

Applause

Volume 24, Number 10 School of the Arts, North Charleston, SC May 2023



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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

As the saying goes, "April showers bring May flowers," and this month, we're blooming with exciting stories from Spring Break and a special focus on the Visual Arts major at SOA. While the June paper will be dedicated to the graduating class of 2023, we're making the most of this last "regular" issue by showcasing the talents, achievements, and experiences of our fellow students.

During Spring Break, SOA students engaged in a wide range of activities, from skiing and college tours to visiting Europe. Check out our centerfold (pages 20 and 21) to see what SOA was up to over break! We're excited to feature Ms. Jones for Where Were They Then, and 2022 graduate Maya Drake for Where Are They Now (page 15). Don't miss the Visual Arts Senior Thesis on May 24th

This month, *Applause* junior editors Riley and Cate have diligently worked to provide you with this great issue, taking the reins on layout and working closely with the staff. We are excited to welcome them into their future roles as Editors-in-Chief, and look forward to seeing how they carry on the *Applause* legacy next year!

The school year's end is on the horizon. Spend time with friends and enjoy the beautiful weather while you're away from end-of-year exam cramming, and if you're a senior, take in each moment with your friends before the year ends!

Your Editors,

Peter O'Malley Lauren Holladay



Applause

since 1999, the official student publication of
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Cover by Margeaux Burkhardt

SOA Calendar

by Cate Traywick

May 11: Middle School Visual Arts Showcase, Cafeteria, 6 pm

May 12: Creative Writing Senior Thesis Reading, RMMT, 6:30 pm

May 12: Early Release Day

May 15: 10th and 11th Grade Creative Writing Reading, Kudu Coffee House, 6:30 pm

May 15: High School Theatre Stage Combat Show, Middle School Gym, 6:30 pm

May 15: High School Band Spring Concert, RMMT, 6:30 pm

May 16: High School Jazz Chamber Concert, RMMT, 6:30 pm

May 19 & 20: Vocal's "Music Down In My Soul" Concert, Cafeteria, 6 pm

May 22 & 23: High School Theatre's Cabaret, BBT, 6:30 pm

May 24: Visual Arts Senior Thesis, Cafeteria, 5 pm

May 24: *Applause* presents "I Want My MTV: Songs of the Early 80s," RMMT, 6:30 pm.

May 25: 7th Grade Creative Writing Spring Reading, Media Center, 6 pm.

May 25: Senior Awards Ceremony, RMMT, 6 pm

June 1: Class of 2023 Graduation, North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 7 pm



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Maya Drake**

by Ariana Lane

**SOA Students Enjoy the
Costa Rican Trip of a
Lifetime**

by SOA Students

**SOA Students Participate
in Earth Day Activities at
Sweetgrass Gardens**

by *Applause* Staff

Sass Attack: Beachgoers

“Sass Attack” was started in 2007 by Applause writer David Sass and has been an Applause column for fourteen years. Our senior Fashion major, Beatrice Criscuolo, has decided to continue the tradition.

If you know me, you probably know that the beach is my favorite place in the world. Any beach, anywhere, anytime. I have been going to the beach for all eighteen years of my life, since I was a little baby eating sand in the shallows. Since then, I’ve upgraded to making money while at the beach, with my job as an ocean rescue lifeguard. For some odd reason, I’ve noticed that people feel a sense of anonymity at the beach: the feeling that no one is watching or judging you, unlike most other public spaces. And I love this feeling. It is one of the only places that you can truly be yourself - which is probably why I see so many wacky things. I mean, let’s face it, people are wacky.

You are too, don’t deny it. So the little kids running around with no clothes on, the human pyramids that end in disaster, the utterly untameable hair: I won’t bat an eye. But what I will bat an eye about is all the bad decisions people make at the beach. I will bat both eyes. You’ll see me blinking at you from a mile away.

Along with the sense of anonymity, people on a beach feel a sense of entitlement. Entitlement to feed the seagulls even though they then go on to swarm groups of people. Entitlement to walk all over the dunes even though the dunes are a protected habitat. Entitlement to catch and release stingrays and baby sharks even though that hurts them (because you catch sooo many fish standing in the shallows). Sure, there’s limited rule enforcement. Even as a lifeguard, I can’t stop every single person from walking on the (incredibly dangerous) rocks. But it only takes two seconds of thought to make a good decision. So stop and think it through. While this might be unpopular amongst your friends, taking a step back will ultimately bring about a happier ending to a beach day. If not for you, then for the cute little hermit crab that wasn’t left to die in the hot, dry sand.

The beach is a beautiful place which deserves to have beautiful people on it having beautiful days. And once you embrace the wackiness and ditch the entitlement, you’ll have a much better time. And, like me, you’ll be able to laugh with (but sometimes at) all the other wacky people. Just wear your reflective sunglasses.

The Good Ending

by Eliana Gross

This past year, my final year here at SOA, I’ve done a good bit of complaining. The parking lot, train, WiFi, pollen, and those god forsaken bells, have all driven me insane since I first came here in sixth grade. I’ve gotten my complaints off my chest and onto paper, which as a drama queen has been a blast. Now I have one final complaint before I retire.

Since the invention of the wheel, transporting heavy objects from point a to point b has only gotten easier, but with many Americans living a more sedentary lifestyle, I believe that we have evolved past it. Pick up your bookbag. The wheels are unnecessary. When I rode the bus, everyone who had a rolling bookbag was enemy #1. They’re awkward and take up the aisle. Now that I don’t ride the bus, my hatred has only grown. Pick them up. They’re bags. Not suitcases.

I see the strife of middle-schoolers who refuse to empty their bag and



Beatrice Criscuolo

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consequently carry a bag twice their size and weight. You see their sacrifice, carrying so much weight to stay out of everyone’s way, and think “No, not me. I want to be the human version of a gnat today.” I must ask you, rolling bookbag haver, do you think you’re better than them? Are you seriously this unaware? You’re not willing to carry your bag for five minutes so it doesn’t trip everyone in the breezeway?

What it really comes down to is entitlement. When you use a rolling bookbag, all you do is get in everyone’s way. They never fail to ruin my day everytime I see them. Going into the new school year, if you have a rolling bookbag, get a new one.

No offense, of course. To be completely honest, I am entirely indifferent to them but every joke has a bit of truth to it. Do with that information what you will. All love.

XOXO,
Eliana Gross

AP Exams: A Blessing Or A Curse?

by Anna Garziera

It was April 15th, the second Saturday of Spring Break, when I realized that the long-dreaded AP exams were approaching rapidly, and that I only had just about two weeks left to prepare. Far from the national average, it is common practice here at SOA to take an excessive number of AP classes, sometimes more than we can be said to be capable of.

Taking AP classes is all fun and games (except not very fun and with very few games), until April hits, and our inflated grades do not by any means reflect our abilities, and the whole year’s worth of knowledge has to be re-taught, re-studied, or by some, swept aside.

Compared to these seeming straightforwardness of taking a three-hour long test, AP exams bring students a disproportionate amount of stress: stress from parents, who believe too strongly in the intellectual genius of their children, stress from teachers, who have taken the exam multitudes of times themselves, and insist it is easy, and stress from classmates, who not only represent competition, but also look at those who are failing with proud contempt.

I was stressed too, that Saturday, as I scrutinized my calendar, poking the days remaining with my index finger. This became my reality for a number of days, until I began to look back on the AP classes I took last year, and a sense of gladness came over me; what I realized was that the final exam was a very small speck in the grand scheme of things.

Though I felt nauseous before every AP Language practice essay last year, the joy of being taught by Mr. Martin came back to me in a gale as I flipped through the Mosaic Project. Though the content of AP Chemistry was painstaking, I had the pleasure of meeting one of my best friends, SOA graduate Alma Lutas, in that class. Though I never was able to learn all the presidents and wars in AP US History (even with the help of some twenty hours’ worth of screencasts), I ensured that AP Government would be in my schedule this year, so that I may learn in Ms. Orchard’s class again.

Nevertheless, even after this walk down Memory Lane, AP exams are still looming over me, and so I’ll put my head down, practice some, cry some, and pray some, and whatever happens on the day of, I’ll accept, because I’ll have done my best.

As I open my AP exam score report in the summer, I’ll look back on this year, and decide that indeed, I enjoyed the fun Kahoots in Ms. Mahoney’s AP Calculus, and the courtroom simulation in Ms. Orchard’s AP Government, and reading and annotating *Hamlet* in Dr. Cusatis’ AP Literature, after all.



Eliana Gross

Applause



Anna Garziera

Applause Staff



Wednesday, May 24, 6:30 pm
Rose Maree Myers Theater

The Process of Choosing a Music School

by Peter O'Malley

Last issue I wrote an opinion article on the conservatory audition process, detailing my routine, experiences, and thoughts on the fearsome "audition season." On April 5th, I committed to my dream school, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and I wanted to share my experience post-auditions, from results to decision making.

Through the month of February, I took live auditions for six schools around the country: Eastman, the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM), DePaul University School of Music, Peabody Institute, Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and the McDuffie Center for Strings. I was accepted to the first five of those schools, and placed on the waitlist for McDuffie. I received acceptance letters from the six schools from mid-March to the 31st, and shortly after each acceptance I heard from the teachers. There was a lot of back-and-forth, on the phone and over email, but I couldn't come up with a definitive list until I heard from each institution. From the start, my top school was CIM (Eastman a close second), and that was the last school I heard from. So, it made for a very stressful month!

As soon as I heard from CIM and received my scholarship package, I was thrilled. I studied with the cello professor, Dr. Melissa Kraut, over the summer, and after my audition, she told me how impressed she was with my improvement since July. As soon as April 1st hit, I received several emails from the professors at each school. But it's awkward, because with music schools, the decision process is so personal. I had established a strong relationship with the teacher from Cincinnati, and had studied with him each summer since 2020. Additionally, I drove up to each school for trial lessons back in October and in my Junior year, and had stayed in touch with the teachers at each school over email. The hardest part of the process wasn't committing to CIM; it was telling five cello professors that I would not be studying with them in the Fall.

The initial financial offer from the Cleveland Institute of Music was not economically feasible for myself or my family. But I'd made several friends at CIM, and each of them told me exactly what to do: fill out the financial aid appeal form, directly citing the scholarships other schools are offering and how much you need to be able to go, then email the teacher (in my case, Dr. Kraut). Two days after submitting my appeal, I received an updated financial package, and at that moment I knew I had to commit. I was worried I'd have to negotiate all through the month of April, but fortunately I was able to make my decision early.

The audition process is long and stressful. But as soon as you make a decision, it becomes so fulfilling and rewarding. I'm thrilled to be going to CIM next year.



