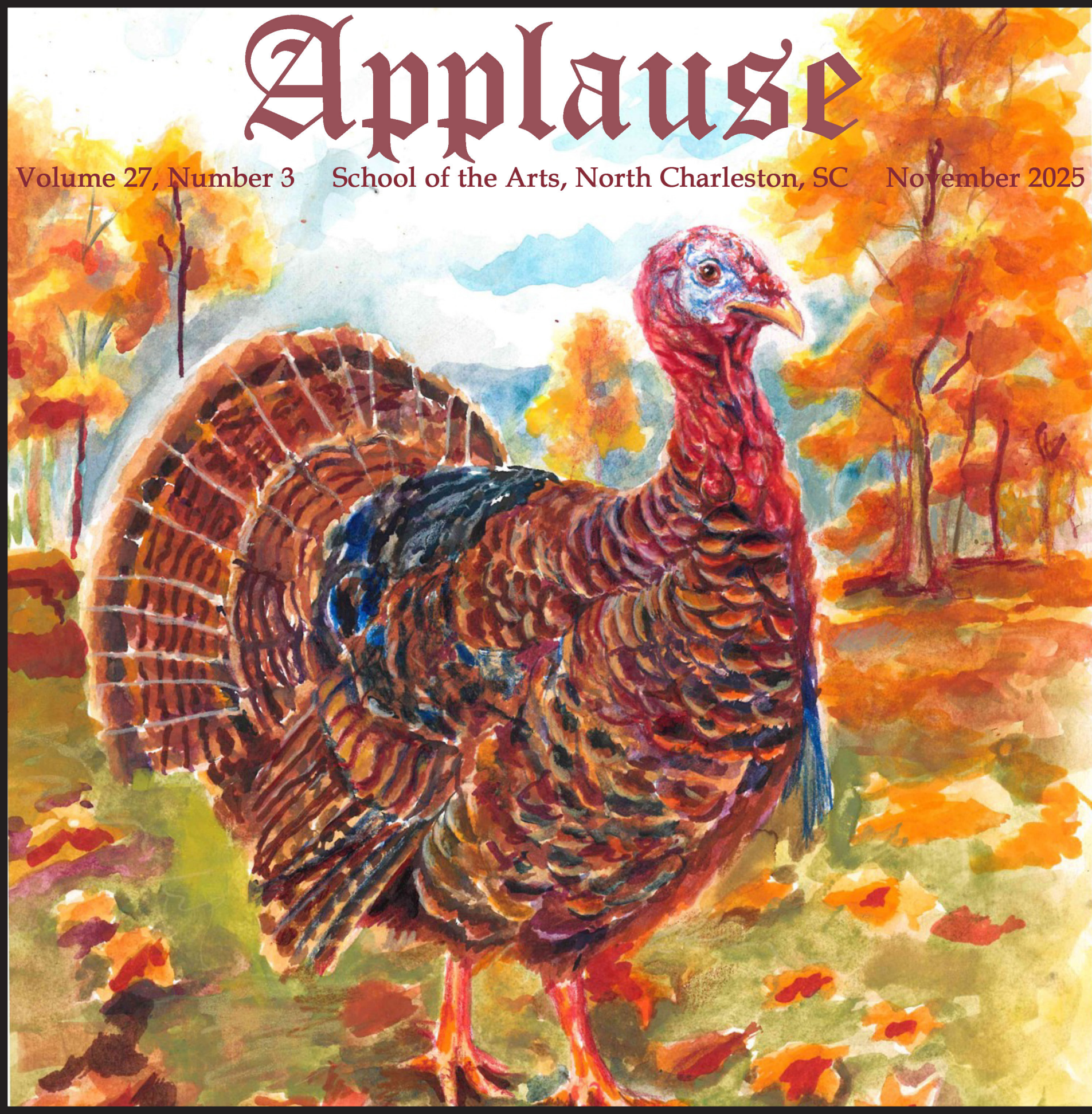


Applause

Volume 27, Number 3

School of the Arts, North Charleston, SC

November 2025



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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Halloween came and went, and here we are in November, with this year’s third issue of *Applause*. I think this is our best issue yet, featuring scores of photos of what has been going on around SOA lately, and some great articles for your enjoyment.

Check out the centerfold (pgs 16-17) to view some of the incredible outfits from the first Spirit Week of the year. Speaking of firsts, we also recently had our first of four convocations, so see photos from that event on page 13, and turn to pg 24 for pictures from SOA’s *Anastasia*.

This issue also features interviews with our senior theater majors as they prepare to perform their Senior Theses. Pages 20-22 offer insight into how that process has been for them.

In additon, we hope you enjoy our features on Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Loar, as well as SOA graduate JT Ho-Mueller.

As always, none of this would be possible without our patrons and advertisers, so it is with there support we present to you the November issue of *Applause*!

Your Editor,
Luciano Cusatis



SOA Calendar
by Trinity Collins

Tuesday, 11/18: Creative Writing guest author: Allison Davis, RMMT & Creative Writing rooms, 8:30-11:30 AM
Thursday, 11/20: Junior Dance Composition Fall Performance, RMMT, 6:30-8 PM
Monday, 12/1: 7th grade Theatre Improv, Black Box Theatre, 4-7 PM
Tuesday, 12/2: 7th grade Theatre Improv, Black Box Theatre, 4-7 PM
Tuesday, 12/2: Gaillard Holiday Spectacular, Gaillard Center, 7-9 PM

Wednesday, 12/3: Gaillard Holiday Spectacular, Gaillard Center, 10 AM-12 PM
Wednesday, 12/3: 8th grade Theatre Improv, Black Box Theatre, 4-7 PM
Wednesday, 12/3: Dance Winter Showcase, RMMT, 6:30-8 PM
Wednesday, 12/3: Gaillard Holiday Spectacular, Gaillard Center, 7-9 PM
Thursday, 12/4: 8th grade Theatre Improv, Black Box Theatre, 4-7 PM
Thursday, 12/4: Piano Classical Concerts, RMMT, 6-8 PM
Friday, 12/5: MS Band Winter Concert, RMMT, 6-7:30 PM
Monday, 12/8: 9th grade Theatre One-Act,

Black Box Theatre, 4-7:30 PM
Monday, 12/8: MS Vocal and Strings Holiday Concert, RMMT, 6-7 PM
Tuesday, 12/9: 9th grade Theatre One-Act, Black Box Theatre, 4-7:30 PM
Tuesday, 12/9: MS Vocal and Strings Holiday Concert, RMMT, 6-7 PM
Wednesday, 12/10: 10th grade Theatre One-Act, Black Box Theatre, 4-7:30 PM
Wednesday, 12/10: HS Band Winter Concert, RMMT, 6-8 PM
Thursday, 12/11: 10th grade Theatre One-Act, Black Box Theatre, 4-7:30 PM
Thursday, 12/11: Piano Classical Concerts, RMMT, 6-8 PM

Applause

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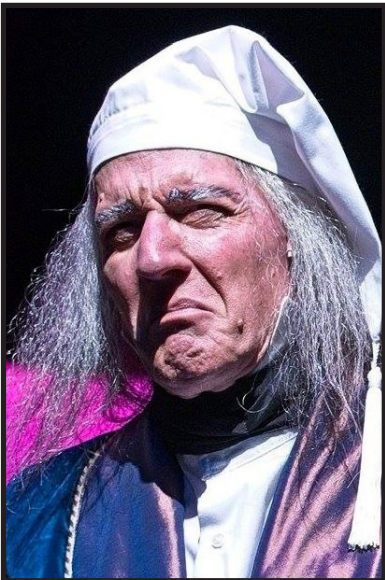
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Cover by Cameron Hazel



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Sports to the Stage

by Cannon Gibbs

SOA Celebrates Spirit
Week

by Luciano Cusatis

Vocal Packs RMMT for
Anastasia

by Luciano Cusatis

Battling Declining Literacy

After two decades, the popular national poetry recitation contest Poetry Out Loud no longer includes non-American or living poets from its anthology. Their website attributes this change to the 250-year anniversary of the nation, and the federal government's desire to commemorate its "indomitable spirit." The Poetry Foundation, the backbone of the event, who also compiled the anthology has withdrawn its support from the competition, which now gravely misrepresents our rich English poetry tradition.

But this leads into a wider problem: our country's literacy rates are falling. In 2024, only 71% of 12th grade students reported having high confidence in their reading skills, a decrease from 2019. With an increase in the usage of AI in schools, many students aren't fully comprehending the reading material they are given, taking away from the benefits of increased reading comprehension.

Due to AI, literacy rates aren't the only issue. More specifically, media literacy rates have been on a decline. As AI becomes more prevalent, deciphering real content from artificial becomes more difficult. For example, the internet was in a frenzy several months ago over viral videos depicting animals such as bunnies on trampolines. Originally thought to be real, these videos were soon debunked and proven to be AI-generated. However, the number of people who saw these videos and assumed they were legitimate was high, and raises concerns about our media awareness in a rapidly evolving world. In order to prevent misinformation from spreading, our active consciousness while consuming media is necessary.

Another literacy issue in the world of AI is plagiarism. While AI may generate information, writing, or art, it cannot create any of those on its own. Instead, it draws from a database of artists' work to compile it into something fitting the user-provided prompt. This pulls recognition from the original writer, decreasing engagement of the user in the literary world and making it more difficult for writers to gain success. If accessibility to writing continues to decline, it will cause another drop in literacy rates due to the continued shrinking of writing's prevalence.

Literacy is necessary to sustain our democracy, world stability, and quality of life. When citizens are educated, voting rates increase and citizens have a greater understanding of who they're voting for. When misinformation is easily spread online due to a lack of literacy, voting rates may decline or voters may not be educated beforehand on the candidates.

