

Applause

Volume 27, Number 9 School of the Arts, North Charleston, SC May 2026



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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

With May here, we are now at the penultimate issue of *Applause* Volume 27! There will be a quick turnaround and the June Issue will be here before it's time for me and my fellow Seniors to graduate.

One big focus of this paper is the Fashion Show which recently took place. Flip to the centerfold to see pictures, then go to the next pages to read interviews with all of the Senior Fashion majors and learn a little more of the behind-the-scenes.

You can also see some awesome photos from Vocal's recent performance *Country Live*, which I personally had a blast seeing, on page five.

Additionally, if you like to check out what SOA's students did over spring break, flip to pages twelve and thirteen.

There's plenty more this month for you to sink your teeth into, so enjoy reading the May *Applause*, and I'll see you later this month for what will be final 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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soa-applause.com

Cover by Cameron Hazel

SOA Calendar
by Trinity Collins

Saturday, 5/2: Annual Dance
Departmental, RMMT, 3:30-5:30 PM
Saturday, 5/2: *All You Need is Love:*
Songs of the Sixties, No Bull Burger Bar,
2-5 PM
Sunday, 5/3: *All You Need is Love:*
Songs of the Sixties, Charleston
Convention Center 2-5 PM
Monday, 5/4: Annual Dance
Departmental (school show), RMMT,

10:05-11:35 AM
Tuesday, 5/5: MS Band Concert,
RMMT, 6-8:30 PM
Thursday, 5/7: Creative Writing
Senior Thesis Reading 2026, RMMT,
5:30-8:30 PM
Thursday, 5/7: *Bring Your Best* High
School Art Show, Visual Arts room and
hallway, 6-7 PM
Friday, 5/8: HS Strings Spring Awards
Concert, RMMT, 5:30-8 PM
Tuesday, 5/12: Theatre Evening of
Scenes and Songs, BBT, 4-7 PM
Tuesday, 5/12: *Dancing With the*

Teachers, RMMT, 6-7:30 PM
Wednesday, 5/13: MS Theatre
Adjudications, RMMT, 3:45-6:30 PM
Thursday, 5/14: *Mega Show-* MS
Visual Arts show, Visual Arts hallway
and rooms, 6-7:15 PM
Friday, 5/15: *Music Down in My Soul*,
Cafeteria, 6-8:30 PM
Saturday, 5/16: *Music Down in My
Soul*, Cafeteria, 6-8:30 PM
Monday, 5/18: 8th Grade Dystopian
Projects, RMMT, 10 AM-3:30 PM
Tuesday, 5/19: 8th Grade Dystopian
Projects, RMMT, 10 AM-3:30 PM



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In This Issue

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by Luciano Cusatis

The SOA Dance Department Has Had Plenty to Celebrate during the Second Semester!
by Sage Stoner

Students Rock the Runway at Fashion Show
by Luciano Cusatis

Sass Attack: Chappell Roan Did Nothing Wrong (as Usual)

by Ellis Richards

Sass Attack was originally started by former Applause writer David Sass in 2008. Our Junior Creative Writing major, Ellis Richards, has carried on the tradition

Chappell Roan's Meteoric career has been subject to its fair share of "controversies" from daring to not be disrespected by paparazzi, speaking honestly on her opinion of parenthood, and not tolerating parasocial behavior from fans. Because of course, while Kanye and Chris Brown continue to sell out tours (in light of their *actually* proven horrible behavior) the internet seems to only have the energy to heavily scrutinize her, a queer woman. Just saying the quiet part out loud.

If you've been out of the loop, recently on March twenty-first Brazilian soccer player Jorgino Frello made an Instagram post stating Chappell Roan sent a security guard to aggressively reprimand him and his family at a hotel breakfast after his daughter stood near her with a sign. Within minutes the internet was *alight* with hate from all directions, with previous fans, steadfast detractors, and even the Mayor of Rio De Janeiro all dogpiling her across multiple social medias. This culminated in the mayor actually *banning* her from headlining at *Lollapalooza Brazil*, all after a single post from Jorgino. Even following her own response via Instagram, the story and most public opinion would remain against her up until the security guard himself would finally come out and reveal a statement on March twenty-fifth. Taking to X, the guard himself, Pascal Duveir would write,

"The actions I took were not on behalf of Chappell Roan, her personal security team, her management, or any other individuals. I made a judgment call based on information we obtained from the hotel, events I had witnessed in the days prior and the heightened overall security risk of our location. My sole interaction with the mother was calm and with good intentions, and the outcome of the encounter is regretful." This finally proved that not only (of course) has Chappell done nothing wrong, but that she did not attempt to lie in her response at all. The entire escapade, the countless sexist/homophobic posts, even the banning of her from an *entire* city, was all from a single lie from Jorgino; who has released the expected poor quality and general apology, as usual failing to mention the witch hunt he brought on her just for eating breakfast.

This is yet another example of just how much constant scrutiny popular female artists are held under, proven by the absolute avalanche of hate following a post from just one man. This doesn't even take into account how Chappell's own response was essentially swept under the rug, until the *male* security guard made a statement on her behalf! It's *maddening!* I find it absolutely crazy that a baseless accusation from Jorgino escalated into anything more than a couple hate posts and a TMZ headline, and I feel this is an incredibly concerning forecast for the world's treatment of female artists going forward. Do better.

Opinion: The Generalization of Country Music

by Lila Hayes

Country is a style of music often reduced to a right-leaning genre, associated with "all-American values," white nationalism, and masculinity.

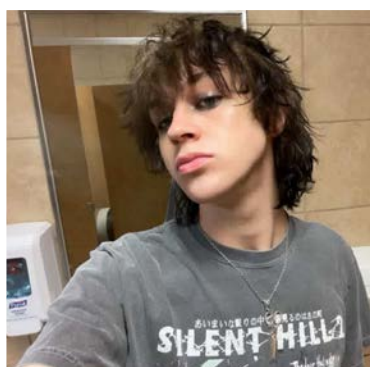
But historically, country music began on the opposite side of the political spectrum.

The banjo, a staple of country music, wasn't first incorporated into the genre by artists similar to those dominating the industry today. Instead, its roots began in West Africa, in gourd-bodied lute instruments like the akonting that were brought to the United States by enslaved people. Over time, it became an integral piece of music and was largely disconnected from its roots in West African culture. Now, it's impossible to separate the banjo from genres like bluegrass, Americana, and folk.

Country music began with British folk traditions in Appalachia, with influence from genres like African American blues and gospel music. As the genre evolved and split, the folk revival emerged in the mid 1940s and quickly popularized folk music as a genre inseparable from the activists within it.

Western culture has always been indistinguishable from minorities. The modern cowboy is an idea that was adapted and learned from the Mexican vaquero tradition. What is thought of as a pop culture cowboy started with the men joining cattle drives who were almost entirely Indigenous, Mexican, or Black.

Only after 9/11 did Western culture sharply divert from its activist root country music has always been a genre created by and for minorities and the working class. With artists like Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Woody Guthrie, and Pete Seeger heavily influencing country and folk music, it's undeniable that country music was formed as nearly the opposite of what it often stands for today.



Ellis Richards

Provided



Lila Hayes

Provided



Vocal Delivers Boot-Stompin' Country Concert

by Luciano Cusatis

Vocal students performed *Country Live* on April 24th and 25th, with fantastic solos and a variety of country classics!



Where Were They Then? Mr. Johnsen

by Sage Stoner

Curious about his path to SOA, staff writer Sage Stoner interviewed Mr. Brett Johnsen, who has been teaching Science and Biology here for twenty-three years, as well as coaching varsity basketball at AMHS, for this month's edition of Where Were They Then?

Sage Stoner: Where were you born & raised?

Brett Johnsen: I was born and raised in a town outside of Chicago called Schaumburg, Illinois.

SS: Can you tell us a bit about your family?

BJ: My wife's name is Joi, and I have 2 daughters. Britni graduated from SOA as a vocal major and is a double major in college; she is currently a junior. My youngest daughter, Briana, is a junior in high school and loves sports. Basketball is her main sport.

SS: How did your childhood shape you into the person you are today?

BJ: I loved playing all kinds of sports throughout my childhood. That definitely had a big impact. But my grandmother inspired the science-loving side that led me to earn my degree in Biology and eventually teach.

SS: What do you remember from high school academically, socially, and athletically?

BJ: I did well in high school, I believe, because of sports. I played three sports in high school, and I wanted to do well academically so I could focus on the sport I was in at the time.

SS: When graduating from high school, what did you do next?

BJ: I graduated **September 2005 Applause** with their newborns from high school **Giovanni and Britni, who went on to graduate from SOA in the class of 2023.**

all of the schools I applied to, but chose to come to the University of South Carolina. It was a big move from the Midwest to the Southeast. After a few years, I transferred to the College of Charleston to possibly pursue marine science.



Mr Johnsen with his family's pet raccoon, Rocky

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Dr. Cusatis and Mr. Johnsen pose for the

BJ: I graduated **September 2005 Applause** with their newborns from high school **Giovanni and Britni, who went on to graduate from SOA in the class of 2023.**

Applause Archive

SS: What first sparked your interest in science, and more specifically, Biology?

BJ: As I said, my grandmother sparked the interest in science. I have always had an interest in animals and life around us, so Biology was a natural fit.

SS: What were some of your previous experiences in teaching and coaching before teaching here at SOA?

BJ: I have been teaching at SOA my whole career. I did do my student teaching at West Ashley High School, though. I have coached a lot of softball travel teams and some basketball before coaching at Academic Magnet.

SS: What brought you to SOA?

BJ: I started at SOA in 2003. The physics and health positions in the high school were very appealing for a new teacher out of college. Plus, the atmosphere on the old campus was welcoming as I met my future colleagues. I interviewed with Rose Maree Myers, the founder of SOA, and loved the people and students here.

SS: During your time here, what experiences have stood out to you the most?

BJ: Being able to teach my daughter, Britni, was a fun experience. The DC trip was always fun. The experiences with my colleagues and team members have stood out as well, there are a lot of good people at SOA!

