

Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, New Hampshire

The Exonian

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English Instructors Share Their Recent Publications



English Instructor Alex Myers reads a passage from his book *The Symmetry of Stars*.

By JOONYOUNG HEO, SELIM KIM, and ADEN LEE

On Tuesday, April 12, Instructors in English Alex Myers, Erica Lazure, and Todd Hearon gathered for a reading of their latest pub-

lished pieces. It was both a celebration of their creative talent and an inspiring opportunity for prospective writers in the Exeter community.

The event was organized by the library and held in the Goel Center for the Performing Arts. Typically open to

Courtesy of William Park

the townspeople of Exeter, due to COVID-19, this reading was only an option for students and faculty at the Academy. While English instructors Matthew Miller and Ralph Sneed were invited to the reading, they were both nominated for the Poetry Society of New Hamp-

shire's "Book of the Year" award, which hosted its award ceremony on the same day. Sneed took home the award.

Myers's piece is entitled *The Symmetry of Stars*. "It's based on the Orlando legends—one part of that features two sets of twins and two women warriors," he said. "I was curious about what a 'sideshow' to the main legend is and wanted to expand on it."

Hearon's piece is entitled *Crows in Eden*. "I became aware of the term 'sundown town' a number of years ago," he said. "It refers to areas in this country that have been made, and maintained, all-white. After doing some reading on the subject and realizing that these are not exclusively southern towns, as I had assumed, but are widespread throughout the American Midwest, Pacific Coast and even up through

ENGLISH TEACHER PUBLICATIONS, 2

Academy Reflects on Course Selection Process

By AVEEN BURNEY, CALISTA LEE, and CATHERINE WU

Students selected their courses for the 2022-2023 school year this week. This process, called "big reg," took place from Monday, April 18 through Wednesday, April 20. The senior lottery took place the week prior. The lottery provides an equitable way to register for limited-enrollment electives for rising seniors. Students consulted with their advisers, college counselors, peers, and families during the course planning process.

Most teachers feel excited and ready for the new classes. "I am excited to teach all and any of my courses," Physics Instructor Tatiana Waterman said. "I am never nervous or worried about any course. Why? Because they all have Exonians in them."

Biology Instructor

Anne Rankin agreed, speaking about the different merits of each of her courses. "I love different classes for different reasons. I love BIO486 [Introductory Genetics] for all the logic and puzzles. I love BIO586 [Molecular Genetics] for the lab work. I love BIO210 [Introduction of Biology] because it is the first high school science class for ninth graders. I love BIO230 because we have made a commitment to teaching about climate change in the Introductory Biology curriculum."

History Instructor Troy Samuels discussed a new course he is introducing, History Through Food. He said, "There's a lot of development work, but we will actually be learning, tasting, and eating while using the whole range of senses to think about historical questions, which

COURSE SELECTIONS, 3

COVID and General Sickness Resurge on Campus

By LAUREN KIM, EMI LEVINE, MAX MANTEL, and ANDREW YUAN

In recent weeks, the Academy has experienced an increase in cases of COVID-19, norovirus, the flu, and seasonal allergies. A variety of factors may have contributed to the rise in cases, including the return from break and Experience Exeter. Because of these increasing numbers, the Academy re-instituted numerous policies such as mandatory masking and mandatory testing.

Assistant principal Karen Lassey explained that the rise in COVID cases "was not really a spike...it was more that we were seeing some increase in transmission on

campus. We could see student-to-student transmission in what we would call second generation spread. We were seeing that in ways that we hadn't been able to identify before."

Lassey also described the administration's approach to addressing the situation: "We're doing the best we can to gather as much information and input as we can, and to also make decisions quickly and responsively to the information we have. We're trying to balance how we can make decisions quickly and responsibly knowing that we have limited information sometimes, especially when we weren't screening students for COVID as often as we are now."

Some students commend-

ed the effectiveness of the Academy's quarantining system. "All the people I knew in there went through stages of being symptomatic but by the time we were released, we were fine. We got in at the start of the small COVID outbreak, so we got to stay in the health center before being moved to the QU for a night where there were many other kids but I definitely preferred the health center," upper Stellan Aalto said.

Many students found that the health center facilitated their experience with their illness well. Patients received snacks and regular check-ups from the staff, and some were allowed to go outside for periods of time or order food. Senior Jacob David said, "I can't say my stay at

the health center was a good experience just because of the nature of my quarantine, but I will say that the health center staff members made it a lot better than it could have been."

Although senior Chieko Imamura found her stay at the health center similarly pleasant, she expressed her frustration with the process. "I know that currently, with all the viruses on top of COVID, and just in general, everywhere on campus seems to be understaffed. And it just feels kind of rude or like it's not my place to complain about the waiting, but every time I went to the health center, which ended up being from very real sicknesses, I had to wait at least two hours," Imamura said.

"I remember I was in the waiting room next to my friend who ended up having COVID, and that was the first time I went in for the stomach bug and I tested negative for COVID, but it's hard not to think that I didn't get COVID from being in the health center for so long without getting checked, you know? And I'm not really sure what the solution is because obviously the nurse's number one priority is taking care of the people who are already sick but yeah, that was a bit frustrating," Imamura added.

Some students also raised questions about the procedure for testing students. "I think that the testing procedure is a little weird because there were several people I knew who I wasn't neces-

sarily close contacts with, but I know had been in contact with people who had COVID, but they couldn't get tested unless they were actively showing symptoms, which was a bit concerning," senior Will Park said. "I think part of that also has to do with the fact that the health center has been really overloaded recently, so they can only afford to give COVID tests to people who are actively showing symptoms, but it was a little weird to hear about."

Imamura expressed similar concerns with the logistics of the quarantine and testing process. "I was really confused about who was staying

COVID RESURGENCE, 2

Learning Centers in Review

By ANVI BHATE and CHENGYUE ZHANG

The Learning Centers—consisting of the Math Center, Science Center, Writing Center, and Modern Languages Center—run from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and serves as a space for students to get academic help in various subjects from peer tutors and teachers. Operating on the first floor of Phillips Hall, students are able to receive help from a faculty member and other students by signing up or dropping in.

The Writing Center was shut down halfway through the 2018-19 school year, and was brought back earlier this year by English Instructor Alex Myers. Alongside the revival of the Writing Center, an effort to combine peer tutoring and the newly installed Modern Languages Center began. Both students and faculty alike find the centers very helpful and nourishing learning experiences.

Explaining why the Learning Center was brought back, Myers said, "Peer tutoring has existed for a long time, and the Writing Center ran for three years and then stopped. This year we committed to re-opening the writing center and in the process Languages, Math, and Science also became interested, so they joined on. We asked the peer tutors to join us in the Elting Room so that all the groups would be together. That makes it easier to find and use the help. We wanted to offer help at a time that is convenient and consistent so that assistance was available to a wide range of students."