Peter O'Malley

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AMHS Student Action Committee Holds Walkout to Protest Gun Violence

by Anna Garziera

Bonds-Wilson Campus, SC. A crowd of students stand in solidarity around the flagpole, eyes to the ground for six minutes of silent reflection during a walkout in protest of gun violence in the United States.

On Wednesday, April 26th, over two hundred AMHS students and teachers participated in a walkout to protest against gun violence. A token of respect to the victims of gun violence, the walkout was organized "to call attention to gun violence in America and involve the majority of the student body in that endeavor," as described by president of Students Demand Action and walkout co-organizer Laura Dailey. "I found that mass shootings and school shootings seemed to be on the news for a day or two before being forgotten," she admits. By demonstrating school-wide support, walkout leader Laura hoped to bring light to the issue: "the walkout achieved its goal: reaffirming that mass shootings should not be normalized and swept under the rug."

Kabir Zaman, the Vice President of Progressive Action at AMHS and a co-organizer of the walkout, agrees: "The point of the walkout was to send a message to legislators, the message that students are done being on the receiving end of immense and preventable violence, and that there is mass solidarity in favor of change," he says.



Academic Magnet student speaks out against gun violence.

Anna Garziera

Students from all grades gathered with ardor; holding up their hand-made signs, their message clear: "Protect children, not guns." "We deserve more than thoughts and prayers." "If not now, when?" "A large focus of mine was trying to bring together different political and ethnic clubs around a specific cause, to test the waters for future events," admits Kabir Zaman, who was well pleased by the success of the walkout. "A lot of people talked about how the moment of silence and Willa Wiley's speech were very moving, and how they were proud to have taken some level of action against gun violence."

"It was most important to me that students felt the emotional toll of mass shooting; so, we held a six minute moment of silence in honor of the six people who lost their lives in the Nashville school shooting on March 27th," Laura Daily explained; for some, the six minutes of silence was a sign of respect towards the victims; for others, a form of protest: "I'm glad to have participated" said SOA senior Flora Majkrzak, who was able to join and support AMHS with her 3B AP Literature class. "It was both powerful and saddening."

A powerful cry for action, AMHS Speech and Debate president Willa Wiley's speech on the necessity for gun-law reform in SC disclosed that the problems in our state's legislature are plain fact; (continued on page 7)



AMHS student holds a sign urging others to join the effort.

Anna Garziera



AMHS student holds up a sign in protest of gun violence.

Anna Garziera

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she urged Academic Magnet to take action with passion.

While Academic Magnet’s call for action was loud and clear, their student-leaders are not ready to stop here. “Future plans are currently in the works,” said Kabir Zaman, and Laura Dailey agrees. “My hope for next year is that Students Demand Action will gain more support from the student body so we can attempt larger endeavors that draw even bigger attention to our support for stricter gun laws.”

This Month Among The Stars

by Yatawee Petchsuriya

May 24th: Conjunction of Moon and Mars

From the observer on Earth, the Moon and Mars will appear very close to each other in the sky. Of course, the two bodies are still very far apart.

May 25th: Moon at Apogee

Distance between the Earth and Moon constantly varies as a result of the Moon’s elliptical orbit. “At apogee” refers to the farthest point of an eclipse from the center, or the Moon’s furthest point from Earth within its orbit. During the apogee, the Moon will appear to have decreased in size. This would be the opposite of a perigee, in which the Moon is closest to the Earth, and is known as a Supermoon.

May 29th: Mercury at Greatest Elongation West

This elongation occurs as Mercury obtains its greatest distance away from the Sun within the skydome and is observed from the surface of the Earth.

May 30th: Mars Aphelion

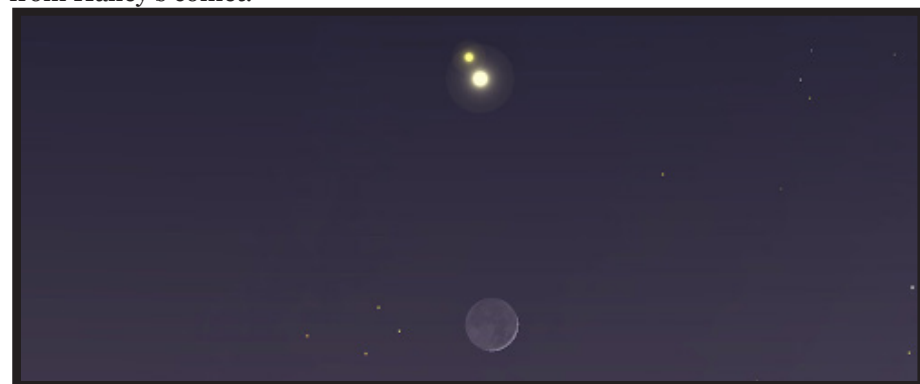
An aphelion occurs when a planet is furthest from the Sun within its orbit. At this point, it also moves at its slowest, unlike its perihelion, where it moves the fastest. This is pointed out by Kepler’s Second Law, that the imaginary line joining a planet and the Sun sweeps equal areas of space during equal time intervals as the planet orbits. Overall, it shows that planets vary in their speeds as they orbit.

June 9th: Conjunction of Moon and Saturn

A conjunction occurs when two celestial bodies share the same celestial longitude. In the celestial coordinate system, which tells the position of an object in space, celestial longitude refers to degrees east of the vernal equinox along the ecliptic (plane of Earth’s orbit along the Sun). Equinoxes occur when the Sun crosses the celestial plane (a tilted, imaginary circle infinitely extending from the Earth’s equator).

June 11th: Aretid Meteor Shower

The Aretids occur during daylight and most are invisible as they cross the sky, making a great view for the morning. These meteors are frequently slow “Earthgazers,” meaning they skim just above the horizon. The shower is sourced from Halley’s comet.



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The conjunction of Moon and Saturn.



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Student Athletes wrap up seasons

by Giovanni Cusatis

As the school year unwinds and classes are wrapping up, SOA student athletes are playing their final home games, competing in the playoffs, and seniors are committing and getting honored on senior night.

Many SOA students played soccer, not only for Magnet, but also other schools. Sophomore Will Marchant was a consistent starter for West Ashley, and he was recently honored by being named to the All Region Team. Senior Sydney Kahler is a member of the West Ashley women's team, who won the Region Championship for the first time in thirteen years. At Magnet, a number of 8th and 9th graders played on the women's JV team. Freshman Maren Spangler reflected on her time on the team: "I loved being able to play for AMHS and meet so many new people. I learned that being on Magnet isn't easy and all the new players had to work hard to find what benefits we could bring to the team. Overall, I would love to play again next year and maybe be on the Varsity team."

In addition to Maren, Lowery Missmiller and Macey Lavine, both 8th graders, also enjoyed a good season for the AMHS soccer team.

SOA had one senior commit to play sports in college: Theater major Maile Merklein, who played center/right defense for Magnet's varsity soccer team. She is going to USC Lancaster to pursue a biomedical engineering degree, as she hopes to work on creating mechanical prosthetics from recycled materials. She chose USC Lancaster because of the beautiful campus, great coach, and environment.

In track and field, many SOA athletes competed in the County, Tri-county, and Region meets. In both the County and Tri-County meets, Luke Shackelford placed first in the 800 with a time of 2 minutes flat. Senior Piano major Ben Fancher placed 11th, with a time of 2:05. In the Region meet, Giselle Rattelade advanced to Lower State in the hurdles. Additionally, Freshman Luciano Cusatis threw his personal best in the javelin.

Austin Walton, senior saxophone player at SOA, won his second state championship in lacrosse with Lucy Beckham. Earlier in the year when interviewed he said his biggest goal for the season was to win another ring. In the fall, Austin will be attending Boston University to major in computer science.

As another year of sports is finishing up, I've really enjoyed being able to follow SOA's athletes for the past three years. Thanks to *Applause*, I will be attending University of South Carolina to major in Sports Journalism.



Austin Walton



Maile Merklein with her whole team on signing day.



Maren Spangler, 9th grade



Lowery Missmiller, 8th grade



Giselle Rattelade (far left) on the winners' podium with her award winning teammates.

SOA Students Perform In Chamber Music Charleston Concert

Photos by Applause Staff

On April 28th, at the West Ashley Theater Center, SOA High School Strings majors Peter O'Malley, Riley Borkowski, Alex Lim, Carolina Agrest, Trow Weeks, Jade Williams, Devin O'Brien, Giovanni Cusatis, and Evan Baker (amongst others) played a series of pieces as a part of a Chamber Music Charleston Concert through CMCs High School program, CMC TWO.



Chamber Music Charleston is now accepting applications for the 2023-2024 CMC TWO program for high school wind and string students.

Special note for wind students: at this time we are only accepting winds to perform in standard chamber ensembles such as wind quintet (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, french horn) and brass quintet (trumpets, french horn, trombone, and tuba/ bass trombone). Pre-formed wind quintets and brass quintets are prioritized.

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Student Council Celebrates Earth Day With the SOA Thrift Market

by Cate Traywick

On Friday, April 28th, SOA Student Council held the first-ever SOA Thrift Market. The market ran from 11:30 to 1:00 and sold a wide variety of clothes donated by SOA staff and students. Sophomore class representative, Isabella Pineda, who was the mastermind behind the Thrift Market, said that she “loved seeing so many people help out, as well as walk around and shop with their friends!” “I had suggested a thrift market awhile back as a spirit week event,” Pineda told *Applause*, “but we [STUCO] decided to make the Thrift Market its own thing since it would be a good way for people to destress with the upcoming exams!”

Throughout the month of March, Student Council worked tirelessly before school, after school, and during lunch to be sure that the Thrift Market exceeded any and all expectations. Student Council began advertising for the event by hanging posters and making morning announcements, as well as frequently posting on their Instagram (@soa_stuco). As an incentive for students to donate, service hours were awarded to those who donated their clothes to the cause. This prompted students to send in an overwhelming amount of clothing, which ensured a successful event, as well as a diverse catalog of clothing.

“The day of the Thrift Market, we did last-minute sorting and organizing,” Isabella said as she regaled *Applause* with behind-the-scenes details of the market. “We set up all of the supplies that we had accumulated over the last month (racks, tables, hangers, stickers, etc.), and were ready just before middle school lunch!” Those who went to the Thrift Market were greeted with racks and tables containing specific categories of clothing (skirts, tank tops, pants, etc), and, to my delight, in true thrift store fashion, there were rummage piles where every piece was priced down to one dollar!

As to where the profits and leftover clothes are going, Pineda told *Applause*, “It’s still to be determined, but we’ve had a lot of ideas! We were thinking of either Lowcountry Orphan Relief or an environment-related organization, since the market was used as a way to celebrate Earth Day!” Thanks to the hard work of the Student Council, the inaugural SOA Thrift Market was a rousing success!