Where Are They Now? Ashley Woods

by Lila Hayes

Ashley Woods graduated from SOA as a Vocal major in 2003, and now teaches English at Trident Technical College. Her daughter, Lexia Woods is a Senior Dance major, so this month Ashley will become the first SOA Alum to have a child graduate here. Staffwriter Lila Hayes caught up with her to discuss what she has been up to since her time at SOA.

Lila Hayes: What was most memorable about attending SOA in its early days?

Ashley Woods: I think what I remember the most was everyone getting along and a lack of cliques and social exclusion. I also remember being so in awe of the talents on display all the time. It seemed like there was always music and dance and color in every corner of the school. I still have some of my closest friends who were also SOA grads. My best friend was a Theater major, and we've been inseparable since then, doing probably a dozen or so theater productions together.

LH: Where did you further your education after SOA?

AW: My college career was a little unusual. I actually got married the summer after my freshman year of college in 2004, and he's stuck around the last 22 years, so I think we will keep him.

I received a Bachelor of Arts in English with a concentration in Creative Writing from the College of Charleston in 2007. I actually walked for my CofC graduation three months pregnant with Lex. I took a year off



Ashley and Lexia Woods, classes of 2003 and 2026

Provided

between undergrad and grad school when Lex was born. My husband was also active duty in the military, so we relocated from Charleston to New Orleans, LA, where Lex was born. I received a Master of Arts from the University of New Orleans in 2010. I'm currently working on my EdD from Capella University in Education with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction and will finish the program in July of 2027.

LH: What did your path to teaching at Trident Tech look like?

AW: It was definitely not traditional. I started teaching preschool when I was in high school and continued doing that throughout undergrad. When I started my Master's program, I had a teaching assistantship, which meant they covered my tuition and materials, and I taught one English 101 class a semester. After graduating, I was working full-time



Ashley with her grandmother and brother at her SOA Graduation

teaching preschool on the base in New Orleans and also adjuncting for Embry-Riddle, a military college, and Delgado Community College, which is a two-year community college in New Orleans. When we transferred back to Charleston in 2011, it was the height of the recession, so there were no teaching jobs available at a college level. So I went back to teaching preschool. I also started officiating high school football (only the second woman in the state to do that and also to officiate at 5A football games), acting, stage managing, directing, and costuming for local community productions, and I started volunteering at the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw. All of that has an educational backing, and that is partially why I enjoy each of those different parts of my life. I like constantly learning new things and being able to teach others, whether it's football fundamentals, rare vulture facts, or a new way to create a set piece under a strict budget. I finally got a part-time job at Trident in 2012 as a military recruiter. I was also adjuncting for Trident and teaching in the evenings for USC Salkahatchie. I finally got a full-time position in 2014, working as an admin in the Vice President's office. I moved up to a Director position from there and then became full-time faculty in January of 2020. Yep, 2020, so my first few years as full-time faculty were anything but conventional. I'm currently the English department dual credit coordinator, so on top of teaching a full load, I also work with the 40 or so schools where we teach dual credit classes. Mrs. Detiberus' classes are some of my favorites to come observe, so the SOA students are very lucky to have such an amazing English 101 and 102 instructor.

LH: What do you enjoy most about teaching at Trident Tech?

AW: I have some of the most amazing people in my department. The ideas and the creativity that my colleagues possess amaze me. I think the "water cooler" type conversations we have in hallways or doorways have contributed so much to growing as an educator. Everyone comes from a different background and emphasis, and so to bounce ideas off each other and lean on other people's expertise and experience really makes it collaborative. We also have some academic freedom, so a few years ago I completely overhauled my 102 syllabus and created all these poetry lectures centered around Hamilton lyrics. It has been a huge success and eliminates the stigma of poetry while teaching something that is more approachable and has the same elements and foundations. I also really

Provided

love teaching my dual credit students. I've been at Charleston Math and Science the last five years, and I teach 101 in the Fall and 102 in the spring, so I get the same students for a whole school year, which is very different from the traditional college students. It allows for time to build a bond and really get to know my students, and I'm so proud of them when they graduate and go on to do all these amazing things. I love that I get to be a tiny footnote in their lives.

LH: How has your daughter's senior year experience differed from your own?

AW: It's really special to me that Lex will be the first legacy to graduate! There were some similarities between

our experiences. I loved that she got to have Dr. Cusatis for one of her English courses. To this day, he is one of my favorite instructors. I think the biggest thing that I'm jealous of when it comes to Lex's experience versus my own is the senior thesis aspect. We didn't have that opportunity, and I've really loved seeing the things she's created. I'm also horribly jealous of the theater. Our black box was an old diesel mechanics shop, and you never knew what was leaking up from the floor. Also, as a theater nerd, the backstage opportunities that these kids get today are invaluable. I was in Theater Wings at Charleston Stage in high school and actually worked with Mr. Christensen my senior year, and he is an amazing resource. I've also loved watching the fashion design students each year when Lex has been in the shows. I've also been able to work with some of the students to help make costume pieces for shows I've directed as community service hours. We also didn't have a community service component, and I think it's a brilliant part of these kids' formative years.



The cast of *Beauty and the Beast*, the first show Ashley directed; on the right end is Lexia as the Enchantress

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A Look at Deaf and Hard of Hearing's Extracurricular Work

by Sheridan King

A continuation of a series highlighting what the Deaf program has done through the years.

Another of the amazing things the Deaf and Hard of Hearing department is doing here is the opportunities they offer to their students outside of the classroom. Classes offering career readiness, vocational training, and the opportunity to develop transitional skills make this program unique. These classes are at the Cooper River Center for Advanced studies, which the students travel to throughout the day.

There's also offerings throughout the year to gain real workplace experience, providing valuable skills to the students as they transition into what they do after SOA. There's a strong partnership with South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation, which helps to connect students to employment resources and career pathways. There have been students that have worked in Charlestowne Landing, Old Navy, ASPCA, Grey Ghost Bakery, Big Lots, 5/8th Seams, Jones Ford, Lowcountry Food Bank, and Embassy Suites.



Deaf Senior Katerin Figueroa learning Carpentry at the Cooper River Center for Advanced Studies

Throughout their time in these places, some students have been able to get paid internships at 5/7th Seams, Jones Ford, The Lowcountry Food Bank, and Beyond Distilling! One student even went so far as to participate in the Food Works program at the Lowcountry Food Bank, which is a culinary training initiative designed to prepare people for a career in the food industry.

Trident Technical College has also been a major help with everything these students have been able to accomplish through this program. Students have enrolled in courses there while still completing their studies at SOA.

Here at SOA, Deaf students have created a student-run enterprise, Pegasus Perks, to also contribute to those valuable skills that people need for real-world jobs. Students took daily coffee orders from faculty and staff and then delivered those directly to the classrooms. For \$2 a cup, you could get regular, decaffeinated, and iced coffee. This business allowed the students to gain skills such as order management, inventory tracking, and budgeting.

These amazing opportunities have made the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program very unique, and have impacted our community here at SOA and beyond in such a meaningful way.



Deaf students volunteering at Charles Towne Landing

Sign of the Month: "Good Luck on Exams"

Demonstrated by Marquis Larry



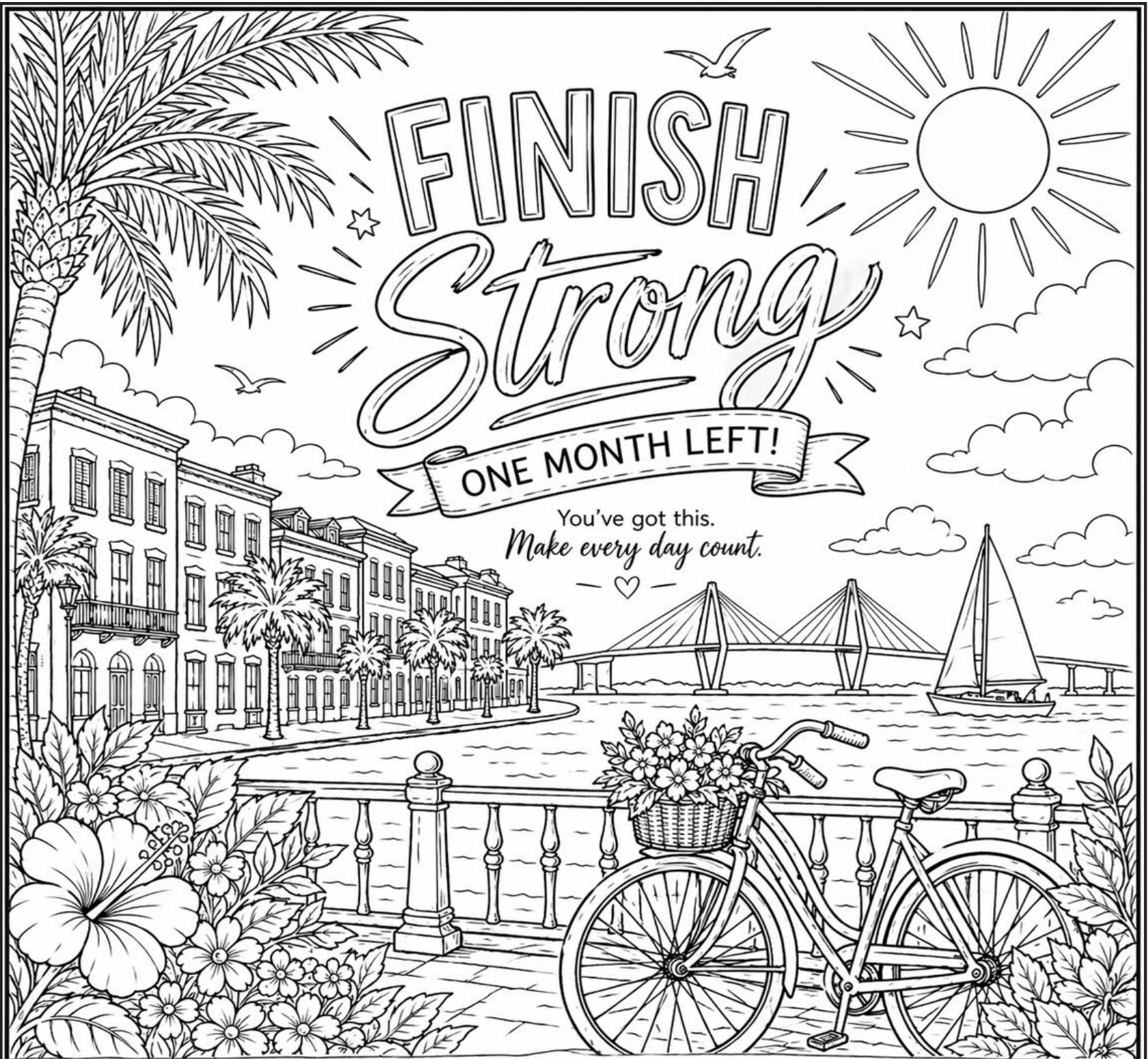
1. Touch your middle finger to your chin
2. Flick your hand outwards
3. Hold both hands up with your index finger bent
4. But both hands down flat



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Teacher Cadets Update

by Rachel Wheelon

SOA's Teacher Cadets class, taught by Mr. Martin, was created last year for students who are considering teaching as a career. Each month, staffwriter and cadet Rachel Wheelon gives an update on what the class has been doing.