History Instructor Mika Court described her experiences at the Writing Center. "[As a] faculty member, [the experience is] always really smooth, clear, and enjoyable. I get to see the range of assignments that faculty are assigning, which I find fascinating, and I get to work with so many students in a different way,



Lower Michael Yang visits the Modern Language Center to study Latin with Classics teaching intern Alexandria Frank.

Minseo Kim/*The Exonian*

one on one. As much as it takes time, it's energizing. I love teaching, and I love the feeling of [knowing that] I can be providing some support."

Faculty member Laurie Barr, who is a neurodiversity dyslexia disability specialist, shared the same sentiment, "Everybody in the Learning Center is working hard to support students in

such positive ways," Barr said. "I think that it's become a, not just useful, but really engaging and supportive environment, and that has been awesome to see."

This year, the Modern Languages Center was a new addition to the program, and has received very positive feedback. "At the beginning I was a little

skeptical about how many people were actually going to come to like the Center, but I've gotten a good amount of people," Spanish peer tutor and upper Sofia Morais recalled. "Every time I'm here, someone will come ask for help, and towards finals, it starts to pick up a little more."

Other tutors had similar thoughts. "It's pretty high

commitment, but I honestly feel like it's worth it. You really feel like you're helping people, and it helps me also review things by explaining it to other people," biology peer tutor and upper Vibha Udayakumar reflected. "The environment is really welcoming. There's al-

LEARNING CENTERS, 2

News

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» COVID-19

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» LEARNING CENTERS

Read about this year's Math, Science, Writing, and Modern Language Centers, 1.

English Teacher Publications Cont.



Alex Myers, Erica Lazure, and Todd Hearon's (left to right) recently published books exhibited in Goel.

Courtesy of William Park

New England, and discovering that I had been born into a probable sundown town in Texas, had grown up just across the mountains from such a community in North Carolina, I knew I wanted to write on the subject. The 'Eden' of my book is an imagined amalgam of hundreds of sundown towns that I researched, where very similar occurrences have taken place."

Lazure's book is entitled *Proof of Me and Other Stories*. "It's a short story collection that is set in a fictional town called Mewborn, North Carolina...The collection is linked in that each section has stories that are somewhat connected to each other, whether through family ties, geography, or other themes. Some of the characters in the collection may not even know each other, but you'll see one character showing up in another's story—but they're all more or less a part of the same community," Lazure said.

Lazure continued by mentioning the decision to center her piece around a fictionalized community set in the American South. "I'm not from the South [and I don't] consider myself a 'Southern' writer. But I first started writing fiction after I moved to North Carolina and had the chance to read so many wonderful Southern authors, that I feel my writing is influenced by a Southern literature tradition," Lazure explained.

Miller's piece is a collection of poems entitled *Tender the River*. "The book is a look back at the town and river valley I grew up in, but not just my personal history but the history going back to the last ice age, the coming of the indigenous peoples, to the colonists and the industrial era, labor protests, to the economic and social issues of a post industrial immigrant town that keeps trying to find love and life along the banks of the Merrimack River," Miller said.

Each of the instructors' creative processes has a unique structure and consistency. "I like to work from existing texts, taking these as the backbone for a work of fiction," Myers explained. "Other times I make things up entirely. I try to write every day, even when I don't feel like it. Sometimes, even if I think 'I don't know what to write,' if I just start writing, then more emerges. For editing, I usually share a draft with someone and get feedback, let the draft sit for a while, and then try to revise. How I do that depends on what stage the manuscript is in."

For his piece, Hearon did a significant amount of first-hand research. "My creative process involved tons of research and reading and even travel—visiting communities where this sort of thing (violent exclusion of African-American communities) had happened, talking

to people there, collecting their stories, then beginning to arrange and develop them into a long narrative poem sequence," he said. "The best way to avoid writer's block is to stay active and keep reading."

Miller went through a similar process. He explained what crafting poems around a river with a rich historic past required, saying, "Lots of research into the history and language of place and people, going back to the Laurentide ice sheet that covered and carved this area, to the indigenous people who settled it first, to colonization and industrialization and the fall out of all of that. And the biggest thing I wanted to do was honor the stories and struggles of the people that lived and died and dreamed in this valley."

Lazure's collection was finalized and polished through the editing process. "The collection itself is kind of a long time coming...I was the Bennett fellow here at Exeter about 12 years ago, and was working on this collection, and I thought it was finished then. Then, every few years, I would come back to it and reorganize and revise it. This time around, I was able to revise it in such a way that it was ready for publication."

Lazure continued, "When you write a collection of short stories...you have to kind of keep in mind all of the different things that are going on. You can't just think about

one story. You have to think about the story before it, and the story that comes next—how are they in conversation with each other? And so, wrapping your brain around, not just one story, but 20 or 21 stories, and how they connect with each other, is extremely challenging. There were early versions of these stories where there was no real connection, or I wasn't thinking about them in terms of, 'Could these people all live in, or be connected to in some way, to this one community in North Carolina?' The more I was able to spend time thinking about it and connecting some dots, I was like, 'Actually, they can.'"

Miller also found the editing process integral to making his creation. "I try to rescue the poem from terrible first drafts. But really I love revising. I love playing with words, with form and structure, with the possibility of what else the poem might want to be," Miller said.

The organizer of the event, associate director of the library Beth Rohloff, sees these readings as an opportunity for everyone involved. "I think it's great that hosting reading events is another way for the Library to celebrate and support our faculty," Rohloff said. "Whenever possible, we try to organize these events when a faculty member publishes. It's an amazing opportunity for the students as well. Normally they see their teachers in their

classroom, and the teachers are the ones reading and making comments on what the students write. But at these readings, the students get to see a different side of their teachers, almost like a second life. I think it really inspires them to be creative and try something new."

Many in attendance similarly believed that the reading was a worthwhile experience. "It was a really good reading," upper Phil Avilov said. "I thought Ms. Lazure's short story about capitalism and mistletoe was cool. Mr. Myers's book about space entities that keep arguing with each other was pretty funny. One line was like, 'If I had eyes I would roll them.' And Mr. Hearon, he read a few poems about a destructive landscape, like copper mines, and that was really cool as well."

Prep Amara Nwuneli shared similar sentiments. "The readings were very powerful, especially because I heard it from the writers themselves. Each syllable, word and phrase was read as they wrote it to be and each piece had a lasting effect the entire night!" Nwuneli said.

Though Miller and Sneeden could not attend the reading, their time at the ceremony for the "Book of the Year" award presented by the Poetry Society of New Hampshire, proved to be eventful. Both Miller and Sneeden alike expressed

great gratitude for being nominated for such a prestigious award.

Miller shared, "I was honored and it was great to be part of those three finalists. [It's] nice to have work recognized like that. I was a finalist for the Eric Hoffner prize as well, which is a national prize, and it's just nice to know all that work landed with people... It was great Mr. Sneeden won the New Hampshire Book award. That book of his was a long time coming and deserves every award."

Their achievement was also recognized by the instructors at the reading. "When the in-person reading was over, some attendees all huddled around a phone in the Goel lobby, to watch the New Hampshire Poetry Society's awards ceremony," Rohloff said. "It was great to see two of our faculty members recognized for their work and Ralph Sneeden accept the award for best poetry book of the year."