Ms. Harman’s Class Travels To Costa Rica

by Gracie Pennington

This April, Ms. Harman took a group of her students to the beautiful country of Costa Rica, and I had the privilege of speaking with her about how the trip went.

The trip was action packed: they stayed in the small community of Tortuguero first, which is a home of sea turtles. “The lodging was quaint with some rooms lacking AC,” Ms. Harman commented, “but the nights cooled down and the owner and staff took care of us like family.”

After this, they traveled to Arenal, which is home to the largest volcano in Costa Rica. They enjoyed the volcanic hot springs and kayaking on the lake. Next, they went to Monteverde for hiking and ziplining in the cloud forest. They also went to San Jose, the capital of the country. “A few travelers became ill then, but all were recovered and still have the spectacular memories of our adventures together.”

The students had so many wonderful experiences on the trip, including

seeing wildlife native to the region. The environment is teeming with life, and monkeys, parrots, sloths, and piranhas are just a few of the animals that they saw out in the wild. Another incredibly special experience was that they got the opportunity to apply their Spanish-speaking skills in the real world. “Each day someone would come tell me how they had spoken to a local in Spanish and ‘it worked!’,” Ms. Harman recalls. The locals were incredibly kind and welcoming to the travelers, and helpful to those learning Spanish. It was a great experience for the students to have so many successful Spanish interactions in the real world.

“My very favorite memory from the trip is the word familia. Our tour guide, Rey [Reinard], was superb. He was professional in every way, arranging our meals, transportation, hotels, etc. But mostly we all loved his hilarious personality. Each time we boarded the bus, gathered in a group, or needed to pay attention to him, he would just say familia, in a deep voice. No one that went on the trip will ever forget that. He probably uses this tactic with all his groups, but it is very effective in establishing a positive feeling from the first day. ‘Family’ is a wonderful psychological way to put everyone together in the adventure and to make each traveler feel important and included. I will definitely request Rey if I take students to Costa Rica again.”

It is incredibly touching to hear about the sense of family that the travelers felt on their educational journey through Costa Rica. The experiences, sights, and familia on the trip was surely a once-in-a-lifetime experience for all of the students involved. Ms. Harman will be offering another Costa Rica trip during Spring Break in 2024, when the students will head to the Pacific Coast to experience another part of the country and have many more adventures, including surfing and snorkeling.



Cate Traywick

Students enjoying the SOA thrift market, see more pictures on page 12



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Students learning about the ecology of Costa Rica, see more pictures on page 16

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SOA Students Participate in Earth Day Service Project at Sweetgrass Gardens

by Anna Garziera

On Saturday, April 22nd, a group of twenty-five SOA students gathered at Sweetgrass Gardens, a small volunteer-run farm on John's Island which uses regenerative practices to grow produce and feed the local community. Four-year volunteers and SOA seniors Giovanni Cusatis and Evan Baker led the project, excited to help out in their community and celebrate Earth Day.

Grim and dull, an overcast sky threatened us with rain that Saturday morning. However, we were not discouraged; right as 8:30 struck, we were ready to work. Before any tasks were assigned, long-time volunteer Jennifer Wicker gave us a well-rounded tour of the farm grounds. She showed us the pecan and permission trees, the four goats, the empty chicken coops (the chickens had been eaten by some famished raccoons), two varieties of mint, which we tasted also, the bee hives, and the lettuce that freshman Luciano Cusatis had planted some weeks before, and was now growing beautifully.



SOA students pose after a long day of celebrating Mother Nature.

Farming enthusiast and Sweetgrass Gardens owner Mr. George Taylor further fed our interest in regenerative farming practices with some detailed explanations of the nitrogen cycle, soil fertilization, balance of the ecosystem, and blueberry harvesting, leaving students more learned than they could have been left in any biology class.

As the tasks to be accomplished in the four hours ahead were laid out, each student picked their battle: some dug, some weeded, some laid cardboard and wood chips, some fed the goats; others stayed away from the goats, having already had misadventures with the bearded creatures that morning. Him armed with a wheel weeder and I with a stirrup hoe, Giovanni Cusatis and I were entrusted with weeding a small patch of land at the front of the property. In our same area, SOA juniors Vivian Gordon, Jesse Price, Parker Weeks, and Leilah Baird laid cardboard and wood chips; that is, until a sudden downpour left us drenched.

Though it ceased, the rain did not leave us dry for long, for soon back it came, then went, then came again; our morals stayed high as we took shelter under the roof of the shed, but our drive steadily diminished, and soon we were feasting on the room-temperature water, breakfast bars, and oranges that had been provided for us. An experienced farmer, Liz Hornig was glad to take a water break after some hours of weeding: "Oranges are my favorite," she rejoiced, and with that, took off her gardening gloves for good. Though our morning at Sweetgrass Gardens felt too short and damp, it was enjoyed as a whole, and for many of us, it will not be our last.

The History of *Into The Woods*

by Cate Traywick

Upon my hearing of the SOA Musical Theater class's production of *Into The Woods*, I was beyond ecstatic. Despite growing up surrounded by musicals, so few bewitched me (pun intended) quite like Sondheim's *Into The Woods*. From *Sweeney Todd* to *Company* to *Sunday in the Park with George*, Stephen Sondheim was an unstoppable force of musical and lyrical talent. But with its familiar magic and unique tone, *Into the Woods* easily blows them all out of the water.

Into the Woods weaves together the plots and characters of numerous Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales, including (but not limited to!) Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel, and Cinderella. Each of these stories are tied together by our main characters, the Baker and his wife, and their quest

to break a spell set on their family line decades ago. Although it sounds juvenile, *Into The Woods* contains a surprising layer of depth and I can't imagine the world of musical theater without it.

Into The Woods made its debut at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego, California, on December 4th, 1986. Here, it ran for just over fifty nights. During this run, it was edited heavily, and these edits (big or small) made the show into what it is today. Oddly enough, in the original version of *Into the Woods*, the Baker and Cinderella officially become a couple during "Finale," and sing a reprise of "It Takes Two." Obviously, this is far from the current incarnation of the show. After their brief stint in California, the majority of the cast packed their bags and headed to Broadway.

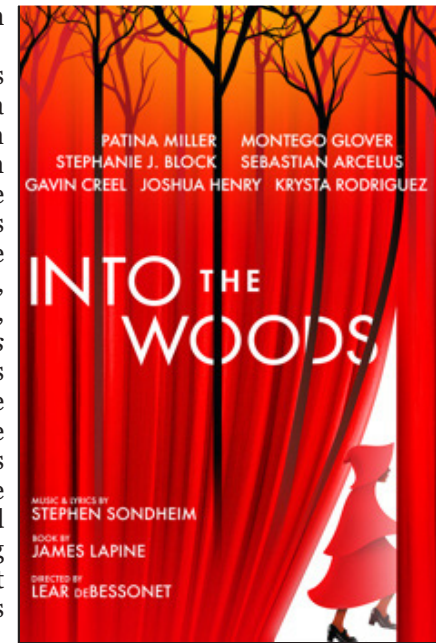
Into the Woods opened on Broadway at the Martin Beck Theatre on November 5th, 1987, starring Bernadette Peters (the Witch), Chip Zien (the Baker), and Joanna Gleason (the Baker's Wife). In 1988, it was nominated for ten Tony Awards. Coincidentally, 1988 was also the year that another well-loved SOA-produced musical was a contender for multiple categories. The Tony Awards that year were swept by *The Phantom of the Opera*, leaving *Into The Woods* with wins in three categories: Best Score, Best Book, and Best Actress. In addition to Tony awards, the original cast recording won a Grammy. Sadly, after 765 performances over two years, the original *Into the Woods* closed on Broadway on September 3rd, 1989.

Between its closing and its recent revival, *Into the Woods* has had a multitude of productions including a run in the West End (essentially, the English equivalent of Broadway), multiple US tours, produced in New York's *Shakespeare in the Park* series, to name a few. In addition to stage productions, everyone's favorite giant corporation, Disney, released an *Into the Woods* film adaptation in 2014. Starring James Corden (The Baker), Emily Blunt (the Baker's Wife), and Meryl Streep (The Witch), this embodiment of the story is hated by die-hard and casual fans due to its obnoxious nature and poor and oversaturated acting. Although seeing this in theaters is one of my fondest memories, I have to admit that it does the source material absolutely no justice.

After the production was held up by Covid-19 in November 2020, New York City Center announced its plans to stage our beloved *Into The Woods* as part of its *Encores!* series. The show ran from May 4th to May 15th, and shortly thereafter, it was transferred back to Broadway at the St. James Theater.

They began running shows on June 28th, 2022, and officially opened to a packed theater on July 10th, 2022. Although this revival was originally set to close on August 21st, demand kept the show open months after its scheduled close, and the stunning revival of *Into the Woods* finally closed on January 8th, 2023. Similarly to its predecessor, the 2022 cast recording won the Grammy for best Musical Theater Album, and it was released in vinyl on March 17th, 2023. Needless to say, *Into The Woods* is a staple of classical and modern musical theater, put together by some of the most brilliant artists of our time. There have been thousands of performances of *Into the Woods* to date, and I hope that there will be thousands to come.

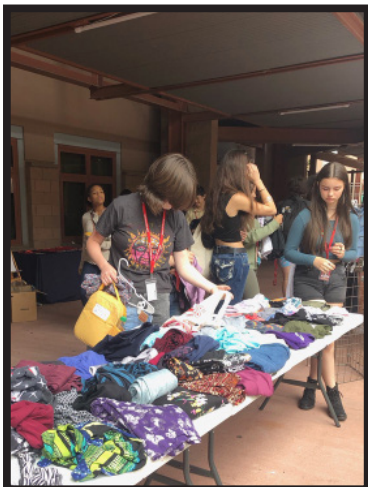
Into the Woods at SOA ran from April 26th to April 29th in the Black Box Theater, and if you had the privilege of seeing it, then I am insanely jealous. Tragically, while writing this I don't have a ticket for any of the four show days, but I hope to finagle somebody out of their ticket... wish me luck!



Into The Woods poster for the 2022 revival.

SOA Students Enjoy the SOA Thrift Market!

Photos by Cate Traywick



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May Slang

by Riley Borkowski and Cate Traywick

Function: (n) A kickback or party, typically more significant than a casual get-together.

“Things only got real when Cate Traywick pulled up to the *function*.”

Flick: (n) Another word for photo or movie. Typically used in captions of Instagram posts or stories.

“Quick! Take a *flick* of me next to the Buc-ee’s beaver!”