If you want to contribute to your own literacy and promote learning, Charleston hosts two literary festivals in the fall. *The Charleston Literary Festival* runs from November 7-16, and features globally renowned authors such as Maggie Smith and Joyce Carol Oates. Secondly, *YALLFest* hosts authors of young adult books on November 14 and 15 for panels, signings, and other events. Though literacy is declining, simply going to a talk in the community, or reading a good book will help maintain your own literary-mindedness

The Issue with SmartPass

by Trinity Collins

SmartPass is "a digital system for schools to manage student movement." It was introduced to SOA on the first day of the 25-26 school year. The SOA staff met during the summer to talk about

improving the way things are run, and they decided to start using SmartPass. I get that the goal is to make the pass more organized, but honestly, I just don't like it. From what I've seen, almost no one else does either.

When I asked Mr. Grant about it, he said SmartPass is for "monitoring instructional time: it allows us to better track and minimize the loss of valuable instructional minutes." Additionally, it enhances campus security, he said. "With improved oversight, we can more accurately identify students who are not in adult-supervised areas." I understand what he means, and it makes sense on paper, but it also feels like a lot of control for something that used to be simple. Do all students really need to be tracked that intensely? I get it if it's middle school, but high school students should be trusted a bit more.

When I asked my friends what they thought about SmartPass, it didn't matter what kind of student they were, straight A's or failing, good in their major or not, they all said basically the same thing: "The SmartPass stinks." One student said, "It makes school feel more like jail than it already does."

It's annoying to have to pull out your Chromebook and make a pass, especially when it takes forever to load. It's time-wasting and distracting. For students with social anxiety, it can be extra stressful, especially when they're worried about how long they're taking. Also not to mention how time consuming it is to make the pass in your major, especially in performing majors.

And the limits don't really help either. At first, we only had seven passes a week and five minutes per bathroom trip, which is kind of crazy, by the way. Now it's ten passes and seven minutes, but that doesn't really fix the problem that the students have with it. Students are still pressured to rush, and sometimes even mocked if someone notices how long their timer's going.

Also, SmartPass doesn't prevent skipping. The students who want to skip will still find a way. Teachers already know who's in their class and where they should be, so why make a whole system out of it?

From a staff p.o.v., you might look at SmartPass and think it's not that bad, but if you actually use it every day, it just overcomplicates things. If the staff really wants to make things better, there are simpler ways. SOA doesn't have that many problems to begin with, and part of what makes it special is that students feel trusted and free. Magnet is doing just fine without the passes, so I know we can too. I appreciate the effort to make things better, but sometimes the old way worked just fine.



Trinity Collins

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SOA Artists and Musicians on Display Downtown

by Lila Hayes

On October 18, swarms of people packed into HedHi Studio in downtown Charleston for one event: Minor Threat. Organized by Tucker McManus, a junior at Academic Magnet, Minor Threat featured young artists and musicians.

On the walls, art from high school students across the county hung. From SOA alone, five students were featured: **Amelia Counts**, **Finn Connor**, **Athan Tawes**, **Quinn Powell**, and **Audra Elm**.

On stage, St. Jerome kicked off the event, followed by Poster Grrl. Made up of **Fia Coleman**, **Micah “MJ” Johnson**, and **Lila Estes**, the band launched into their set with a cover of “Beautiful Son” by Hole. Midway through, they featured another cover of Donovan’s “Season of the Witch,” but changed the lyrics to a politically charged line, “must be the season of the fascist,” sung by MJ. Their hardest song to learn, the band unanimously agrees, was “I’m So Tired” by Fugazi, but all agree that they played their best at Minor Threat. “My favorite part,” MJ says, “was just watching people have fun or being shocked that we sounded so aggressive...a little girl even thought I was a rockstar.”

New Dirty Shoes took the stage next, **Sam Harris** and **Grey Harlos** on vocals to sing “Time” by Pink Floyd and starting off what proved to be a great set. “The intro was such a good build-up, and the audience went crazy,” said **Ty McGinnis**, an SOA Creative Writing Junior who plays guitar in the band. Their set only went uphill from there, with **Dante Criscitiello** and **Audra Elm** on guitar and bass, respectively, for crowd favorites like “All Along the Watchtower” and “Eyes of the World.” The room was packed full and spilling into the parking lot, but the rhythms could be heard despite distance. “The sound tech had us sounding great,” said Ty, but of course, much of the sound could be attributed to relentless rehearsal. “Being prepared is always your best benefit, and there’s nothing better than playing music with your best friends.”

If there’s one thing that all of the musicians can agree on, it’s that the experience was a memorable one. “I was just so in awe of all the art and the shows,” said Fia, and it seemed that everyone had something in common. “We all knew we were there to do what we love,” Ty said. Don’t worry if you missed the performances this time. According to Tucker, there’s a good chance that Minor Threat will be back. Based on the crowd’s response to everyone’s performances, it’ll return sooner rather than later.



Poster Grrl performing at Minor Threat

Cliff Rhodes



New Dirty Shoes' Performance

Ella Cuitala

David Loar’s Path from Sports to the Stage

by Cannon Gibbs

SOA’s newest theater teacher, David Loar, took quite a unique path before ending up here.

Growing up in Richmond, Indiana, Loar was an outstanding athlete at a young age. By age nine, he was playing football, basketball, and baseball. In high school, he became the starting quarterback for Richmond’s 1973 varsity team, leading them to an 8–2 record and a conference championship. He also showed his talents on the baseball field, playing shortstop and outfield for teams that reached the state finals.



Mr. Loar throws a touchdown pass in a 62-0 victory in high school, 1973

At DePauw University, while studying for a BA in English Composition, Loar continued football until realizing his passion had faded. He turned to cycling, where he won the school’s famous Little 500 race with his fraternity team. Upon graduating, Loar began teaching English, which he continued for several years before taking up acting.

“When I got up on my feet to rehearse, it felt like I was finally doing the right thing,” he said. His athletic training translated perfectly to the stage. Stage combat came naturally, and so did the physical requirements of touring Shakespeare productions. Now, as a respected actor and teacher, Loar teaches the lessons of sports in the theatre every day.



“The individual succeeds when the team succeeds,” he tells his students. “In sports, the way you practice is the way you play. In theatre, the way you rehearse is the way you perform.” David Loar shows us how you can take your skills and passions anywhere, using his wide variety of athletic talents towards a successful career in acting.

Mr. Loar as Cardinal Richelieu in *The Three Musketeers* at the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, VA, in 2005

therapy without all the fluff.



Where Were They Then? Ms. Sullivan

by Fletcher Seminaroti

Curious about her life before SOA, staff writer Fletcher Seminaroti sat down with 8th grade history teacher Ms. Kathryn Sullivan for this month's edition of "Where Were They Then?"

Fletcher Seminaroti: Where did you grow up, and what stands out to you about your childhood?

Kathryn Sullivan: I grew up in Maryland. Sadly, the thing that stands out most about my childhood is my mother leaving and my parents' awful divorce. I ran the show at home from early on. If you knew my siblings, you'd understand...Doing well in school was my ticket out of a rough situation.

FS: Where did you attend high school and how did the experiences then guide you to where you are today?

KS: I attended a small high school, just outside of DC called Rockville High School, in Rockville, MD. Being close to a large city meant it was very diverse and that shaped me into someone who is very tolerant of all different viewpoints and interested in many different cultural traditions. Some of my favorite memories are meals with friends from other countries where I got to try all different kinds of foods from Korean short ribs with kimchi (thank, Mrs. Lee!) to homemade pollo saltado from my Peruvian friend, Amy, to super spicy chicken from my Ethiopian friend Birhano. I also embraced several Jewish holidays like Purim, where several of my friends got to dress up and have a party to celebrate evading Haman's plot to massacre the Jews, based on the book of Esther.

FS: After graduating high school, was becoming a teacher your first choice, and if not what other jobs were you interested in?

KS: I have ALWAYS loved kids. At first, I tried to be a scientist because I was always told how smart I was, but after college graduation my favorite part of environmental science was working with kids to collect water samples and learn about the Chesapeake Bay. I also HATED being in a lab by myself. It was a good lesson in doing what you love, even if the pay is terrible. I am paid with daily laughter, super entertaining teen drama, and lots of hugs! Watching kids grow into themselves is THE BEST.

FS: Where did you attend college, and what degrees did you earn?

KS: I earned a bachelor's of science from the University of Maryland, College Park followed by a master's of science from Hood College, and then completed a graduate fellowship working with highly gifted children at Johns Hopkins University, where I earned a masters of



Ms. Sullivan's senior photo from 1998

education. I had a professor that told me letting children talk so much in the classroom was poor classroom management. So I completed and published research on the positive effects of student discourse in the mathematics classroom, as measured by standardized test scores. Shockingly enough, whoever is doing the leading/talking is doing the most learning.

FS: What drew you to SOA and what is one goal you had coming into the school?

KS: The school I taught at in Potomac, MD was a Kennedy Center "Changing Education Through the Arts" (CETA) school and while becoming certified to work with artists in residences and teaching arts integrated lessons (remember lyric writing?) I fell in love with making schools a more creative place to teach and learn. Our changing world needs creators, not doers and I'm hoping to help.

FS: What has been your favorite event or performance to view/take part in at our school?

KS: I really loved the immersive high school prom play and the holiday spectacular is a classic. When writers read something meaningful I always cry, and the band can always make the most boring situation so fun. It's hard to choose just one thing.