Hearon believes that the support of faculty works doesn't stop there. "I would encourage the community to support your local faculty authors. You can order *Crows in Eden* through the Irish publisher, Salmon Poetry. Copies of my new novella, *Do Geese See God*, are available in the Academy bookstore," Hearon concluded.

Learning Centers Cont.

ways a lot of people to help you out. If I end up helping someone with math or if I don't know how to do my own math homework, there are people who can help me."

Besides the peer tutors, there are also Math and Science Instructors available for drop-in tutoring in the Elting Room, and many peer tutors themselves commented on this as a very helpful aspect of the program. "Teachers are also available, which is particularly helpful when there is a more advanced Math problem or to provide a better bird's eye view of a concept," Math peer tutor and prep Derrick Chu explained.

Many students who have used the Center commented on the positive experiences they've had at the Learning Centers. "I usually go there for writing and chemistry

help," lower Jocelyn Orr said. "The writing center is very good for reading over stuff, and I usually get a better grade if I go and get it read over by teachers. And for chemistry, if I can't do the problems, they show me the ways to do them and help me comprehend the materials better."

"For writing, [the teachers there] are never judgemental of your work. Usually, I pull up my narrative and the teacher reads it first just for a quick skim. Then, they would have me read it out loud and basically pick it apart, figuring out what worked and what did not," prep Anika Bhatnagar agreed.

Many people find the center very helpful for science and math, such as Lower Quinn Coaxum. "It's been so helpful. Students who are tutoring me are in much higher maths than I

am, and it's very nice to get the opinion of other students instead of teacher's point of view on a math problem," Coaxum continued, "I remember [during] final fall term, I was really stressed and panicking, and they helped me in all that. And I did really well, and I kind of chalk it up to the Learning Center. Really, truly they were most helpful."

"I go there for pretty much everything you can possibly go there for. I've used Math tutoring every other night. Then the Science Department got involved, so I've been going for chemistry and it's nice because they have teachers too... I've gone to the Latin extra help and I've also used the Writing Center [as well], which is really helpful," lower Pippa Pflaum said.

Some students found the peer tutoring intimidat-

ing when they first began, though most have grown more comfortable over time. "Previously, I was kind of scared because most [the peer tutors at the learning center] are so cool and slightly intimidating," lower Katelyn Cui said. "Now that I've been there, I feel like I understand that this place is actually really inviting, and the people there are super nice and totally helpful."

"For peer tutoring, there's teachers there, but mainly it's the students. The students are really helpful. You can go there and chill, but you also have to reach out when you're there to ask for help," Orr added.

Though the Centers are overall beneficial, some students think improvements could be made. "Sometimes I wonder if we can split up science and math," chemistry peer tutor and senior

Olivia Williamson suggested. "They have us in the same room, so sometimes we don't get many science kids, and sometimes we get a lot of them. It's not always as easy to balance."

In addition to this, people felt the need for increased outreach to students to make it more accessible. "I wish more people would take advantage of the Learning Center. Obviously, emails get sent out every week, but I don't know if everyone actually sees the emails. [They can maybe] advertise it a bit more or ask the language teachers to really be like 'if you need help, I'll be here tonight in the learning center.' A lot more people could benefit from this if they knew more about it," Morais said.

Pflaum, among other students, also wished there could be minor changes in the schedule of the centers.

"They are not open on Friday nights when we have Saturday classes or on Sunday nights, but I feel like they should always be open when we class the next day. It'd be really helpful."

Myers also agreed that while the center was effective, there was more that could be done. "I think we've done well, but have room to improve. I'd like to offer daytime hours," Myers said. "I'd like to offer more private space for students to work quietly. I'd like to offer more specialized help for students who have specific needs."

Overall, despite the minor concerns, most agree that all the Learning Centers are helpful and a resource that students should take advantage of. "Definitely utilize the Learning Center!" Coaxum concluded.

Course Selections Cont.

is a new thing here. I'm really just over the moon."

Similar to their teacher counterparts, students from all grades discussed courses they are excited to take in the 2022-23 school year. "I'm excited to take a few religion courses senior year," upper Ryan Kim said. "One class I'm taking next year is Intro to Philosophy. When I was prep, a bunch of seniors told me how interesting the 500s religions were, so I've been looking forward to getting to take those classes for a while."

"I'm really looking forward to Sports Science and History Through Food. I was really lucky to get both of them. I'm also excited for MAT790 Abstract Algebra, because a lot of people recommended it to me and a lot of my friends said the course was really good. And I'm taking a lot of fun classes in the spring with my friends," upper Max Chuang said.

"My interests lie in the sciences, so I am definitely most excited for my chemistry course next year," lower Sophia Lala said. "I haven't had much exposure to this subject in the past, but because I love biology, I am sure chemistry will be really interesting as well."

Preps are looking forward to taking fun courses during their next year as well. "I am most excited to take both chemistry and biology next year. These are courses I've never taken before and they sound very interesting," prep Lang Gou said.

"Next year, I'm looking forward to taking History 309 which focuses on skin colors and race and other outside traits... The class seems really riveting

and I'm looking forward to discussing the ideas the materials might provoke. I am also looking forward to taking Art 208... Personally, I really enjoy art and also because it will be my first art class at Exeter," prep Soleil Jamani said.

Uppers shared their experiences with the senior lottery. "I was really lucky and got the classes that I wanted to take!" upper Lara Muyombwe said. "I only put in English electives and I was able to get all of the ones that I chose."

Kim agreed, "I'm super happy with the classes I got in the senior lottery. I got my first or second choice for both terms of English, and am definitely looking forward to them."

"I am excited to take Food History in the spring and Principles of Engineering and Design in the fall. Some of my English electives should be fun as well," upper Leyla Unver said.

Students discussed how they chose their courses for senior year. "I looked for classes that related to my interest," Kim said. "In the spring, for example, I'm taking Baseball: an American Narrative. I've been a huge baseball fan forever, so I'm super excited that I get to take a class like that my senior spring. And in the winter I'm taking a course on Kazuo Ishiguro, who's been one of my favorite authors for a while, so I'm super excited for that class as well."

For Muyombwe, it was similar. "I looked for courses that pertained to really interesting things! I love creative writing and I thought it would be amazing to take an elective dedicated to that, and

I thought the course description for the Harlem Renaissance elective was really intriguing as well."

"In terms of senior year English electives, I just chose the courses my friends chose," Chuang said. "I am taking [Pages To Screen: Film Adaptations]—which is awesome because I get to watch movies (for homework). And then I got Salman Rushdie, which was my third choice."

For underclassmen, deciding courses also involved hard choices for many. "As a rising upper, my classes for next year didn't require a lot of thinking because I am just taking higher levels of all the core subjects as well as U.S. History. However, I definitely did consult as many people as I could, including my parents and my advisor," Lala said. "I do think that my classmates were the biggest help to me because I received their advice on specific classes, some of which they had already taken, and I could then decide on my choices accordingly."

