

Applause

Volume 27, Number 2 School of the Arts, North Charleston, SC October 2025



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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

October is here, and so is the second issue of *Applause*!

Our staff is already getting into the Halloween spirit, and we know you are too, so check out pages 16-17 for some of SOA's best costumes through the years.

We are also incredibly proud of our vocal majors, as they have been working tirelessly to prepare *Anastasia*, for our audiences. To get yourself ready for their upcoming shows, I recommend checking out pages 21-24 for interviews with some of the stars, and behind the scenes photos from rehearsals.

Alongside those, we've got two fantastic features on SOA Teachers, Ms. Richardson (pg 8) and Mr. Monk (pg 10), and two on talented alumni, Ryan Graudin (pg 6), an accomplished author from the Class of 2005, and 2022 graduate Ryan Hinske, who has already found much success pursuing a career in journalism (pg 11).

As always, none of this would be possible without the support of our patrons and advertisers. So we hope you enjoy our October Issue!

Your Editor,
Luciano Cusatis



Applause

since 1999, the official student publication of
School of the Arts

Founded in 1995 by Rose Maree Myers

Dr. Shannon Cook, Principal

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Cover by Amelia Counts

SOA Calendar

by Trinity Collins

Thursday, 10/16: HS Vocal musical, *Anastasia*, RMMT, 6-9 PM
Friday, 10/17: HS Vocal musical, *Anastasia*, RMMT, 10 AM-1 PM & 6-9 PM
Saturday, 10/18: HS Vocal musical, *Anastasia*, RMMT, 6-9 PM
Sunday, 10/19: HS Vocal musical, *Anastasia*, RMMT, 2-5 PM
Monday, 10/20: 10th Grade Theatre Scene Night, Black Box Theatre, 4-7:30 PM
Tuesday, 10/21: 10th Grade Theatre

Scene Night, Black Box Theatre, 4-7:30 PM

Tuesday, 10/21: HS Orchestra Fall Symphony Concert, RMMT, 5:30-6:30 PM
Wednesday, 10/22: MS Concert, Spooky Tunes, RMMT & Cafeteria, 6-7:30 PM
Thursday, 10/23: HS Visual Arts Glow Show, Visual Arts hallway and rooms, 6:30-7:30 PM
Saturday, 10/25: Jump, Jive, & Wail, Charleston Visitor's Bus Shed, 7-11 PM
Monday, 10/27: Army Field Band Concert with SOA Band and Vocalists, RMMT, 7-9 PM
Tuesday, 10/28: Senior Thesis Fall Dance Adjudication, RMMT & Dance

Studios, 4-5:30 PM
Wednesday, 10/29: MS Piano Fall Jazz concert, RMMT, 6-8 PM
Thursday, 10/30: HS Piano Fall Jazz concert, RMMT, 6-8 PM
Friday, 10/31: Convocation #1, RMMT, 2-3:30 PM
Wednesday, 11/12: Theatre Department Senior Thesis, RMMT, 6-9 PM
Thursday, 11/13: Theatre Department Senior Thesis, RMMT, 6-9 PM
Friday, 11/14: Theatre Department Senior Thesis, RMMT, 6-9 PM
Saturday, 11/15: Creative Writing Wordfest, Barnes and Noble, Mount Pleasant Towne Center, 8:40 AM-4 PM



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by Applause Staff

Sass Attack: The School Parking Lot

by Fletcher Seminaroti

Sass Attack was originally started by former Applause writer David Sass in 2011. Our junior creative writing major, Fletcher Seminaroti, has continued the tradition.

In South Carolina, when a child reaches the age of fifteen, they can apply for a driver's permit. After studying and taking a required thirty-question online test and scoring eighty percent or higher, they are officially road-legal. Of course, there are some limitations, such as the necessity of driving with a licensed adult over the age of twenty-one or driving between the hours of six in the morning and twelve at night.

This opens up a whole new world for our teens, allowing for easier transportation across our traffic-ridden city, enabling part-time jobs further away from home, or the ability to commute to school and escape the "joy" of riding the bus. Unlike most cities, Charleston's infrastructure is beautiful, offering bridges across its waterways, a crosstown route through multiple downtown districts, and a smooth drive down Rivers Avenue. According to many SOA students, crossing the Ravenel Bridge is their favorite part of the drive to school in the morning.

However, when SOA students arrive at school, they turn onto our campus and take a left into our parking lot. Here's where things get dark. Upon turning, you are immediately dodging students left and right as they walk with their heads down, staring at their phones. The statewide phone ban established in 2024 has led students to scrounge for scrolling time on campus, and unfortunately, has transformed into rotting in the parking lot.

Once you've made it through the initial obstacle course of distracted pedestrians, you are immediately met with the second boss battle: the actual parking. If parallel parking is the final exam of driving, then the SOA parking lot is the daily pop quiz no one ever studied for. Cars slide halfway across the yellow lines, trucks hang their beds into the lanes like they own the place, and at least once a week, someone decides diagonal is "close enough."

From the safety of my friend's truck, I've witnessed more near-misses than a demolition derby. Every morning, without fail, someone whips into a spot like they're auditioning for *Fast and Furious: School Edition*, only to slam on the brakes inches from my bumper. I've started keeping mental tallies of how many times my poor car almost becomes collateral damage in the great battle for parking spots. Spoiler: it's every single day. And it's not just bad technique—it's the stress. With limited spaces and everyone running late, people drive like gladiators in a coliseum, fighting for asphalt glory. The sad truth? No matter how early you leave your house or how carefully you drive, the SOA parking lot will always find a way to test your patience—and your insurance policy.

Opinion: Wearing Suits Wears On Me!

by Ellis Richards

Ever have to drive three hours out to a funeral of a great aunt you never met? Attend the wedding of your mom's friend's dog.



Luciano Cusatis

Fletcher Seminaroti

layer up, buttons, blazer, itchy tie, and be uncomfortably hot during the event before coming home exhausted?

I write this as suits were my all day everyday for an entire week in the middle of July while attending the GMU Youth Journalism Conference, and it's given me plenty of ammo against these gaudy garments. So picture this, you and a bunch of co-workers working at some nondescript company are stuck in a three hour conference. The room is humid, the walls are a sad egg white (think *American Psycho*), and the only sound audible above the fluorescent lights buzzing is the wetting of dry lips and the shuffling of blank manila folders. Sounds awful right? So why do we do it?

Everyone in that room is aware of how annoying and hot the suits they have on are, yet we subscribe to a standard set by long-gone, old (probably male) people. I'm assuming anyone stuck in this situation prays for a stranger with some gusto to rip off their too-small blazer and too-tight tie, stand on the table, and wave them around hollering with the same energy as those cheesy "food fight!!!" scenes from 90's movies. Then everybody else would immediately follow suit (get it?) and rip theirs off in a rallying cry of liberation as we storm out of the building and regret it instantly because buying groceries is much more daunting without a cushy office job.

Thankfully, changes in office culture from pandemic-era work coupled with younger generations' shifting values means we're moving towards an era of fewer suits. So when the day finally comes where I don't have to screw with my tie, sweat through my undershirt, and struggle with buttons three times the size of their appropriate buttonholes... I'll celebrate it with my oversized hoodie and a shot of lukewarm water (seasoned with microplastics) from my single-use office standard paper cup.



Ellis in his dorm at GMU not knowing he would later burn alive in that suit

Ellis Richards

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SOA Graduate Ryan Graudin Returns to Discuss Writing Life

by Lila Hayes

"One of the things I loved most about SOA was how it fostered creative expression," remarked 2005 graduate Ryan Graudin, during her visit to the RMMT in late September. Ms. Graudin returned to her alma mater after twenty years on the day her twelfth book was released. She joined the Creative Writing program as a junior, she told students, and quickly fell in love with the community she found here.

Ms. Graudin was introduced by her former teacher, Rene Bufo Miles and creative writer **Brooklyn Mayberry**. Brooklyn is working with Ms. Graudin as she prepares her senior thesis.

"Mentoring students helps me take a step back and hold space for gratitude," Ms. Graudin commented. "I also want to give back to a school that gave so much to me!" Ms. Miles reminisced on Ms. Graudin's days in the Creative Writing program, saying that she could write double the number of pages as anyone else. Ms. Miles looked forward to seeing the drafts of her thesis each class, she said, "Pursue the beauty that you see all around you." -Ryan Graudin



Graudin speaking to Creative Writers in the RMMT on September 26

Applause Staff



The Witch Who Stormed the Palace, by Ryan Graudin, which released the same day as her visit to SOA.

According to Ryan's *Applause* "Senior Survey," she was already set on becoming a writer in high school, and after graduating she enrolled at the College of Charleston. As a freshman at C of C, she recalls, she considered majoring in communications "because it was practical." However, later that year, she and a friend decided to "take the leap" by declaring themselves creative writing majors. "I never once doubted it after that."

Ms. Graudin's career has allowed her to see the world. "Traveling has opened up the scope of my stories," she says, which rings true throughout her work, from her novel *The Walled City*, set in Hong Kong, to *The Enchanted Lives of Céleste Artois*, which takes place in Paris. Whether she's writing historical facts into her adult novels or jokes into her middle-grade novels, Ms. Graudin says she prioritizes "writing things that bring me joy."

The place she feels most connected to, she says, is London. "I have always felt British in my bones--there's so many things about England and British culture that just resonate with me."

Ms. Graudin has built an impressive career thus far, which includes a Carnegie Medal nomination for her novel *Wolf by Wolf*. Regarding her proudest achievement, Ms. Graudin struggles to pin one down. "I'm just grateful to keep publishing books." She says, but also cites the perseverance and adaptation she has needed in what can be a challenging field.

Ms. Graudin concluded her talk with advice for students attending this "magical" school, regardless of age or art: "Pursue the beauty that you see all around you, the beauty in fellow students, the beauty in the art that you create. The world really needs that."

What's Going on in North Charleston?

by Cannon Gibbs

Last Thursday, I stopped by the North Charleston Farmers Market, newly hosted at the Park Circle Pavilion.

When I was a kid, my dad and I would go to the Park Circle Farmers Market every Tuesday and Thursday to get fresh ingredients for his restaurant. Back then, it was located at a local baseball field.