I can't believe that by the time this is published, most of the Cadets will have already finished their internships. It feels like yesterday I was just writing about their beginning.

Recently, the Cadets have moved from observing the classroom into a more leadership-based role. As part of the credit, we are required to build and lead a lesson. Utilizing the teaching methods we learned in the beginning of the year in combination with what we have gotten out of the class observations, we build a lesson from start to finish. This includes building a presentation, coming up with assessment techniques, and creating worksheets and classroom activities.



Mr. Martin

Senior Viktoriya Ustymenko teaching students at her internship

Following the preparation, each cadet presents their lesson to their interning class, taking on the role of the teacher. In the time that we give our lesson, we are also utilizing classroom management techniques to ensure the students are listening to the lesson and participating.

While the task of being the teacher for a block can seem daunting, our time in observation really helped. We were able to get to know the management techniques that work best for the students as well as get to know the kids individually. This allowed the students to feel more comfortable as we gave our lesson because they have gotten to know us while we have gained their trust and respect.

In my own lesson, the kids were excited to have a new face leading the class, and I know this excitement was shared in many of the classrooms.

Now that we're in the home stretch of our internships, we are finishing up our portfolio which includes daily journal entries, essays on various elements of the classroom, and an adapted educational philosophy where we describe the kind of teacher we want to be and the classroom environment we want to foster. This serves as a full circle moment because we are editing the Educational philosophy we wrote in the beginning of the year to change what we originally thought in order to include aspects of what we learned throughout the year.

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What Did SOA Do Over Spring Break?



Junior Vocal major Bryce Lee and Senior Dance major Blakley Thrasher went to the Bahamas



Sophomore Band major Ainsley Geffert traveled to Ecuador



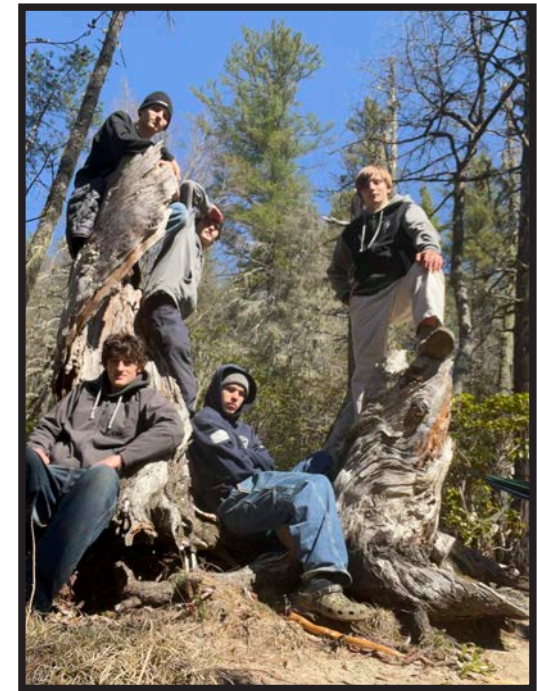
Freshman Vocal major Gus Harris enjoyed the beautiful waters right here in Charleston!



Seniors Micaiah Fagan and Dakota Townsend attended Admitted Student's Day at Winthrop University



Junior Visual Artist Evyn Angelos (second from the left) traveled to the Bahamas



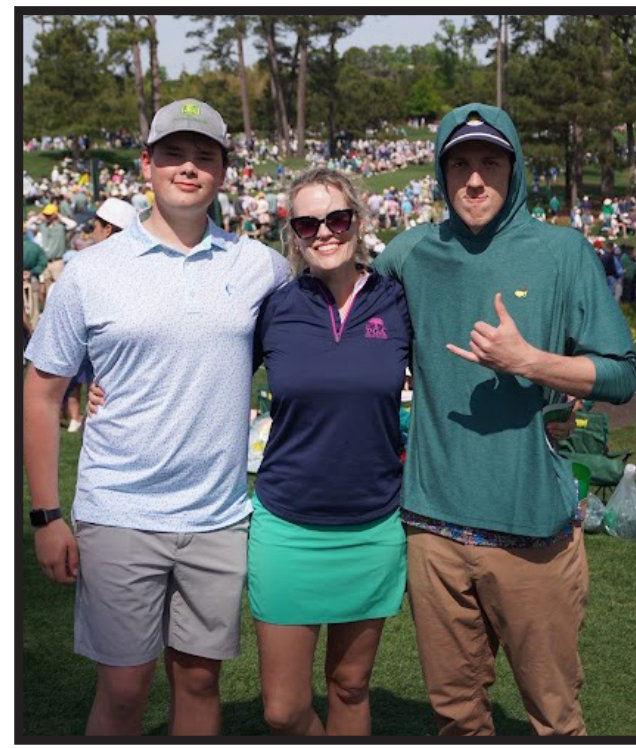
Seniors Kendrick Freligh, Milo Robbins, and Maxim Zakharchyk, and former SOA students Grey Gaides and Axel Gruber went camping in Panther Town, NC



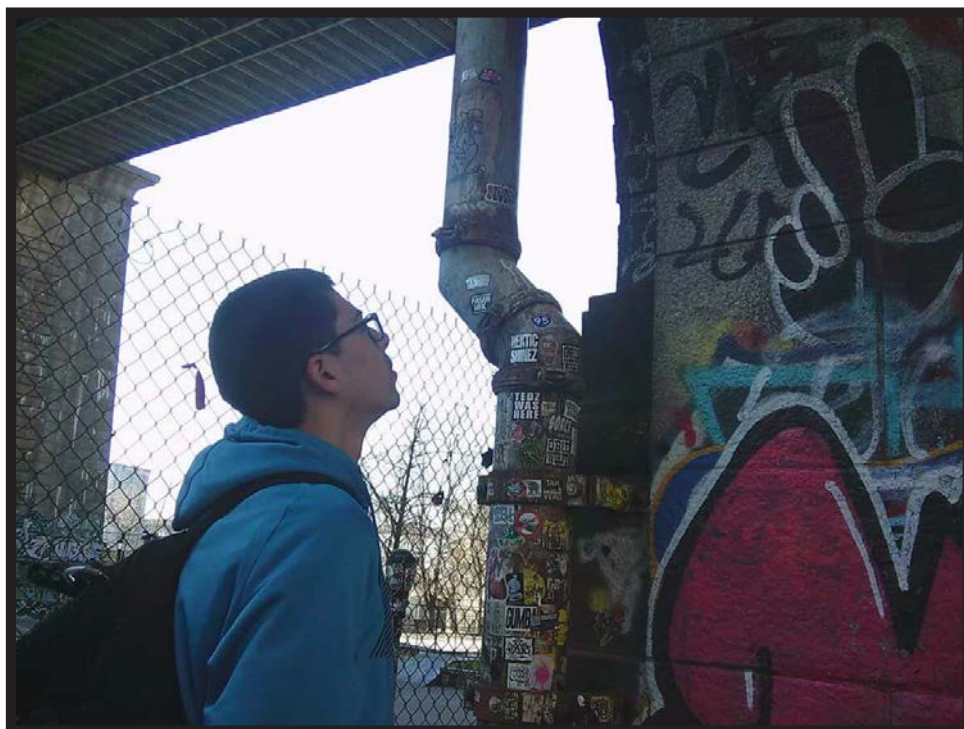
Freshman Fashion major Collins Rabon went to Athens, Greece



Mae Harris went canyoning in The Azores



Juniors Jonah Karen and Dean Barnwell went to Augusta to watch the Master's



Junior Creative Writing major Aiden Withers traveled to New York City



Junior Vocal major Ella Bonazzi went diving in Key Largo, Florida

The SOA Dance Department Has Had Plenty to Celebrate during the Second Semester!

by Sage Stoner

Recently, the eighth and twelfth grade dance majors visited Coker College for the first annual South Carolina Dance Assessment (SCDA), and returned with great news. Seniors earned a “Superior with Distinction,” the highest possible rating in the SCDA, and the eighth graders earned a “Superior.” Both grades were assessed with the Advanced rubrics. “We are so proud of these dancers!” **Ms. Tillotson** remarked

On another note, dance students attended the Regional High School Dance Festival in Norfolk, Virginia. This festival hosts more than 65 performing arts schools and over 1,300 students, making it an incredible opportunity for dancers to train, perform, and connect with college programs and professionals in the field. Representing SOA this year were **Julia Hartman, Lucie Parham Battle, Alexa Waters, Marin Lutz, Nathaniel Green, Sophia Blango, Emilia Hall, Ivy Brown, and Blakely Thrasher.**

Throughout the week and weekend, the dancers participated in an intensive schedule of four to five classes per day, each lasting 90 minutes.

These classes covered a wide range of styles and disciplines, including yoga, pilates, improvisation, musical theater, ballet, ballet partnering, contemporary/modern, Afro beats, hip hop, heels, voguing, commercial dance, and repertory from BalletX (a professional contemporary ballet company from Philadelphia), among many others. A special highlight of the festival was when Nathaniel Green’s Fall Thesis choreography was chosen to be performed as part of the event by Sophia Blango, Ivy Brown, and Marin Lutz, an incredible honor and recognition of Nathaniel’s fine choreographic work.