"Deciding my courses was a long and difficult process. I talked for months with my parents as well as consulted with upperclassmen," Guo said.

"For picking my courses, I talked to upperclassmen and people in my dorm to figure out which classes they enjoyed," Jamani agreed, "And their opinions on taking physics or chemistry, and then I also talked with my advisor and my parents to finalize my decisions for next year."

And for subject-specific courses, "I talked to Mr. Leger, the head of the Science Department, to get

a better sense of the workload," Huang noted.

Regarding the course selection process, many students offered their opinions and potential suggestions for improvement. "The process was slightly stressful because there was such a short window for registration," lower Eric Wu said. "I wish the administration would widen the window to something like a month because there's no apparent reason why it must end so early."

"They could update the Lion Links [the site for course registration] page because it's very confusing," prep Siri Bompelli said.

"I do think that they could make the online platform, Lion Links, more interactive. Right now, the design isn't the best, which makes it slightly complicated to sign up for the classes that you want," Lala agreed.

Some underclassmen noted the difficulty of fitting courses into their limited schedules and diploma requirements. "My biggest problem with course selection is that there are so many courses I want to take, but not enough time to take them," Gou said.

"Making sure that you meet all the graduation requirements is very difficult. Lion Links is a place where I can look, but I wish that other adults knew about the requirements better, so if they look at my plan for the next few years, they would have a better understanding of what was missing," prep Sarah Huang said.

The senior lottery presented a unique set of challenges as well. "The senior lottery is fine—it's random. For the lottery, I wish you

could have a preference for English electives during winter and spring terms. Not just ranking within term, but also ranking overall what we'd want to have," Unver said.

Some students find the senior lottery to be a detrimental process. "My experience with the senior lottery was terrible," upper Krish Patel said. "This school prides itself on its academic rigor and the academic opportunities which it provides, yet the robust curriculum is pointless if students interested don't have opportunities to take their courses of choice."

Instructors also notice the downsides of the senior lottery. Sometimes, when students do not get the classes they wanted most, "the instructor's energy doesn't align with the student's energy. It just becomes hard to make the course feel alive. about it." English Instructor Elizabeth Dean said. "[Try to] be ready to get into the subject."

Chuang offered suggestions regarding the ranked course selections within the senior lottery. "I feel like it's kind of weird how they run the non-English senior lottery," Chuang said. "You only get one slot— you can rank three choices, but what if you want to take two non-English senior lottery courses? And I wanted to take both Sports Science and the Intersection of Science, Health, and Race, but I only got one choice."

"Our school's distinct hierarchy by grade is exactly how course registration should work," Patel continued. "Rising seniors should get the first chance to sign up, followed by

uppers, then lowers. This allows rising seniors the opportunity to sign up for courses they have been waiting for for three years before students who have been waiting less time. This makes sense since the registration isn't based on merit or any other factors besides whose network connection is the quickest."

"I think maybe it could be cool to have everybody fill out a registration, then send it in, so it's not a matter of 'who has the best wifi at 9:50 a.m. on some random Monday.' And what if somebody has a meeting? There's also some [rising] uppers who got my spot for Engineering Design, and I feel like some priority should go to seniors, or it's kind of weird that some popular courses weren't in the lottery," Chuang continued.

Despite some flaws, most students and teachers are looking forward to classes next year. With so many interesting courses, it's hard to pick one. It can also be nervewracking to pick new classes covering topics one might not be familiar with. Even teachers experience this, but as Rankin said, this anxiety is normal. "I think a little nervousness reminds me that I really care about what I am doing. [Former instructor] Mr. Aaronian told me a long time ago that I should be worried if I was not nervous!"

COVID Resurgence Cont.



Students exhibiting COVID symptoms quarantine at the Lamont Health and Wellness Center.

where and why. I don't know who's staying in the QU, I don't know who's staying in the health center. In terms of who gets released and how people are released, I was allowed to come back to campus when Dr. Lilly called me and said, 'Are you having any symptoms?' And when I said no, she was like, 'Okay, you're free to come back,' but other people had to take a rapid test and had to test negative, so I'm just a little confused at the whole system," she added.

Other students noted the inconsistency in the Academy's safety protocols over time. "Sometimes, [the administration] seems very proactive, almost too proactive.

We even had direct entrances—you had to enter through one door and leave through another door way later than we should have," David said. "But then at other times, like earlier this winter, we were completely in quarantine for the first few weeks. Then within the span of a week, the administration went completely hands-off and we were back in person within a short time span. I know that people want things to be back to normal, but maybe just try a gradual approach."

"I feel like the school has done a relatively good job with handling all the cases... But then also I feel like when we got back to campus at the beginning of this term, there

were no quarantine or zoom classes; we jumped straight into everything," upper Wei-yi Huang agreed. "As of right now, it's a nice balance between being really strict and being able to open up and jump back into normal life. I feel like as cases do go down, it would be nice to go back to no masks anywhere."

"It's a hard balance for the administration to strike between safety and having enough freedom that Exeter is a pleasurable experience to live in, but I think it's the best we can do right now. And I think that the student body is also at a place where we're understanding of that enough, so even though we might grumble about all the

policies, we can still understand why they're being put in place," Park added.

Some students offered their input on how the Academy can improve its response to the spike in illnesses. "More information would be nice," Imamura said. "Also, finding ways to make attending class easier, or at least having a better policy in place for catching up on schoolwork...I wish there was more standard protocol on what to do if you have a test or a paper if you actually feel awful at home."

"I think that being flexible is a really important thing for both the administration and for students to have right now," Park said. "I don't

think that the students should really be so critical of the administration because they're not like the CDC, and they're not like trained pathologists either. They're just trying to make the school be able to function."

To improve future experiences at the health center, students shared advice on self-managing health and well-being during the stressful period of quarantine. "The health services and your teachers are there to support you. Prioritizing your physical recovery and health is the most important for you. I was really stressed out near the end of my quarantine about catching up with a lot of my classes. It definitely took a

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toll on me by adding additional stress to my fatigue. In general, just take it easy, prioritize your physical recovery and wear your mask," David said.

Lassey concluded with some advice for the students. "Besides following the protocols and having good discipline around masks, I think the primary recommendation is to be really vigilant about symptoms. Actions such as hand washing, getting enough sleep, and taking care of yourselves can never go wrong. And, as always, keep in mind to be kind and patient with each other," Lassey said.

Life

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» PASSOVER

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Faculty of the Week: Barbara Desmond

By HANNAH PARK and CHENGYUE ZHANG

Travel enthusiast and English instructor Barbara Desmond begins her day early, taking her daughter to carpool before heading to her classroom where she spends most of the afternoon, grading, teaching, and working on her emails.

In her classes and advisories, the EASA [Exonians Against Sexual Assault] advisor and Wheelwright dorm faculty brings her natural warmth to the table. Her constant check-ins and genuine kindness make her a mother figure to many, especially to lower Zara Virani, who describes her as “motherly, caring, kind and thoughtful.”