Poetic Rizz: (phrase) A genre of rizz that employs flowery and poetic language rather than the usual modern lingo.

“My heart is so full of you, I can hardly call it my own.” “He’s using his *poetic rizz*”

Opp: (n) A shorthand version of opponent.

“Riley’s beefing with so many people. She’s got too many *opps*.”

Dawg: (n) Used as a facetious spelling of “dog.” A term used to identify someone you would usually hang out with.

“Dr. Cusatis is my *dawg* fr.”

Hot Girl Summer: (phrase) A summer spent just having fun and living your best life, unapologetically.

“Riley and Cate are heading to the beach later to kick off their personal *hot girl summer*.”

Era: (n) To be in a period of your life that is defined by a certain thing or activity.

“I incessantly use Cate’s chapstick, I’m in my Riley *era*.”

Fit check: (phrase) A phrase stated when someone around you has a particularly fire fit, and you simply must know where they got each item.

“Did you guys see Riley Borkowski’s fit? I want to ask her for a *fit check*, but I’m too intimidated.”

Ghost: (v) To abruptly cut off all contact with someone who you’ve been in regular contact with (can be platonic or romantic).

“Yeah, things were going well but then she *ghosted* me.”

Red flag: (n) A term used as an indication to be wary of someone or something. It can be used in a serious or satirical context.

“He doesn’t use the Oxford comma.” “That’s a *red flag*”

SOA Theatre and Musicians Sell Out Seats for *Into the Woods*

by Isis Hanna

On Thursday, April 28th, after weeks of struggle, I was able to get my hands on a highly-coveted ticket to SOA Theatre’s production of *Into the Woods*. My efforts were more than worth it, and the production was nothing short of mind-blowing. I was lucky enough to snag a front row seat, and the immersive and creative set that Mr. Pickens came up with had me feeling like I was a part of the on-stage action. At times, there were actors a mere foot away from my seat, and I found myself whipping my head in all directions to make sure I was taking in everything. The beautiful live musical accompaniment from our very own Strings majors only added to the immersion.

Into the Woods is a compelling combination of several fairy tales and follows the characters as they attempt, by any means necessary, to improve their lives and obtain their greatest wishes. The story mainly revolves around The Baker and his wife, played by Ramere Kelly and Gilliane Russell. They wish to have a child, but quickly discover that a Witch (Morgan Schatmeyer) has placed a curse upon their house and they are unable to conceive. She sends them on a quest to obtain items for a potion so that they may break the curse, and on the way, they meet many other fairytale characters such as Cinderella (Avery Detitta), Jack and his Mother (Lyles Bruorton and Kenya Hines), Rapunzel (Tai’la Wilson), the two Princes (Parker Legette and Tyler Caplea), and more.

I was blown away by the sheer talent this cast has. For starters, Ramere and Gilliane have so much chemistry on stage, and their character arcs, both together and separately, were so compelling. I loved to see them in scenes

together, whether they were making me laugh or cry (and believe me, I did plenty of both). I have never been a big fan of Little Red’s character in other productions of this musical, but when Autumn Rouse came on stage, I was captivated. She captured the character in a realistic and charming way that had me rooting for her all throughout.

As for the Witch, I will be thinking about Morgan on that stage for the rest of my life. She owned the spotlight and her singing and acting were so moving. I was holding my breath for the entirety of “Last Midnight.”

Avery’s portrayal of Cinderella may be my favorite part from the show. I am biased, because “On the Steps of the Palace” is one of my favorite musical theater songs, but her voice really blew me away.

Judith Hamrick, Marin Morris, and Alex LaPlante played very entertaining villains as the Evil Stepmother and the Stepsisters. Even though we weren’t meant to be rooting for them, I definitely enjoyed every moment they had onstage.

Tyler and Parker were absolutely perfect Princes. They captured the high-and-mighty attitude of royalty so well and in such a hilarious way, not to mention their amazing voices. I’d been looking forward to their rendition of “Agony” since I got my ticket, and they did not disappoint.

Tai played an amazing Rapunzel with a beautiful voice and captivating, emotional acting. Lyles and Kenya made a great mother and son duo who were funny yet endearing, and Lyles really shone in Act II when his normally sweet character became vengeful and serious.

Finally, Sam Owens, who played both the Narrator and the Mysterious Man, added a bit of humor to more serious moments in the show with both of his roles. That’s not to say he didn’t have any compelling serious moments, which he certainly did. His duet with Ramere (“No More”) had me frozen in my seat and nearly brought me to tears.

All of that to say that the SOA Musical Theatre class is made up of so many extremely talented individuals and a creative director who really knows how to put on a show. If you got a ticket, consider yourself lucky, and not just because they sold out seemingly at the speed of light.



The cast of *Into the Woods* on their closing night.

@soatheatre on Instagram

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Where Were They Then?

Applause Staff Writer **Z'Nyah Nelson** reached out to **Ms. Jones**, SOA Dance teacher, to learn about her life before and outside of SOA.

ZNyah Nelson: Where did you grow up, and what are some of your favorite childhood memories?

Leslie Jones: I grew up in Ponca City, Oklahoma. My favorite memories as a kid were playing Nintendo with my older brother, riding bikes to my friends' houses, going to dance classes, and watching *Titanic* and *Lord of the Rings* an unhealthy number of times.

ZN: Who were some people you looked up to growing up, and what did they mean to you?

LJ: Two big role models for me growing up were my studio dance teacher, Ms. Fran, and my high school orchestra director, Mr. Larson. Ms. Fran made dance classes fun rather than competitive. She was funny and upbeat and always helped us have a good time. My high school orchestra director was a very serious man, so my peers and I loved trying to make him laugh. We also bought him a sweat rag as a gift one year because he would fling his sweat on the violins while he was conducting... gross, right? But more seriously, he cared deeply about every single one of his students, whether they were first or last chair in the orchestra, and he pushed everyone to reach their greatest potential.

ZN: What was your schooling like and what stands out most to you about it?

LJ: My small hometown only had one high school, so that was my only schooling option! It was a very different school landscape than all of the school choices in Charleston. We had a strong music program which I loved being part of; I played violin from fourth grade through college. The music program was where I found my "people" and where I felt I belonged. I also played bassoon in band (my mom played bassoon, so I followed suit) and was in our marching band's color guard.

ZN: What was life after high school like?

LJ: After high school, I attended the University of Central Oklahoma. I majored in Dance and minored in Music and earned my BFA after four years. During college, I was an assistant manager at a shoe store and I taught dance at some local studios. I took two years after college to work full-time before moving to Texas for graduate school. I spent three years earning my MFA in Dance from Texas Woman's University. Fun fact: our favorite bar was called Mable Peabody's Beauty Parlor and Chainsaw Repair... we liked to practice our dance improvisation skills during karaoke night. After grad school, I moved to Charleston!

ZN: What led you to want to teach Dance?

LJ: I've wanted to be a dance teacher since about fourth grade. I think I really admired my dance teacher's job and she seemed happy getting to do something she



Ms. Leslie Jones



Ms. Jones' college students performing her work.

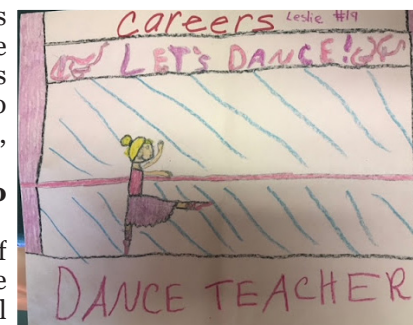
enjoyed every day. I actually made a drawing in fourth grade while learning about careers that showed my future self as a dance teacher. During college, I became even more drawn to teaching dance, as I think it is something that can teach so many life skills like creativity, cooperation, coordination, and communication.

ZN: What are some things you do outside of school?

LJ: Outside of school I spend a lot of time hanging out with my son, Beau. He is in second grade and I am his personal chauffeur. We enjoy spending time on Folly Beach, especially in the summer. I also teach dance at the College of Charleston as an adjunct professor. I enjoy going to their performances and events, as well as seeing the local group Annex Dance Company. I recently performed with the company as a guest in February.

ZN: Do you have any advice for upcoming Dance teachers or students?

LJ: Perseverance is important in the field of dance - you may be declined from one job, audition, studio, or company, only to have something even more appealing be offered. Always make connections with your dance peers, teachers, and guest choreographers. You never know who will start their own company, teach at a school you admire, or send an open call for dancers!




A drawing done by Ms. Jones in fourth grade.

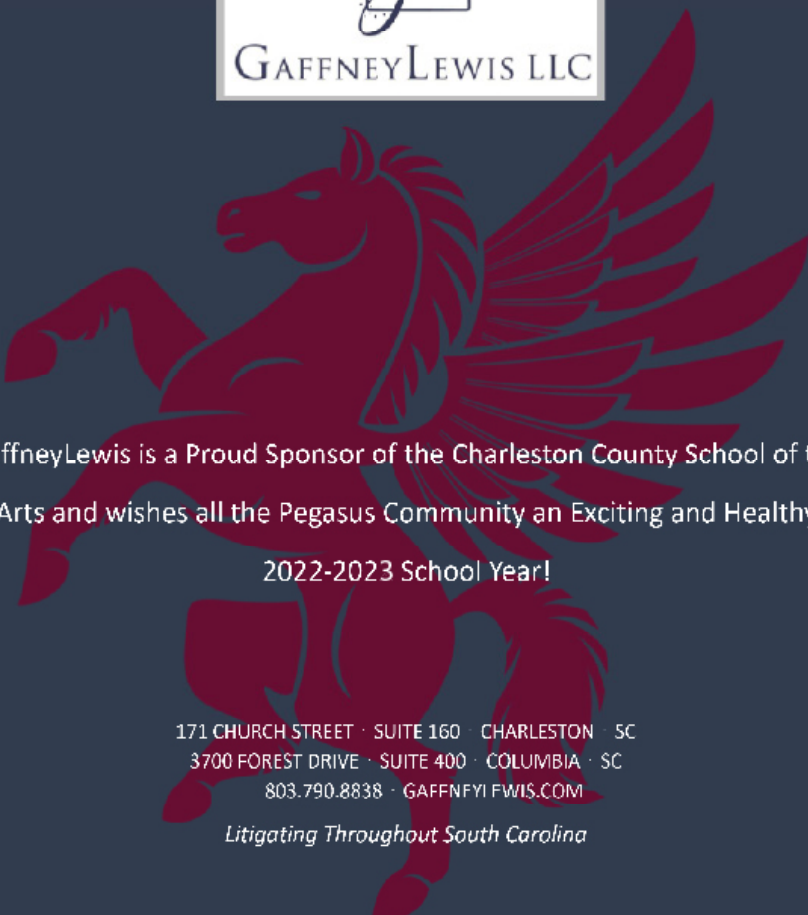
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Where Are They Now?