Park Circle has changed a lot since those times, and I quite miss it. But when I heard that they were moving the pavilion and many new stands were coming to participate, it piqued my interest. I'm glad I decided to go.

My mom and I went, and immediately I recognized the smell of roasted peanuts that I had loved so much as a kid. It felt like the community I had grown up in. As well as many vendors who have been there for years, there were many new additions, such as jewelry makers, candle makers, and even ethnic food vendors, of which I was excited to try.

My mom got a Charleston straw bag, and I loaded up with food and vegetables. Each booth had its own story. One of my favorite parts is just going to talk and meet people.

If you haven't gone it's every Thursday from May 8 through October 30 from 3:00 to 7:00 PM at Park Circle Pavilion, 4800 Park Circle. Go pick up some fresh vegetables, or just pick up some cool knick-knacks!



North Charleston Farmers Market

northcharleston.com

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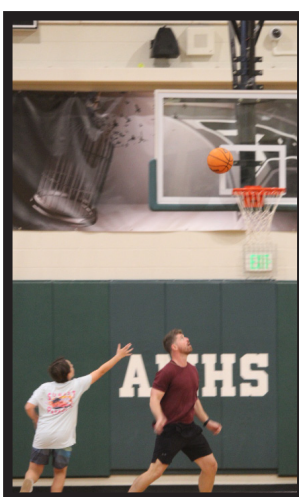
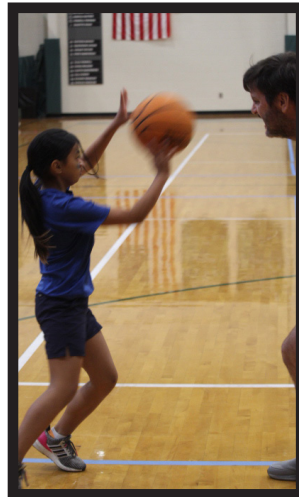
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Teachers Defeat Middle Schoolers in Annual Basketball Game

photos by Fletcher Seminaroti



SOA Band Performs Fall Concert

photos by Trinity Collins





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A Look at Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Collaboration with Visual Arts

by Sheridan King

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing program has worked with many majors over the years, and this month we are focusing on the work that the Visual Artists have done with them. “ASL is a visual language that uses hand shapes, facial expressions, and body movements to convey meaning. This inherently artistic use of the body aligns with visual arts, where form and expression are key,” Mrs. Duffy said, and it’s true. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department has found many ways to incorporate art into what they do every day.

Every year for at least the past five years, sixth grade visual artists begin the year looking at value in lines. They explore this concept with a project that has American Sign Language. The first step is to think of a short word, then the students would be shown the alphabet in ASL. From there, they would use a pen to draw the hands on a piece of paper. By doing so, they work on learning how to show shadows and light with a pen.

When Mr. Colie realized that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program was next door to Visual Arts, they began to display the students’ projects outside in the hallway. “It was our way of communicating to them that we appreciated them and understood them,” Mr. Colie says. He continues to say that he eventually wants to evolve the sign language art project into something involving motion, with a moving sign.

“It’s interesting because the words will change with the trends of like, you know, with every year there’s a cool word” Mr. Colie notes. Popular words from the past few years include “Slay” and “Glow.”

Students that have been in the program in the past have also been recognized for their artistic talent. Students have won PTSA Reflections Contest winner Exceptional Art category, and during Christmas time, there is a district Christmas card artwork contest, and one of the students also won that!

Jeni Kim, a past student at SOA, created many pieces that were entered into competitions and won. Her art piece “Underwater Silence” won first place in the Graphic Design category of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf Annual Art and Essay competition. “If I hadn’t been able to go here, I would never have known that I had this talent inside of me. I would never have had access to that.” Jeni said in an interview for a CCSD video about her artwork.



Deaf students creating pottery in the Visual Arts room



“Underwater Silence” by Jeni Kim

“Artists that have an understanding of ASL often bring a heightened awareness of visual storytelling, rhythm, and composition to their art.” Mrs. Duffy states, and it is shown through the beautiful artwork that these students have created over the years. These collaborations between Visual Arts and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program have created beautiful art pieces over the years, and we look forward to seeing more incredible art to come.

SOA Slang

by Fletcher Seminaroti

Pressed: To show anger or annoyance towards another.

Ex. “My teacher just assigned a new unit project and now I’m pressed.”

Bubba: A term of endearment for a close friend, brother, or someone you look out for.

Ex. “Chill out, Bubba, I got your back.”

Ferda: A tendency or characteristic for some person to choose their friends or bros over anything else.

Ex. “I was going to stay home from school, but I wanted to come and see y’all boys... That’s so ferda.”

Airball: When you talk in a conversation, and no one responds. It can also be used when attempting to “spit game” romantically, and you don’t receive equal interest.

Ex. “Dante, that was your fifth airball of the evening. Maybe it’s time to go home for the night.”

Frat Flick: A complex and nonchalant dance move involving the flicking of your fingers, or wrists, depending on how hard you get down. Used to show you’re the coolest at the party.

Ex. “Dr. C, I didn’t expect you to be here. I could see you frat flicking from across the dance floor.”

Pledge: Originally known in the fraternal world, the term “pledge” has ventured into common language as someone in a lower standing who does something for you.

Ex. “Athan, can you pass me that water over there?... Thanks, pledge.”

Blud: A person of relevance in your life.

Ex. “What’s up, blud? How’s it going?”

Ragebait: Something said or posted with the sole purpose of getting people angry or riled up.

Ex. “Cannon, you have to stop being so mad, you’re easily ragebaited.”

Joybait: Something shared just to make people happy, excited, or feel good.

Ex. “That puppy video was pure joybait — couldn’t stop smiling.”

Rub: Short for the British term “rubbish,” it means trash, or not good.

Ex. “That bonfire was lowkey rub twin, they kept ragebaiting me.”

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Visual Arts Teacher Brings New Spark to Goose Creek

by Cannon Gibbs

I've lived in the Charleston area my whole life, and I've seen murals and art from top to bottom. I've seen them come and go. But rarely do you get the opportunity to see anything like what Mrs. Barbara Richardson has done in Goose Creek.

Our very own SOA visual arts teacher is also the city's art director, a muralist, and the creator of giant, unique geese statues that have started to pop up everywhere. If you've been through Goose Creek lately, you've probably seen one. Maybe it's "Waffles," the Waffle House goose, or my favorite: "Snoop Goose" by the dog park.

What I particularly love about her geese is that each is unique, it's different in its own way, it has a name and almost a story to come along with it. These geese were painted, designed, or coordinated by Mrs. Richardson. When I wrote to her about what drew her to art in the first place, she wrote back that she "always liked art and made art all the time."

There's nothing better than doing what you love, and that's exactly what she does. She's painted murals all over the Charleston area. Now, in just two years, she has convinced the city of Goose Creek to "adopt" more than sixty-five

fiberglass geese through the Adopt-A-Goose program. She wrote to me that Goose Creek needed more color and creativity. "We've been starved for



"Waffles," who stands proudly in front of Waffle House on Goose Creek Boulevard

art for a very long time." Thanks to her, the city even has an ordinance requiring large new developments to include or fund public art as part of their projects.

Goose Creek is now one of South Carolina's most arts-focused small towns. My grandmother lives in Goose Creek, and so I have been in and out of there for much of my life. I can not express how lovely it has been to see all the art.

Mrs. Richardson also often uses SOA students to help with the effort. "I even pay SOA artists to paint geese and murals all the time," she wrote. As a teacher, she brings her community together, not for art but because of it.

If you haven't heard of the Great Goose-Napping, Waffles, a \$2,000 statue in front of the Waffle House on Highway 52 was ripped from the ground and

stolen. Richardson got tipped off ahead of time and called the police, who caught the thief mid-getaway with the goose in his trunk. When I wrote to her about what she thought about it, she laughed, "Waffles has had a pretty traumatic life!" Waffles made it home safely and is now bolted down. "I love that our geese have become so popular," she said. "Sixty-five bought and adopted in two years."

After being able to talk to her and her students, I really learned how passionate she is about art. "Having the opportunity to leave my legacy on the city is beyond comprehension," she wrote to me. "I'm so lucky to have two dream careers."

Having grown up living among Charleston's always-growing art community, I always thought of art as being mostly downtown in museums or galleries. But Mrs. Richardson's helped show me that art and artists are everywhere in Charleston, just open your eyes every now and then.



Last year, Mrs. Richardson was awarded by the SC Municipal Association for the communication and community involvement provided by the Adopt a Goose



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Where Were They Then: Mr Monk

by Dante Criscitello

For this month’s edition of “Where Were They Then,” staff writer Dante Criscitello sat down with beloved Physical Education teacher Mr. Brian Monk to discuss his childhood, time in the military and more.

Dante Criscitello: Where did you grow up, and what do you remember most about your childhood?

Brian Monk: I was born in Miami, Florida but my family moved to Summerville, SC when I was in the first grade. Growing up in the 90’s was awesome. We were always outside making homemade skateboard ramps, playing tackle football with no pads or helmets, or playing Nintendo 64 until our thumbs were sore.

DC: As a child, what did you want to do when you got older?

BM: I wanted to play catcher for the Atlanta Braves. I was obsessed with baseball when I was a kid.

DC: What was your next step after high school? Did you immediately begin college, or did you take another path?

BM: I began my undergraduate degree in Physical Education at the College of Charleston right after high school in 2007.

DC: What drew you towards the military?

BM: I was in 7th grade when 9/11 happened. I wanted to join as soon as I graduated from high school but ultimately decided to get my degree first.

DC: What was the hardest lesson the military taught you, and how have you applied that to your life?

BM: I’m not sure it was the hardest lesson, but the best lesson I learned in the military was to “hunt the good stuff.” No matter how bad something seems you can always find the silver lining or the light at the end of the tunnel.

DC: Where did you attend college, and what did you major in? Did your time in the military help out with that?

BM: I earned a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Physical Education with a concentration in Exercise Science from the College of Charleston in 2011. I then got a Master’s of Science in Health Exercise and Sport Science in 2020 and a Master’s in Teaching Physical Education in 2022 from The Citadel. I would say my time in the military absolutely helped me in the sense of time management and being focused on accomplishing my goals.