Virani described a warm memory of Desmond, who helped her during a rough time. “When a dormmate of mine had to leave unexpectedly, it hit me really hard. Ms. Desmond was there for me, baking me cookies, talking to me, and even offering to buy me food,” she said.

Desmond’s advisee prep Jessica Phan agreed. “I trust Ms. Desmond a lot... She always checks in during and outside of advisory, and she consistently shows that she cares about me,” Phan said.

Before this seventeen-year English Instructor came to work at the Academy, she taught at a small boarding school in MA called St. Mark’s. Her passion for English and decision to become a teacher was cultivated by her upbringing. “I come from a family of readers and storytellers who are not necessarily college educated. [They are] people who were always passionate about reading, but didn’t necessarily go to college, and those were the people who inspired me, my dad and my great uncle,” Desmond said.

“[My father] always encouraged my sisters and me to pick something that we were really passionate about as our career choice and to pursue it regardless of financial gain, so that’s how I ended up becoming a teacher and studying literature,” Desmond added.

“I could have gone a lot of different ways with it,” Desmond reflected, speaking of an early job in publishing. “I realized I didn’t want to do [publishing] because it was really about wheeling and dealing and getting the right book contracts and going out to lunch



English Instructor Barbara Desmond stands in front of her colorful bookshelf.

Owen Dudley/The Exonian

and being on the phone all the time. So I went back to graduate school and started teaching and I realized how much I enjoyed [it].” Desmond taught in colleges until an unexpected summer high school teaching opportunity arised and she fell in love with secondary school education.

For Desmond, the Harkness Method is one of her favorite parts of teaching because of “the discovery.” “I love being in a classroom and the back and forth of the Harkness classroom in particular,” Desmond said. “It truly is best when you are on the side watching young people discover and talk about ideas. I also love the challenge of being there and helping them, but standing back to and not taking over and just watching it unfold. It’s pretty beautiful.”

“Ms. Desmond has had the greatest influence on my own teaching, especially when we team-taught ENG589: Reimagining the Classics. Observing her at the table has inspired me to work on my own Harkness skills and to become a better listener,” Desmond’s husband and Classical Languages Instructor Nicholas Unger said.

Her love for teaching and

care for others is clear to her students as well. For Virani, this has been the case both in and outside the classroom. “I think Ms. Desmond, unlike the other teachers I know, has this motherly touch that always makes me feel safe and watched out for. Being a mother herself, she has this instinct and she can always tell when someone’s having a stressful time. She’s very easy to talk to and because she has kids, she is able to provide that mature yet parental view that most teachers just can’t do,” she said. “I admire Ms. Desmond’s resilience and willingness to take care of us. Even in the time when she had COVID and was sick, she was able to help me organize a project I had going on.”

Though Desmond’s kindness reaches all she interacts with, she especially appreciates the opportunity to teach preps in their first Harkness English class while teaching seniors at the same time in fall term. “You just see how much people grow up in the course of their four years here. It’s incredibly dramatic. They’re getting, in different ways, all of the joys of teaching here,” Desmond said. “On the one hand, you have the preps,

you’re so curious and engaged and sometimes a bit chaotic. Then on the other hand, you have the seniors who are so thoughtful and independent and able to really dig deep and ask all the questions.”

“[Ms. Desmond] has a warm presence in the class. Even if it’s an 8 a.m. class, she always has an infectious sort of happiness that students just feel in my experience. I just feel more energized and more compelled to participate because it feels like she is always genuinely excited to see you every day,” senior Anya Tang explained.

Tang continued, mentioning how Desmond sometimes lets her 8 a.m. classes go to Wetherall to briefly grab breakfast because she is worried about her students not eating. “Having that level of concern for a student that goes beyond their grades or what they turn in is something that I have not seen in many other teachers in my life,” Tang said. “To have a presence like her is so consistently warm and nurturing. That is what encourages me to not just be a better student, but to be a better person.”

English instructor Christina Breen mentioned that in the 25 years she has known

Desmond, she can describe her as an ‘excellent leader and consensus builder.’ “I find [Ms. Desmond] to be a warm and generous colleague and friend. She is so smart and patient and she brings these qualities to her work in the department, the dorm, her clubs and her advisory. She is an outstanding listener and knows how to bring people together,” Breen said.

In her freetime, Desmond enjoys running, reading, watching films, going to the theater, and traveling. “She’s a Wordle fanatic, that’s for sure, along with her daughter. It makes sense since she loves the written word. We enjoy hiking together quite a bit. We spent one of our anniversaries climbing Mount Washington and staying at a hut up there... We also work out together. We go to a personal trainer, and we enjoy spurring each other on,” Unger said.

As a travel enthusiast, she often travels to places such as Nova Scotia, New York, New Mexico, and London to visit friends and family. “My family lives all over the place, so we often have to travel to see them,” Desmond said.

When asked about what is one thing she wished to know when she first came to Exeter,

Desmond said she wished she had “branched outside” and “understood what Exeter is like beyond what you see downtown.” “I think that sometimes people here live within this little boarding school bubble and whatever preconceptions you bring to Exeter about what Exeter is like unless you go beyond... It’s important to be part of the larger community, especially if plan to stay in Exeter for a while,” Desmond said.

Desmond’s tenderness and compassion that stays with her wherever she goes has not gone overlooked. “She genuinely cares about us and it shows. My favorite thing about her would be that I can go to her with any problem I have and she’ll always have a solution that relieves my stress,” Virani continued, showing her appreciation for moments with Desmond and her puppy Rex, who Desmond takes around spreading joy. “I never fail to laugh around Ms. Desmond. I love hanging out with Rex and she has always brought him in when I’m feeling down. I’ve learned the ins and outs of Exeter thanks to her, I don’t feel like a stranger to campus.”

Students Celebrate Passover Seder

By NHAN PHAN and EMILIA KNIESTEDT

On Friday, February 22, the Exeter Jewish Community (EJC) held a Seder open for the entire Exeter community. According to Director of Studies Scott Saltman, who helped prepare for the event, “different foods represent different aspects of the story. The most familiar is matzo, or unleavened bread. After fleeing Egypt in the Exodus under the leadership of Moses, the Jewish people had no time to wait for yeast in bread to rise. We honor that hardship by eating only unleavened bread for eight days!”

Lower Avery Selig returned home to celebrate the occasion. She described the Seder meal in more detail. “First, we start off with prayers for the food and drinks.

Normally we have Passover Seder books with the blessings. Most blessings are said by the whole family, while others are said by the youngest member of the family.”

Saltman talked about a change to this year’s service, “The most memorable part was going through the Haggadah, the book that guides the service, and choosing what passages we would read. The book is over 200 pages long, and this is the first time EJC was using this particular book. We had to choose passages that honored the traditions and told the story of Passover, recognizing that this would be the first Seder many attended. We also had to make sure we kept it to a reasonable length.”

Upper Andy Horrigan also enjoyed the number of new faces at the

celebration. “I’ve never seen a celebration of Jewish culture at Exeter so packed,” he said. “I expected there to be maybe ten people, but there were six tables completely filled with students and faculty too. It was a really good way for everyone to come together.”