Students also participated in college and summer program auditions for admission and scholarships. They received numerous scholarships and/or admission offers and have earned well over \$100,000 from a wide range of esteemed dance programs and institutions.

“Our students represented SOA with professionalism, dedication, and tremendous talent,” Ms. Tillotson told *Applause*. “Their work ethic, openness to learning, and passion for dance were evident throughout the festival, and it was wonderful to see them recognized by so many collegiate and professional programs.”

The SOA Dance Department recently concluded an inspiring Guest Residency Program, bringing an exceptional group of professional artists and educators to work directly with Dance students. Throughout the residency, dancers had the opportunity to train, create, and learn from professionals representing a wide range of dance styles, backgrounds, and career paths.

Brian McGinnis began his training with Jo Ann Warren in Worcester, Massachusetts, and went on to graduate from The Juilliard School under the direction of Benjamin Harkavy, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance. His passion for the art of dance and dedication to performance and training made a strong impact on our students.

Olga Tchoub Wise, a native of Moscow, Russia, graduated from the Bolshoi Choreographic Institute with a Master’s Degree in Fine Arts. She joined the Moscow Classical Ballet as a soloist in 1990 and later performed as a Principal Dancer with internationally renowned artists and companies. Today she is a highly sought-after Master Teacher, choreographer, and ballet competition adjudicator, sharing her deep knowledge of classical ballet.

Jordan Maria Giancurcio, a graduate of the College of Charleston and

alumna of the Charleston County School of the Arts, double majored in Dance and Theatre. She is currently a company member with Annex Dance Company and has performed with Pauletta Washington and The Charleston Pops. Jordan’s work uniquely blends dance and video artistry, collaborating with artists such as Marcus Amaker, Ranky Tanky, Wade Davis (CNN), and Gino Castillo (Cha Cha Charleston), and creating visual projects including *Glory Comes*, *Selah*, and an Apple marketing campaign.

Abbey Wood, a certified TCRG and co-owner/director of Legacy Savannah and Charleston, brought her expertise in Irish dance to the residency. In 1996, after qualifying at the Eastern Region Oireachtas in New York, she became the first girl from the South to qualify for and compete at the World Championships in Dublin, Ireland.

Jatae Bryant shared her extensive performance and teaching experience spanning 25 years across styles including ballet, jazz, hip hop, contemporary, tap, lyrical, modern, pointe, and pom. She was a member of The Rally Cats Dance Team and later performed in the NBA with the Houston Rockets, bringing valuable professional insight into the industry.

James Jiang, a professional dance instructor and choreographer based in Charleston, originally from China, inspired students with his philosophy that dance is both an art form and a joyful expression of life, encouraging dancers to find personal connection and creativity in movement.

Rachel Abelenda, a Miami-based dancer, teacher, and company member with STYX The Company, brought over 20 years of experience in contemporary, modern, hip hop, and fusion styles. She trained at A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts and the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and has performed across the United States—from Santa Fe and Los Angeles to Charleston and Miami—including a performance with Coldplay.

This residency provided SOA dancers with an invaluable opportunity to learn from artists with diverse global experiences, professional careers, and unique artistic voices. The program continues to strengthen our students’ training while exposing them to the many possibilities within the world of dance.

These guest pieces will be performed at our Annual Dance Departmental on Saturday May 2nd at 3:30pm RMMT. This is a ticketed event.

Our Junior Dance Majors took the stage for an exciting evening of creativity in their Composition Concert on April 16 in RMMT. Each choreographer drew a surprise concept from a hat and created an original dance inspired by that challenge. Concepts included using ten props, remaining on low levels, incorporating gestures, using technology, staying physically connected to another dancer, performing with spoken word instead of music, and more. This process pushes students to think creatively, problem-solve, and develop innovative choreography based on unexpected prompts. The result was a dynamic performance filled with imagination and originality

On April 21 in the RMMT SOA Senior Dance Majors also presented their culminating Thesis Concert, an evening of original work that highlighted artistic collaboration across disciplines. Each senior choreographer partnered with another arts major—such as Visual Art, Theatre, Creative Writing, Strings, or Vocal—to create an original master work that blended movement with other forms of artistic expression. These collaborations allowed students to explore new creative perspectives while producing a fully realized interdisciplinary performance. For this special showcase of innovation, artistry, and the culmination of the seniors’ years of study. A Senior reception followed the performance to celebrate the graduates and their achievements.



Eight Grade dancers at SCDA

Provided



Senior dancers take a final bow after completing Senior Thesis

Mr. Martin

SOA's FEM Club Hosts *Girls to the Front*

Co-sponsored by *Applause* and organized by Junior Editor, Lila Hayes, *Girls to the Front* took place on April 25th at No Bull Burger Bar. Featuring music, poetry, and visual art, the show put female artists from SOA on display while raising over \$450 for My Sister's House.



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Students Rock the Runway!

by Luciano Cusatis



Fashion Seniors Discuss their Designs

This year's fashion show, Unstoppable, took place on April 18, and featured the hard work of all the Fashion majors. Our staff interviewed all the talented Senior designers, who make the largest collections, to get an inside look at the show.

Reese Brittingham: *Off to the Races!*

Luciano Cusatis: What is your theme for the show, and what inspired it?

Reese Brittingham: My theme is *Off to the Races!* I am inspired by the famous Kentucky Derby, from the elegant designs to the one of a kind hats!

LC: How did you interpret the theme *Unstoppable* for this show?

RB: I think the theme this year is very broad and left for interpretation but personally I saw it as powerful and unbeatably strong.

LC: Who is modeling for you?

RB: Eudora Holland, Ali Wager, Rory Sood, Grace Pitcavage, Maddie Leluc, Cooper Brittingham, and Pluma Hyatt-Eakes.

LC: What have you learned throughout this process?

RB: I have learned how to get even more creative with my designs in order to make up to eight unique pieces all with different meanings but still tie it together to make a collection.



Reese Brittingham

Micaiah Fagan: *Midnight in Paris*

CG: Who did you choose to model this collection?

MF: Ivy Brown, Jaidon Richardson, Nora Green, Kendyl Chatman, Cyniah Green, Hannah Pinckney, and my mother, Brittney Washington.

CG: How did you interpret the show's theme *Unstoppable* in your own way?

MF: I wanted to push my boundaries as a designer and make garments that were a bit out of my comfort zone in terms of technique and style.

CG: What problems occurred while making your collection?

MF: I had to change my theme a lot due to a lack of inspiration, and some of my garments didn't come out like I envisioned, leading to me having to remake a few garments over and over.

CG: What piece in your collection is your favorite, and what does it mean to you?

MF: Picking a favorite would be hard, but if I had to choose, it would be Ivy's garment (a fluffy skirt and an off-the-shoulder batwing top) because it was one of my hardest. Not because of sewing it, but because I had to keep remaking and trying out new ideas until I was happy with the result. It just means so much to me that through a heap of setbacks, I was able to overcome them and be happy with the end result.



Micaiah Fagan

Mia Gonzales: *The Silver File*

Trinity Collins: Who are your models?

Mia Gonzales: My models are Kelsey Mikeska, Whitney Werking, Charlotte German, Helina Lloyd, Lexia Woods, Iliana Domenech, and Lileana Domenech.

TC: How did you interpret the theme this year?

MG: With this year's theme *Unstoppable*, I wanted to experiment a lot more

with implementing my personal style and newer techniques I haven't used much till now.

TC: Are there any skills you feel you mastered while making this collection?

MG: This year, I definitely mastered draping. I drafted and made all of the patterns for each of my garments, rarely relying on pre-made patterns. This helped me gain a broader understanding of how each garment is made and enabled me to be more creative in my designs.

TC: Are there any certain fabrics or styles you like doing most?

MG: My favorite fabrics to use are satin, leather, and corduroy.



Mia Gonzales

Kiera Koederitz: *Lustrous in the Light*

Sheridan King: How did you interpret this year's theme?

Kiera Koederitz: At first for my theme I wanted to choose something with a free and "unstoppable" feeling. I had a whole inspiration board to do a theme about the music festival Coachella but after making 2 garments I knew something wasn't right. My first theme wasn't capturing my design style.

I was having a hard time sewing garments that complemented me as much as it complemented my models. I eventually just searched for a word that would spark my interest and what I thought I could make come to life. I came across the word "lustrous." Before that I never really knew the definition of that word but after a quick search I found out that it means something that reflects light with a soft or radiant glow. After that I knew I could make a theme with outfits that captured the light and the audience. I eventually came up with the name *Lustrous in the Light*.

SK: Who were your models?

KK: My models were: Eva Higdon, Bella Snider, Maddie Snider, Laney Tucker, Ella Maestas, Sophia Blango, and Charlotte Payne.

SK: Is there anything you've learned from creating these pieces?

KK: Making these garments this year I not only learned new sewing techniques but also learned how to make a collection where garments can tie into each other using similar fabrics and outfit styles.

SK: Who was your inspiration for this collection?

KK: I didn't have a specific person that was my inspiration for this year's collection but I was definitely inspired by night out outfits, cowl necks, mini dresses, trousers, and tops with fabrics that are shiny and have sequins.



Kiera Koederitz



Addy Lawrence: *Hot Summer Nights*

Dante Criscitiello: What is the theme of your collection?

Addy Lawrence: My theme is Hot Summer Nights. It was inspired by 70s fashion with elements like bold colors, sparkles, and texture. I named my theme Hot Summer Nights because my collection reflected the freedom of summer nights. All of my outfits have a lot of flowy features to show the breeze of summer.

DC: Who did you choose to model your collections?

AL: My models were **Louisa Seminaroti, Kennedy Colie, Rosalie Leopard, Maggie Conlon, Harper Rose, and Sophia Lawrence.**

DC: What did you learn from this experience overall, and would you do something like this again?

AL: This has been one of my favorite collections because I feel like I have learned what I like and don't like from my previous years in Fashion. I learned that I can create anything I put my mind to and the key to fashion is to explore different ideas.