DC: What inspired you to become a PE teacher, and have you taught anywhere else?

BM: PE was always my favorite class growing up so it was a pretty easy choice. But actually, right after I graduated from C of C, I spent the next Fall semester substitute teaching and coaching football at a small school in Orangeburg, SC before I left for basic training. One afternoon I was walking out of the building toward the practice field and I just knew it was what I wanted to do.

DC: How has the experience of being a father influenced your teaching career?



Mr Monk as a young kid

BM: It has definitely taught me more patience and empathy, that is for sure.

DC: How has your earlier life prepared you for a career as a teacher?

BM: My mom was actually a teacher for many years so I had a sneak peek into what life was like as a teacher growing up. I also played a lot of sports so I had a lot of coaches over the years. I would say I try to incorporate what I have learned from them in my teaching and coaching.

DC: If there is any piece of advice you would give your students, what would you tell them and why?

BM: Don’t avoid discomfort. Do things that may seem difficult or challenging at the time. When you accomplish something or finish something you thought was hard, you build confidence in yourself and your abilities. When life throws you a curveball or presents a new challenge, you will be better equipped to be successful.



Mr. Monk while in the army

Where Are They Now: Ryan Hinske

by Applause Staff

For this month’s edition of “Where Are They Now,” the whole Applause staff sat down on Zoom with 2022 Vocal Alum Ryan Hinske, who graduated from DePaul with a Bachelor’s in Journalism, and now attends graduate school at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Trinity Collins: Good to see you. Thanks for joining us today.

Ryan Hinske: Thank you for having me. I am glad to be here.

TC: Each of us has a question for you.

RH: Fire away.

TC: Thank you. So when did you first become passionate about sports, and how did your love of sports continue to develop?

RH: Thank you for that question. I first got into sports when I was a small kid. Sports were always playing on the TV in my house. I am missing the Cleveland Guardians’ playoff game right now. I’m a Cleveland sports fan, and we’re in the playoffs. So that’s important. But I’ll catch up later. My dad is from Cleveland, and I grew up watching sports. I’m sure you guys are old enough to remember when the Cavs won the 2016 NBA Finals. That was the best day of my life. The celebration parade that followed broke the public gathering record. There were more than a million people in downtown Cleveland for that parade. That really inspired me. I think that was the point where I said I wanted to stay involved with sports. I knew early on that I wasn’t going to be good enough to play sports professionally. I thought, “Well, if I can’t play it, I might as well find some other way to get into it.” It turns out there are plenty of options for people that are interested in a sports profession.

Lila Hayes: In your Applause Senior Survey, you said your dream was to become a sports broadcaster. At what point did you realize you wanted to turn your passion into a career, and was being a sports broadcaster always your career plan?

RH: I forgot all my Applause features, mentions, anything, are

That's a big part of journalism. I turned the passion into a career when I decided to go to DePaul University for sports communication. They have a sports journalism concentration. I thought, I'm still going to get a liberal arts education. I'm still going to take all kinds of classes in all kinds of fields. In my Intro to Journalism class, I was a little bit knocked off guard. It's always the assignment where they make you go outside and talk to random people on the street that really tests you. But I got through that, and that was a hard assignment. After that, you get into the sports specific stuff. I just always felt like I wanted to write or be on air. And when I said I wanted to be a sports broadcaster, that's absolutely true.

At DePaul, I was super fortunate to get opportunities to do radio. I eventually became program director, a job I held for my last two years. So during my junior and senior year I got to be the ace broadcaster. I would get DePaul vs. Marquette, DePaul vs. UConn, sitting courtside and broadcasting Paige Bueckers, interviewing players after the game. That really set me up well. If you are interested in journalism, student media is the best way to get free access to student athletes and professionals in the area. They like to help students. Also, I became the sports editor of the school newspaper, The DePaulia, for the last two years. If I was able to do this ten to fifteen hours a week and really like it, I thought, I could get into it long term. But college really helped cement that for me. And I think it should for all of you. You've heard people say

you never know when your pivot is going to occur, if you're going to do a completely different thing than you think you want to do now. That's true. For me, I tested the waters, and it turns out that that first instinct was probably -- I still don't know-- but I'm pretty sure it was the right instinct. So, yeah, it's going pretty well.

Cannon Gibbs: I heard that you co-hosted a podcast when you were here at SOA, and you also wrote for *Applause*, just like us, so I'm curious, how did these activities or other things you did at SOA help you prepare for your career?

RH: Everyone who knew me in high school knew Trip, whose brother is Beckett. You guys know Beckett. Tripp is his older brother. Tripp and I had the same interests. We always hung out together. He's in L.A., and I'm in Chicago now. But we're still best friends. We both had the same idea to do a podcast, but we were too scared to ask each other. Then one day we were sitting around at my house, and I said, "I got this mic and stuff. Let's make a podcast." And he said, "I was going to ask you the same thing." So we did that. It's called *Pavement Sweat*. I think it's still on Spotify. You can probably still listen to it. But I'm glad it's up there because I can now see how bad I was at first. I think we can all go back and look at our English 1 papers and see how bad they were, and you can really see your improvement. As for high school, SOA was a very great environment for learning. My teachers were incredible. I don't think Ms. Orchard is



Ryan at the Big East Tournament at Madison Square Garden, March 12, 2025

there anymore, but she was a huge figure for me in my education, getting me past COVID to enjoy reading history. And Dr. C. I remember having journalism, AP Lit, and AP Lang all in that room. I learned so much. I wrote my essay for the Honors College on Hamlet. The prompt was "What is a book you think everyone should read?" I got into the Honors College, so maybe it was a good essay. I didn't think I would like reading Shakespeare, but now I own his Collected Works. I think you pick up a lot of things in high school that contribute to what you want to do. It's funny looking back and thinking, I was podcasting then, and I still am now. I think that's cool that I got to start when I was fifteen or sixteen.

Fletcher Seminaroti: You majored in journalism with a concentration in sports at DePaul and are now working on a master's degree in the field. What are some things that you would recommend to young journalists interested in pursuing a similar career?

RH: This is a great question. I think people that are interested in journalism at your guys' age will hear a lot of scary stuff: local news is dying, print news is dying. You don't see newspapers anymore. I would challenge you to find any field out there that hasn't changed due to AI and the internet. You're not getting the traditional newspaper anymore, but you're still seeing news everywhere. Whether you realize it or not, you're reading a hundred bylines a day. It's just more snappy, more video elements, and podcasting is bigger than it's ever been. So, I would say, take that with a grain of salt. Sure, the newspaper isn't coming to your house every day anymore. I remember Dr. C. still had the *Post & Courier* delivered to his house, and that's the same with my parents. That's less of a thing than it used to be. I'm not going to assume that all of you are going to go to college for journalism or that you'll go to college at all. Everyone has their own way of reaching their career goal. I'm at grad school at Northwestern now, which is such a huge school that there's just so much of everything. But you can get into student media no matter what major you are in. If you have an inkling of interest in news, you like NPR or whatever, your college will have a radio station or some way to make media. And if there isn't, make your own. I had a professor that told us to just go sit in the back row of a high school baseball game with a phone and record the video and commentate. You can do whatever you want to do in media for free because you have access to public events. You can create a sub stack right. I have a friend who is doing anchoring, and he has a sports Substack. You can always do that on the side if you're interested in it. But I would say, pay attention in class if you're a young journalist, and go apply it. That's what journalism is about. It's not about taking notes. It's about, "Okay, go do this, find a story." After a sports event is over, notice who is affected. Who is crying? Who is happy? Whose mom was being egregious in the stands and got kicked out? It's crazy stuff like that. I think there's always a way to report and practice journalism in public because at a public event you have the right to report or talk to people. With journalism you're getting so many different perspectives and learning from so many different people. If that's what you want to do, then you can apply that to anything in your life. I did a sales internship this past summer with the Chicago Sky, the WNBA team, and there were so many transferable skills from journalism. It was cold calling, right? I've done cold calling before. I've cold called coaches at high schools in the area to try to attend a practice and report. I'm selling myself as a journalist, trying to get people to agree to interviews. So I was just selling myself as a salesperson, selling tickets for the Chicago Sky. There are so many transferable skills, and you'll hear it in high school, but communication is one of the greatest skills you can have, and that's just a huge part of journalism. So don't take that for granted.

Luciano Cusatis: So you started at DePaul in Chicago, and now you're

at Northwestern, still in the area. What about Chicago was so enticing to you to pursue sports journalism there?

RH: Well, how many professional teams are in Chicago? I'll ask you that.

LC: A lot

RH: We have two baseball teams, the Bulls, Bears, Blackhawks, Sky, Fire, Stars. There are so many. So there's access here. There's also high school sports, right? They want you to go cover them. Who came out of Chicago high school sports? Derrick Rose, Anthony Davis. I would say that's part of it. But I also think Chicago is so connected. At DePaul, we worked with NBC 5, a local station, to make two stories, and both were nominated for Midwest Emmys on the college level. So come November 1st, you could be looking at an Emmy Award winner. But that's just because we collaborated with NBC 5. They put our piece up on their website and helped us edit it. Every day at Northwestern I'm looking at NBC tower. I'm looking at the

Tribune tower even though the Tribune isn't there anymore. They're right down the street, and they love to help. I would call that an intangible about DePaul. Sure the curriculum is good; the professors are good. But how about the guest speakers? How about how close we are to everything? This

is a little biased, but if you're at Notre Dame you're going to have to get people to drive three hours to the middle of nowhere to talk to you. Trust me, I've been there. Sure there's Zoom, like we're doing now, but I think just being surrounded by Chicago journalists at all times is such a benefit. And the city is amazing. This city is absolutely incredible. I can't get enough of it. I don't want to leave, but I might have to as a journalist going into the world. But hopefully I'll make my way back. We'll see.

LC: So you've been able to make a lot of great connections in the world of sports. Who would be your dream athlete to interview?

RH: This could be a retired athlete, too?

LC: It could be anybody.

RH: I don't know if I've thought about it. I definitely have one, or a few. All right, fine, I'll do it: LeBron James.

LC: That's what I was thinking you'd say. He's the best to ever do it.

RH: Yeah, the greatest.