FS: You taught me 6th Grade Math and 8th grade SC History, which of the courses was your favorite to teach and what inspired the change?

KS: My masters is in math. Teaching math is like selling vegetables at a candy store. Social studies has way more discussion and I get to know my students better that way.

FS: If you could tell all of your students one thing, what would it be?

KS: Don't let the internet fool you. Reading a little about one thing does not suddenly make you an expert. You have to go and do the thing. Experience life.

FS: What was your Halloween costume this year?

KS: A witch with spiders all over. I love spiders and had several giant inflatable ones on really big webs in my yard.



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Where Are They Now? JT Ho-Mueller

by Cannon Gibbs

For this month's edition of "Where Are They Now?" Cannon interviewed SOA Piano Alum, JT Ho-Mueller, a graduate of Berklee College of Music.

Cannon Gibbs: How did SOA help you to a full ride to the Berklee College of Music?

JT Ho-Mueller: I have a lot to be grateful for due to the environments SOA exposed me to. To even get into the school, SOA requires an audition. That taught me the importance of preparation and having to be articulate in front of a panel of judges. It also gave me some of my most cherished friendships. The benefit of these friendships was not only teaching me how to build character and personality, but they were also pushing my musical boundaries and educating me in genres and sounds I had not been privy to before. Art is an incredibly powerful entity that helps strengthen relationships with people. All these points contributed to my success in getting into Berklee.

CG: What was it like when you first went to Berklee? And how did your education ultimately affect you?

JH: The first couple of weeks at Berklee were insane. I met some of my favorite artists that were attending the school and also met some of my now best friends. The first year was such a culture shock. I had finally gotten what I wanted and had incentivized and extremely talented musicians around me and it honestly gave me an existential crisis. I had gotten where I wanted but I realized I had a mountain to climb to really become the musician I wanted to be. After graduating I feel that my experience at Berklee was life changing. It extended on the life lessons I had learned at SOA and truly showed me that the real world and school are two completely different realms of reality. Being able to have a reason to develop my skills on the Boston scene was a tremendous blessing.

CG: If you could share one memory from Berklee, what would it be?

JH: Wow, there are so many to choose from. Since this is a high school magazine I'll keep it PG but probably this one night in my second semester. A couple of friends and I gathered in the largest rehearsal space at Berklee, shut the lights off, and played John Coltrane's "Resolution from a Love Supreme." Super nerdy, but it was just a moment where I realized I finally had other people that could really play the music I loved authentically.

CG: How has music affected your life? What do you plan to do with it?



JT now teaches and performs around Charleston

JH: Music changed my life. I honestly couldn't see myself doing anything else. All my friends are musicians or arts related. I could probably go to about any country in the world and have a desire to stay because of music. I don't have a set plan yet but my future involves a lot of gigs, teaching, and producing.

CG: If you could share a piece of what you learned through your years at SOA and Berklee, what would it be?

JH: Don't be afraid. Whether it's art or something else you have passion or curiosity for, don't wait to pursue it. We live in very uncertain times right now and a lot of us are wrapped up in a reality that doesn't exist because I think society is trying to make us afraid to chase the things we want in this life. To that I would say that pursuing what I've wanted to do in my life has made me very fulfilled despite the trials and tribulations the journey has come with. I think if more people would pursue their interests vs what they are told to do it would benefit all of us collectively.

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Creative Writing Takes Annual Lake Logan Field Trip

by Rachel Wheelon

In 2024, the class of 2026 creative writers never got to pack their bags for their first Lake Logan experience. It was a combination of a hurricane, snowstorm, and intense bad luck that got the trip cancelled not once, but twice. Now, those same students are seniors, and we finally got to go on our annual field trip.

The six hour drive to Canton, NC began our experience bright and early. At 6:00 am, juniors and seniors arrived at the school to begin boarding the bus, where we would spend the next five and a half hours sleeping, watching downloaded movies, and being somewhat productive; many early application deadlines were due midnight the day we left, so some seniors took the long ride to edit their essays and finalize their submissions.

It's a good thing they did because once we got to the cabins, not even a text would go through. While this forced some into a withdrawal from their devices, many of us embraced the lack of internet to explore outside and get settled inside.

Our cabins had the typical summer camp layout, with a series of bunks lining the walls and a shared bathroom where hundreds of dead ladybugs on the bathroom floor made us eternally grateful for the packing list including shower shoes.

Day 1 consisted of two response groups where the seniors read excerpts from their theses, and received feedback from the rest of us, including the juniors who were hearing them for the first time. This day also consisted of the senior prank.

In sixth grade, I wrote a piece so bad that it has been a laughing matter since. We decided that, to really confuse the juniors on how I was still in the program, I would read this piece as though it was my senior thesis. Some juniors knew right off the bat that it was a prank, but it was still fairly successful in getting a laugh.

That night, we had a bonfire, roasted marshmallows, and played manhunt.

The following day, we finished response groups and had our first workshop with guest speaker, Nickole Brown, who also brought her therapy dog, Solace. Mainly focusing on nature and the environment, we got in the mindset perfect for hiking. An annual tradition, creative



Students and teachers admire the scenic view of Lake Logan



Junior and Senior Creative Writers at the annual flag presenting

writers walk up the mountain (around thirty-seven floors according to my friend's apple watch), and take group pictures. More importantly, a senior will present a flag to a junior creative writer who the class agrees embodies what it means to be a student in the program. This year, senior **Katherine Largent**, presented the flag to junior, **Kayla Diaz-Janes**.

On day 3, everyone gathered in the conference room one last time, and the juniors shared what they were thinking for their own thesis, and everyone exchanged appreciations. We then loaded up the bus, said goodbye to the beautiful mountain scenery, and headed home.

November Spotify Playlist

By Ellis Richards

As an avid EDM listener, I feel the genre is largely overgeneralized and ignored despite being deeply integrated with many of its neighboring genres like pop and rock. So I've taken the opportunity to showcase a hundred of my favorites in a "throw everything at the wall and hope something sticks" approach.



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Aurora Shea, 8th



Laura Brown, 9th



Dylann Starck, 9th



Montez Wilson Robinson, 9th



Verde Green, 8th



Laney Tucker, 9th

SOA Slang

by Cannon Gibbs and Fletcher Seminaroti

Cannon Fodder: Formally used as “soldiers regarded merely as material to be expended in war.” Now used to define someone who is not relevant to the point at hand.

Ex: *Dante is not important, he’s cannon fodder.”*

Game: Used as a noun to describe giving someone advice or showing them something new.

Ex: *“You need to listen to this song, let me put you on game.”*

Khaby Lame Mechanism: Said by a person when simultaneously putting their hands down with their palms up to show their annoyance, referencing Khaby Lame, an influencer who uses this gesture in his videos.

Ex: *“I was getting so annoyed of the lecture I genuinely turned into a Khaby Lame Mechanism.”*

Comms: Short for communications, this is commonly used when your friend is trying to give you advice or when you want to give someone some advice.

Ex. *“Sebastian was trying to rizz his crush, so I had to step in to give him some elite comms.”*

Niche: Typically used to describe something you or someone already has a decent knowledge of despite it still being “underground.”

Ex: *“Yo, check this new Faye Webster album out, it came out a week ago, it’s so niche.”*

All Roads Lead to Rome: Used to remind someone that not all good times last. Saying the words when something good is happening, so they know bad times will soon come.

Ex: *“Fletcher got a good grade on his test, and so Dante said, don’t get excited, all roads lead to Rome.”*

Ball Knowledge: This term refers to an individual’s profound understanding of a particular category, recognized for their expertise and wisdom on a specific topic.

Ex: *“Bro Dr. C, no way you know about this Bob Dylan song, that’s elite ball knowledge.”*

Road Runner: Someone who is known for taking risks and not confined to the everyday “rat race” lifestyle.

Ex: *“Dean is never working, but he has so much money. He’s such a risk taker and road runner.”*

Eye Tag: When you repeatedly lock eyes with another, a flirtatious game played among couples.

Ex: *Those two were playing eye tag all class, there’s clearly something going on.*



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A Look at Deaf and Hard of Hearing’s Collaborations with Theater

by Sheridan King

Theater is all about the connection that the actors on stage make with the audience and how they tell their story. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program has done many collaborations with the Theater program over time, and created meaningful memories along the way.

American Sign Language and theatre share a powerful connection — both rely on expression, movement, and emotion to tell stories. When Deaf students bring ASL to the stage, they remind us that performance isn’t just about spoken words, but about the beauty of communication in all its forms.” said Ms. Duffy. Deaf Theater has grown in many other ways as well, leading to the formation of groups like “National Theater of the Deaf” and “Deaf West Theater”.

There have been so many productions here at SOA, and so many outside of it. Mr. Younts and his one man show “A Christmas Carol” was amazing, performed in both the lowcountry and the upstate, and with the help of Mr.



Deaf students acting in *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*

Walters (retired Teacher of the Deaf), it was made even better with sign language interpretation. Sign Language interpretation is also a way that many people can be incorporated into shows. For example, during some of the night performances of *Spongebob the Musical*, sign language interpretation was helpful in allowing more people to experience the comedy and happiness of the show. When performing *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, 3 hearing students, and 4 deaf students got together and performed a 20 minute show in the Black Box Theater.

Students have also been able to assist and join the Theatre Tech classes here at SOA, and have helped on many projects, including the Haunted House beneath the stage.

“When hearing and Deaf students perform together using ASL, their voices and hands unite — showing that theatre is truly about connection and expression,” said Ms. Duffy. This has been shown in many ways, and throughout many fun projects over the years. With so many people acting together and having a great time, so many memories have been created, and we look forward to seeing more in the future!