Addy Lawrence

Sara Mojica Supelano: *Summer in Colombia*

Lila Hayes: Who is modeling your pieces?

Sara Mojica Supelano: **Althea De Sa, Jack Childers, Kent Mackey, Kendall Grimsley, Grey Harlos, and Abbey Morea**

LH: What impression do you want to leave on the audience with this collection?

SM: I want to share my culture and my pride with the audience. I want Colombia to be known for more than the outside perspective people all over the world have about Colombia. In the movies, they have made Colombia seem like a drug factory and that's it. For me, there's more to Colombia than the awful perspective everyone has about Colombia. I want the audience to see the beauty in Colombia like I see it.

LH: What was the most challenging aspect of creating your collection?

SM: I think it was coming up with the right outfits that actually represented each color of the flag. The guys shirts were hard to design because I really did not know how to switch it up to make them different.



Sara Mojica Supelano

Maggie O'Dell: *Barbie*

Cannon Gibbs: Who did you choose to model this collection?

Maggie O'Dell: **Emma Norton**, a senior Vocal major, **Gabi Citrolo**, a former Fashion major from the class of 2024, **Pia Oronce**, a Senior Visual Arts major, who had also modeled for me last year, **Isabel Bean**, a Senior Piano major, **Junia Willis**, a younger girl from my church whose family I'm very close with, **Maybry Lynch**, also a friend from church and an amazing model, and **Collins Rabon**, a Freshman Fashion major.

CG: How did you interpret the show's theme *Unstoppable* in your own way?

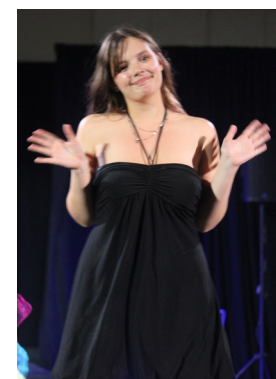
MO: Barbie has always been about possibilities, careers, independence, and reinvention. Since Barbie's debut by Ruth Handler, Barbie has always been a symbol of perseverance and empowerment to everyone throughout the years, with her being seen as someone who can do anything and keep moving no matter what, and I wanted to show that within my collection.

CG: What problems occurred while making your collection?

MO: While I did have some trouble with trying to find a balance between garments that were a little more elegant and ones that were a little more creative and fun, keeping that experimental Barbie style seen within a lot of the Barbie designs in the 2000s, but through a few remakes and a good amount of time, I was eventually able to create a collection that was cohesive in its style.

CG: What piece in your collection is your favorite, and what does it mean to you?

MO: A few of my favorite pieces within my collection this year have to be some of my crochet pieces. I've been crocheting since I was 12 and it's something that I've loved to do and I'm so glad that I've been able to incorporate that into my collections throughout the years. One of my favorite ones has to be this duster that I had made using a yarn with a variety of blues, teals, and purple, creating a pretty gradient throughout, with a mandala-like design on the back, with the duster going over a satin lilac dress. My other crochet garment went on the 4 year-old daughter of one of my friends from church. She wore a pink frilly crochet skirt with a halter crocheted top with pink roses. She loved modeling it and was absolutely adorable going down the runway.



Maggie O'Dell

Aria Tran: *Phobias*

Ellis Richards: How did you choose to interpret this year's theme? Would you consider your approach "out-of-the-box" or unorthodox in any way?

Aria Tran: I interpreted it as something that persists constantly, breaking boundaries whether good or bad. So for my collection, I chose to take inspiration from different phobias. I think this is a little out-of-the-box, since not many people think of phobias when they hear the word "unstoppable". But if you think about it, phobias are things that often persist throughout your whole life, whether it's the fear of spiders, heights, needles, etc. often they stick with you and are a part of you.

ER: Has the process of creating for this collection enlightened you to anything about yourself? Have you discovered places of improvement for your sewing going forward?

AT: The process of making this collection had many hurdles and my designs have changed from how I initially designed them to account for these hurdles. I think one thing I do need to work on is time management. I noticed this the past two years as well, but I am awful at getting things done on time. I would just procrastinate or forget about things and end up having to rush things. I also need to get better at hemming more slippery fabric.

ER: How was model selection? Who are your models and how has your time with them impacted you?

AT: All of my models went to a different school, but the same school. It's the school I went to during 9th grade (I joined SOA in 10th grade). They were all friends of mine or my twin sister's. Two of my models were my sister, my twin and my younger sister. Overall, since I already knew my models it definitely made it a lot easier and it was very fun.

ER: What/who did you draw inspiration from in your designs?

AT: For most of them, I drew inspiration from nature. One was inspired by seaweed, the other birds, even storms. For one of them, I drew inspiration from clowns, since it was designed to represent the phobia of clowns (Coulrophobia). Overall, I wasn't really inspired by a person, mostly it was just things in nature or other random things.



Aria Tran

Blakeney Vaughan: *Shibuya Crossing*

Sage Stoner: How did you interpret this year's theme, *Unstoppable*?

Blakeney Vaughan: I took it somewhat literally. The clothes I made this year are all items that I would wear. I dress a lot differently in school than I do outside of it. Most people on the street see what I look like and make wrongful assumptions, mock me, and take pictures, but that doesn't stop me from dressing how I do. I'm glad I got the opportunity to highlight not only my style but also to represent anyone else who may feel the same way.

SS: What was your main inspiration for this collection?

BV: I take a lot of inspiration from Japanese fashion magazines, like *Cure*, *FRUITs*, *Kera*, *Popteen*, *ViVi*, etc. I also have been in the VKei scene for over 5 years now and do a lot of research on bands and their origin, style, and concepts, and apply that to how I make my own designs.

SS: What do you feel you've learned while creating this collection?

BV: Honestly, I feel like I've slowly become more confident in sharing what I like. I never used to talk to my family about any of my interests because I was too scared of being laughed at for how "irregular" they might be. Who cares what you like as long as it makes you happy?

SS: What was the most challenging but rewarding part of creating your collection?

BV: One of the most challenging parts of my collection was finding people who would model for it. Most of my girls said yes immediately, but I had to ask a handful of guys before I found some that were excited to model. I noticed most guys were too shy to say yes or were hesitant, which is the opposite of what I like. I need people to be just as excited as I am!!! I'm very happy with my group of people who are modeling for me, and I appreciate them all!! An upcoming challenge will be doing hair and makeup, since that is a really important factor for most of my designs...I hope it goes as planned.



Blakeney Vaughan

Evelyn Vazquez-Ortiz: *¡Viva México!*

Luciano Cusatis: What is your theme for the show, and what inspired it?

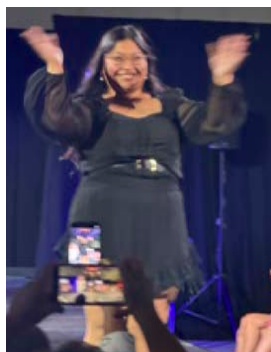
Evelyn Vazquez-Ortiz: For my collection this year I designed a line inspired by México. Since my freshman year, I have had the vision of creating a collection that represents my culture. The theme of my collection is *¡Viva México!*, a phrase meaning "long live México" that represents patriotism, freedom, and pride. With everything going on politically, I also wanted to show the beauty and richness of México and not just the stereotypes people often focus on.

LC: How did you interpret the theme *Unstoppable* for this show?

EV: This collection connects to the theme *Unstoppable* by showing strength and determination. It represents a culture that has faced challenges and stereotypes but continues to grow and move forward. The designs show progress by combining traditional inspiration with modern fashion. Each garment represents confidence and the idea of not giving up.

LC: Who is modeling for you?

EV: Since my collection is about culture and representation, I chose to have only models of color. My models this year are: **Rayhona Mukhtarova**, **Giselle Godinez Vazquez**, **Santiago Calzada**, **Samantha Lizcano**, **Manda Nguyen**, **Ashley Yax Apolinar**, **Giselle Gonzalez**, **Love Orozco**, **Christopher Calzada**, and **Michelle Barrios Aguilar**.



Evelyn Vazquez-Ortiz

LC: What have you learned throughout this process?

EV: While making this collection, I learned a lot of new sewing skills, especially more detailed and couture techniques. I also used skills I've learned in past years and improved them. This process helped me grow not just as a designer, but as a person too. During my research, I came across the quote, "They love our culture, but they don't love the people," and it really stuck with me. It reminded me to stay true to myself and my culture. I'm proud to be the daughter of immigrant parents who work so hard, and I will always be proud of who I am.

Josalyn Vazquez-Ortiz: *Echoes of Us*

Frankey Coakley: How are you incorporating this year's theme into your outfits?

Josalyn Vazquez-Ortiz: This year, I incorporated the theme into my collection by pushing myself beyond my usual design limits. I learned new construction techniques and focused on adding small details throughout each garment. These small details help my garments stand out.

FC: What was your inspiration for these pieces?

JV: For each of my eight looks, I based my theme on four categories. The first category is The Love Letter. Even though we live in a modern world where we mostly text or call, a letter can express your feelings more personally. A letter shows that someone has taken the time to write, and it often contains more thoughtful, meaningful words. My second category is Dancing in the Rain. In the Regency era, dancing was an intimate and passionate way to connect with people. Even today, dancing is still considered an intimate way to connect. The rain represents a quiet moment where the rest of the world fades away, leaving just two people sharing a meaningful connection. My third category is Music in Love. In the past, present, and future, music will always express love. In my culture, when you are deeply in love, you give a serenata, singing outside someone's window at night to declare your feelings. My last category is Millions of Flowers. Even small acts can hold meaning. Every flower has its own symbolism. One of my favorites, tulips, represents perfection, deep love, and passion.



Josalyn Vazquez-Ortiz

Millions of flowers symbolize how love is built from countless small gestures, not just one grand moment.

FC: What was the process like? What were the most challenging parts?