Fletcher Seminaroti: You're in Chicago.

LC: That's true you are in Chicago, aren't you surrounded by Jordan fans all the time?

RH: I've got to keep my voice down. No, it is a hot take to think of LeBron as the goat.

LC: But it's the correct take.

RH: Oh, it's the right take. I think he is so much more than an athlete.

LC: Oh, yeah.

RH: I've thought about it. Here comes the glaze. I've been playing



Performing a solo at the Holiday Concert at the Gaillard Center in 2021

pickup basketball for so many years. Basketball is my favorite sport. I'll be playing pickup basketball, and think, "How does LeBron do that?" I don't think anyone's asked LeBron how he does these specific things.

LC: Because he can do it all.

RH: I just want to sit down with him and be like, "I have these very specific nitpicky questions for you that no one has ever asked you before."

LC: He could coach you, help you out in your game a little bit.

RH: He could, yes, I need it.

Dante Criscitiello: Was there anyone who influenced your decision to pursue sports journalism? Were there any people in the field you admired?

RH: Good question. I would say my biggest influence was, honestly, Madden and 2K. I played Madden and 2K, and thought, "Look at these. They're not even real broadcasters." It's like Jim Nantz and Phil Simms, but I just loved their voices. Same with any sport I watch on TV. I want to listen, too. I want to hear everything that is going on. Broadcasters really add a lot. The best broadcasts I've ever watched were any that had to do with the 2016 Olympics in Rio. NBC does such a good job with the Olympics. The feature stories, which are different from news, are so interesting. How do you get someone to be interested in who this person is? And I'm thinking, "I really am!" The "30 for 30" documentaries on ESPN do such a good job of getting you to really feel for and empathize with the subjects, almost like they're a character in a movie. You feel like you're part of this athlete's journey. I think that was probably the biggest influence. And I would say Kevin Harlan is the greatest broadcaster of all time. He's got the best voice. There's no way anyone will ever have as good a voice as Kevin Harlan. But currently, I really look up to some of the people that I've met or reached out to. There's a local broadcaster named Sam Brief that I really like. He's a really good guy. I've had a few conversations with him over the phone because I reached out to him on LinkedIn. If you don't know the word "LinkedIn," you will pretty soon. He was very helpful with the preliminary stuff such as, "Oh, I'm a freshman, how do I break into this?" I hit him up when I was a freshman; he was local. And now, I've watched his career grow. He's doing features with Brian Urlacher, a Bears Hall of Famer. He's just a good all-around journalist. And then some of my professors and guest speakers who've come into class I follow really closely, too. I've gotten into producing and editing recently, and at NBC 5, they have a chief editor I really look up to because of the way he talks about editing a news story to make it connect with the viewer. I've seen him put together these pieces. You're watching a master at work. How could you not be inspired? I've met a few journalists in the last few years who really inspire me now more than just the childhood heroes did, because I'm seeing their day-to-day. I'm talking to them about what they do on a daily basis. Thank you for that question.

Ellis Richards: Since you have taken something that you enjoy and made it into a career, has it been a lot of work, or has it also been fun? Has your schedule been demanding or stressful at times?

RH: Good question. This is something that everyone who wants to be a journalist should know. What does our day to day look like? Northwestern's grad program is one year. They cram a whole graduate program's worth of content into eleven and a half months. On Thursdays I have my methods class from nine to five. My teacher sends us out at noon after our lecture, and we have to turn in a story by 5. It's hard. But look what journalists do every day. There's breaking news, there's a fire in uptown, go to uptown, report on this fire, that's your assignment for the day. I'm doing that now. That's my Thursday, but then I have to go home and do my own things. At least reporters don't have to do that. For

this full-time program they told us, “Don’t get a job. Don’t even work part-time. This is your life for the next year.” Northwestern was always my dream school and knew it was going to be hard. And it’s been a really fun start. I really like it. Tomorrow I’ll go in in the morning and my package better be ready for the sports show. That is part of my class. So we go on this big set. It’s like a real professional set with a control room. And my assignment tomorrow is to be a reporter. I was assigned it yesterday. I had one day. That’s what I’m going to do when I get home is finish the package, which is basically a one-minute segment about the Cleveland Guardians. The other day, they clinched the playoffs, yet back in August, they had a one percent chance of clinching the division. I’ll have to be ready. First thing, I’ll get dressed up. That’s another thing journalists have to do, since they’re going on camera, they have to dress up, which is cool. I like that. It really is like a nine to five at Northwestern. The program really puts you into the week in a life of a reporter. It might even be a little bit more commitment in terms of hours, which might make my first job seem easier. Let’s say I get my first job at a local station in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I’ll be pretty prepared for it. I feel confident that I’ll be more than ready for my first job. So yeah, that’s my day in the life.

Sage Stoner: In addition to other reporting, you’ve written a series of articles titled *The Hinske Huddle*. Do you hope to eventually write a book?

RH: This is a great question. Yes, I would love to write a book. I have a professor who spent nine years in Qatar as a Middle Eastern sports historian. He’s written fourteen books. Let’s say I go into TV. After the daily grind of the TV stuff is done, then maybe I will work on writing a book. But I’m going to need more lectures from Dr. C. before I’m ready to do that.

Frankey Coakley: Has being a vocal major at SOA helped you out along the way, and do you still try to find opportunities to perform as a vocalist or musician?

RH: I thought it was so cool, studying an art for an hour and a half every day. I have used it. I sang a cappella in undergrad, and that was super fun! I gained instant access to fifteen best friends, just like that. I think that everyone should join an interest organization if they go to college, one like that or a local choir, if you sing. I think the camaraderie is great. Also, vocal taught me to use my voice. I’m on air. Talking in my broadcast voice. It’s completely different from my regular voice. Singing is too. There are parallels between what I do now and singing.

Sheridan King: What are you most proud of so far regarding your career and do you have any ultimate career goals?

RH: I’m very proud of the network I’ve established. I’m very proud of being program director at the radio station. I think I left it much better than I found it. That’s really saying something because I was only there for three years. Being locked in and realizing we had something there, but it had to be better. That was huge. I’m more proud of that than any work I’ve done that you can see on paper or hear on broadcast because that’s what it takes to be a good teammate. Any career goals? I think probably working on the Olympics one day. I don’t think NBC is going to give up the Olympics. So that would mean eventually working for NBC. I don’t know if that’s going to line up. Maybe I’m with a different network or with a different paper or news organization. Why would I ever leave that? But I think the Olympics are the greatest two weeks ever. I remember every Olympics since 2012, so I’ve seen four of them. I set aside those two weeks. I’m like, “don’t call me, don’t text me, don’t email me, I’m watching the Olympics.” I think one day I’d like to do something like that, overseas or wherever the Olympics might be at the time.



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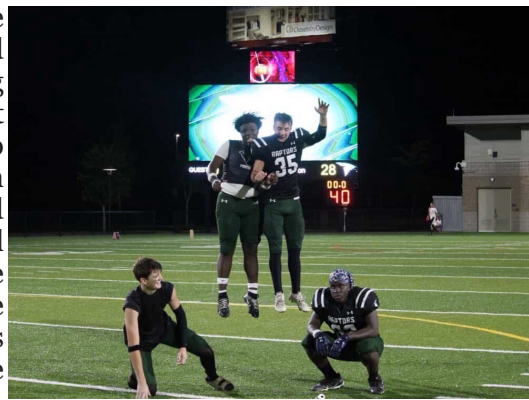
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SOA's Athletes Continue to Shine!

by Fletcher Seminaroti

The fall sports season at Academic Magnet is in full swing, and Raptor athletes continue to show progress and determination across every field, court, and pool.

The football team has built strong momentum this season, standing at 4–2 overall with region play heating up this month. Recent matchups include a tough 42–0 loss to Andrews on October 3, but the team is looking ahead to key region games against Timberland, Philip Simmons, Woodland, and Burke later this month. Junior linebacker Caleb Parrish shared that the team’s “attitude has improved greatly since summer,” adding that “the intensity will only get better in the playoffs.” He also emphasized the group’s focus on improving communication and teamwork, saying, “If we can all get on the same page, we’ll be golden.” Parrish highlighted the victory over Military Magnet as a defining moment, saying the team “showed up, did our job, did it well, and came home with a W.” Players like **Bryce Lee**, averaging over seven receiving yards per game, and Parrish himself, who ranks among the top in tackles per game, are helping lead the Raptors toward a strong finish to the season.



Bryce Lee, Cameron Leach, Caleb Parrish, and Muki Donaldson celebrating after a big win

The boys volleyball team has shown major growth this month, especially in serve-receive consistency and team communication. Sophomore **Sam Bundy** explained that the squad has “shown massive improvement in getting the first pass every play to our setter,” noting that they’ve worked hard on “angling our passes just right and diving for every ball.” He credited captains Will and Ben for keeping the energy up, saying they “give helpful tips every point” and set the tone for staying positive even when the team is down. Bundy emphasized that their main goal for the rest of the season is to maintain energy throughout every match and celebrate small victories, recognizing that the team “has the skill and experience to beat even the best teams.”



Cheerleaders Alexa Waters, Sammy De La Cruz, and Cyniah Green

The boys swim team has also been training hard as they move toward the state meet. Seventh grader **Keith Aikman** shared that his 200 Individual Medley has shown the most improvement this season. “The training intensity has increased a lot by adding more focus to things and having faster intervals in our sets,” Aikman said, adding that one of his goals is “to increase my power in my dives.” With strong team

chemistry and dedicated practice sessions, the Raptor swimmers are poised for a strong finish at upcoming meets.

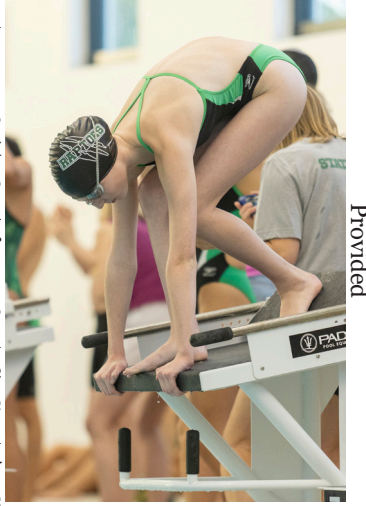
The cross country team has been putting in serious mileage this fall, with both middle and high school runners showing steady improvement as the season progresses. Through long practices in the Charleston heat, the team has focused on consistency, endurance, and pacing—key factors for success in their upcoming region and state meets. The atmosphere is one of focus and encouragement, as each race brings the group closer to their ultimate goal: performing their best on the state stage in Columbia later this month. The Raptors are running with purpose and heart, proving that hard work really does pay off—one stride at a time.