Deaf students creating set-pieces for a Theater performance

Sign of the Month:

“Stuffed”

by Sheridan King
Demonstrated by Marquis Larry



1. Put your hands parallel to each other in front of your chest and puff your cheeks
2. Bring your hands to meet each other and continue to keep your cheeks puffed

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Students Perform First Convocation of the Year

Photos by Luciano Cusatis

SOA's first convocation occurred on Halloween, with performances from Piano, Theater, Band, and Creative Writing. It also featured the crowning of the Homecoming Court!



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SOA's Athletes Finish Strong!

by Fletcher Seminaroti

The fall sports season at Academic Magnet is coming to a close, and SOA athletes continue to show progress and determination across every field, court, and pool.

The football team made it to the playoffs this season, finishing at 5–5. The Raptors faced tough opponents such as Philip Simmons, Timberland, and Woodland, showcasing resilience and determination in each game. The team, on November 7th, faced Manning High School for the first 2A playoff game, unfortunately losing and ending their season. **Caleb Parrish** has been a standout on defense, anchoring the team with key tackles and leadership, while star wide receiver **Bryce Lee** is averaging nearly 40 yards per game, ranking second in the region for receiving yards. With these leaders on the field, the Raptors finished the season strong.

The boys' volleyball team finished the season 12–12 overall, showing growth, resilience, and strong team chemistry throughout the year. Sophomore **Sam Bundy** reflected on a key moment this season during a tournament at Lucy Beckham:

coming off a loss, the team faced Cane Bay, a powerhouse 5A school. “As the underdogs, many teams would have played scared or without confidence; however, we played like it was the state championship, even though we were tired, and we won,”

Bundy said, calling it “probably our best game of the season.” Bundy praised the team’s communication, noting that players are “not afraid to give others tips or ask for something different,” and that “if something is not going how it should, each player has ideas on how to fix it and the issue can usually be solved.” He also highlighted his personal growth: “My passing has seen huge improvement throughout this season. Our libero, Arslan, is a sensational passer, and playing with him has given me an opportunity to elevate my passing and my confidence. I have learned to make smooth movements low to the ground to get the perfect pass. My setting has also evolved greatly, and has become far more fluid.” Bundy added that this year he played nearly every position on the court, which “allowed me to develop every aspect of my game and experience how it feels to play every position.” The Raptors capped off the season by winning their first-ever playoff game, marking a historic milestone and a season that Bundy described as the best in Magnet Boys Volleyball history.

The girls' volleyball team is currently 15–12, standing second in the region, showing resilience and teamwork throughout the season. Players have worked hard to improve communication, set up precise passes, and maintain focus during tight matches. The team has faced tough opponents, but strong energy, supportive teammates, and steady improvement have helped them stay competitive. Highlights include key wins against Lake Marion, Burke, and Woodland that showcase their skill and growth, with the team continuing to build momentum for the



Sam Bundy (center) and his volleyball teammates during a match

remainder of the season.

The boys' swim team capped off a strong season at the State Championship meet in Columbia, where multiple athletes achieved personal bests. **Nathan Wright** dropped two full seconds off his 100 Fly, finishing in 1:07.29, and credited his teammates' support for fueling his performance: “Seeing my teammates succeed and cheering them on gave me some confidence for my race.” **Brayden Knauer** shaved nearly three seconds off his 100 Breast while seventh grader **Keith Aikman** also hit a milestone by breaking the one-minute mark in his 100 Fly, sharing that “supporting my teammates made the meet more hype.” The swimmers' camaraderie and determination were evident throughout the season, proving that hard work—and a little team spirit—can go a long way.

The girls' swim team has had a season full of personal and team successes. **Judith Suttle**

highlighted her teammate Isa as a key motivator, sharing that swimming together for six years has pushed her to improve constantly. She celebrated personal milestones, dropping 6 seconds in her 200 IM and 3 seconds in her 100 Fly at states, while also taking pride in the team's relay podium finishes. Suttle emphasized the balance between personal goals and team goals, noting that achieving personal bests helped the entire squad succeed. Her reflections showcase the dedication, camaraderie, and hard work that defined the girls' swim season.

Both the boys and girls cross country teams have put in serious mileage this fall, training hard through the Charleston heat to prepare for their upcoming region and state meets. Sophomore **Isaiah Liu**, who runs for North Charleston High School, reflected on his toughest race. Liu recalls the hilly Bob Jenkins Coaches Classic in Newberry but said he overcame the challenge thanks to “immense support from coaches, teammates, parents, and family.” Liu finished at the state qualifiers 40th out of 72, running an impressive 20:04. On the girls' side, **Lucy Harper** highlighted the Starlight Invitational as her favorite race, where runners sported light-up scrunchies, glitter, and glow-in-the-dark paint, and Harper ran her personal best of 21:21. Harper ran in the SC State Qualifier race on November finishing 14th out of 90 with an impressive time of 21:58. Harper noted that she relies on rest days and preparation like drinking plenty of Celsius to perform her best. With consistent training and positive team energy, Harper and the Raptors—who finished 2nd in the qualifiers—are ready to take on the new State Course in Aiken, SC, on November 14–15.

The cheer team has brought unmatched spirit and energy to every game this season, rallying the crowd and supporting teams across all sports. **Lily Bilbrey** said she was proudest of the first halftime show the team performed, calling it a highlight of their season. She praised the team's “super positive” atmosphere, noting that “we all worked hard

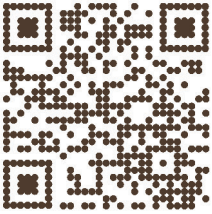


Judith Suttle (left) celebrates with her team after they took second place at States

so there wasn't much pressure." Billbrey added that she learned flying is "as scary as it looks—as long as you trust your stunt group," a lesson that reflects the team's confidence and trust in one another.

The girls' tennis team has had a season defined by perseverance and positivity. **Bella Billew** reflected on her approach to tough matches, saying she focused on staying positive, being consistent, and gradually increasing her shot difficulty against stronger opponents. She credited the team's supportive atmosphere for helping her maintain good energy and perform her best, noting that even on challenging days she was able to "carry through" thanks to her teammates' encouragement. Looking ahead, Billew hopes to bring the same perseverance to next season, balancing school and tennis while always giving her best effort.

As winter sports prepare to begin, 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 have paid off for the Raptors and their SOA athletes.



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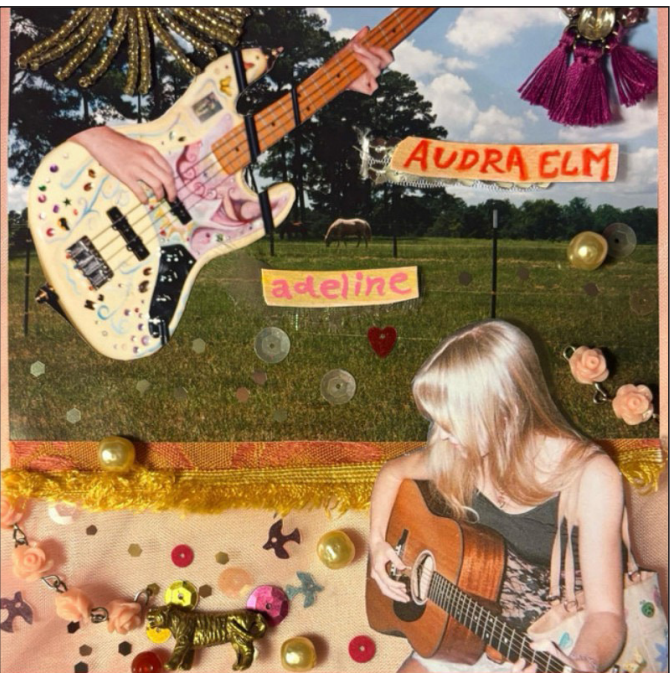
Two Major Music Events Announced

On Tuesday, December 16th, *Applause* presents “All You Need is Love, Unplugged: Music Meets Poetry,” featuring the world premiere of “Slaughter of the Innocents,” a musical composition by Carson Coonan based on the poem of that title by esteemed Charleston poet Eugene Platt. The new piece will be debuted by seven SOA students. Platt will also read his poem, the title work of his latest collection, which was inspired by the tragic Sandy Hook shootings of December 14, 2012.

Mr. Platt’s reading will be followed by a dozen of the finest poetically composed pop songs of the 1960s, ranging from social and humanitarian protest to lyrics of longing and finally a few love songs. Fifteen SOA students and faculty will perform the pieces, written by Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell, Sam Cooke, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Pete Seeger and others.

Applause will sponsor several follow ups to this show featuring other sixties favorites in the RMMT and in at least two off campus venues during the second semester.

On a related note, Audra Elm, who will sing and play bass in the concert also provided the artwork for the poster. Audra just released her debut single, “Adeline” on November 8, and it is available on all music platforms. Check it out!



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Theater Majors Prepare Their Senior Theses

For their Senior Thesis, every member of the Senior Theater class is writing and directing their own play, which will be performed in the RMMT from November 12th-14th. Our staff sat down with some of these students to discuss the process of creating their theses.