“Everyone was very glad to be there, very happy with what they’re doing and really willing to have conversations, willing to celebrate. It was really nice. For those who were not necessarily Jewish, more often than not, they were very respectful and willing to participate within the common tradition,” Horrigan added.

Upper David Kim talked about his experience attending the Seder. “As someone who does not identify as Jewish, I feel like Passover, as a celebration, is a great

opportunity for me to experience different kinds of cultures as well as understand the depths of the Seder meal and how it is symbolic of Jewish stories,” Kim said.

Horrigan described the matzo breaking at the beginning of the ceremony, emphasizing the camaraderie and significance of the event. “Everybody around the table, we broke off one piece of matzo and we all took part in it. It was very friendly. It was a very good moment for our small community.”

Director of Religious and Spiritual Life Reverend Bonnie-Jeanne Casey noted the holiday’s unique role of both educating and celebrating, “I love the Seder so much because teaching, storytelling, and education are built into the ceremony. Seder tells the sto-

ry through the meal and that’s one of its powers... we are purposefully trying to walk a line of educating, but educating in the spirit of an embodied tradition. The Passover Seder is really a great expression of support and solidarity across religious identities.”

Casey also noted how Seder is purposefully meant to be a cross-generational ceremony. “Passover is so great because there’s purposefully meant to be multiple generations around the table.”

Casey went on to explain Find the Afikomen, the tradition of hiding a piece of matzo and giving the youngest the task of finding it. She explained how the game “assumes that you’re going to have different ages around and that’s important too, at a school like ours, where

the student body is largely 14 to 18-year-olds, and it’s really important to have faculty as adults at these kinds of events. On the one hand, yes, it’s a Jewish student event, but it’s very much a Jewish community event.”

Upper Ben Martin concluded by noting the inclusivity of EJC in general. “Every Friday night, we have Shabbat dinner, open to all members of the Exeter community, Jewish and non-Jewish. EJC is a good time for all, we always appreciate new members of the community,” Martin said.

Skylark Ensemble Premieres *Sub Rosa*

By ANDREW YUAN '24

On Tuesday, Skylark Ensemble, a Grammy-nominated a cappella chamber choir group, performed the premiere of *Sub Rosa*, a collaboration concert series between alumnus musician Gregory Brown '93 and alumnus author Dan Brown '82 in the Forrestal-Bowld Music Center. Originally scheduled for March 2020, the Ensemble visited the Academy as a residential musician group for five days, rehearsed and workshoped musical pieces with the Academy's choir students.

This year's residency marks Skylark's first return to the Academy since the ensemble's 2018 visit when the choir group debuted two pieces, "Te Deum" and its companion piece "Sepulchrum Mutum" in The Bowld and the Phillips Church.

G. Brown, the composer of the Skylark Vocal Ensemble, elaborated on his decision to return to Academy in 2018. "The visit was really meaningful to me. My mom passed away about six months prior and I sort of did a meditation on Tuesday mornings. The choir sang music that I had written for them, it was

incredibly meaningful not just to my mom, but to me as well," he said, "I was able to speak a lot of important life events and share them through music."

Chair of the Music Department Kristofer Johnson shared the importance of Skylark Ensemble's recurring visiting residency to music students and the community. "As a music department, we try really hard to serve all of the different constituencies and types of music-making that happen under this building. People might be interested in larger types of music performances and we see that not only as the concert series, but also as an opportunity for students to come and learn from world class artists right here on campus," he said.

G. Brown agreed, citing the intricate process and valuable experience of rehearsing and perfecting musical performances with professional musicians. "It is so important for students to see professionals rehearse. So often you go to a concert and you see just the polished piece. You don't have a sense of how much work goes into getting there. It's a great thing to be able to see people making mistakes, disagreeing,

trying different things, coming to a place where people didn't think would work, but it really does work," he added, "a well-run rehearsal can be like a Harkness classroom where, where people communicate and work out for the better."

The Music Department had originally planned for a combined performance between Skylark and the Concert Choir, but the performance was cancelled due to COVID protocols.

The concert centered around D. Brown's fictional character Robert Langdon in *The Da Vinci Code* as Langdon was enlisted to explore concealed histories behind buried manuscripts of choral music. D. Brown introduced the concert on Tuesday virtually through a pre-recorded video. "We wanted to present a show as if looting through Robert Langdon's eyes again to find what is hidden in history. We wanted to find music that was both appropriate for the choir but also appropriate for the audience, that the audience could take something away from without me explaining music theory for 20 minutes," G. Brown said.

Choir students found the workshop experience

with Skylark Ensemble as inspiring and educational for their music learning.

"Their tips are so insightful and really helped us bring more emotion into our pieces. I have learned a level of specificity in their approach to pieces, such as improvement with dynamics and also breathe work among other things. I hope students can take away the beauty that can be reached through singing if you give each phrase each note a specific focus and an intentionality. It was so amazing to hear Skylark perform, especially *Immortal Bach*, because in Concert choir we have been working on that and it was so great to hear how the piece should sound," Concert Choir member and lower Colin Maloney said.

Fellow member and upper Stellan Aalto agreed, noting the transformation that the choir underwent during its rehearsal with the Skylark Ensemble. "In the two rehearsals, our whole choir changed. Their presence and advice channelled a new focus, which we had never had as a choir. They had many opportunities where members of the ensemble came out to help us," he said, "From diction to dynamics, over

the course of the two rehearsals our choir grew so much. We also got to hear them sing songs we had been practicing along with pieces from their own program which was really special and unique. The whole experience was ethereal."

"We have been working with Skylark especially on vowels and timing as well as responding more clearly to conductors. I hope that we can take away some amazing examples of pitch we learned from Skylark to implement in our own pieces," upper Oliver Brandes said.

Lower David Goodall agreed, citing the rehearsal experience as incredible. "Concert Choir rehearsed several of our current pieces with Skylark Ensemble. It was incredible to work with them, as well as see professionals rehearse the same material we work working on. We learnt a lot, especially with the general flow of pieces," he said, "The performance on Tuesday was incredible and I'm super glad to have seen it!"

Aalto also shared his experience at the concert. "The theme was enigmatic and puzzles in music. There was a projected screen where one of

the composers, Gregory Brown, told the audience about the hidden themes in each piece. I had never seen anything like this, so it caught my attention. After working with them for a couple days, it was really interesting to see them perform and execute the things they had taught us, like breath control, to perfection. It was a phenomenal experience and I hope someday they can come back to the school and do some more workshops," he added.

Along with the rehearsal, G. Brown shared insightful advice for music students at the Academy. "I think the thing that makes a creative person more interesting is all the tangents. A lot of the time, my composition comes from something tangential: I see a piece of architecture, I see an interaction between a tree and a bird. I'll think, what could that mean musically? And that leads you to really interesting, unusual places," he said.