Applause staff writer **Ariana Lane** reached out to 2022 Visual Arts graduate **Maya Drake** to hear about their life now and how their work in the arts has developed since attending SOA.

Ariana Lane: Which college are you currently attending, and what are you studying?

Maya Drake: I am currently attending Trident Tech for my Associates in Science, and hope to continue studying biochemistry in university.

AL: What have you been up to since graduating from SOA?

MD: I've been studying hard and working a lot. I've really enjoyed getting to know myself on a deeper level and learning about what I want from life.

AL: Have you continued to pursue art after graduation?

MD: I work for a well-known artist in the area - which is the best job I could ever ask for - and I am a regular vendor at shows in the area, selling my art and the clothes I design. If you're interested in what I've got going on, I post shows that I'll be at and other cool news on my Instagram, @spooky_babi.

AL: What was it like to have your art featured in a gallery?

MD: There's no feeling quite like having your hard work liked by other people. I make art for myself, but it's really nice receiving that validation.

AL: Are you currently working on any projects?

MD: I've been busy with some murals in the area, and have had a bunch of new opportunities made available to me recently. Be on the lookout for my name; big things are coming!

AL: Do you have any advice for graduating seniors?

MD: Have a plan, but don't spend every second of your day worrying about what is gonna come next for you. You may change your mind on what you want to do or life might throw a curveball at you, but that's okay! Life gets pretty overwhelming sometimes, but you've gotta take it one day at a time and be kind to yourself. Do the things that make you happy, and the rest will fall into place.

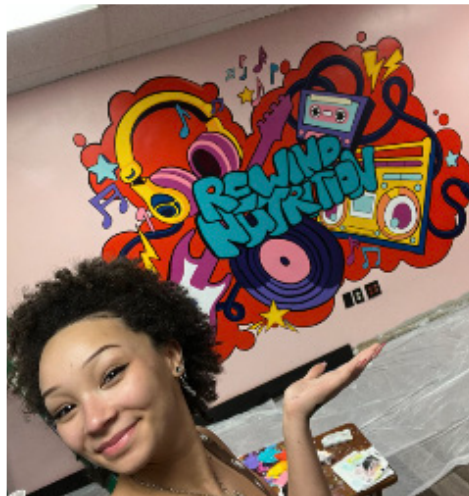
AL: What are you looking forward to in the future?

MD: I'm looking forward to continuing to share my art with the world and building a life for myself. I've far surpassed my expectations for myself and I'm so excited to see where the universe takes me next.



Maya Drake

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Maya with a mural commissioned by Rewind Nutrition, painted by them and SOA Visual Arts graduate Alma Lutas.

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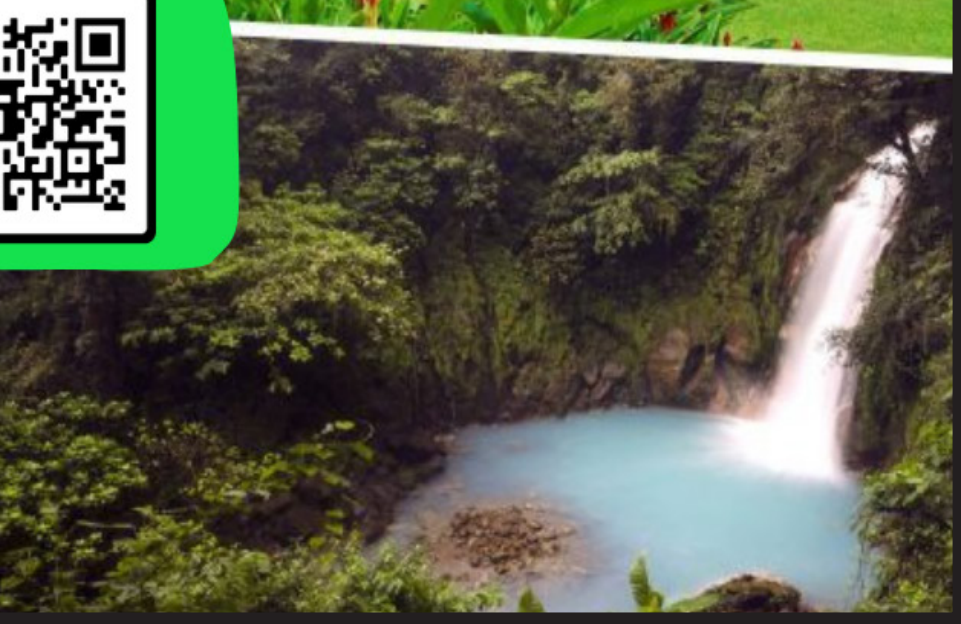
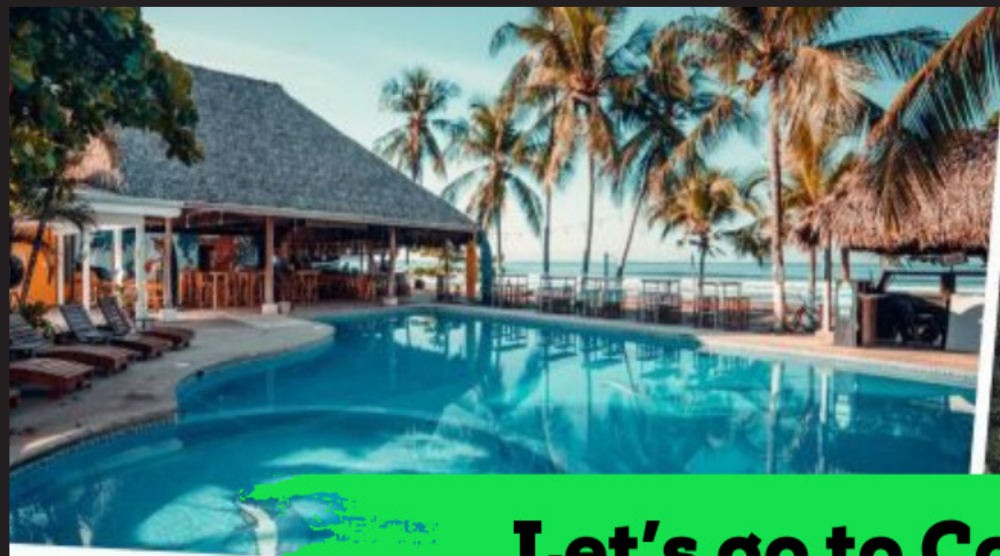
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Ms. Harman Leads a Spring Break Trip To Costa Rica!

Photos by Ms. Meredith Harman and SOA students

Over Spring Break, Ms. Harman and over thirty-five students took a trip to Central America, where they explored Costa Rica by spending time ziplining, kyaking, hiking, and more. Read more about the trip on page 10!



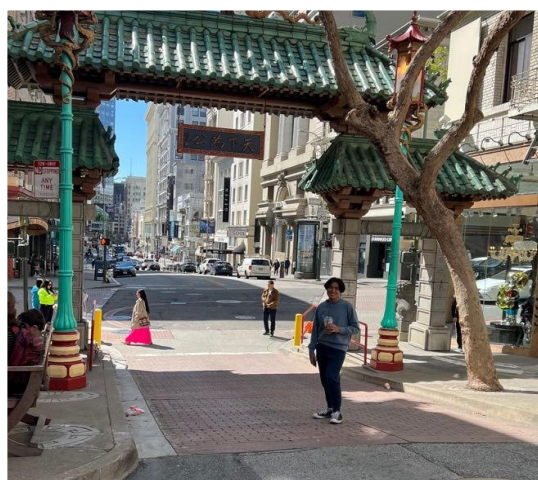


Let's go to Costa Rica!
Spring Break '24
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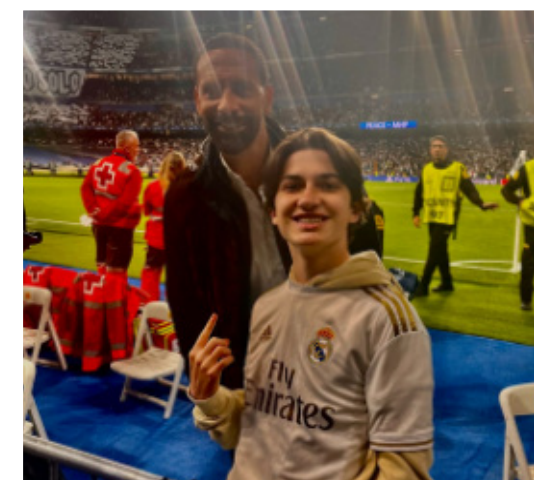
Emma Ladd, 10th grade Vocal major, visited Destin, Florida, and drank lots of virgin pina coladas.



10th grade Visual Arts major Kai Sulyma visited San Francisco.



Julia Dubay, 12th grade Strings major, had a photo shoot Downtown with friends from out of town.



11th grade Strings major Manny Stavrinakis met Rio Ferdinand at the Santiago Bernabéu in Madrid, Spain.



Liz Hornig, 12th grade Strings major, went skiing in Winter Park, Colorado.

What did SOA do over Spring Break?



SOA 12th graders Bryce Waldron-Noren, John Lapolla, Chris Easterbrook, David Konikov, and Margeaux Burkhardt walked the marsh trails around Charleston.



Cate Traywick, 10th grade Creative Writing major, visited the Florida Keys.



Ms. Harman, SOA Spanish teacher, took a group of students to Costa Rica.



10th grade Strings major Isabella Pineda visited Destin Beach in Florida.

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Sign of the Month:

“Good Luck!”

by Ariana Lane

Demonstrated by Katerin Figueroa
9th grade ASL & Deaf Culture



1. With your dominant hand, touch your chin with the tips of your fingers while keeping your hand in a flat position. Hold your non-dominant hand palm-up in front of your chest.
2. Bring your dominant hand down to rest on top of your other hand. The back of your hand should be resting on the palm of the upward facing hand.
3. Drop your non-dominant hand and bring your dominant hand in front of your face. With your palm facing you, touch your chin with your middle finger.
4. While keeping the position of your hand, rotate your arm so that your palm is facing away from you.