Bryce Beasley: Junk

Luciano Cusatis: Without giving away too much can you give a summary of your thesis?
Bryce Beasley: My play tells the story of someone coping with mental health challenges in unconventional ways. That is something I know many of us can recognize in our own families. The play centers around a mother who is finally reunited with her estranged daughter. However, her hoarding habits become an obstacle to their reconciliation, forcing both characters, and perhaps the audience, to reflect on what it really means to love someone. Is family love unconditional, or is it simply a matter of shared blood?
LC: Who is in your thesis?
BB: Annika Baran plays the mother, Judy and Anna Grace Leshar plays the daughter, Leah.
LC: What have been the biggest challenges throughout the process, and what have you learned from it?
BB: The directing aspect of the show came very easy to me, especially because Annika and Anna Grace are so easy to direct and understand my vision very well. My biggest challenge was definitely the writing component of the show. From my first conception of my play, I knew exactly what I wanted the plot to be, however fitting everything into a 10 minute play is a lot more difficult than I thought. Throughout my several drafts it would always be a few minutes over the time limit. The key to writing a 10 minute play is just to share a moment of a bigger story that still has a clear beginning, middle and end. What took me so long to write was because I wanted to have enough exposition to where the story made sense but not give too much to where it runs overtime. It's a tricky thing to balance, but throughout our several draft processes and advice from Mrs. Horn, I think I was able to pull it off.



Kendyl Chatman: La Vie D'une Femme

Lila Hayes: Who is in your cast?
Kendyl Chatman: *La Vie D'une Femme* stars Jordyn Goodman as Darline Denis, Bella-Adore Williams as Monet Denis, and Maxim Zakharchyk as Dr. William.
LH: Briefly, what is your thesis about?
KC: The show tells the story of a young woman who moves from Louisiana to Georgia and soon finds out she's pregnant. She's not sure if she's ready to be a mom, and on top of that, she's facing health challenges and a doctor who keeps brushing off her and her mother's concerns. I was inspired to create this show after getting the chance to advocate on Capitol Hill for Black maternal rights.
LH: What inspired you when creating it?
KC: When one of the legislative teams from a South Carolina senator said that the reason for high Black maternal mortality rates was AIDS and drug addiction, it really stuck with me but in the worst way possible. It pushed me to start researching and learning about real stories like Adriana Smith's, whose death was caused by pure medical negligence. Her story, and the lack of awareness around it, made me want to tell something honest and emotional that reflects what so many women go through. Writing and directing *La Vie D'une Femme* has been personal and eye-opening for me. My hope is that people see themselves in this story, feel something real, and start more conversations about what's really happening to Black women in healthcare.



Reily Dukes: Rom Coms are Stupid and Dumb and Completely My Thing

Cannon Gibbs: Who's in your thesis?
Reily Dukes: Adeline - Jordyn Goodman; Thomas - Nicholas King; MeeMaw - Shelby Miller
CG: What is it about?
RD: My show is about Adeline, a spicy southern redneck who won't admit her secret Rom Com love, and Thomas, her new neighbor who won't give up easily, meeting each other for the first



time, southern style, on a front porch. It explores the mess, humor, and heartbreak of classic romantic comedies while delving into the courage of vulnerability, the joy of small acts of tenderness, and the beauty of imperfect, genuine love.
CG: What does this play mean to you?
RD: I related to Adeline immediately; her sarcasm, her stubbornness, and her fierce independence, and beneath it all, her longing for someone who likes her for who she really is. Writing this story allowed me to explore the messy, funny, and sometimes cringe-inducing ways people find love.

Izzy Galvan: Brighter Than Tupelo

Trinity Collins: Who's in your thesis?
Izzy Galvan: My two leads are Dakota Townsend and Kent Mackey.
TC: What is it about?
IG: My show is about friendship. Two good friends, Taylor and Dorothea, grew up together in Tupelo, Mississippi. They end up growing apart to fulfill different lives. Although they aren't close anymore, Taylor has nothing but well wishes for Dorothea. She loves to watch her friend shine from afar even though she wishes they would reconnect. "It's never too late to come back to my side, the stars in your eyes shined brighter in Tupelo". But, looking beyond the surface, my central theme is, "Goodbyes don't last forever". I chose this topic because it's true. No matter how many times you bid someone farewell you always end up seeing them again one way or another. Whether it be in person, on social media or even on the TV. You can never fully wipe someone away from your life; they always find a way to come back to you.
TC: What were you most excited about when creating it?
IG: When creating my thesis, I was most excited to work with my actors and see my story come to life, as any director would. But on the other hand, I was also excited to take a song that I love and hold dear to me and twist the story, give it conflict, give it the "what if?" factor. An alternate ending if you will. It's all so thrilling and I'm super excited to put it on the big stage.



Jordyn Goodman: Three's A Crowd

Sage Stoner: Who is in your cast?

Jordyn Goodman: Annika Baran, Shelby Miller, and Mathis Morse

SS: What inspired your play?

JG: It all actually started as an Improv scene with six people at one of my friends' parties.

SS: What was the most challenging part of creating your thesis?:

JG: Probably refining it and cutting it down. I had so many good ideas and bits that just didn't make it into the script because of the 10-minute limit

SS: What do you hope the audience will take away from your play?:

JG: Honestly, I just want the audience to have a good time while watching my show. It does stem from outdated 1950s family dynamics, but that's simply the way I wanted to portray this family in a comedic sense

SS: What do you want underclassmen to know about creating a thesis?:

JG: It's hard. It's so hard. And don't get stuck on any one idea. Branch out and see what interests you because you will surprise yourself with what you can come up with.



Nicholas King: Incident Report

Sheridan King: Who's in your thesis?

Nicholas King: My actors are Shelby Miller, Andrew Blind, and Hadley Thompson.

SK: Briefly, what is your thesis about?

NK: My thesis is about a girl trying to impress a careless boss on her first day of work, when a difficult customer in a fatal situation pushes both the manager's and the girl's morals.

SK: What do you hope the audience takes away from your thesis?

NK: I hope the audience takes away the message to always treat people with kindness, even strangers. You never know someone's background and what your interactions with people could end up being.



Anna Leshner: Moving Day

Sheridan King: Who's in your thesis?

Anna Leshner: Izzy Galvan, Kent Mackey, and Maddie Snider

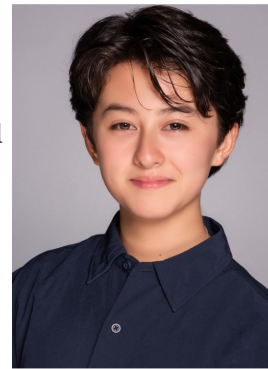
SK: Briefly, what is your thesis about?

AL: A city girl, Willow, moves back to her

hometown in Texas to escape a messy breakup and her suffocating mom. Brandi, her childhood best friend, has been waiting for her return so that they can go back to the way things were when they were kids, but Willow isn't ready to go back to the way things used to be, especially because they've both changed so much, and Brandi has a secret she's been holding in for years.

SK: What inspired your piece?

AL: I think that your childhood is such a substantial part of development, but people are so hasty to escape it and start a life for themselves. I get it, me too, but I don't think I could ever leave behind all that I've made here, especially at SOA. My best friends, my girlfriend, my family are all here, so I think they're what really inspired me. No matter what, I'll always have a home to come back to- that is, my loved ones, not the humidity- and love can be found anywhere, especially places you've lost in forgotten memories.



Kent Mackey: In Storage

Lila Hayes: Who is in your cast?

Kent Mackey: Reilly Dukes, Sadie Scozzaro, and Kendyl Chatman

LH: Briefly, what is your thesis about?

KM: My thesis is about three sisters who recently lost their father and are now having to work together to pack up his apartment. It focuses heavily on themes of grief and identity.

LH: What was most challenging for you?

KM: I took a lot of inspiration from my feelings on my fathers passing. I was stuck in a very emotional spot with it and felt so many different things. On one hand, I was sad about his passing even if we didn't know one another and grieved what could have been and on the other hand I was angry about what life had been when he was there. But making this thesis really helped me expand upon my thoughts on it and have different characters with very different perspectives.



Shelby Miller: August Is When The Rain Came

Trinity Collins: What's the title of your thesis, and who's in it?

Shelby Miller: Annika Baran, Leo West, and Evelyn Sanchez.

TC: What is it about?

SM: Rain. That's it.

TC: What was the most challenging part for you?

SM: The most challenging part for me was having to manage directing my own show while also being in three others. It's so many things to multitask as well as school and other theater things.



Mathis Morse: Dog, You're Homeless

Luciano Cusatis:

Without giving away too much can you give a summary of your thesis?

Mathis Morse: My show is about how society treats homeless people and dogs similarly

LC: Who is in your thesis?

MM: Sadie Scozzaro and Eveylyn Sanchez

LC: What inspired your thesis?

MM: Homelessness



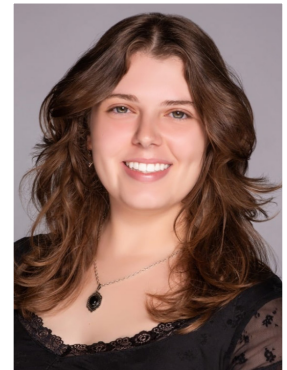
Sadie Scozzaro: Eternal Encore

Cannon Gibbs: Who's in it?

Sadie Scozzaro: Bryce Beasley is playing Victor, the Mozart-inspired older group leader. Andrew Blind is playing Nikki, the 80s rocker-inspired, rebellious character. Anna Grace Leshner is playing the youngest, Justin Bieber-inspired character who inspires change.

CG: What is it about?

SS: Eternal Encore is about a vampire rock band creating their new album. All three members represent different eras, and they must find a way to collaborate and work together effectively. They all come from different time periods and different backgrounds, and each offers something different from their past lives. They struggle working together at first, but as the play progresses, they



become a team. Throughout the show, Justin, the upbeat youngest, convinces Nikki, the angst rocker, that change can be a good thing, and we can't always be so stuck in our ways.

CG: How did you develop the idea?