TV Review: *Octonauts* and *The Ring of Fire*



Courtesy of Netflix

By CALISTA LEE '24

Produced by Silvergate Media and originally written by Vicki Wong and Michael C. Murphy, *The Octonauts* is a British children's television series following a diverse group of animals who live inside an undersea base called the Octopod. Led by polar bear Captain Barnacles, the crew conducts research on and takes care of different marine life, teaching kids at home about sea animals and marine biology.

The Ring of Fire focuses on a real-life underwater phenomenon under the same name. The Ring of Fire is a belt of volcanoes that stretches almost 25,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean, with many of them being underwater. In the movie, these volcanoes give the Octonauts lots of trouble. When the first volcano

erupts, it sets off a chain reaction that leads to the other ones going off as well. The main cast is separated in small groups at this point, almost all of them being far away from the Octopod.

As always, the movie has extremely good animation that is consistent throughout the series. The characters are adorable and the animation is shockingly smooth. The design of the movie's newest Gups (the Octonauts' underwater vehicles) are creative and are based off of various sea creatures. These include a mantis shrimp and a Vegimal, one of the fictional half-vegetable half-animal creatures in the series.

I'm not going to lie, I came into this movie with pretty low expectations. Although I'm a die-hard Octonauts fan, I didn't

think a kids' show like this would have much to offer in terms of movies. However, I was proven wrong.

The friendships between the characters are not really discussed much in the main series. Although we see lots of teamwork, not many scenes involve the crew getting out of life-threatening situations. This can be disappointing at times, but it makes the moments where they do show true friendships even more special.

One addition that I was really surprised by was the choice to group Tweak, the engineering rabbit with a southern accent, and Kwazii, an orange cat who is a pirate. These two have very few interactions at all in the main series, and I didn't think they would be friends at all. But in the movie, they go through

an emergency together and somehow make it out alive.

While lava and water are pouring into Tweak's underground and underwater workshop, she and Kwazii are completely stuck and almost entirely submerged in water. They have to use teamwork and wit to make it out alive. I'm completely serious when I say my heart was racing and I was leaning towards the TV. This has got to be one of the greatest cinematic scenes in history.

I also enjoyed how even though the crew was separated, they were still connected through Captain Barnacles' old informational videos. While going through their scary situations, they all turn to his videos for guidance, although they usually stumbled across these videos accidentally. The crew's Gups all have

these movies downloaded and all use them for help throughout the movie. It's really sweet and shows just how important Captain Barnacles is for the team.

There was one thing that irked me, despite how much I loved this movie. Towards the end, all of the new Gups come together to make the Gup-Z, a big super machine that can destroy everything. It gives off Transformer-esque, Voltron kind of vibes. The whole concept felt like a cheap rip off of other similar shows. However, I can't say that I didn't still enjoy this part of the movie. While trying to save some animals inside of a volcano starting to erupt lava, the Gup-Z comes in and saves the day. It's a heroic moment that I really found fun.

Although *Octonauts* and *The Ring of Fire* is

a children's show, it is still very interesting and a good watch. Just because it's meant for kids doesn't mean you should write it off. I recommend everyone take a look at it and get a glimpse of this amazing writing and animation!

Photo Essay: My Black is Royalty Fashion Show



Audience members look on as upper Lydia Osei walks down the Phillips Hall stairs, matching the show's final theme of "royalty."



Senior John Baptiste stops at center stage to showcase his Alsydes t-shirt with the words "Never Stop Growing."



Lower Vera Aimunmondion and senior Marina Williams spin around to show their outfits.



Students cheer as upper Hope Flowers strides down in a beautiful red dress.



Seniors KG Buckham-White, Ifeoma Ajufo, and Marina Williams introduce the fashion show event and models.



Senior Ifeoma Ajufo struts on the runway with a Nigerian flag draped over her shoulders, wearing a black dress and strappy heels.



Uppers Riches Afolabi and Reggie Harris MC the fashion show event.



The audience applauds all performers and hosts for a successful evening show.

Senior of the Week: Moksha Akil



Senior Moksha Akil smiles radiantly towards the camera.

Courtesy of Moksha Akil

By **EMI LEVINE** and **SELIM KIM**

With twinkle-lights spread across the walls, casting a soft glow, senior Moksha Akil lies in her third-floor Merrill dorm room. Fellow Merrilites surround Akil as they crowd around a laptop. Harry Styles sings at his most recent concert. Laughter echoes into the air as Akil and her friends crack jokes and admire the British singer. It is at this moment that Akil is in her comfortable element.

Akil came to Exeter in the fall of 2018 as a prep from Long Island. Boarding school was not what she initially had in mind for high school. “I was very set on going to a private high school in Manhattan called Dalton, but my middle school headmaster suggested that boarding schools were a good option for me because he thought I was quite an independent person,” Akil said.

What did convince Akil of her fit with Exeter was Experience Exeter. “I really liked the energy. The weather was really gloomy that day, and I really like gloomy weather, so that set everything in. It was like it was meant to be,” she said.

Akil discovered her passion for history at Exeter, something that was quite unexpected. “I was actually awful at history in middle school, and to be honest, I’m still not great at it,” Akil reflected. “In fact, I remember that prep winter I took History of Japan, and I was awful at it. I genuinely had no idea what was happening, and I did not speak a word in the class.”

“Then, lower fall happened. I took Classical Greece with Mr. Kilinc...I absolutely adore Mr. Kilinc. He had these five short written assignments instead of three long papers, and it made me fall in love with history,” Akil said. “Right after that, I took Absolutism and Revolution with Ms. Merrill...and I loved reading about Peter and Catherine The Great, and then the French revolution, and all the philosophers like Voltaire and Russo.”

Akil also found she had a knack for English in her lower year. “I liked English because I had Ms. Carbonell lower fall, and she was the person who made me realize that I might not be that bad at writing.

She kind of put it on me, in a sense,” Akil recalled.

So, naturally, when the opportunity to pursue a senior project arose, Akil seized it. “Once senior project sign-ups came out, I was like, ‘Oh, I kind of wanna combine English and history.’” Then, it just came to my mind to do historical fiction, short stories, and I ran with it. It was generally like a two second thought that I ran with...that kind of solidified my love of history in English. So, now I am a history major,” Akil said.

Because of her love of English and writing, one place Akil shined in was her senior meditation, which did not go the way she had originally envisioned. “I was not expecting to go in the direction I went... As I went into it, I had no idea what I was going to write about, but I remember at least a week before it was due, I ended up watching *The Joker* and sobbing right after and then writing my entire meditation after that,” Akil said.

Akil said that she had “three things I could definitely write about,” going into her meditation. “I had my race, I had my parents, and I had my dance and my body to fall back on. I’m actually really proud of myself that I did not write about my race or my parents because I already had written a lot about both of those topics... I ended up writing about my happiness and the perception of me as a quite happy person, and about allowing myself to feel emotion. It was titled ‘Bring Me Home’ and I also wrote about me being a bad daughter and about my relationship with my mom and me being upset that I was upset at her,” Akil added.