The AMHS Girls Varsity Volleyball team is boasting a 13-4 record with the help of SOA’s **Josie Meloeny**, and The Raptors JV Girls Tennis team is just under .500 so far, but won their most recent match against Bishop England. SOA’s **Charlotte Grass, Reese Erickson, Bella Billew**, and **Celia Abney** play tennis for AMHS.

The girls Cross Country team looks forward to their State Championship in mid-November, with SOA’s **Lillian Pastre** helping lead AMHS, finishing fourth for the girls at the recent Lowcountry Invitational at Mullet Hall, SC, and 51st overall of nearly 200 finishers. Her time for the 3.1 mile course was an impressive 22:12.

The AMHS Girls Swim Team has continued to do well with SOA’s **Pluma Hyatt-Eakes** scoring a personal best in 100 yard freestyle of 1:12.31 at the recent Raptor Invitational on October 4, which the AMHS girls won. The girls finished up their season placing second at state!

As October continues, Raptor athletes across all sports are demonstrating the grit, teamwork, and school pride that define Academic Magnet athletics. From Friday night lights to early morning runs, it’s clear that hard work and dedication are paying off for the Raptors this fall.



Pluma Hyatt-Eakes preparing for her race

Provided

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Music Recommendation of the Month: Mountain Grass Unit

by Dante Criscitello

Mountain Grass Unit is a bluegrass group that comes from Birmingham, Alabama. They use a very unique approach to the genre which isn't just standard bluegrass, and can be described more accurately as "Jamgrass."

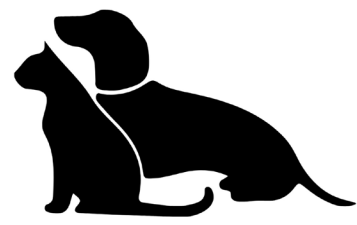
Their music blends traditional bluegrass with genres like country, jazz, funk, rock, and even metal. Their 2024 debut EP, *Runnin' From Trouble*, highlights this crossover in sounds and showcases both original tunes and creative covers. It was recorded in Nashville and produced by Mike Harris of Old Crow Medicine Show. Featuring tracks like "Hey Mama," "Cicada Song," and "Smugglin," the EP displays their range from introspective lyrics to funk-laced instrumentals.



Mountain Grass Unit

I've also seen them live at the Pour House and they were amazing. With some of the best improvisational skills I had ever seen, I had a great time watching them. Their guitarist Luke Black has to be the best guitarist I've ever seen live, and as far as harmonies go they are a great vocal group. The audience screamed for one more song even after 2 encores and it showed how genuine they are. They were just happy that the audience was so stoked to see them, and then they ended with "Don't Let Me Down" by the Beatles, what a surreal experience.

Mountain Grass Unit is an incredible group live and in the studio, so I recommend giving them a try.



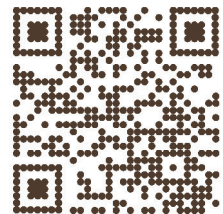
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Senior Visual Artists Ella Cutaila and Suzie Nordoff as Pete the Cat and Magic Mike. What a combo!



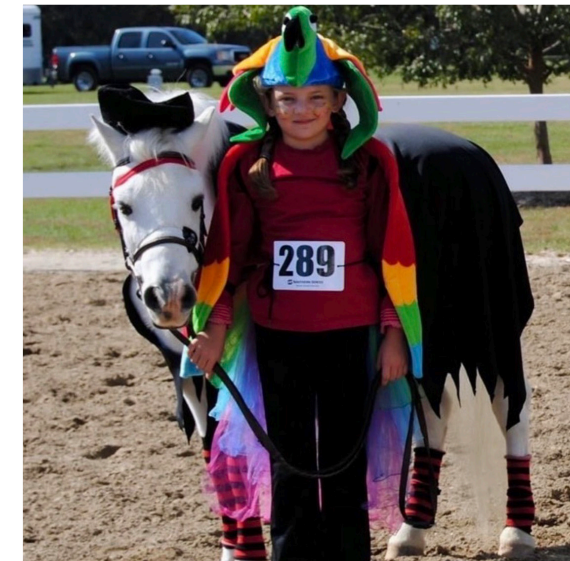
Sophomore Creative Writing major Mae Harris in a handmade porcelain doll costume, complete with face paint!



Junior Creative Writer Fletcher Seminaroti as an eagle!



Seniors Audra and Lila Elm with their dad as Axl Rose, Alice Cooper, and Slash



MK Ammons, an 11th grade band major, was a parrot with her pony Syd, who was a pirate in 2017.



Alexia Gontijo, Junior Band major, as a deer!

SOA's Best Past Halloween Costumes

by Applause Staff



Ms Gomez's dog, Scout, as a pirate in 2015



Sophomore Vocalist Laila Henderson as Superwoman!



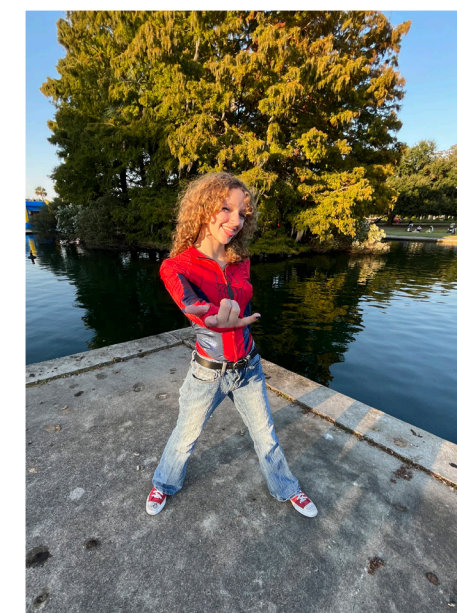
Senior Visual Artist Athan Tawes as an Angelfish, because he "wanted to be the scariest fish!"



Junior Vocal major Beckett Carrington as a viking!



Junior Strings major Hugh Hollinger as a dinosaur. Terrifying!



9th Grade Fashion Major Collins Rabon went as Spiderman in 2024!



Bre Seitter, an 11th grade fashion major, was a Dia de Los Muertos Skeleton in 2024.



Ms. Gomez and Ms. Henderson as Peanut Butter and Jelly, joined by Ms. Do as a cat!



Ainsley Bonazzi, 7th



Saylour LoValla, 9th



Annabel Grammes, 9th



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photos by Trinity Collins



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Meet the Cast of *Anastasia*!

From October 14-19, the SOA Vocal Department, in collaboration with Strings, Band, and Dance, will be performing Anastasia for their annual musical. Our staff writers interviewed the talented singers playing the lead roles.

Anya: Gabi Blumetti

by Ellis Richards

Ellis Richards: How does your role as Anastasia compare with that of Liesl in *The Sound of Music* last year?

Gabi Blumetti: In comparison to my role in last year's musical as Liesl, Anastasia is a much more difficult role since she's in the majority of the show. Getting to have the role double cast though has been amazing because I have Libby to help support me through everything which is great. The process of getting the role was easier for me than last year because I didn't have to do a monologue, but Libby and I had to wait longer than last year to get the roles announced.

ER: What's the hardest part of this role? Are there any unexpected difficulties as you move forward?

GB: The hardest part of this role for me is memorizing all of my lines. Memorizing songs and music has always come much easier to me so the acting part of the show is a little bit of a struggle overall.

GB: Do you see yourself in each of the characters you play? What do you think Anastasia embodies most about you?

ER: I always try to put myself into the character as much as possible, and I think that comes from making sure everything is completely memorized so all I have to think about is the performance itself. Anastasia is such an interesting and complex character. I love getting to play her because even though she doesn't fully know who she is, she still manages to be sure of herself and her journey. I think her sarcasm and confidence is something I see in myself as well which is always fun to portray.



Anya: Libby Hansel

by Lila Hayes

Lila Hayes: Introduce your character to us. What sticks out to you the most?

Libby Hansel: I play Anya in the show; she is a very frightened/ confused girl, but also at the same time, she is very stubborn and headstrong. She struggles with remembering her life from before she was 17 years old and slowly pieces parts of her story together. She definitely has a lot of character development and discovers who she really is as the story progresses. The part that really sticks out to me about Anya is her strength and resilience because she has gone through so many hardships in her life, but she still continues to live her life to the fullest.

Lila H: How was your audition process? Was Anastasia the role you auditioned for originally?

Libby H: My audition process wasn't too hard; it lasted around a week or two. It started with us just singing the songs if we were interested in the part, but then it continued with us actually going in for auditions at lunch and having callbacks during class. Anastasia was the only role I originally auditioned for. She was definitely



one of my dream roles because I love this musical so much, so when I heard we were doing it this year, I definitely wanted to get the role.

Lila H: What challenges have you faced in portraying your character?

Libby H: I haven't really faced a lot of challenges when it comes to playing Anya. The biggest struggles have probably been how fast her emotions change because she tends to have a bit of an issue with mood swings. And the other struggles would come from being double-cast. Since we are double cast, we have two different parts we have to learn for the show, Anya and dance/ensemble, so sometimes it's hard to remember which part is which depending on the songs.

Lila H: What are you most looking forward to in the show?

Libby H: I am most excited for just performing the show for everyone, so everyone can see what we've been really working on for the past couple of months. Because I think so far we have created a great and entertaining show! I would be lying if I didn't say I was extremely excited to wear her beautiful dresses and outfits. They are genuinely so breathtaking, and I can't wait to try them on and perform in them!

Dmitry: Matthew Gould

by Fletcher Seminaroti

Fletcher Seminaroti: Who is your character, Dmitry, and in what way do you relate to him?

Matthew Gould: My character, Dmitry, is a Russian street rat and con man who's been struggling to survive his whole life. Even though I can't really relate to most of what he's gone through, I like that he's determined to make a better life for himself. He's the type to grab an opportunity the moment it shows up.