"Growing Pains"
by Abby Short, 12th grade



"Untitled"
by Dylann Starck, 6th grade



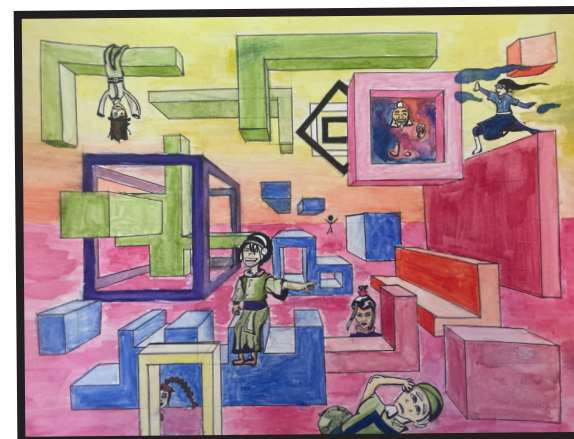
"Untitled"
by Priya Cardella, 7th grade



"Used Meat"
by Kingsley Gainey, 12th grade



"Scarab Beetle"
by Emily Apostolico, 12th grade



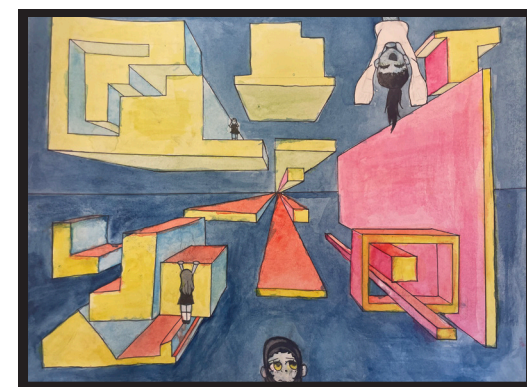
"Untitled"
by Oliver Ivan, 6th grade



"Untitled," Unfinished
by Amaliia Steblynenko, 12th grade



"Untitled"
by Lyla Steedley, 8th grade



"Untitled"
Annabel Grammes, 6th grade



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Student Poetry

by Cate Traywick

Last issue, in honor of National Poetry Month, *Applause* published the poetry of SOA's very own Creative Writing Majors. I decided to carry this celebration of poetry into the May issue, and plan to continually feature SOA's talented poets throughout the next few years! But for now, we are nearing the end of this year, and a new year is on the horizon. In honor of new beginnings, *Applause* is excited to present poetry from poets who are just beginning their middle and high school careers, the Creative Writing department's 6th and 9th graders!

My English Teacher Gives Us the Week's Vocabulary List and I am Reminded of this Morning's Argument in the Car

by Niamh Carmichael, 9th Grade

I wanted to leave this feeling in the car
along with my muffin wrapper, but the vocabulary list
reminds me of how hard it is to let go. Pharisaism.
Insults thrown back and forth rebound off the car,
off my mind. I'm simmering around the edges like a fried egg,
sunny yellow yolk about to pop.
Querulous. It's the bitterness
my body carries from each argument, an acrid cloud over my head.
It stays with me. When I watched *The Conjuring* I felt sick
for a week. I become the ghost of the movie,
floating over my body, completely unaware.
Vociferous. I want to scream, tell them how
much it hurts to love them. My skin crawls
like germs clinging to the body-shaped dimple in my sheets
after I stay ill in bed for days. That achiness nestled in the folds
of my brain, that veils my retinas in a haze of gray and drapes
a curtain over color. All day
I walk as if in a dream, replaying words they didn't mean;
insults hurled like hail hurtling from the clouds,
stinging my skin and speckling my skull with ice.
I wish I could recalibrate myself like the smartboard
in first grade, strain to press the target till the light turns green.
I knew I couldn't reach but I wanted a job
that was not to be the peacemaker. It is mine
to Arbitrate when I am not the ghost hovering around the house on tiptoe.
I've given so much until all I can see of me is the heart thumping
in my transparent chest, blood running thick along veins, and then I notice that
I can see my family's too.
We sit in the car, three fist-sized organs beating blood,
three scarlet hearts solid and Tangible and alive.



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Snow

by Emily King, 6th Grade

Snowflakes come down from the sky
 Like a baby spider gliding on a string of silk
 Drifting away from their home in the clouds
 Slowly spiraling their way to the ground
 Or getting caught in the wind

Cells And Dolls

by Katherine Largent, 9th Grade

“A girl with Turner syndrome only has 1 normal X sex chromosome,
 rather than the usual 2.”

—NHS.uk


The weirdest part is how my DNA, the core of my physical being, is full of holes. It's wild because you can't tell until you find the center of the nucleus. There are blank spaces, empty pockets scattered throughout my cells like broken bars on the wall of a prison cell, gaps big enough to let the inmate escape. Think of the chances, the statistics of it: by all logic, I had no chance of being this way. I'm a cell myself, the odd one out in two thousand cells that make up an organism. How did it all happen? A million factors put me together, sewed patches over every hole. In a way, I was sewn like a doll, maybe even like the creepy ones in Coraline, with button eyes and a stitched smile. I can still sing, even though there is just stuffing where my vocal cords should be. And the stage, of course, is in my head. I'm from a strange world through a door that sometimes only leads to a brick wall. It doesn't make sense, but neither do I, see? My cells are the bricks, stuck in puzzle shape the wrong way. This wall, this formation, is a pure coincidence, but for me, it's more like a miracle. I'm so lucky to be alive and here. There are no prison walls, just me, a performer belting out the triumphant climax of a song. But I don't get to show that, to say it. Sometimes I change my songs, sometimes I repeat the words. What more can I say? I'm so many cells, so many stitches, all put together to make one being, when really it's hard to believe there's anything there at all. I was sewn by needles laced with growth hormone, my blood drawn out of my body through a seam in my arm. I'm made of sharp, clean metal and gauze

Blue Horizon

by Olive Rust, 6th Grade

A vast oasis of emeralds,
 The blending of sapphires and aquas
 Waves bobbing up and down.
 Crashing over each other.
 Sparkling foam reaching for land,

Only to be declined
 Again and again
 A quiet breeze
 Brushes past
 The gulls hop from side to side,
 Screeching into the wind
 Beaks sinking into the wet sand.
 A powerful sunlight glares into my eyes.
 The clouds are thin and wispy,
 Stretching in every direction,
 Swirl above my head,
 Unanswered thoughts.
 Flaky and hollow,
 the tree's bones are scattered,
 The sand their ashes.
 A salty sea air fills your nostrils,
 The symphony of waves drowns you.
 A seaside lullaby.




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**SOA Band Majors
Perform Senior Thesis**

Photos by *Applause Staff*



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SOA Students Participate In Earth Day Event At Sweetgreass Gardens

Photos by Applause Staff



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Classic Movie Review: *Fantastic Mr. Fox*

by Eliana Gross

With Wes Anderson's unique directing style trending on TikTok, let me take the opportunity to recommend one of my favorite childhood movies, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. *Fantastic Mr. Fox* is a stop-motion animated film based on a book written by Roald Dahl, directed by Wes Anderson. My favorite thing about this movie, aesthetically, is the same as every other film made by him: the focus on the setting and the symmetrical composition found in almost every scene. It makes the movie peaceful to watch, despite its more serious themes. Serious by a children's movie's standards, at least.

Roald Dahl had a habit of making the protagonists (usually kids) fun and relatable while the adults tend to be unfair, cruel, or simply annoying, and this story was no different. Mr. Fox, a former chicken thief turned newspaper columnist, gets fed up with being poor and living in a hole. So, he buys himself and his family a beautiful new tree (house). Which just so happens to have a perfect view of the three farms of our antagonists:



Boggis (fat), Bunce (short), and Bean (mean). A new plan hatches in his mind and he, with his opossum friend and his nephew as sidekicks, decides he must pull off his last heist.

For fear of spoiling the story, I can't say anything else. I cannot recommend this movie enough. It's set and character design, music, composition, and acting, along with the actual plot and the subplots throughout the film, come together to create a wonderfully charming story that, if you ever need a break from stress or just the wear and tear of end of the year anxiety, will be the quickest return to childhood wonder.

Contemporary Show Review: *Trigun Stampede*

by Gracie Pennington

Trigun Stampede is a show I feel incredibly strongly about. Although it can't top the 1998 anime, it's still an incredible work of modern art in its own right. It was released this year and has seen incredible popularity - for good reason. Created by

Studio Orange, it utilizes 3D CGI animation, which is something you don't see quite often in Japanese animation. It takes creative liberties with the original *Trigun*, both in design and plot. However, these aren't necessarily bad, more like a fresh coat of paint for a modern audience. It still houses the same *Trigun* charm as the original.

Now, you may be asking yourself, "what is *Trigun*? It sounds like some kind of corny western cowboy cartoon." If that is the case, then I am here to tell you that you are right on the money. *Trigun* is a space western about Vash the Stampede, the most wanted outlaw and "humanoid typhoon" of No Man's Land, which is a desolate desert planet that humanity crash-landed onto. Legends about him tell of a ruthless killer destroying every single town he comes to, but in reality, he is a goofy, pacifistic hero who refuses to kill anybody. The concept plays out to be very fun and witty, but at its core, this show is much more than a comical western. It's a gut-wrenching tale about two siblings with polar opposite ideologies, both driven by their care for the other.

Trigun Stampede takes all of the good things about the original 1998 *Trigun* and rewrites it into a beautifully animated story. It's full of so much visual symbolism; everything on screen has a purpose. The characters are emotional and relatable, and oftentimes hilarious (the original humor is carried over to this show too, thankfully). The action scenes are spectacularly well done also and will keep you on the edge of your seat. My favorite aspect of the show is the soundtrack, particularly for its use of symbolism with leitmotifs, as well as its clever use of instruments in the orchestra in general.

Even though I will always prefer the 1998 *Trigun*, *Trigun Stampede* is most definitely a much-watch for any fans of modern animation, and I highly recommend you to check out this action-packed space western.

Contemporary Show Review: *Total Drama Island*

by Isis Hanna

Recently, the widely-beloved Cartoon Network show, *Total Drama Island* was renewed for a reboot season, and on April 10th it was released in Italy. After a good amount of searching, I was able to get my hands on some shady-looking files



that had all of the episodes in English. Since it is not technically released in the US yet, this review will be void of any actual plot points, but I will say that any fan or former fan of the show should give it a watch when able.

I was not a Cartoon Network kid (I watched the same ten episodes of *SpongeBob* over and over again when I was a kid), so I cannot speak to the nostalgia factor that this new season may or may not have. What I can say is that two summers ago I watched every single season of *Total Drama*, including *The Amazing Race* spinoff, and I did not have high hopes for this reboot. The initial three seasons of the show were (in my opinion) amazing, and then it got steadily worse until it ended after the dumpster fire that was Pahkitew Island. However, as soon as the cast introduced themselves in the first episode of the reboot, my spirits were lifted.

The characters are all for the most part incredibly interesting. None of them are based off of super overdone cliches and they are likable, unique, and funny. It's also a super diverse cast, featuring the first openly gay character in the show (I say openly because we all know there was something going on with Owen in previous seasons). The dynamics between characters are really great and engaging, and a lot of unlikely friendships form that make for some genuinely funny moments.