JV: My design process starts with finding inspiration and deciding the meaning behind my collection. From there, I begin sketching my ideas and then move on to finding fabrics. Throughout the process, things often change. For example, I might originally plan for a Victorian collar shirt, but later decide a simple collar shirt works better. Once all the garments are completed, I make sure everything looks cohesive and well-made. The most challenging part is creating a strong connection between myself and each look. I try to give every outfit its own meaning while still keeping the entire collection cohesive. It can be difficult to balance multiple designs without losing that sense of purpose or making any piece feel rushed.

FC: Who's modeling your clothing, and what about them stood out to you?

JV: **Allison Roblero Ruiz** stood out to me because of her strong energy and focus. I've seen her dance at my church, and when she's in her zone, she gives off a powerful presence. I knew she would bring that same energy to modeling, and she did an amazing job. **Luke Gonzalez** stood out to me with his confidence, and he's willing to wear anything without worrying about masculinity, which is rare and really important for my designs. **Allison Utreras Segundo** has been modeling for me for three years. She's incredibly responsible and always shows up prepared. Even though she seems quiet, she brings so much energy on stage and always communicates honestly about

the garments. **Jason Wijaya** responded to my Instagram post when I was looking for models. He stood out because he was willing to wear anything without worrying about masculinity. I could tell he would be reliable and bring my vision to life. **Srijita Roy** caught my attention because of her cheerful personality and natural confidence. I've known her since freshman year, and I always admired her energy. I finally asked her to model for me last year, and she brought that confidence to the runway. **Alex Muñoz** is a friend of mine who has a very natural presence. I wanted male models who could fit an ethereal vibe. He's also very dedicated and always willing to learn and improve. **Dennora Legare** has a very strong, confident walk. Even though this is her first time modeling for me, I've always admired her presence. She connects deeply with the garments and brings powerful energy to the runway. **Nicko Palihan** stood out for his confidence. He has a great sense of modeling and even helped other models with posing. Overall, I chose my models based on their energy, confidence, and willingness to connect with my designs, and each of them helped bring my vision to life.

FC: What are you looking forward to with this year's fashion show?

JV: This year, I'm especially looking forward to the finale. I've spent so many months working on this collection, so seeing everything come together on stage means a lot to me. I'm excited to hear the audience's reactions, like their applause, and to see how all the hard work pays off with everything looking well put together. I know it'll be an emotional moment for me.

FC: Anything that you're nervous about?

JV: I wouldn't say I'm too nervous about this year's fashion show because I've been doing this for about four years now. Of course, I still get a little nervous about whether people will like my collection. But I remind myself that it's not about pleasing everyone, it's about expressing what I want through my designs. I know I may not reach everyone, but I will connect with someone, and that's what matters. I'm just hoping everything comes together nicely in the end.

Marz Watson: *Party on the Dance Floor*

Frankey Coakley: How are you incorporating this year's theme into your outfits?

Marz Watson: I decided to do something completely different from my other collections from the past three years, and also stepping out of my comfort zone by using bold patterns and bright, colorful fabrics.

FC: What was your inspiration for these pieces?

MW: My inspiration for my collection is 2000's prom dresses and Scene fashion.

FC: What was the process like? What were the most challenging parts?

MW: The process was quite stressful. I would say the most challenging thing was getting new models and revising designs.

FC: Who's modeling your clothing, and what about them stood out to you?

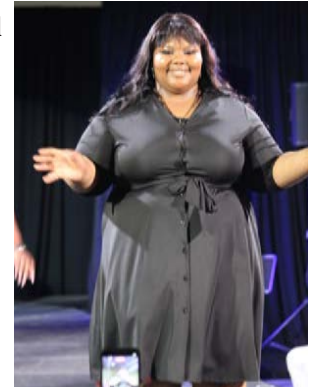
MW: I have seven models this year. One of them that stood out to me is **Rex Mincey**; she's energetic and has so much personality to her.

FC: What are you looking forward to with this year's fashion show?

MW: This year, I'm looking forward to having fun designing my outfits and using colorful fabrics.

FC: Anything that you're nervous about?

MW: The fashion show and graduating.



Marz Watson



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Senior Reilly Dukes Excels in National Speech Contest

by Sage Stoner

Senior Theater Major Reilly Dukes participated in this year's annual Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) "Voice of Democracy" Speech Contest. The prompt was "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Your Country?" She came in first place in the state and fifteenth in the country. Congrats, Reilly!

Sage Stoner: What about the contest brought you to it?

Reilly Dukes: I am an auxiliary member for the VFW Post 445 on James Island, so naturally, as a high school student, I was recommended by multiple members to enter the contest. I was drawn to the prompt immediately because most people see patriotism as an accomplishment and would relish the idea of listing it out, while I believe the most important acts are instinctive and natural and may often go unrecognized.

SS: What was most exciting about the contest?

RD: The most exciting part was reading the speech to my family and friends, especially those with a tie to



Reilly after winning the state competition

the military. Watching the joy I brought them by reading a simple speech I wrote was a reward enough.

SS: What did you learn from being a part of this?

RD: I learned about how kind words can move a group of people who are in such dark times. We recently lost our beloved Commander of the post, so our community was struggling. But when I read my speech, people were motivated once more to do things for our veterans. It taught me that one action could make a big difference when it's needed.



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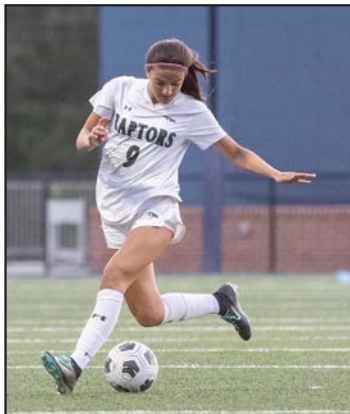
NBC-SC.COM

SOA Athletes Rise to the Occasion!

by Fletcher Seminaroti

With Spring seasons coming to an end, athlete's from SOA have been working very hard to secure high seeds and deliver stellar performances in their respective playoffs.

As meets grow more competitive, track and field athletes have been pushed harder than ever before. At the 4th Annual Iron Horse Stampede, **Cameron Leach** delivered a strong performance in the shot put competition. Leach earned a third-place finish with a throw of 13.13 meters against a talented field of competitors. On Wednesday, April 29, the Raptors traveled to Woodland High School for the 2A Region 6 meet. With top-four placings in various events, five SOA Athletes qualified for the Lower-State Meet. Junior Strings majors **Jacob Freligh** and **Hugh Hollinger** earned third in shot put and fourth in the 110 meter hurdles respectively. Sophomore Vocal major **Molly Boudolf** came second in discus and Sophomore Visual Arts major **Priya Cardella** placed second in the 400 meter hurdles. Sophomore Band major **Mackenzie Wilbourn** qualified in two events, with a second place finish in the triple jump and fourth in long jump. Additionally, the boys 4x800 relay team, featuring Freshman Theater major **Andrew Amani**, placed third, and the girls 4x400 team finished fourth with the help of Junior Vocal major **Hadley McAdams**. These athletes will travel back to Woodland on Saturday, May 9th for Lower State, where they compete for a chance at the State meet.



Bridget Lee leads the AMHS Varsity Girls Soccer team in goals

The Lady Raptor soccer team leads the region at 16-5, recently beating Berkley High School, Cane Bay, and Ashley Ridge. Sophomore vocal major **Bridget Lee** is one of the top performers, scoring 16 goals, the most on the team! Going into the playoffs, which stretch into May, the Lady Raptors hold the first seed in the 2A tournament.



Leo West (left) plays Offensive Midfield for JIHS Varsity Boys Lacrosse

Raptor men's soccer is also 1st in the region heading into the playoffs with a 16-4 record, beating popular teams around Charleston, such as Porter-Gaud and Phillip Simmons. Senior art major **Cesar Ramirez** has continued to show his dominance on the field, leading the team in all statistics. Ramirez has 47 points on the season, averaging over two points per game.

Magnet men's lacrosse has entered the playoffs and moved on to the second round, beating Waccamaw High School 13-4. SOA students **Gavriel Pekar**, **Luke Whitley**, and **Fletcher Seminaroti** all put points on the board, with Whitley scoring his first varsity point. Stepping away from Academic Magnet, Senior Theater major **Leo West** has dominated the lacrosse field over at James Island. Competing in the more competitive 5A division, the Trojans are currently 8-7 and hold the fourth seed heading into the playoffs, where they take on Lexington High School.

Good luck to all these incredible athletes as they continue to advance in the post-season!

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Contemporary Album Review: *THIS MUSIC MAY CONTAIN HOPE* (2026)

by Rachel Wheelon

THIS MUSIC MAY CONTAIN HOPE is four-time Grammy nominee, RAYE's second studio album. With a tracklist of seventeen songs and a runtime of seventy-three minutes, the album blends elements of jazz, pop, blues, and soul. The album is divided into four parts, each representing a season of the year.

What makes RAYE one of the best artists in our generation, in my opinion, is her dedication to gratitude. In the final track of the album, "Fin," RAYE lists the names of the people who helped make the album possible. This list includes members of her family, her production team, background singers, her band, The London Symphony Orchestra, and a few more recognizable personas such as Al Green and Hans Zimmer.

This album is on repeat in my playlist. My personal favorite songs are "Goodbye Henry," "Click Clack Symphony," and "The Whatsapp Shakespeare."

Each song is an experience, and their scale is incredible. Every note, lyric, and instrumental is necessary and intentional, and this is evident in every track. What also makes the album amazing is the lyricism. They are pieces of poetry, and they will stand the test of time as though they are classic literature.

Some of my favorite lyrics are "Aren't we all broken people? Just perfect how to hide it?" "The way I fake a smile could pay the mortgage and the rent," "He's not looking for a heart, just a pillow to rest his head," "You always find some kind words for a stranger. I wish that you could find some for yourself," "But you can feel lonely in a crowded room."

I could go on and on, but this article would never end. Instead, I'll finish by saying that this album is a work of art that listeners should be grateful to hear.

Classic Movie Review: *Good Will Hunting* (1997)

by Dante Criscitiello

"You don't know about real loss, 'cause it only occurs when you've loved something more than you love yourself. And I doubt you've ever dared to love anybody that much." This is one of the many beautiful quotes from *Good Will Hunting*. After watching this movie, I can confidently say I have a different outlook on love, loss, fear, and life in general.