FS: What steps are you taking to prepare for your role, and what has been the biggest challenge?

MG: We've had a lot of rehearsals at school, but what's helped me most has been practicing my lines and taking lessons. I put a lot of pressure on myself to do well, so the hardest part has been letting go of that fear and learning to accept my mistakes as part of the process.

FS: Who helped you the most in auditioning for this lead role, and what was your reaction when you learned you got it?

MG: I wouldn't have gotten close to this role without Luke Whitley. He helped me prepare and work through the music, and I'm really grateful for his support. I was so excited to find out I got the part, and I know it's going to take a lot of hard work moving forward.



Dowager Empress: Meredith Leeke

by Sheridan King

Sheridan King: Who are you playing the role of?

Meredith Leeke: I am playing the Dowager Empress, Anastasia's Grandma. She's strong and regal, but really just wants her granddaughter back.

SK: How did you prepare for the audition?

ML: For the first audition, I listened to and practiced the song until I felt confident in it. Once I got a callback, I worked on my grandma voice. It's surprisingly difficult to sound old, but also not so old that you're weak.

SK: How are rehearsals? Are there any challenges you've had to overcome?



ML: Rehearsals are going well and we're being pretty efficient. It's been hard getting out of my comfort zone to be someone who has a lot more life experience than me, but Mrs. Hammond knows what she's looking for, so she tells me if I'm doing something off.

SK: What is your favorite part in the song that you sing, "Close the Door"? Why?

ML: My favorite part in Close the Door is towards the end. When she says, "You're a lie that I've waited for." The lyrics really show the desperation and longing the Empress has for Anastasia. But, it also brings home that she is done, she is sick of all the fakes.

SK: Do you relate to your character in any way?

ML: I can relate to the Empress in the way that I would do a whole lot for my family. I also have 4 younger siblings, so it's easy to relate to her in the "parental" sense.

Gleb: Nicko Palihan

by Frankey Coakley

Frankey Coakley: Tell us about your character.

Nicko Palihan: My character, Deputy Commissioner Gleb Vaganov, is a complicated one. He's the son of one of the Romanovs' guards and participated in the death of the Romanovs. But taking a closer look into who he is, Gleb is conflicted, torn between showing mercy upon Anya, Anastasia Romanov, and carrying out his duties as a loyal comrade. Throughout the musical, this character has a major character arc, starting as a stoic, dutiful comrade full of vengeance towards the Romanovs with conviction towards his cause, to a man who understands Anastasia's situation, and after meeting her, uncertain of his beliefs and what he's fighting for and capable of showing mercy to someone as harmless and kind as her. He shouldn't necessarily be seen as a complete villain, but as a person who's the way he is because of his experiences during the rule of the Romanovs. He isn't malicious towards the Romanov family, but is sure that he is in the right and that the Romanovs were a threat to the good of Russia.

FC: How do you identify with your character?

NP: I wouldn't say that I can totally identify with Gleb. However, I can relate to being conflicted with choosing between my beliefs and something you feel has. I understand the strain that sort of situation puts on someone.

FC: Are you happy about receiving the role?

NP: I am very happy with the role I've received and very grateful as well. Gleb was the only role I wanted and auditioned to play, so it all turned out well. How did you prepare for the audition? How did you feel about it?

I prepared with my vocal coach. She helped me work on the singing aspect of the character, of course, but also in portraying the character to the best of my ability in his lines, as well as his songs.

FC: Are you looking forward to performing again?

NP: I definitely am. Performing on stage is so thrilling for me and gives me a feeling that I can't get anywhere else.

FC: Looking back, what was your favorite part of playing the butler in *The Sound of Music*?

NP: Junior year was very stressful for me, but I still wanted to be a part of the vocal program's production of *The Sound of Music*, so when I was cast as Franz instead of the role I had initially auditioned for, Max Detweiler, I wasn't upset at all. I saw it as a chance to focus on other things going on in my life, like getting ready for college and working on what I could to improve my skills as a singer and performer.

FC: Do you plan on pursuing music and/or theatre after high school?

NP: I do! I plan on becoming a singer-songwriter/audio engineer.



Lily: Kennedy Colie

by Luciano Cusatis

Luciano Cusatis: Can you tell us about your character, Countess Lily? Do you relate to her at all?

Kennedy Colie: Countess Lily is a fun, sarcastic, and sassy young woman. She is the only lady in waiting to the Dowager Empress, who she is very close with. Lily definitely loves to have fun and to party, and I think she and I have that in common!

LC: How has your experience with this show so far been compared to Vocal's past productions?

KC: I think *Anastasia* is my favorite one so far—not only because I have a role, but because it feels so magical. The dance numbers are exciting and fun, and the music is just amazing. I'm really looking forward to performing it!

LC: Do you have a favorite moment/song in the show that you're most looking forward to?

KC: Land of Yesterday for sure. The choreography is chef's kiss, and I absolutely love singing it.

LC: What would be your dream musical theater role?

KC: Elphaba from *Wicked*!! I'm a huge Idina Menzel fan, and that's probably what launched my love for the character. Elphaba's songs hit my sweet spots perfectly, and I'd love to play her.



Lily: Reese Patterson

by Cannon Gibbs

Cannon Gibbs: You were cast as Lily. Is that who you were auditioning for? What was the audition process like?

Reese Patterson: Yes! I auditioned for the role of Lily and Anastasia to show my range, but I really wanted the part of Lily. The audition process took about a week ish. We got the music, then I learned the audition portions of three songs, two for Anastasia and one for Lily, over the course of a few days. Then once the day came I went in at lunch and auditioned for both parts. We got the callback information a few days later and I got a callback for both parts. Then during class we did callbacks with cold reads of lines, and the cast list was posted about a week to two weeks later.

CG: What has been the most challenging part of preparing for this role, and how did you work through it?

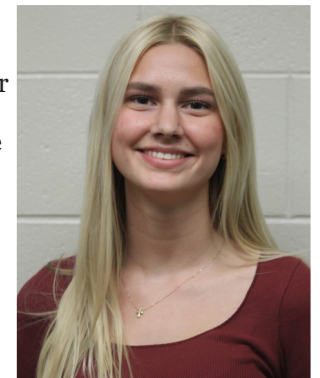
RP: Well, I am a soprano and some of the parts of Lily's songs are pretty low for me, so I like to do vocal exercises that warm up my lower register.

CG: Is there a particular scene or song in the musical that feels most powerful or meaningful to perform, and why?

RP: Lily is more of a comedic character, so most of her songs are pretty lighthearted, but my absolute favorite song in the musical is "Stay, I Pray You". It's very powerful and absolutely beautiful and I can't wait for everyone to hear it.

CG: How has being part of this production influenced your growth as both a performer and a student at SOA?

RP: It's definitely helped me grow as an actress and learn how to rehearse in a more professional setting with my friends while focusing, and this definitely transfers over to being a student at SOA and working better with my peers



Vlad: Beckett Carrington

by Dante Criscitiello

Dante Criscitiello: What was it like having to prepare for this musical?
Beckett Carrington: I was a big fan of this musical before Vocal decided to do it. When I first got into musical theatre, my favorite singer was Ramin Karimloo. He originally played Gleb (shoutout Niko) so I already knew most of the songs from the start. The real challenge for me has been the choreography. I'm notoriously bad at dancing, so trying to learn and keep up with all the movement has definitely been a tough feat!
DC: How do you feel this role is different from your past roles, for example, Captain Von Trapp in *The Sound of Music* last year?
BC: The character of Vlad Popov is almost the complete opposite of Captain Von Trapp. With Captain Von Trapp, I had to stand on stage with a stern face and strict posture. Vlad, on the other hand, is playful, funny, and full of energy. There's a lot more comedic timing, exaggerated expression, and overall looseness that I've had to get comfortable with.
DC: What does it feel like to be in a major role, and what are you most excited about?
BC: It feels amazing! I really love being involved in the Vocal shows they're such a highlight of the year. I'm most excited about sharing the stage with my friends and giving our school and Vocal family a performance we can all be proud of.



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Vocal Majors Putting in the Work for Anastasia!

Photos by Cannon Gibbs

SOA's Vocalists have been hard at work for their performances of *Anastasia*. Thank you for supporting them from October 16-19 in the RMMT!



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Classic Album Review: *Californication* (1999)

by Trinity Collins

With the Red Hot Chili Peppers' original lead guitarist returning after a six-year absence, fans everywhere were looking forward to the band's new album release. The album, *Californication*, came out on June 8, 1999.

After John Frusciante (the band's original guitarist) left the group in 1992, he was replaced by Arik Marshall, and fans said that his playing was "too complex," rather than the usual simple guitar work.

"Around the World" is the album opener. It gives a great sense of how the rest of the album is going to be. The song starts with a sick bass riff, followed by guitar, and Anthony Kiedis yelling. The whole song has a total upbeat feeling to it; it's something I'd listen to on a sunny boat ride. This song celebrates the diverse experiences and connections made through travel and exploration around the globe.



Californication

I'm sure many people can relate to this, as I know my friends do, but this entire album is a huge throwback to my childhood. My dad has the classic dad music taste, so we would always listen to stuff like this in the car. "Scar Tissue" makes me think of the one time he brought my brother and me to check out where he grew up, and I tried Krystal's for the first time.

While on the topic of "Scar Tissue," it's in my top three songs on the album. "Scar Tissue" is a song I can put on when I'm going to sleep, doing homework, walking, traveling—the list goes on and on. It repeats one line multiple times, "With the birds I'll share this lonely viewin'" which means they find companionship with nature, despite feeling alone. It talks about the aftermath of personal struggles, specifically Anthony Kiedis's battle with addiction. Like with all of Red Hot Chili Peppers' songs, they have meaning in the words, and they have a way to convey that meaning into sound.

Anthony Kiedis wasn't the only one with addiction problems; John Frusciante was in his early twenties when his struggles with drugs started. Due to his addiction issues, he left the band twice, once in 1992 and again in 2009. Frusciante hated the fame of his band. As they got more popular, he became more depressed and missed performing in a small space with a small audience. When he first recovered in 1998, Anthony Kiedis and Flea approached him, and later Flea called him crying and said it would mean so much to him if he would rejoin the band. The second time he returned was

in 2019. He matured a bit more and reflected on his last leave. He missed the bond of the band and playing with a group.