One thing that a lot of people, including myself, are upset about is that the iconic host, Chris McClain, has a new voice actor. To the great disappointment of fans, his jokes simply don't land the way they used to. However, after the first episode, I found myself paying less attention to that, because the rest of the new characters stole the show and by the end of the show, it didn't even bother me. Something that did bother me was the horrendous new intro song. I suggest you look it up on YouTube for yourself, if you want to be assaulted in the eardrums. I watched the new season for the first time with a good friend of mine (who actually watched the original show as a kid, like intended) and it was a rollercoaster of emotions for the both of us. The four consecutive hours flew by as we laughed, cried, and cursed each elimination together. The bad thing about having such a good cast is that no matter who gets voted off the island, you'll be upset. Since the character designs and names were released earlier this year, my friend and I took a minute to make predictions on who our favorites would be before we started episode one. Anyone who plans on watching should do the same, because it is fun to see how your



opinions change as you watch and what predictions you make end up being correct. Most of my predicted favorites ended up being lame and getting voted off early, but I didn't mind. Our hearts ended up being stolen by the hockey player best friend duo, anyway. Who could resist two silly guys who don't seem to ever have rational thoughts?

Contemporary Book Review: *Florida*

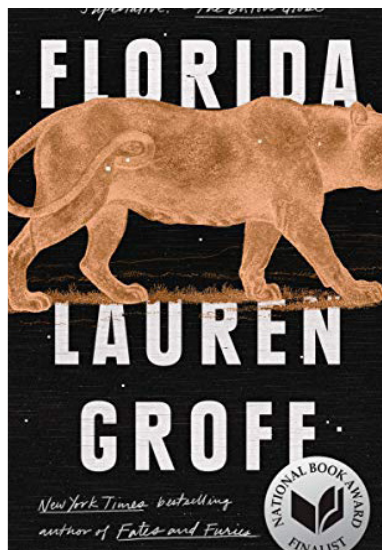
by Beatrice Crisculo

Florida, Lauren Groff's collection of short stories, contains eleven stories that all take place in Florida. Most have no relation to each other, but the first and the last follow the same mother who is overwhelmed by the state of the world, but brought back to reality by her two children.

Both stories exude love: a mother's love for her children, even as she faces personal struggles. The mother is surrounded by horror stories about the world: melting glaciers, the pile of trash in the Pacific ocean, and species' extinctions, but manages to hold all these images back and focus on how she can teach her children to be good people.

"Ghosts and Empties," the first story of the book, first published in *The New Yorker*, follows the mother on her multi-hour long walks in the middle of the night. Though she leaves her children and husband each night, her "...spirit, hours ago, slip[s] back into the house." While walking, the main character tries to drown out the countless news articles about global issues with her surroundings, watching the expansion of her neighborhood and the secret lives of people behind their window screens. Eventually, though, she limps back to bed, back to her own world, no longer a silent onlooker, but a main character once more.

In the last story, "Yport," the mother takes her two sons to France, ostensibly for a research project, but really to escape the Florida heat and the suffocating feeling the mother faces. While there, they explore the seaside, the children feeling out of place and uncomfortable, yet the mother is unwilling to give in and go home. Eventually though, the mother and her children find peace, and she realizes, "there will be time, perhaps, at least she hopes, to make them into good men."



Florida's other stories also detail love: between a girl and her book: "Above and Below," and two sisters: "Dogs go Wolf," both of which were first published in *The New Yorker*, and between a woman and her history: "Eyewall," first published in *Subtropics*. Though most of these stories are not linearly (or even convolutedly) connected, it seems as though each character builds off the previous one. From childhood to maturity, each central figure is forced to look inside themselves, ending up a bit more self-certain than they were when their narrative started. When faced with this introspection, it is impossible to close the book without learning a bit more about yourself as well.

The raw emotion Groff expresses, while never lighthearted, is always beautiful. In order to truly absorb Groff's stories, you must read *Florida* with empathy: for the characters, the state, the writer, and yourself. Only then will you connect to her almost poetic insights about Florida's unique inhabitants.

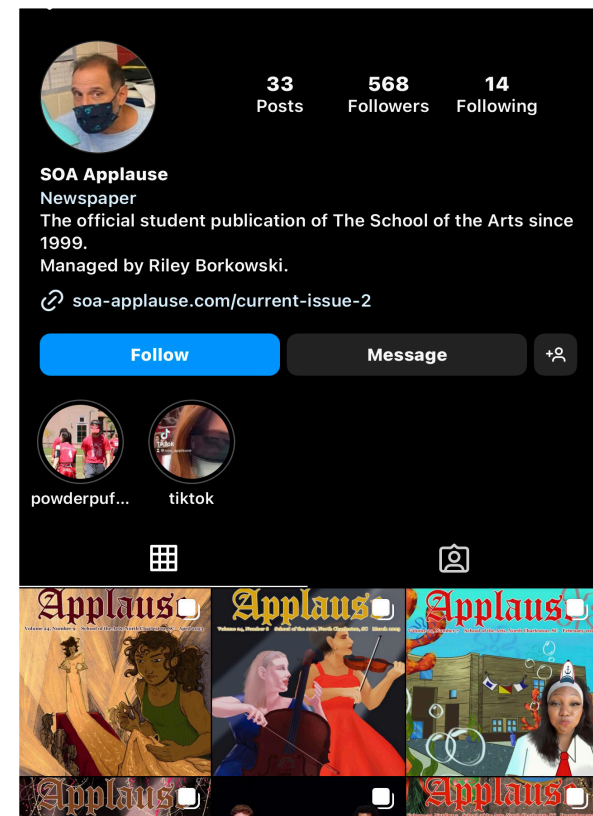
Video Game Review: *Valorant's* New Agent, "Gekko"

by Yatawee Petchsuriya and Madison McDonald

The latest agent, Gekko, brings a new initiator to the roster. His kit of abilities compromises between usability and power which overall puts him towards the stronger, but still moderate side of the tier for me. I love his bold and dynamic design with neon purples and greens. Best of all, he is accompanied by three adorable pets: Wingman, Dizzy, and Thrash.

In order to activate his ability, he throws these adorable pets, like Pokemon. Dropping Wingman on the ground allows Gekko to scout for enemies, similar to a Roomba. If an enemy is detected by Wingman, they are chased after and stunned. Although this is similar to Raze's bot ability, the difference is that Wingman can also plant spikes on site for Gekko. In order to plant a spike, in which the enemies must diffuse before it explodes to win the round, a player will have to put themselves in a vulnerable position, as they cannot move while planting, making this ability very solid. Throwing Dizzy into the air shoots a blind, which blocks everything on the enemy's screen except a couple of inches on the side. This can be especially annoying, as enemies cannot turn away as they could with any other flash, and because of this, it gives general information on the enemy's whereabouts. By throwing Mosh, a molly, which is a puddle where players will take damage if stepped on, is created. For his ultimate, Thrash is thrown out and Gekko is in complete control of the pet for a few seconds before it disappears. If Thrash is able to capture an enemy during those seconds, the enemy will be frozen and have to inch their way back to safety before they are spotted and shot. Some cruel Gekkos

love to pull out the melee instead of a gun, slowly killing their hopeless victims. On top of these strong abilities, he can even reuse them. However, this comes at the expense of picking the pets up after use, which requires him to stand still for a second. Gekko's versatility makes him a formidable opponent in all game modes and maps. He is easy to learn and master, making him incredibly beginner friendly. Overall he is an excellent agent, and is one of my favorites of the one recently added to the roster.



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Horoscopes

by Cate Traywick



that person in your math class or maybe to indulge in that (very tasty) kale salad that you've been eyeing all year! But dear Sagittarius, we all know that you will be doing nothing of the sort, so see you next year I guess.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 20): Capricorn, you've been gearing up for "hot girl summer" all year, but now that it's finally hit, you seem to be entering "sad girl summer". No more are your dreams of brightly-colored bikinis and traveling. Now, it's time to curl up on your couch, listen to Lana Del Rey, and watch The Notebook over and over again.

Aquarius (January 21 - February 18): Alright Aquarius, listen up. It's time to rip off that band aid and start doing summer activities. Go to the beach! Bring your friends! I know that parking is a nightmare, but what's a dented bumper or side swiped car when you have awkward tanlines and jellyfish stings?

Pisces (February 19 - March 20): Cancer is allowed be a jerk because they're the sign of the crab, but you Pisces, have no buisness being this crabby. Take a deep breath and take some time for yourself. My suggestion? Row out onto a sunlit pond and spend a few hours reading french poetry and wax philosophical. Or be lame and study for your exams or whatever.

Aries (March 21 - April 19): Helloooooo Aries, guess who just learned what Mercury in Retrograde means, me. Since I now know that it means that change is coming, I have advice for you. Resist the change, Aries. Don't make any rash decisions and cling to the constants in your life. Mercury has nothing on you.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20): Happy Birthday Taurus! For the next month, it's all about you, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. But just to let you know, I heard that Virgo overheard Libra told Scorpio told Pisces that Leo thinks you're cute. Do with that what you will, but in my personal opinion, you should totally go for it, if Virgo said so then it has to be true!

Gemini (May 21 - June 20): You told me that I've been too negative towards you Gemini, but I can't change the future so I'll try to put a positive spin on all the unfortunate things that are going to happen to you in the next month. You're going to bomb three finals, but that's okay because there's so much room for improvement! You may stub your toe immediately after falling down a flight of stairs, but don't worry, you'll only be hospitalized for three days!

Cancer (June 21 - July 22): Cancer, I couldn't help but notice that you've been bored out of your mind for the last few months, but never fear Cancer, I have a brilliant idea. Whip out one or two (or three!) of your English class books, and cringe at your poorly thought out and rushed annotations. That copy of The Book Thief has never looked better.

Leo (July 23 - August 22): Hey Leo, you are on your last legs, and it shows. As you cram for finals, you may find yourself hysterically laughing while listening to your chill hip hop beats to study/relax to. Don't worry Leo, it's almost over (it isn't). It's all good Leo, you'll be fine (not at this point). Let yourself relax, Leo, finals aren't even real (they are).

Virgo (August 23 - September 22): Hey Virgo, all year you've been everyone's go-to gossip girl (and I haven't even seen the show!). People meet you in the hidden corners of the school to be updated on all the latest and greatest going ons. Honestly, Virgo, you should start charging for your services. I know it's fun to spread rumors Virgo, but sometimes it's okay to keep secrets.