SS: I developed this idea because I adore anything related to vampires, and I am very passionate about music. I drew a lot of inspiration for writing these characters from movies like Interview with the Vampire, The Lost Boys, and The Twilight Saga.

Maddie Snider: *The Interview*

Sheridan King: Who's in your thesis?

Maddie Snider: My actors are Dakota as Rebecca, Reilly as the CEO, and Bella as Claire.

SK: Briefly, what is your thesis about?

MS: My thesis follows Rebecca as she goes through a lengthy process to get a job. She dresses up as different "characters" for each of her interviews while the people interviewing her have no idea.

SK: What was most challenging about creating your thesis?

MS: The most challenging thing was honestly just coming up with an idea. Do I want to do a drama or a comedy? How much character arc should there be? Eventually I settled on something simple and funny.

Hadley Thompson: *In the Dust*

Lila Hayes: Who is your cast?

Hadley Thompson: My cast is Kendyl, Dakota, and Anna Grace.

LH: Briefly, what is it about?

HT: In *The Dust* is a story about two factory girls in 1924 who fall in love in a world that doesn't have space for them. It takes place in a Newark paint factory, surrounded by the constant hum of machines and the haze of lead dust that slowly kills the people who breathe it in. The story is told through the eyes of an older Marie, looking back on her first love, Evelyn — a love that was both beautiful and impossible.

LH: What do you hope the audience takes away



from it?

HT: By the end of the play, I want the audience to feel the loss, but also the beauty of what they had. I want people to think about how many stories like theirs were lost to history; not just from lead or factory work, but from shame and silence. In *The Dust* is a story about love that couldn't survive its time, but still mattered. It's about what happens when you love someone in a world that tells you not to.

Leo West: *The Honorable Stank Williams Presiding*

Dante Criscitiello: What is your thesis about, and what inspired it?

Leo West: It's about a homeless man who is mistaken for a judge and presides over a court case.

DC: Who is in your thesis?

LW: Maddie Snider, Hadley Thompson, and Maxim Zackharchyk

DC: What do you hope the audience will take away from your thesis?

LW: I hope they find it funny, I've worked hard on it.



Bella-Adore Williams: *Kiss of Life*

Sage Stoner: Who is in your cast?:

Bella-Adore Williams: Izzy Galvan and Leo West

SS: What inspired your play?

BW: At its heart, this play is about two people at different stages of life realizing how similar they truly are. It asks the audience to consider who in their life they could deeper relate to if only they were willing to open up.

SS: What do you hope the audience will take away from your play?:

BW: I want the audience to leave feeling both connected and enlightened. My hope is that this play encourages compassion. While reminding people not to judge someone who is struggling, to lean on others when they need support, and to recognize when it's time to reach out for help themselves.

SS: What was the most challenging part of creating your thesis?:

BW: The most challenging part of creating my



thesis was my teacher's feedback. I felt it was hard to interpret in the beginning. But what really helped me was printing it on paper, then I saw all the flaws. My script went from a great Greek tragedy to the fifth grade holiday play! But it all worked out in the end.

SS: What do you want underclassmen to know about creating a thesis?:

BW: Put onstage what you would want to see! If you don't find it interesting don't do it. Your senior thesis is about you, no one else!

Maxim Zakharchyk: *Revenge of the Ski Bums*

Dante Criscitiello: What is your thesis about, and what inspired it?

Maxim Zakharchyk: It's about an ancient wizard who created the mountains to ski, and then got it all taken from him. He then recruits a ski bum in his efforts to claim back what was once rightfully his. I love the mountains and just nature in general, and I wanted to somehow incorporate that into my show. The ski bum part is just for fun.

DC: Who is in your thesis?

MZ: In my show, Leo West plays the mighty wizard, Lord Nature, Andrew Blind as the ski bum, Thad, and Reilly Dukes as the evil resort manager, Raging Karen.

DC: What do you hope the audience will take away from your thesis?

MZ: I hope people think a little deeper about our earth and the way we treat it.. This land isn't ours anyway, its Lord Nature's!



Congrats Theater majors on your theses!

Check back next month for photos from the performances!



fletcher3.com

Recommissioned, an art exhibit at the Navy Yard running from November 1-30 contains the work of 2005 SOA graduate **Fletcher Williams III**. His art will also be included in a forthcoming book by Jerry Siegel titled *At This Moment: A Collection of South Carolina Artists*

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Vocal Packs RMMT for *Anastasia*

Photos by Luciano Cusatis

From October 16-19, students from Vocal, Strings, Band, and Dance gave incredible performances across seven shows. Congratulations to all who were a part of *Anastasia*!



The next issue of Applause comes out on Friday, December 12th, in time for the performance of *All You Need is Love Unplugged: Music Meets Poetry*.

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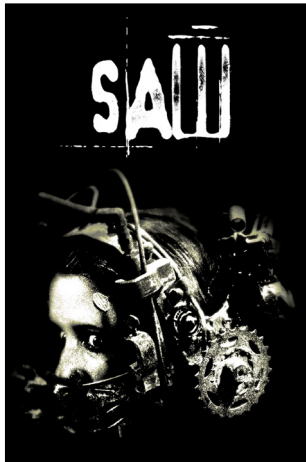


Classic Movie Review: *Saw* (2003)

by Ellis Richards

Directed by James Wan in his directorial debut (who would later go on to direct mega hits like *The Conjuring*), *Saw* is a genre-defining psycho-thriller that has cemented itself as a modern horror classic due to its innovative storytelling and influence on the fledgling “death-game” subgenre. The movie is based off a small, low-budget short film of the same name, which Wan presented as a prototype to screens across Australia and Los Angeles before it eventually got greenlit for a full-length movie. *Saw* would go on to be one of the most profitable horror films of all time, making 103 million worldwide on a budget of just 1.2 million, much like giants in the genre such as Wes Craven’s *Scream*. *Saw* offers a twisting and at times legitimately difficult-to-track narrative spanning multiple flashbacks (often inside each other). The film immediately draws the viewer in with an electric premise: An oncologist, Lawrence Gordon (Cary Elwes), and photographer, Adam Stanheight (Leigh Whannell), wake up with tapes in their pockets, chained to opposite sides of a grimy, dilapidated bathroom. Between them lies the corpse of a supposed previous victim; clutched in his hands are a small microcassette player and revolver that may reveal the path towards survival. The movie is immediately rife with interpersonal conflict and drama as the backstories of the two intersect and twist. Lawrence very quickly theorizes that they are in the clutches of the “Jigsaw Killer,” a sadistic mastermind who utilizes engineered death traps to either kill their victims or allow them survival at the cost of physical pain. The moniker “jigsaw killer” has been earned via their habit of leaving puzzle-piece-shaped wounds in each person who fails to escape their “trap,” which Lawrence and Adam mutually agree to avoid doing.

The film also often showcases its unconventional storytelling with flashbacks within flashbacks, one of which went on to become arguably the most iconic scene in the series. We see Amanda Young (Shawnee Smith) wake up alone strapped to a chair; attached to her head is the iconic Reverse Bear Trap, a helmet fashioned from scrap metal and tubing that is anchored into a person’s mouth. Pneumatically powered, if the helmet isn’t removed before the time set on the device, it will violently open and take the victim’s jaw with it. Amanda’s challenge is absolutely merciless and visceral in its visual and auditory delivery, subjecting the viewer to a nailbiting sixty seconds of her struggling while the timer to her doom ticks down. It’s considered by many to be the highlight of the movie and is an example of *Saw*’s bread and butter; inciting extreme anxiety and dread in the viewer. *Saw* also doesn’t hold back on its own grittiness and thrives on the shock value its extreme content has to viewers, routinely setting up characters to only succeed at a



Saw

great cost. Exemplified when a desperate Lawrence has to sever his own foot in order to escape his chains and leave the chamber, promising to get help for Adam.

The movie also constantly denies the viewers immediate satisfaction in exchange for bigger payoffs later. Often intentionally obscuring details and playing scenes out of chronological order in order to lead the viewer in the wrong direction. A pattern the movie keeps up until its extreme twist ending. Having just fought off Zep Hindle (Michael Emerson) with a toilet tank lid, an exhausted Adam slumps to the ground of the now thought to be empty bathroom. The viewer is treated to some sweet relief as he finally gets a chance to breathe, bating us closer with the satisfaction of him potentially managing to survive.

Except the viewer doesn’t get that satisfaction, and neither does Adam, as the thought-to-be-dead body in the center of the room rises to his feet, rubbing at his bleary eyes. The man, John Kramer (Tobin Bell), reveals that he is the orchestrator of the game and that Zep was just another player, challenged to ensure Adams’ passing in exchange for his own life. Kramer shuffles over to the heavy sliding door, loudly asserting to a despairing Adam, “Game over!” before slamming it shut and leaving him to starve alone in the dark. This effectively dooms Adam and acts as an incredible end to a set up started in the very first scene when the viewer first saw the body.

Saw, as a project, held a tonal mirror to the gloomy era of post-9/11 2001, echoing the slump in America’s cultural mood with its content and themes. One of many darker movies to release during this period, it’s a reminder that societal outlook holds great influence over the media we create. Despite the grieving heart pumping beneath the surface, *Saw* is a cult-classic crudely engineered sucker punch that ensures the viewer a blood-stained front row seat to the action!

