producer better known for his development of successful video games—indeed, designated by *PC Gamer* back in 1999 among the top 25 game designers in America?

The author of full-length documented biographies of Louise Bryant, Henry Miller, Peggy Guggenheim, Norman Mailer, and Ernest Hemingway, among others world-class cultural

celebrities?

An independent rock music record producer who also runs technology services at an august writers' organization.

The author of several books and museum exhibition catalogs about avant-garde art and literature in America, particularly Man Ray, Joseph Cornell, William Carlos Williams, Dada, and Surrealism.

A composer and music writer renowned for his work with the world's ancient instruments, particularly Tibetan Singing Bowls?

A New York art gallerist who has also written major books on German expressionism?

A "bootleg" artist noted, if not notorious, for making small copies of innumerable valuable contemporary paintings and artist's books, the sum of his project incidentally reflecting the greater literacy characteristic of artists educated in the Ivy League.

Once summa cum laude with highest honors at Brown, later a professor of Shakespeare at the University of Seoul, who is also among his native country's most distinguished public intellectuals?

The first major historian of American comic books, who incidentally published novels he authored?

A relentless investigative opponent of Islamic terrorism/extremism?

The recipient of ten individual fellowships from different departments of the National Endowment for the Arts?

The author of a thick extraordinary "Alternative History of Twentieth-Century Comedy" (2011) that is so original, not only in its choice of subjects but its interpretations, that it was

handsomely published in English not in the US or in Britain but, no joke, in Denmark, with scarce copies of a nouveau "cult classic" now selling for nearly \$200 on Amazon.

The sometime president of both CBS, Inc., and Muhlenberg College (though not the American league).

The prominent Yale historian of modern Eastern and Central Europe, thanks in part to his knowledge of nearly one dozen relevant languages.

An early practitioner of Queer (feature-length) Cinema?

The electronic composer who some five decades ago adapted the Moog synthesizer for J. S. Bach for a best-selling LP record?

A sometime investment banker who later founded weekly newspapers in CT and NYC and even later exhibited his sculpture in galleries and public spaces, including the Brown campus?

Three authors publishing children's books for decades?

One of only two alumni meriting an individual entry in the mammoth but selective *Contemporary Poets* (several volumes), though he resided for most of his life in France?

Once an active poet and reviewer, long the literary editor of the *Providence Journal*, the author of legendary "Literary Notebooks," who became the subject of the first full-length biography by Scott Donaldson?

A visual artist recognized for his innovative work with computer programming and digital software.

A world-class theatrical magician (whom I've incidentally known since high school)?

What other alumni realized plateaus likewise uniquely superlative?

Who among them was ever employed at Brown?

What's the truth informing the diversity of their achievements?

if you can't identify at least five of these people, why not?

I'd like to think that what all these undergraduate alumni achieved in their lives reflects the education they received at Brown.

### **ALPHABETICAL NAMES**

[to be published separately, either reminding the reader or requiring some easy investigative work]

Alan Sondheim

Alfred Uhry

Alvin Curran

Alvin Friedman-Kien

Arthur L. Carter

Arthur Taylor

Barry Beckham

Bruce Mann

Bruce McPherson

Christine Vachon

Daniel Robbins

David Kelley

David Kertzer

David Shields



Dickran Tashjian

Don Share

Donald Kartiganer

Edward Guiliano

Edward Pincus

Emily McCully

Eric Doeringer

Fredson Bowers

Gordon Keith Chalmers

Gustav Sobin

Hal Barwood

Harry Smith

Ira Glass

Ira Schneider

Jacob Appel

James Risen

Jane Kallir

Jane Kates

Janet Yellin

Jean Amatniek Dowdell

Jeffrey Eugenides

Jeffrey Friedman

Jennifer Brown

Joel Cohen

John F. Simon, Jr.

John Tukey

Krista Tippett

Kurt Luedke

Larry Elder

Les Daniels

Lillian Robinson

Liz Levy

Lois Lowry

Mara Eliason

Marianne Hirsch

Marilyn Jenkins

Marilynne Robinson

Mark Kapner

Mary Dearborn

Miles Tierney

Nak-chungPaik

Nathanael West

Pamela Paul

Paul Laffoley

Peter Emmanuel Goldman

Peter Freyd

Raphael Mostel

Raymond J. Barry

Richard Foreman

Rick Trainor

Robert A. Corrigan

Ross McElwee

Rudolf Fisher

S. J. Perelman

Steven Emerson

Steve Silverstein

Susan Cheever

Thomas Mallon

Thomas McCormack

Timothy Snyder

Todd Haynes

Wendy Carlos

Willoughby Sharp

Winfield Townley Scott

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