Californication by Red Hot Chili Peppers has a deeper meaning than most albums, but the songs remain classics for any occasion. Whether you listen to this album and think of your past, Frusciante's past, or a completely other reason, all 56 minutes and 24 seconds will have you immersed in the sound.

Contemporary Album Review: *Getting Killed* (2025)

by Luciano Cusatis

Out of all the young bands that have risen to fame in the 2020's, no one is doing it quite like Geese. The New York based rock group found success with their first two albums, but with the release of *Getting Killed* in September, they truly proved they're here to stay.

I first became aware of Geese upon the release of "Taxes," the lead single for *Getting Killed*, this past summer. After hearing it, I went and listened to their 2023 record *3D Country*, and I was instantly hooked. Tracks such as "2122," "I See Myself," "Tomorrow's Crusades," among others, felt so refreshing and new, so needless to say I had high hopes going into *Getting Killed*, and it completely exceeded them.



Getting Killed

It's important to note that in between the release of Geese's last two albums, frontman Cameron Winter delivered his debut solo album, *Heavy Metal*. The album, in contradiction to its title, is a lot more stripped down than Geese's music. It ditches some of the super technical instrumental elements in favor of beautiful ballads such as "Love Takes Miles," and the extremely cathartic "\$0," which really showcase Winter's growth as a songwriter.

Getting Killed manages to combine the best of Winter's solo work and Geese's previous outputs into one fantastic album. For example, the song "Au Pays du Cocaine" at first sounds like it could've come straight off *Heavy Metal*, but once the other three talented members of the band join in, it really showcases what makes their music so great. All four musicians are incredibly talented, but with all of them together, it creates something truly special.

While it's clear that *Heavy Metal* influenced this record, the energy that was put on display in

3D Country is still very much there. The title track, "Getting Killed," and "Bow Down," for example both pack an excellent punch. Every song on this album feels completely unique, yet they also all manage to convene in the outro, "Long Island City Here I Come."

The six-and-a-half minute song is Cameron Winter telling of his desire to make his masterpiece. The song was originally performed by Winter solo with just a piano in previous live concerts, but was eventually put with the full band and turned into what just may be the masterpiece he's been looking for. Similar to his solo music, it's full of religious allusions and spiritual themes, and discusses his wanting to be remembered by both the people, and by a higher power. In one part of the song, he even addresses the late Buddy Holly and says, "You were there the day the music died, and I'll be there the day it dies again."

With the band already receiving incredible critical reception, and their music beginning to reach a much larger audience, Geese is going to continue to be one of the most intriguing bands to watch. If *Getting Killed* is any evidence, we are definitely in for some great music to come.

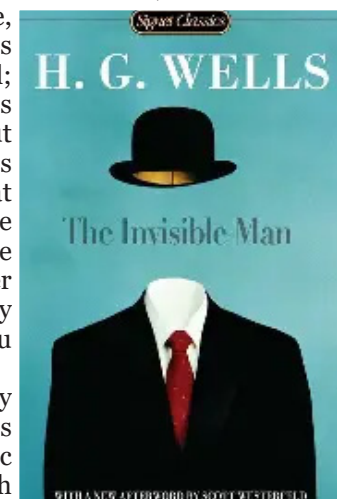
Classic Book Review: *The Invisible Man* (1897)

by Frankey Coakley

The Invisible Man by H.G. Wells is absolutely amazing! When I first got this book, I thought it would be boring, and I mainly got it because I needed a book for my Independent Reading. But to be honest, it grew on me; it's suspenseful, funny, adventurous, and overall a really fun read. To me, Griffin's character is quite controversial; on one hand, he's funny and chill, but on the other, he's rude and somewhat evil. Throughout the story, it feels like an emotional roller coaster, constantly changing who you root for.

The imagery is even better, lines that aren't too specific but specific enough to where you can use your imagination. Like, how he describes the cat's eyes, saying "And after all the rest had faded and vanished, there remained two little ghosts of her eyes." Which I find to look really cool.

You might be able to tell that this is my favorite part, but I love how even the writing is in a



The Invisible Man

country accent with words like 'Ul-lo!" and "ask'n" and "bout it," and "bustin".

Not only do I love the writing style, but the writing in general is magnificent, and the story is amazing! An outcast scientist who's only trying to be seen, only to become even more invisible.

Speaking of the story, it rarely feels boring. Sure, it's a pretty slow book, but every part, whether it's slow or fast, is super interesting, which is why I recommend this book if you want a little slow-burn that never gets too slow. Overall, *The Invisible Man* will remain my second-favorite book; nothing competes with *Goosebumps*. To be fair, I've probably read every book in the series 6 or 7 times.

Back to *The Invisible Man*, this book is high on my recommended list. This book of Griffin's story of redemption and adventure is truly "cool beans," and I think everyone should at least take a peek, if you can see it.

Contemporary Book Review: *The Vegetarian* (2007)

by Rachel Wheelon

Written in three points of view, Nobel-Prize winning novel, *The Vegetarian*, tells the haunting story of a woman, Yeong-hye, whose decision to stop eating meat leads to intense conflict in her personal and familial relationships.

Set in modern-day Seoul, Yeong-hye begins having disturbing nightmares detailing violent animal cruelty and slaughter. In the first part of the novel, Mr. Cheong, her husband, details his confusion on her decision. He calls her family to see if they can convince her to eat, but after a physical altercation, Yeong-hye lands in the hospital.

The second part of the novel, "Mongolian Mark," is told from her unnamed brother-in-law's perspective, and his attraction to Yeong-hye bleeds into "Flaming Trees," the third and final part of the novel told by In-hye, his wife and Yeong-hye's sister.

With her own marriage falling apart, and the care of her son falling primarily to her, In-hye still makes the time to visit and take care of her sister. After a while, however, Yeong-hye's insanity becomes clearer, and she repeats metaphors and images of trees, explaining that she wants to become one.

While reading the book, I had to take many breaks as some scenes were just too disturbing or violent to read. However, I think that my decision to continue and finish the novel was a good one.

I appreciated the symbolism that developed

throughout (hint: the trees), and would encourage those with strong stomachs and desire for a complex story to read Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*.

Restaurant Review: Konnichiwa

by Trinity Collins

It's always nice to be greeted with a skeleton riding a motorcycle right when you walk in! Konnichiwa is a Japanese restaurant in West Ashley, located in a shopping center off of Savannah Highway. Inside the building, it's quiet and relaxing, with calm music playing in the back.

I showed up at 3:20 PM (well after lunch hours), the place wasn't busy at all, and only a few customers were there. Right as I walked in, I noticed the sound of the wall fountain a few feet away from the door. To my left, plants and a bowl of mints sat on top of the reception desk. We were greeted right away with a "Konnichiwa!" and were soon seated. We sat in a comfortable booth, right next to the bar. The bar had warm-toned, hanging lightbulbs and a television on the wall, playing a home renovation series.

While I waited for our appetizer to arrive, I scanned the menu. Each option looked amazing, and I could definitely say I'd eat everything on the menu there. For my appetizer, I got the Spicy Tuna Crispy Rice (\$12.34). The appetizer arrived and looked amazing, with the sliced jalapenos placed perfectly on each of the five pieces we got. The rice hit first, warm and crispy, then the tuna mixed with it, cold and perfectly prepared. The sauce and jalapeno hit soon after, and the spice lasted in my mouth. Even for someone who has a very low spice tolerance, the spice level on this was perfect.

My food came twelve minutes after I ordered. I got the Chirashi- Assorted Sashimi (\$25.81). At the bottom of the bowl, there was warm white rice, and on top was salmon, tuna, yellowtail, shrimp, crab, avocado, cucumber, seaweed salad, mushrooms, and sesame seeds sprinkled on top. The bowl was visually pleasing, with everything laid out around the inside of the bowl and avocado slices stacked neatly in the middle. I mixed everything, gathered it in my chopsticks, and took a bite. It was a bit dry without any sauce, but I mixed some soy sauce into it and took another bite. In that moment, I knew I had found my solution. The soy sauce brought out the sweetness of the rice and made the fish taste bolder. The overall taste turned richer, slightly tangy, and balanced between salty, sweet, and fresh. It didn't take long before I had finished my bowl.

Overall, this restaurant is a great place to go to for some quality food! There are numerous options on



Konnichiwa

the menu to choose from, the cooks are efficient, the staff is friendly, and the environment is calming. If I were going to go to a restaurant with a plastic skeleton riding a motorcycle, it'd be this one.

Video Game Review: *Lethal Company*

by Sage Stoner

Lethal Company is a multiplayer co-op horror survival game that took the gaming world by storm in 2023 after beating out *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* in sales on Steam.

Lethal Company's gameplay loop is surprisingly simple: land on a moon with an abandoned factory, mansion, or even mineshaft, collect as much scrap loot as possible, and then leave before midnight. Seems incredibly simple, right? The twist is that monsters lurk around every corner; the buildings and monsters are randomized, and lastly, the later it is outside, the more dangerous the monsters inside and outside get.

Lethal Company uses a pixelation blur to make the player feel like they could be seeing something wrong or catch something moving out of the corner of their eye, therefore increasing the atmosphere of the game, causing players to be more paranoid and building suspense. It also utilizes 3D Proximity-based voice chat, making people who are far away sound as if they are actually far away, unlike *COD: MW3*, which employs basic Proximity-based voice chat that causes people to sound as if they are next to you even when they are upstairs. Using the 3D Voice chat means that when teammates die, their voice immediately cuts off, making for a terrifying experience.

In my experience, *Lethal Company* has given me one of the most horrifying experiences I've ever had from a game, from being left alone in the dark with a dying flashlight, all the way to being eaten by a giant while protecting my friends. *Lethal Company* is a must for any horror game enthusiast or really anyone who isn't faint of heart and who has a somewhat trustworthy group of friends.

In conclusion, *Lethal Company* showed that triple-A game studios can't beat a game made with love, care, and soul. An easy 9.5 out of 10.