Contemporary Album Review: *3000* (2023)

by Lila Hayes

One of the first live bands I ever saw was the Mañanas at Red Rocks Amphitheatre, previous to 3000’s release. Before a showing of an Indiana Jones movie, the Mañanas came on stage complete with a ragdoll named after an earlier song, “Lucía.” Lucía even tried crowdsurfing while they played her namesake, but was returned safely to the stage. Perhaps most memorable, though, was a cover off of 3000. “La Plaga,” a cover of the Los Teen Tops song by the same name, is still played on my dad and I’s road trips. Despite our Spanish comprehension being limited to a few classes between us, we crank the volume up and roll the windows down every time, and that summarizes the Mañanas’ reckless energy. So do the lyrics: “Ahí viene la plaga, me gusta bailar/Y cuando estoy rockanroleando/ Es la reina del lugar,” sung by Brandon Unpingco about the contagious spirit of rock and roll.



3000

Though they might not have written the song, the Mañanas play it like it was theirs from the start. The other songs on 3000 aren’t an exception to the sound of “La Plaga,” with Unpingco’s vocals on “OJ Sand” singing about the longing for the adrenaline of adventure.

The Mañanas might not have the biggest fan base. According to Spotify, it’s about 1,750 people. But if you’re headed out on the road and looking for a newer listen, 3000’s ‘60s spirit and garage band energy is hard to beat.

Contemporary Book Review: *The Alice Network* (2017)

by Sheridan King

In one perspective, Eve Gardiner is a woman who wants to do what she can during World War One. She joins a spy network and meets Lili, who goes by the name Alice. Eve aspires to be her and finds comfort in the guidance that Lili gives while they pass intelligence to the British from German-occupied France. Through some interesting experiences, their bond grows, and they do what must be done to help the rebellion.

Meanwhile, in 1947, Charlie St. Clair and her parents travel to Paris to get rid of a “problem”. She goes off on her own, in a search for information about her cousin, “Rose”, who has been missing since the war. In her search, she meets Eve, 30 years later, haunted by her experiences from the past. Eve has a connection to Charlie’s cousin, and they are both determined to find out the truth.



The Alice Network

I had a hard time getting through the basic plotline in the beginning, but as soon as I had the context about the characters, the book picked up and it was hard to put down. There were plot twists throughout the book that supported the anxiety and tension that is seen in Eve’s perspective 30 years later. This book is an amazing pick for anyone who likes an easy to get through historical fiction book.

Restaurant Review: *Locals*

by Trinity Collins

Upon walking into *Locals* in West Ashley, you’re welcomed by multiple TVs playing football games and the friendly bartender stationed outside. The energy feels super laid back and inviting, perfect for dining and watching a game.

When my family and I arrived, it was around 65°, so we decided to sit in the outdoor area. It’s mostly enclosed, with three walls and a covered ceiling, but large open windows that let in the soft breeze. The space wraps around the bar, with a few wooden tables and spinning stools scattered around. At that time, it was empty. Besides the bartender, there wasn’t a single other person out there, which gave it a quiet and peaceful atmosphere.

We showed up around 2 pm, and I convinced

my dad to order the Japanese Mozzarella sticks (\$8), which came highly recommended by the bartender. While we waited, we tuned into the Falcons vs. Patriots game playing on one of the TVs nearby. The mozzarella sticks came out at around 2:14, and the smell was faint but warm and buttery. The first bite gave a satisfying crunch, followed by the gooey, stretchy cheese inside. It had that perfect pull when you bit into it, the kind that makes you want to take a video and brag to your friends about it.

After finishing off the sticks, we ordered our food, and about twenty minutes later, it arrived. I went with the Tobago (\$15), one of their signature sushi rolls. The presentation was beautiful, the roll was arranged diagonally on the plate with sauce drizzled over it like art. The first bite was even better than it looked. It was creamy, flavorful, and fresh. Each ingredient stood out in its own way, and the white sauce tied everything together perfectly. Thinking about it now honestly makes me want to go back and order it again.

By the end, I was full and happy with how everything tasted. I'd definitely recommend Locals for anyone looking for a chill place to eat and watch football. Their menu has something for everyone, from sushi and sashimi to tacos, burgers, and desserts. Even though it was quiet when we went, the relaxed atmosphere made it a really nice spot to eat and unwind.

Video Game Review: *Wobbly Life*

by Sage Stoner

Wobbly Life is a goofy, fun, and surprisingly chill game developed by Rubber Band Games. In *Wobbly Life*, you play as a humanoid species known as a “Wobbly” who is kicked out of his grandma’s house for not having a job for nearly a whole year.

The main gameplay of *Wobbly Life* is simple: find a wobbly that has a job they need help with, such as a taxi job, waste disposal, or construction jobs. While doing jobs, you get money based on whether you completed the job, the difficulty of the job, and the amount of time taken to complete it.

While the main gameplay loop is fun, the atmosphere really brings the game together. Other Wobblies will go about their day, going to work, driving around, walking around, or taking a taxi. Now, the best part of this game is hands down the ragdoll physics. The goofy ragdolls, sounds, and the ability to drive cars that explode, launching you and your passengers into the stratosphere, is the most fun part of this game by far. The huge map gives you free rein over an entire world.

Wobbly Life also features split-screen multiplayer for two players, and the 2-player online multiplayer really makes the game shine. With its family-friendly graphics and fun multiplayer, it makes it a game you can play with your younger siblings.

Personally, I have played *Wobbly Life* with my 7-year-old sister for over a week now. It is our favorite game to play together, and we always have a blast when we play it. *Wobbly Life* shows that goofy & fun can make a game



Wobbly Life

studio shine. Overall, I give *Wobbly Life* a 9.9 out of 10. I have never played a game as goofy as this before, and it’s a blast. Please buy it!!

Anastasia Review

by Rachel Wheelon

The annual school musical never fails to impress me. This year’s *Anastasia* was a symphony of talent from the cast, design from production, and pure awe from audiences. With a double-cast for the lead Anastasia, both Gabi Blumetti and Libby Hansel were nothing short of perfection. The same applies to their costars, sophomore Matthew Gould as Dmitry, and junior Beckett Carrington as Vlad.

While the vocal major is constantly performing, their skill in theater doesn’t get highlighted as much. However, the acting skills of all of the cast was outstanding and emotional. With the musical presents themes of new beginnings, grief, and love, a lot was demanded from the cast in terms of delivering their respective characters, but nothing fell short.

Two of my favorite emotional performances were given by senior Jack Mears and Nicholas Palihan. Jack’s solo as Count Ipolitov in “Stay, I Pray You” was not only technically impressive with its low notes, but also deeply moving because of the acting. Nicko’s character, Gleb, tells the story of his father, and the effect it has had on him in “The Neva Flows.”

In my time at SOA, *Anastasia* has been the most emotional and powerful school musical that I have seen, and everyone who performed in it, worked behind the scenes, and made it happen deserve all the applause.

Concert Review: Paul McCartney Got Back

by Luciano Cusatis

On Saturday, November 2nd, I had the privilege of seeing Paul McCartney in concert for his *Got Back* tour, and it blew every expectation I had out of the water.

Paul opened the show with “Help!,” and even though the song came out sixty years ago, it felt relevant as ever. The lyrics about growing older were a perfect opener for an Eighty-Three year old McCartney to be singing. However, do not let his age fool you, his voice sounded incredibly clear, he was hitting all the notes, and he was still able to play bass, guitar, and piano impressively, swapping between each throughout the show.

His setlist combined the best from every part of his career. The Beatles, Wings, and all his solo work was represented to create a three-hour show, which still somehow never felt like a drag at any point. Even some of the lesser known songs he played, for example more recent solo songs such as “Come On To Me,” were still

great, and they were few and far between the classics making up the rest of the setlist.

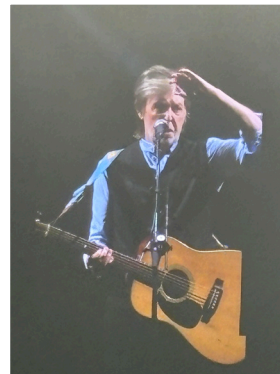
It was a perfect balance of his different types of songs too. For example, the show became more somber as he performed “Blackbird,” and then followed it up with a touching tribute to John Lennon featuring the songs “Here Today” and “Now and Then.” However, he then really picked the pace back up with “Lady Madonna” and “Jet,” two much higher energy songs.

From there, it was nothing but the best of the best until the end of the show. One of the biggest highlights for me was when he performed the Beatles classic “Something” on ukulele as a tribute to George Harrison. Following that, the last six songs of the show were all perfect singalongs that had the crowd screaming. “Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da,” “Band on The Run,” “Get Back,” and “Let it Be” were all incredible, but the last two songs managed to somehow take it up another notch. First, “Live and Let Die” was an absolute blast both to hear and watch. With fire shooting all over the place and cannons going off, it was the perfect climax. It was then followed up by a pretty obvious choice for a finale, “Hey Jude.” I’ve never seen so many people all joined together like they were in that moment. With everyone singing along to such a beloved track, it made for a beautiful conclusion.

However, this was not the end. After a brief moment of thunderous applause and shouts, Paul came back to the stage to deliver his encore. It began with “I’ve Gotta Feeling,” where The Beatles 1969 performance of the song played behind Paul during John’s parts, so the legendary pair could sing together once again. He followed it up with “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” and the hard-rocking “Helter Skelter.” I saw ahead of time online that he would be playing “Helter Skelter,” and I wasn’t too sure of how well he was going to be able to pull it off at his age. However he completely hit it out of the park, with powerful vocals and super cool use of the lights and screens to create an intense atmosphere. For the show’s actual ending, he performed the last three songs of the famous *Abbey Road* medley, “Golden Slumbers,” “Carry That Weight,” and “The End.” These three together wrapped everything up perfectly, and left everyone in the audience as pleased as could be. Paul stepping up off the piano to deliver the guitar solo in “The End” was absolutely one of my favorite moments of the concert.