Libra (September 23 - October 22): If you were a color, Libra, you would be a robin egg blue, you're fun, you're bright, and it's an absolute joy to be around you. So, sweet and loveable Libra, it's time for you to cut out those people that embody dark khaki and chartreuse. I'm not saying that dark khaki and chartreuse don't have their moments, but they seriously clash with robin egg blue.

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21): Alright Scorpio, it's crunch time. Slacking off (but still somehow getting an A) in all of your classes is good in theory until you remember that you have final exams in all of them and you have to remember all of the information that you didn't learn during the last 9 months. Time to redownload Quizlet!

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21): It's the very end of the year Sag! Last chance for you to finally do that thing that you've been wanting to do all year, so do it while you still can! It's time to finally talk to



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Visual Arts Trivia

by Gracie Pennington

1. Who is considered the first abstract artist?
2. Which artist is most known for his paintings of water lilies?
3. Where is the famous art museum the Louvre located?
4. Which artist is most famous for pop art?
5. Which famous artist cut part of his ear off?
6. What do you call a point with no end?
7. Which famous artist invented the kite?
8. What object most commonly appears in Pablo Picasso's paintings?
9. Which modern artist is famous for shredding his own artwork?
10. Which modern artist hosted the television program *The Joy of Painting*?

Alex Selby, 12th grade Strings



Gracie Pennington

6/10

1. Picasso
2. Monet
3. Paris, France
4. I don't know
5. Van Gogh
6. A line
7. Da Vinci
8. People
9. I don't know the name
10. Bob Ross

Jordan Cante, 11th grade Visual Arts



Gracie Pennington

5/10

1. I don't know
2. I don't know
3. Paris, France
4. I don't know
5. Van Gogh
6. A line
7. Da Vinci
8. Clock
9. Oh, easy! I did that!
10. Bob Ross

Answers

1. Kandinsky 2. Claude Mone 3. Paris, France 4. Andy Warhol 5. Vincent Van Gogh 6. A line 7. Leonardo Da Vinci 8. Guitars 9. Banksy 10. Bob Ross

May Playlist

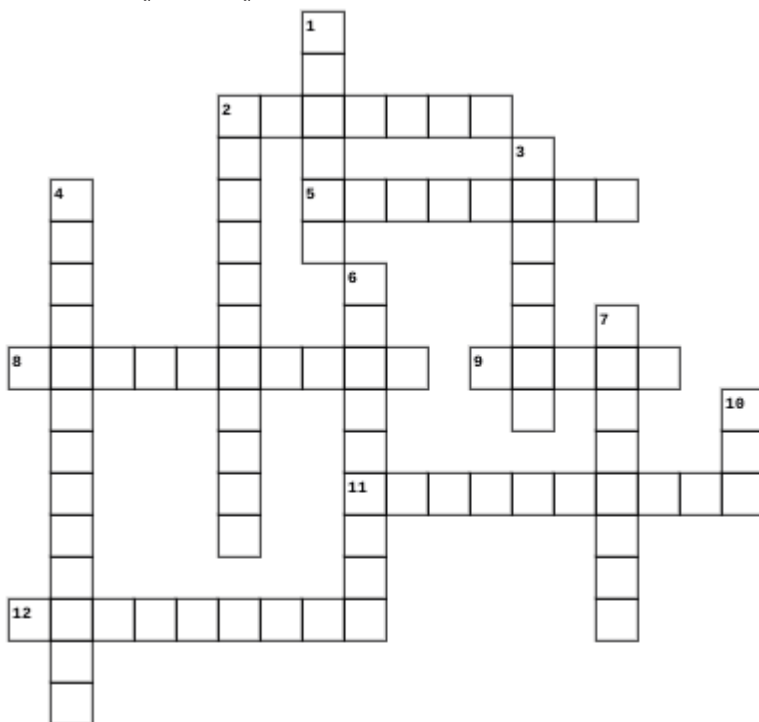
by Beatrice Criscuolo

This spring's newest songs



Visual Arts Crossword

by Manny Stavrinakis

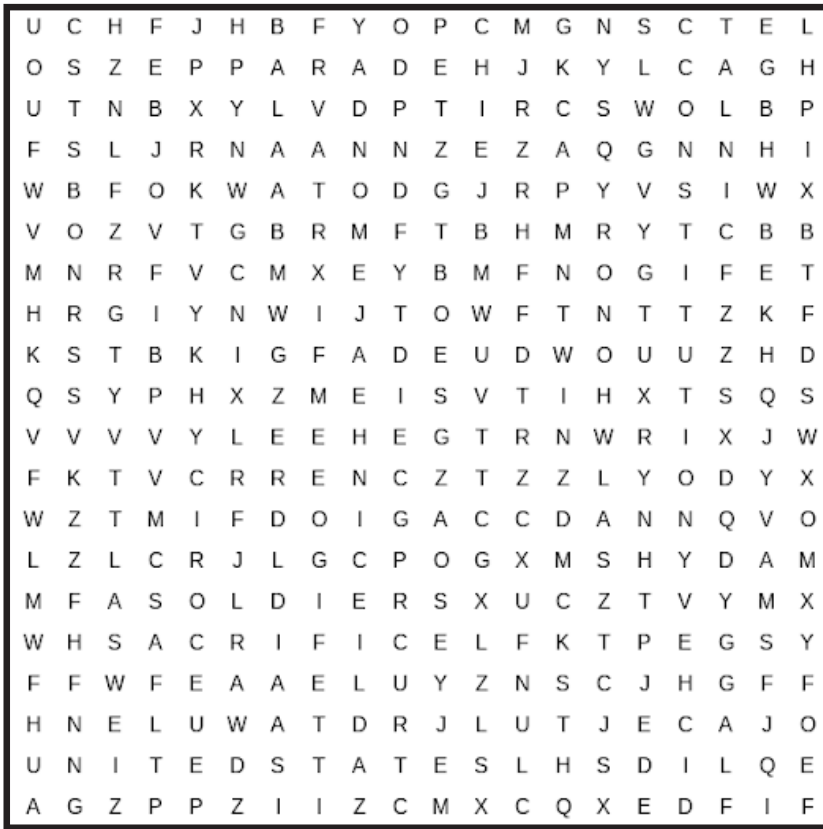


Across

2. The outline of something.
5. Art that uses shapes and colors, and is not based on reality or nature.
8. The area of an artwork that appears farthest away from the viewer.
9. A large painting applied to a wall or ceiling, especially in a public space.
11. A drawing of a person or thing with exaggerated or distorted features.
12. An image with urban scenery as

Down

1. A cloth of hemp, cotton, linen, or a similar fiber, used as a surface for painting.
2. Decorative handwriting or lettering.
3. A style in art and architecture developed in Europe from the early seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century.
4. An act of placing things close together or side by side for comparison or contrast.
6. An image that has natural scenery as its primary focus.
7. A work of art made from paint applied to canvas.
10. A particular shade or tint of a color.



Memorial Day Word Search

by Manny Stavrinakis

- AMERICA
- SACRIFICE
- CONSTITUTION
- SOLDIERS
- FLAG
- UNITEDSTATES
- FREEDOM
- VETERAN
- HONOR
- WAR
- MAY
- PARADE
- MONDAY
- PATRIOTIC

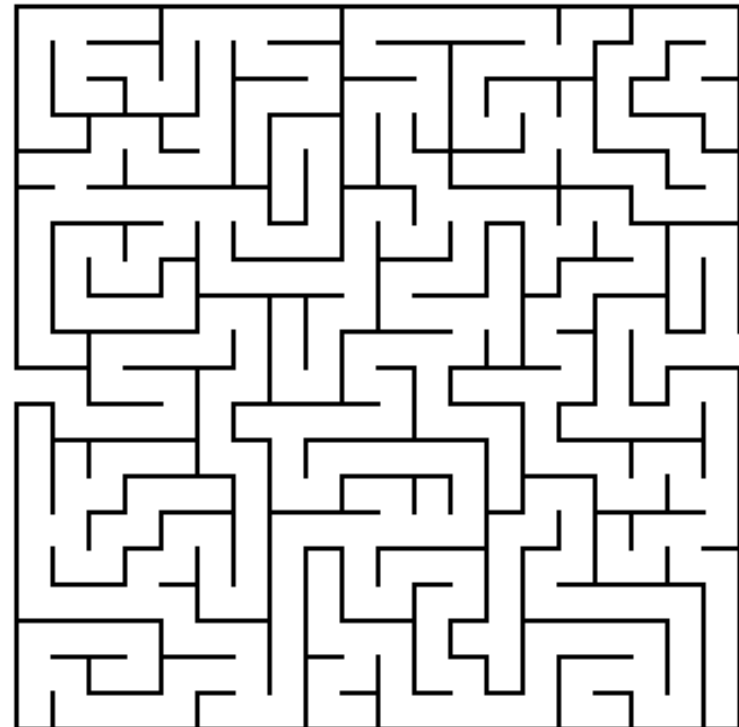
SOA Sudoku

by Manny Stavrinakis

2	5			6				
1		6	4					
	8			9		6		
5				7	9	6		8
8								1
7		3	6	1				5
	4			5			8	
				3	2			9
			8				1	4

Help Ms. Jones find her pointe shoes!

by Manny Stavrinakis





“We are going to a Melanie Martinez concert together”

Zell Lord and MJ Johnson, 6th grade Creative Writing



“I’m going to a Taylor Swift concert.”

Rosie Sandan, 7th grade Theater



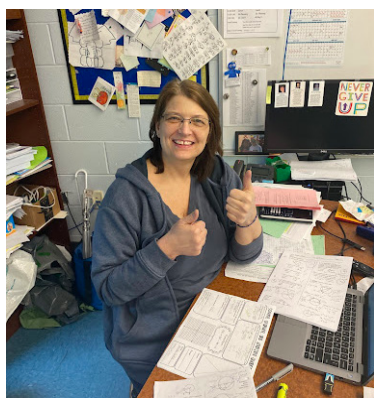
“Going to dance class.”

Lilly Vivas, 8th grade Dance:



“Violin lessons and hopefully a job.”

Isabella Pineda, 10th grade Strings



“Do we know?”

Ms. Lebrun, Middle and High School Math Teacher

What are your Summer Break plans?

by Isis Hanna and Riley Borkowski



“Moving.”

Ms. Mortensen, High School Science



“I am going to Portugal”

Mathis Morris, 9th grade Theater



“I’m going to be volunteering at a karate camp.”

Avem Polon, 10th grade Creative Writing



“I want to go white water rafting with my family in Ocoee, Tennessee”

Payton Thrasher, 11th grade Theater



“I will be an intern at Camp Jubilee and I’m so excited to spend half the summer doing what I love!”

Julia Dubay, 12th grade Strings