Lethal Company

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October Horoscopes

by Ellis Richards <3



Scorpio: Dig in! As Halloween approaches all the decorative smoke machines provide the perfect atmosphere for some amateur sleuthing. A missing cat? Smashed pumpkins? It's time to get to the bottom of all that goes bump in the night and you, Scorpio, are up for the task!



Aries: All the ghouls, ghosts, and vampires can't distract from all the fantasmagloric costume making, pumpkin carving, and decorating you'll be doing! Your house is usually the one to gawk at when the pivotal night arrives, so we'll be watching for those spook-tastic decorations.



Sagittarius: Fright-Night, horror movies, and fake chainsaws are scary enough. So please spare us the scathing brand of your honesty! I promise I'll stop chewing with my mouth open, I'll never forget to hold the door open for you again, and I'll always be on time! Mercy! I beg of you!



Gemini: Workplace victories inbound, a productive Halloween is in your future. Congrats Gemini, all the resolving conflict, dealing with annoying customers, and negotiating your way to the top has come to fruition this month! Just remember to turn work-mode off sometimes and relax, go get some candy!



Capricorn: The spotlight's on you this month, Capricorn, so take advantage! Work hard and score a promotion at work, look cool in front of the person you like, and climb both career and social ladders. Just make sure to do so at a calculated pace so you don't run out of steam!

Aquarius: Halloween on a beach in Aruba is odd, but it's calling to you this month, Aquarius! Make sure to indulge your wanderlust, journey, and seek the previously unseen to feed your curiosity! Maybe bring back a mini-Hawaiian shirt for your jack-o-lantern to wear.



Pieces: Light a nice scented candle and get down to your finances this month since some nice investment opportunities are sure to float your way. Consider some new places for employment or even hustle some up on your own! Sure, a lemonade stand in October is...odd, but I'm positive we'll still visit!



Taurus: You're off to the races this coming Halloween! From the metaphorical driver's seat this month, you'll likely gravitate towards positions of leadership, command, and control. Run a tight ship and be productive, but don't forget to squeeze in a "me" day every now and then. It's the perfect time for a relaxing horror binge.



Virgo: Surprisingly green is the color to look for this month as opposed to orange or black! Be it money, pretty evergreens, or a sign to eat your veggies, surrounding yourself with it is certain to welcome good fortune! I wonder if a leprechaun makes for a good Halloween costume?



Leo: Grab a to-do list and a cute graphic organizer because errands are abound, and they may not consider your schedule! Ensure that groceries, pet care, and other busy work are taken care of in preparation for whatever spontaneous quests you may end up on as we creep closer to the 31st!



Libra: October has granted you the ideal time to reinvent, change, and switch up your style as we go forward! Ever wanted a nice piercing? Hair dye? Some cool new pants from an odd barley visited storefront on Etsy? Well go on ahead! Just do a quick background check so you don't get scammed, alright?



Cancer: Neither work nor school can stop your family this month! Find some fun Halloween crafts online to keep the whiny cousins busy, download games on your phone for when some little relative inevitably asks, and work on finding the perfect pumpkin pie recipe so they don't starve. Hangry little kids are scarier than most of what Halloween might throw at you.

Music History Trivia

by Sheridan King

- Who is known as the King of Rock?
- Who was the very first American Idol winner?
- What astronomer is mentioned in “Bohemian Rhapsody”?
- Who from the “Beatles” was killed?
- What famous N’Sync song was in *Deadpool and Wolverine*?
- What is John William’s most famous movie score?
- What state is the Coachella music festival located in?
- What movie is the song “What was I Made for” from?
- What is Bob Dylan’s real name?
- Finish the lyric: “I can buy myself flowers...”

Juliet Crabb,
9th grade Theater



Fletcher Seminaroti

8/10

- Elvis Presley
- Saja Boys
- Galileo
- John Lennon
- “Bye Bye Bye”
- Star Wars*
- California
- Barbie*
- Edward
- “I can hold my own hand”

Henry Duncan,
10th grade Visual Arts



Fletcher Seminaroti

4/10

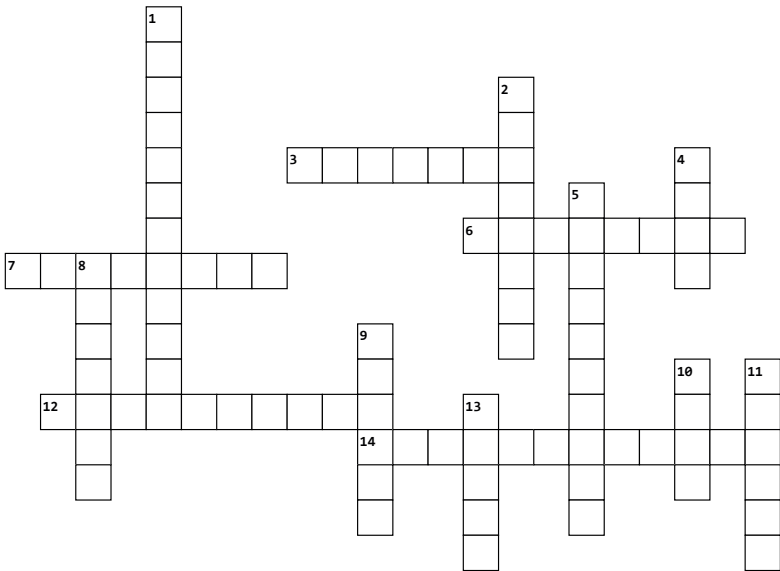
- Elvis Presley
- Ed Sheeran
- Galileo
- John Lennon
- “Like a Prayer”
- Titanic*
- New Mexico
- The Greatest Showman*
- Dob Bylan
- “I can hold my own hand”

Answers

1. Elvis Presley, 2. Kelly Clarkson, 3. Galileo, 4. John Lennon, 5. “Bye Bye Bye,” 6. *Star Wars*, 7. California, 8. *Barbie*, 9. Robert Zimmerman, 10. “Write my name in the sand” or “I can hold my own hand”

Musicals Crossword

by Luciano Cusatis



Across

- Haunts the opera
- Tells the stories of the founding fathers
- Family in *Sound of Music*
- Les _____*
- SOA Vocal’s musical last year

Down

- Played Glinda in the recent movie of *Wicked*
- Soundtracked by ABBA
- A Fiddler is on one of these
- Features a yellow brick road
- About paperboys
- Where *Anastasia* takes place
- _____ Side Story*
- Contains “Defying Gravity”
- Contains “Tomorrow”

S	H	E	O	H	A	L	L	O	W	E	E	N	T
N	W	H	A	U	N	T	E	D	H	O	U	S	E
O	D	N	I	G	C	O	S	T	U	M	E	H	N
I	Z	O	M	B	I	E	C	E	L	S	G	Y	W
T	F	L	O	W	E	R	E	W	H	P	C	O	O
A	D	I	T	T	H	G	I	N	B	O	O	O	O
R	E	H	N	R	I	S	O	C	T	O	B	E	R
O	S	C	U	E	I	O	K	O	H	K	C	I	N
C	D	D	E	A	R	C	R	E	D	Y	S	W	I
E	N	O	A	T	G	N	K	E	L	U	C	U	E
D	E	A	A	L	Y	E	R	D	E	E	O	H	L
S	T	I	O	S	H	S	O	A	E	U	T	C	M
P	U	M	P	K	I	N	C	A	N	D	Y	O	N
G	H	O	S	T	O	O	I	E	C	T	N	A	N

Halloween Word Search

CANDY
COSTUME
DECORATIONS
GHOST
HALLOWEEN
HAUNTED HOUSE
NIGHT
OCTOBER

PUMPKIN
SKELETON
SPOOKY
TREAT
TRICK
WEREWOLF
ZOMBIE

SOA Sudoku

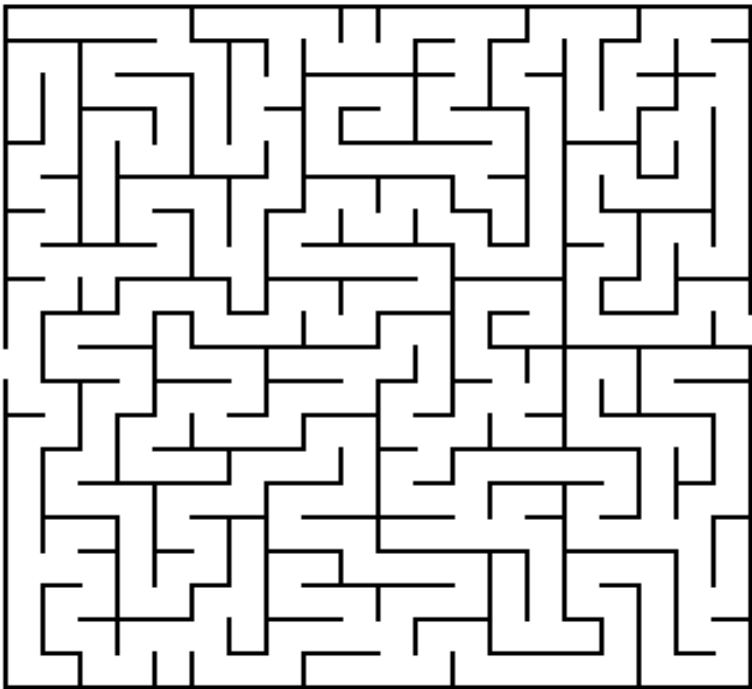
by Frankey Coakley

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



Help Mr. Monk find his weights!

by Frankey Coakley





“Anything inside of dirt.”

Jase Clark, 6th grade Orchestra



“Seagulls.”

Amerson Johnston, 7th grade Vocal



“Bugs in general.”

Audrey Rogers, 8th grade Visual Arts



“Swarms.”

Ms. Horschel, English Teacher



“Ticks.”

Ms. Colvin, Front Desk

What is your most unusual fear?

by Sage Stoner and Sheridan King



“Geese.”

Anna Grace Leshner, 12th grade Theater



“Monsters in my closet.”

Carina Giuliano, 9th grade Band



“My twin.”

Kendall King, 10th grade Band



“Throwing up.”

MK Ammons, 11th grade Band



“Butterflies.”

Maddie Snider, 12th grade Theater