Everything about the show, even outside of Paul and his music, was terrific. From the crazy talented band he had supporting him, to the various ways he used the screens and lights all did justice to the widely-adored music that was being performed.

At Eighty-Three years old, Paul McCartney managed to play flawlessly for three hours straight, and the whole time he was talking and joking with the crowd between songs, making it all feel even more personal. He made it clear that he is not done, and as he walked off the stage saying “see you next time,” it made me hope that he is able to keep performing as long as possible, because it was truly the greatest performance I have ever seen, and a night I will never forget.



Paul McCartney reading aloud signs held by audience members



Matthew and Gabi as Dmitri and Anya



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November Horoscopes

by Ellis Richards



Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)



Check your forehead because your third eye is supposedly open this month. A gift from November's "transformative energy," use this time for deep introspection and personal growth as paths previously closed open up to your new improved perception.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)



I've got a sneaking suspicion you're up to something, Sagittarius... I may not know what that something is but trust me I know. A get-together? Surprise trivia night? Potluck? I would try to read your expression for a hint, but you've got an unshakeable poker face.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)



Expect slow and steady progress going further into November. The academic climb is as arduous as usual, so keep going one foot in front of the other. Oh, and also rent your own ice-axe as the snowy mountain I bought out to do this bit was capital E expensive.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)



Ever done a palm reading? Some tarot? Not even a fortune cookie? I would recommend using the clairvoyance you've received this month for something, jeez. I mean even just go down to the gas station and try to sense which lottery ticket is the winner, who knows when the stars will align like this again!

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)



Re-everything! Reread your favorite books! Rewatch your favorite shows! Replay your favorite games! The familiar comforts will calm your soul and help you figure out what you truly seek from this month. I was also going to say relisten to your favorite music, but literally everyone already does that.

Aries (March 29 – April 19)



Even in the storm of the early year workload, changing relationships, and new schedules, a tenacious spirit such as you can weather anything that comes your way. With such a deep well of passion the assignments will graze by your cheek like a light breeze, so bend your knees when you land, Aries! We're rooting for you! Just please stop trying to convince me to take more APs, my pea-brain can't handle it.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)



Wear clothes with deep pockets Taurus! The stars have granted you some good financial and career opportunities this month! Just make sure to keep it balanced. I'm concerned by the number of energy drinks you're chugging... Wait!? You're opening another!?

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)



I would tell you to pull your head out of the clouds, but it's already left the milky-way. If you can see this message, I would advise extra focus this month as distractions abound! No, you do not need that overpriced leopard print hoodie from depop, two-hundred dollar demonias, or a "baddie on board" bumper sticker. Enough!

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)



Touch grass; I'm not even joking! Consider daily excursions down the street, to the park, or even just in your backyard! A relaxing mosaic of fall foliage is sure to assuage fears and anxieties, even better if you bring a thermos of hot chocolate!

Leo (July 23 - August 22)



Play it like a game of chess this month and carefully plan the moves you make. One-hundred dollar pair of sneakers? Wait for the inevitable discount. Test at the end of a busy week? Spend extra effort on your studies. Strategy is the key to a successful November, Leo!

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)



Come closer — wait! Ow! OK, not that much! This month is the perfect time for friendship making and connection forging! Flock to interaction like a moth to a flame and aim to impress as your gregarious nature is (supposedly) amplified ten-fold. Just don't go launching into odd rants about birds being government drones or how we "faked" landing on the moon.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)



Have fun! Do stuff! November is the time to enjoy activities like DIY-ing a pair of pants, trying to make homemade milkshakes, or lazer-tag. Bonus points if you bring the other signs along as now everyone will know you're the life of the party! Just not a *ahem* party animal, important distinction.

Football Trivia

by Luciano Cusatis

- Which NFL team has the most Super Bowl wins?
- How many points is a touchdown worth?
- Who does Patrick Mahomes play for?
- What year was the NFL Founded?
- Terry Bradshaw is the only NFL player to win what non-football award?
- What year was the first Super Bowl?
- How long is each quarter of an NFL game?
- Which college has the most National Championships?
- Which college’s team is the Volunteers?
- How many National Championships has Clemson won?

Juliet Crabb,
9th grade Theater

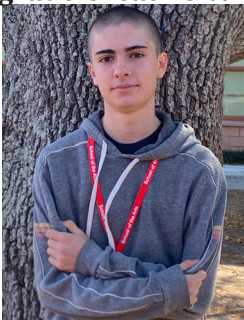


Sheridan King

6/10

- Dallas Cowboys?
- Six
- The Chiefs
- 1950
- A Grammy?
- 1967
- Fifteen minutes
- Alabama
- Tennessee
- Five

Leo Voelker,
11th grade Creative Writing



Luciano Cusatis

6/10

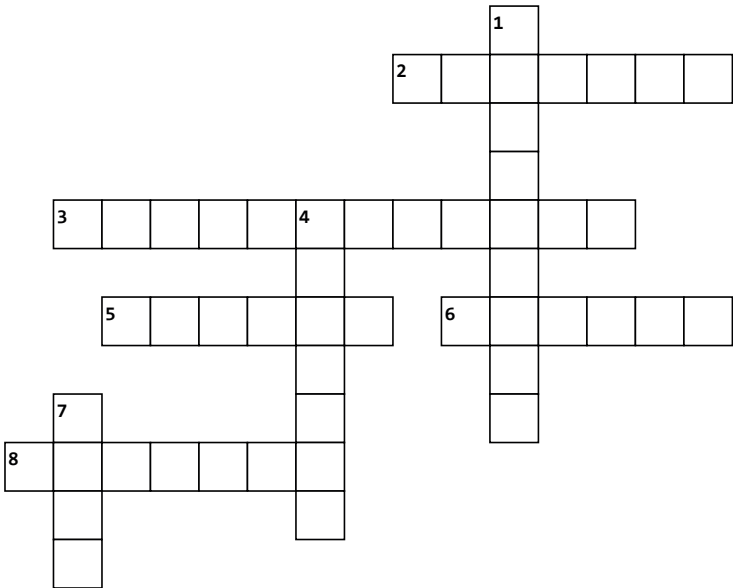
- Patriots
- Six
- Chiefs
- 1930
- Oscars
- 1973
- Fifteen Minutes
- Alabama
- Tennessee
- Three

Answers

1. Patriots/Steelers, 2. Six, 3. Chiefs, 4. 1920, 5. Grammy, 6. 1967, 7. Fifteen minutes, 8. Yale, 9. Tennessee, 10. Three

Fall Crossword

by Sheridan King



Across

- Time to gather crops
- Holiday for gratitude and turkey
- What fall trees drop
- Season of falling leaves
- Outdoor fire for warmth or celebration

Down

- Feeling of thankfulness
- Warm clothing for chilly days
- Feeling warm and comfortable

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

November Word Search

by Sheridan King

Apple Cider
Cozy
Cranberry
Fall
Gravy

Leaves
Pumpkin
Scarecrow
Sunflower
Thanksgiving

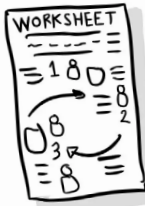
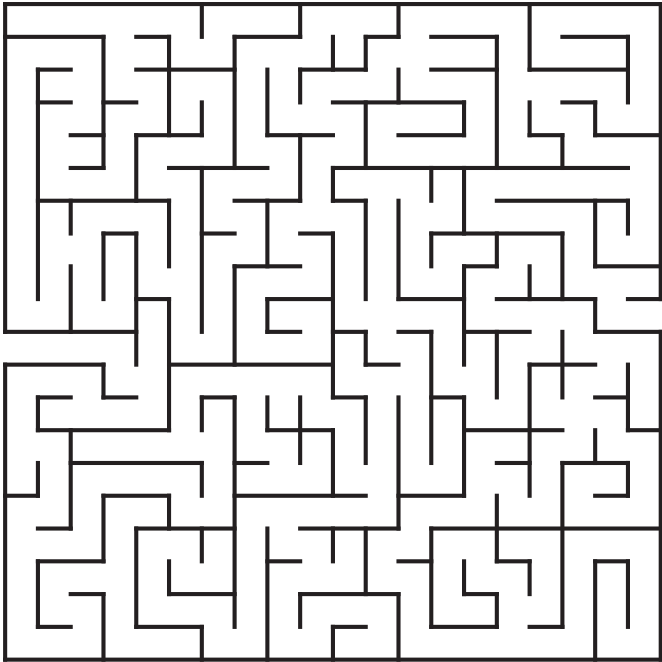
SOA Sudoku

by Sheridan King

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



Help Ms. Sullivan find her worksheets!





"To 2040 to see the new iPhones."

Addison Colee, 6th grade Strings



"I would go to 1985 to meet my grandpa."

Elsie Seminaroti, 7th grade Vocal



"The 2000s for the fashion."

Stella Sato, 8th grade Creative Writing



"I would go to Pearl Harbor to warn everyone."

Officer Baber, Student Resource Officer



"The time before I had gray in my beard."

Mr. Southwick, Science Teacher

If You Could Time Travel, Where Would You Go?

by Dante Criscitello and Luciano Cusatis



"I would go back to the 80s to be without internet."

Ms. Morelli, Social Studies Teacher



"I would go to 1500s England to see Anne Boleyn, because no one knows what she looked like."

Harry Baxley, 9th grade Vocal



"I would go to a Bob Marley concert."

Zion Stanton, 10th grade Band



"I would go to the gladiator times so I could fight in the arena."

Dean Barnwell, 11th grade Piano



"Whenever flying cars exist."

Julia Bates, 12th grade Band