It follows a young man, Will Hunting, who

works as a janitor at MIT, but he has a very special gift and passion: reading, mathematics, and education as a whole, but he keeps this secret from the world. His philosophy is that there will always be two outcomes if he pursues this secret passion: he will try and fail, or will never unlock his full potential. His life consists of a simple routine; his best friend Chuck picks him up, they go out and drink or go to work, and they get in some sort of fight. It's no surprise that it eventually gets him jail time. No one knows that Will is this secret genius until Professor Gerald Lambeau caught him solving a math problem in the hallways. He attempts to confront him, but Will is scared, so he tries running, but the professor realizes Will's answer is correct. He can't believe it. The professor then goes down to the police station to allow Will to get out of jail, but Will is hesitant to accept his deal because it involves him going to therapy, which is almost the last thing he wants. But Will takes the offer to avoid facing potential years in jail. As Will begins therapy, he pushes away multiple therapists, using his intelligence to outsmart and intimidate them.

That is, until he meets Sean Maguire, played by Robin Williams. Unlike the others, Sean doesn't try to impress Will or compete with him—he challenges him differently. Through their sessions, Sean forces Will to confront the emotional walls he has built around himself. Slowly, Will begins to realize that his greatest obstacle isn't his past, his intelligence, or even his opportunities—it's his fear. This fear is shown most clearly in his relationship with Skylar. Will genuinely cares about her, but when things start to get serious, he pushes her away instead of risking getting hurt. This becomes a turning point in the film, showing how his fear of vulnerability is holding him back not just in love, but in life. Sean helps Will understand that real growth comes from taking risks and allowing oneself to be seen, even if it means facing pain.

The film also highlights the importance of the people around you. Chuckie, Will's best friend, delivers one of the most powerful moments in the movie when he tells Will that the best part of his day is the few seconds before knocking on his door—hoping that one day, Will won't be there anymore. This moment reinforces the idea that sometimes the people who care about you most will push you to be better, even if it means letting you go.

In the end, *Good Will Hunting* is more than just a story about a hidden genius—it's a story about self-discovery. Will's journey shows that finding yourself isn't about being the smartest person in the room or living up to others' expectations. It's about confronting your fears, letting go of the past, and choosing your own path. When Will finally decides

to leave everything behind to "go see about a girl," it symbolizes his eagerness to take control of his life for the first time.

Overall, *Good Will Hunting* is a powerful reminder that everyone has potential, but realizing that potential requires courage. It teaches that you can't truly find yourself until you're willing to face who you are and who you're afraid to become.

Contemporary Movie Review: *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come* (2026)

by Frankey Coakley

Did I absolutely love this film? Yes! *Ready or Not 2* is a film I've been waiting on ever since it was first announced, and it did not disappoint whatsoever. It's packed with story, action, thrills, and chills.

The film follows right after the first, so you don't miss an ounce of time between the 2 movies, which personally I really like. This movie was packed with many thought-provoking surprises as well, from things such as small twists to big reveals all throughout. The film also lets you listen to absorb the small details while still leaving you room and time to watch the big ones unfold.

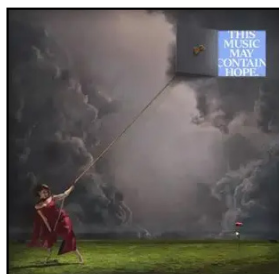
The inner stories are beautifully intertwined, both deriving backstory from the protagonists and antagonists, giving each one its own personality and reason for how they are and act. Plus, the backstories go all the way from small to traumatic.

Something I love about these types of films is that they know how to be funny without forcing jokes. They make the humor natural. Even in a stressful horror/thriller, they still find ways to make something hilarious without telling the joke flat out, which nowadays is not as common as it should be.

The injuries within this movie are extremely creative most of the time, but even basic ones are done really well. The way they do the VFX and the CGI is perfect. The acting was just mwah, chef's kiss. The anger, the sorrow, the true fear, and the raw emotion that drove through that story were beautifully done. Every actor was perfect to every last degree! I have no notes whatsoever.

My personal thoughts on this movie? I loved it, every second was enjoyable for me, and it felt like no part went too slow either. The pacing was wonderful, and the story kept me hooked the entire time it was going, all the way to the last second. Something I love about it is that they found a way to make the first film just a small piece of something way bigger than it was thought to be, it opens a whole new world of story, and it works really well!!

Who'd enjoy this? I feel like this movie is for most thriller lovers. The pacing goes at a great



THIS MUSIC MAY CONTAIN HOPE



Good Will Hunting



Ready or Not 2: Here I Come

speed, and though it has a knack for small details, you could still enjoy it without having to pay too close attention. Though it has gore, I feel like if you watched the first movie, you should be fine with the second.

Contemporary Movie Review: *The Drama* (2026)

by Rachel Wheelon

Starring Zendaya and Robert Pattinson, *The Drama* is the most stressful movie I have ever seen. I was not expecting anything I saw in it.

From the trailer, you know that the movie focuses on a couple the week before their wedding.

At a dinner with their friends, they share the worst thing they've ever done. Emma, played by Zendaya, shares something that shocks everyone, and causes chaos between her and her soon-to-be husband, Charlie, played by Pattinson.

However, you don't know what the secret is from the trailer, which is what made the movie so enticing for me to see.

I won't spoil it because going in blind was truly what made watching this movie so entertaining. While some spoilers have already come out from viewers, the film did an amazing job of keeping the element of surprise. It wasn't played at any film festivals like it normally would be because then the secret would have been revealed months before the premier, making its premise slightly less enticing.

What I will say is that this felt like the longest movie I have ever seen and it has a runtime of just under two hours. I was so stressed throughout the entire film, and leaving the theater, my mom and I were silent for a few minutes because we were so surprised.

I'd highly recommend going to see this film solely for the shock factor.

Video Game Review: *Titanfall 2* (2016)

by Ellis Richards

Do you like the idea of running around insanely fast with the ability to wall run and double jump? Do you like high kit variety and expansive arsenal options? Do you like Giant mechs? Well *Titanfall 2*, expertly marries the two in both its heartfelt campaign and its high octane multiplayer. Releasing back on October 28, 2016, *Titanfall 2* has garnered a dedicated cult following of skilled players who continue to fill the servers to this day! This is despite just failing to meet EA's original sales goals, and a lengthy plague of server based/balance issues that slowly eroded the initial playerbase following launch.

Central to *Titanfall's* story, gameplay, and well...the title, Titans are massive, intelligent, and extremely dangerous combat mechs designed specifically for use in tandem with advanced Pilots. Highly trained, agile, and armed to the teeth, pilots are extremely lethal and are built from the ground up to control and engage with titans as well as enemy pilots. Pilots and titans represent the peak of humanity unified with the peak of technology under dedication to the greater good; a theme central to the games story.

You begin your *TF2* journey as aspiring pilot Jack Cooper (Matthew Mercer) undergoing pilot training before a sudden offensive from the IMC military (designated evil corporation) rips you from your training and planetside to fight in the conflict. Upon landing, Jack wedges open his drop-pod to discover horrific losses on the side of the frontier militia and witness the execution of his mentor, captain Lastimoso. (the guy who was training you moments ago) Shortly thereafter surviving a conflict of his own, Cooper takes on Lastimoso's mantle, officially dons his pilot helmet, and makes a pact with Lastimoso's titan BT-7274 (Glenn Steinbaum), effectively kicking off the story and somewhat realizing his dream.

Their goal, after surviving and getting their bearings, is preventing the IMC's use of the fold weapon. A massively destructive device capable of vaporizing entire planets by warping/"folding" time and space. The IMC has also dispatched the Apex Predators, an elite group of pilot mercenaries, to hopefully halt Jack's progress. Your trip to the fold weapon takes you through sanitation facilities, massive underground factories, time-travel, and active war ships as you decimate each member of the Apex Predators on your way to save everyone. This also acts as a clever tutorial for fighting each of the titan classes you'll face regularly in multiplayer, that being Ion, Scorch, Ronin, Tone, Legion, and Northstar; who each feature a unique and deadly array of weapons and abilities.

After besting the game's final boss, Slone (who pilots Tone), BT and Jack reach the fold weapon with seconds remaining before it fires. Immediately BT removes a fearful Jack from his Chassis, restating the iconic "Protocol three: protect the pilot" before talking over Jack's protest and throwing him to safety. As Jack flies away we watch BT's frame crash into the center of the fold weapon with a final "goodbye, Jack." As Jack narrowly escapes the ensuing explosion, a far future epilogue version of himself narrates the progression of the war afterwards, que cut to credits.

Outside of the campaign, *Titanfall 2* features a stellar multiplayer mode which continues to feel extremely enjoyable despite flaws in balancing/strategy. In the standard mode, attrition, two teams of pilots fight it out in a lengthy deathmatch with players utilizing creative movement and precise marksmanship to best each other. Around halfway through, titans get called down on each side, and fighting grows even more chaotic as a mix of pilot and mechanised combat takes the stage until one team hits six hundred points. Pilots can choose between a variety of abilities and weapons ranging from grappling, teleportation, invisibility, increased speed, holographic clones, etc. While titans each have different kits depending on their class, Scorch utilizes explosive fire, Northstar is an agile sniper, Tone utilizes burst-barrage, and many more.

Overall, through its exceptionally smooth movement based gameplay, tear-jerking campaign, and dynamic multiplayer, *Titanfall 2* earns its place as the blueprint to mega-hit Apex legends, and effectively retains a loyal playerbase to this day.



Titanfall 2



The Drama

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May Horoscopes

by Ellis Richards <3

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Leave it up to chance because we both holding hope for a non-chaotic month is a fruitless endeavor. Besides, it's kinda fun. The infinity between the dice falling and displaying a number, the thrill of showing your hand after playing the long game, the anxiety as you scratch number after number off the back of your lottery ticket- lean into the uncertainty of possibility, embrace it!

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Hurray! The cold is gone so get your reptilian self outside instead of draped over our fake fireplace like the world's biggest scarf. I genuinely don't understand your capability to blast yourself with the heat of forty suns, and then stand up to go to bed under five heavy quilts and a toasted pillow.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Pick your least favorite bad habit and use it as target practice! Now between nail picking, chewing loud, poor driving, poor sleep, constant phone use, 200% of your daily caffeine intake, no studying, mouth breathing, impulse buying, lacking hydration- oh boy.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Negotiation *is* your strong suit, so I implore you to try now more than ever to get that piercing. Even the coldest heart of the coldest mother may waver in the face of a slightly effortful powerpoint and collared shirt. Don't forget the artful addition of an intentionally convoluted "sources" slide.

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Prove to me you're somehow not working with Carmen Sandiego because your spring break vacation post looked like a photographic re-telling of *The Odyssey* and you have enough money to constantly keep a full tank of gas in the big '26. Consider bringing me in a spare trunk and keeping me alive by periodically feeding Mamba Fruit Chews with water through a vinyl pvc tube.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Things are *current* as can be with life going forward so I implore you to watch, read, and stalk the news! Expect invites out of the blue, coincidences, deja vu, impossibilities, miracles, and curiosities because life is looking everything but predictable atm. Or do the exact opposite and trash all methods of info gathering save for your inner compass and a magic-8-ball. Goodluck, Zoro.

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

You've got a storyteller's glint to the eye as May is time for unlocking your true potential as an entertainer! *Writing, plays, magic, illustration...* In the same way you give these gifts of spectacle to the world, it seeks to repay you in the form of romance. So keep an eye out for sweets from your sweet.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Prioritize yourself and take extra measures to avoid overworking/burning yourself out. But remember to be strategic, May also brings lots of potential new opportunities for you to advance in schooling/work. It's less precarious of a situation than walking a tightrope between two buildings, but not as lax as the five foot, forgotten slackline currently dry rotting in your friend's backyard. (too niche?)

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

Your soul is bursting in a kaleidoscopic array of vibrant neons, soap bubbles, and Fanta. Consider providing a medium for it all: Art of any kind would do wonders to soothe the burnout incurred through having an explosively creative core. Don't waste this month where it's *suuuperrr* active.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

May is a rabbit out of the hat in terms of sudden mysterious fortune Aquarius! Overcast skies and vine covered cobblestone, dim caravans, playing cards, fogged glass, and lock-boxes- To put it simply, you're taking quite a bit more than just a walk on the wild side, you're swimming in it.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

"Work, work Angelicaaaaaa!" It's like you brought the big apple home with you and now work is just as bustling as the city that never sleeps. Now whether you survive, thrive, or suffer due to a microcosmic wall street running out of your work computer is kinda up in the hot-dog cart scented air.

Aries (March 29 – April 19)

If i'm being honest you really need a couple decade long *wandering-swordsman* esque pilgrimage through scenic countryside to regain some inner peace. But we live in the big Carolina' so the best I can offer you is a Needoh and thirty minutes in the Costco freezer room.

Asian American Pacific Islander Month Trivia

by Luciano Cusatis

1. South Korean director Bong Joon-Hu won Best Picture at the 2020 Oscars for what film?
2. Taiwanese-American basketball player Jeremy Lin took the world by storm in 2012, with a phenomenon that became known as what?
3. Which Hong Kong-American popularized Martial Arts through films in the 1970s?
4. In what decade was AAPI month officially established?
5. Which Hawaiian actor plays Aquaman?
6. Which US State has the largest Asian-American population?
7. In 2025, writer Arthur Sze became the first Asian-American to earn what title?
8. This cellist became the first individual Asian-American to win a Grammy in 1984
9. In 1957, Dalip Sing Saund became the first Asian-American elected to what position?
10. How many times has Tiger Woods won the Masters?

Answer

1. *Parasite*, 2. Linsanity, 3. Bruce Lee, 4. 90s, 5. Jason Momoa, 6. California, 7. US Poet Laureate, 8. Yo-Yo Ma, 9. Congress, 10. Eight

Maxim Zakharchyk,
12th grade Theater



Luciano Cusatis

6/10

1. *You*
2. The Lin Shuffle
3. Bruce Lee
4. 90's
5. Jason Momoa
6. California
7. US Poet Laureate
8. Victoria Chan
9. Congress
10. Nine

William Henrikson,
12th grade Band



Luciano Cusatis

7/10

1. *Parasite*
2. Linsanity
3. Bruce Lee
4. 70's
5. Jason Momoa
6. California
7. Pulitzer Prize
8. Yo-Yo Ma
9. Congress
10. Eight

"Things to do in May" Crossword

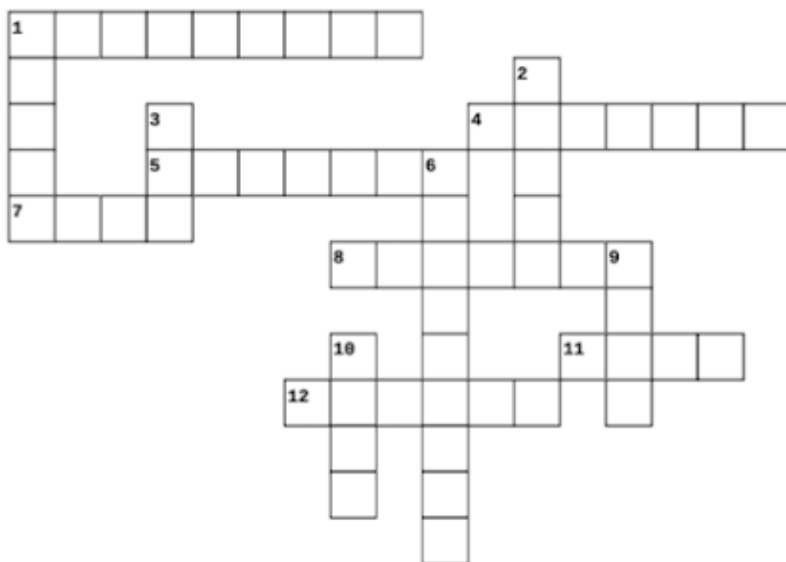
by Frankey Coakley

Across

1. Go to a ____ Garden! See the little winged beauties flap around!
4. Invite the neighborhood to a nice ____! Grill up some good grub!
5. Survive the night in the woods! Go _____!
7. Go on a nice ____ in the hilly terrains!
8. Head to the _____ Market and get the fresh fruits and crops!
11. Go on a ____! Feel the sun and the breeze!
12. Set down a nice little checkered blanket and have a cute little ____!

Down

1. Take a nice day off and feel the sand between your toes at the ____!
2. Go on a ____ Date! See the latest films!
3. Taste a nice delectable _____ pop!
6. Take some you time with your plants and start _____
9. Go ____ Gazing! Try and spot some neat constellations!
10. Take a peek at your feathery friends and go ____ watching!



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

Flowers Word Search

by Frankey Coakley

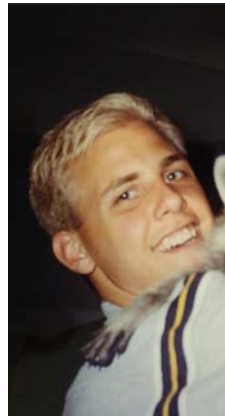
BLOOM
BOTANISTS
BOUQUET
DISPLAY
EXHIBITION
FESTIVAL
FOLIAGE
GARDENING

GARLAND
MEADOW
MOSAIC
ORCHARD
PARADE
PETALS
VIBRANT

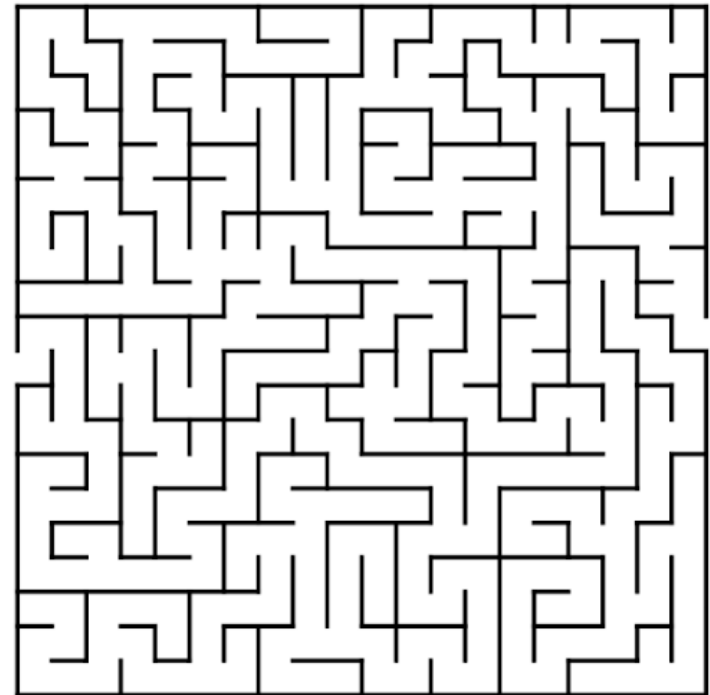
SOA Sudoku

by Frankey Coakley

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



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“Chicken and Waffles from Edison’s.”

Fox Fennel, 6th grade Band



“The Gnocci at Obstinate Daughter.”

Grey Frenkel, 7th grade Theater



“The Sushi Ship from Konichiwa. It’s a boat with ginger sails and a sushi crew.”

Artur Riberio, 8th grade Vocal



“Shrimp and Grits from Page’s Okra Grill”

Coach Butts, Academic Supervisor



“The pizza with calilo olives at Indigo.”

Ms. Boyle, Piano Teacher

What is your favorite dish at your favorite local restaurant?

by Dante Criscitiello and Luciano Cusatis



“The Chicken Fajitas at Los Reyes.”

Coach White, Government Teacher



“The Sampler Platter at Azul.”

Aldrin Moriarity, 9th grade Vocal



“Tacos with refried beans and rice from Senior Tequila.”

William Svendsen, 10th grade Vocal



“Steak and Shrimp Hibachi from Hachiya.”

Carson Godwin, 11th grade Visual Arts



“Crab and Cheese Wontons from Sushi Tarro.”

Suzie Nordoff, 12th grade Visual Arts