Akil also talked about how “cathartic” it was to write her meditation on this: “It was a really good feeling to write this meditation and the fact that it happened after I watched *The Joker* adds personality to it. But I think it was a really big part of myself that I hadn’t really talked about. So being able to write that into my meditation and being like, ‘Hey, I’m not really always happy’ and saying like, ‘Oh, here’s who I actually am, not this perception of me, but I also am this perception of me,’ it was really fun.”

This clear passion Akil possesses towards the humanities is reflected in her active involvement in *The Exonian*. Yet, Akil described how her involvement in *The Exonian* did not come naturally at first. “I did *Exonian* when I came in right off the bat. I remember being in the first *Exonian* meeting with all the other preps, and I was terrified to raise my hand. But, I did and I think I was put on a Faculty of the Week [for] Dr. Hofheinz. I did none of the work. Like, I don’t think I touched the document. I was absolutely terrified...” Akil said.

But, Akil prevailed, eventually finding her place in *The Exonian* through interviews. Akil said, recalling one specific instance, “The main reason why I loved *Exonian* was because of the interviews. I loved interviewing people. I think the most impactful interview I did was with Ciatta Baysah, who is the General Alumni Association President...She was a really cool woman... and it was impressive to see someone who was considered really young, in a position of power, and she was a Black Woman...I think I learned a lot from that and it was like a two hour conversation.”

Akil continued, “I learned to really like interviewing people...I think I am quite a social person and *The Exonian* really cultivated that through the interviews. It wasn’t really like the writing that I liked, like I wasn’t a big fan of introducing the quotes and closing it off to be honest, but I was really fond of getting to know people.”

Outside of academics, Akil is known for her impressive dancing skills in all forms. Yet, hip-hop, one of Akil’s favorite forms, was rediscovered from its dormancy at Exeter. “I didn’t know I liked hip hop until sixth or seventh grade when I went to Frenchwood, a residency arts camp... I did a hip hop class there, and performed with a group...but then I didn’t do any hip hop outside of that,” Akil said. “Then Exeter came, and I joined Dance Company prep spring. But then I saw InMotion and Imani and I was like, ‘Wait, that looks really cool,’ and this comes really naturally.’ So I decided to continue with it.”

Indeed she has, as Akil now serves as coheads for both Imani and Precision, Exeter’s

female step-team.

Akil also cultivated her love for photography at Exeter. “I just did photography as a hobby, like with my phone in middle school and then I got my first camera in eighth grade and I decided to use it with PEAN [Phillips Exeter Academy Notebook],” Akil said.

Akil then went on to mention how photography also encouraged the more social aspects of herself. “It was really fun because I had to go to all of these places and they did not know who I was. I just took pictures of them and was like, ‘Oh I have to do this for PEAN.’ So, I met so many people because of PEAN... For example, senior photos. I met so many people in the grade above me, because I had to take senior photos, and I got to use my camera and have fun with it. I also went to hockey games, and I don’t go to hockey games...so it also gave me a different view of the school,” Akil said.

Akil is truly artistic in all forms as she also has a passion for singing. “I went from being absolutely terrified of singing and only singing in my room with my prep year roommate...in the privacy of our double to singing in a band by myself to being in concert choir. I feel like that’s wild,” Akil noted.

Though Akil has made her mark in her academic and extracurricular passions, she has also made formidable relationships. Indeed, many of those closest to Akil note their fondest appreciation towards her.

Senior Chieko Imamura said her favorite thing about Akil was “how unique she is.” “Not in a way where I’m saying she’s weird or anything but, she doesn’t really believe in type castes. Whenever she wants to do anything, she just kind of goes for it and is kind of fearless. I’ve seen that in small things like theater. She used to do it as a kid and then all of a sudden she wanted to try out for the play. I mean, I’m not sure what ended up happening with it, but the fact that she even tried out in the first place was really, really amazing. With *The Exonian*, I remember she was a little reluctant to apply for an exec position, but ultimately she was like, ‘I’m gonna give it my all, no matter what happens,’” Imamura said.

Senior Ela Andreassen also talked about the unapologetic way Akil carries herself, saying, “I think Moksha has gotten a lot more self assured about who she is as a person. I remember in prep year, she was really worried about proving herself and making friends and being liked by everyone. So it’s been really interesting to see her sort of grow into someone who’s more confident in who she is beyond the approval of others and who doesn’t feel the need to constantly be chasing the approval of others.”

Imamura noticed a similar change, talking about how she has seen Akil grow over their four year here: “She kind of commands more respect, I guess. Not that she didn’t before, but I saw her grow from someone who cared about the normal things of high school like fitting in and classes to someone who cares more about things that she’s really passionate about, like dance and writing and photography and it’s just been really great.”

“She’s also just really fun to be around. I don’t think you necessarily have to be the closest friends with her to have fun with her and at the same time being really close friends with her is so amazing. I think the way people will remember her on campus is that she was just really herself,” Imamura added.

Andreassen had similar thoughts: “Moksha leaves behind a legacy of inclusion and kindness. I think she’s tried really hard to enter spaces that maybe didn’t feel super inclusive to her and leave them feeling more inclusive. Whether that’s *The Exonian* or dance, I think she’s tried really hard to make them less toxic and more habitable for people.”

Lower Sophie Zhu talked about how appreciative she was to find an upperclassman friend and mentor in Akil. “I like our relationship dynamic because even though she is obviously older than me by a few years, she’s not a superior and she’s not condescending. She’s very understanding and that helps a lot when we’re having both normal conversations, but also when I need someone to listen. It feels like she has those extra years of experience, but at the same time, she’s there to listen and be a friend, and I think it’s really valuable to

have someone like that at Exeter,” Zhu said.

“I think that she has a really enjoyable persona and a very attractive aura. Obviously her hair is amazing and I love her outfits but there’s a lot of different areas where she really excels in. And then also not to mention that she’s an amazing human being,” Zhu added.

While Moksha has forged amazing friendships while at Exeter, she has made equally strong relationships with faculty members. Dance instructor Samm Wesler talked about the joys of being able to get to know Moksha inside and outside dance. “She always has such a can-do attitude... She brings such a good balance of an absolutely incredible work ethic while also never taking herself so seriously that she can’t laugh when she makes a mistake or still have fun with it,” Wesler said.

“I also think she does an incredible job of tackling social justice issues through choreography. Her pieces in our winter concert were just of such an incredibly high caliber and she was able to do it in this incredibly approachable way, where it really struck you and really made you think about what she was trying to say,” Wesler added.

As Akil reflected on her four years at Exeter, she advises younger students to make the most of their time here. “Of course, don’t overload yourself...you need free time. But, I think at the same time, don’t just like waste your free time by laying in bed. Learn to appreciate your free time by spending more time with your friends... don’t overwork yourself by just trying to do what their people want you to do, do what you want to do,” Akil said.

Indeed, throughout her time at Exeter, Akil has truly pursued what she loves to do most, becoming a skilled historian, writer, artist, dancer, and above all, a notable friend and student. Wesler concluded, “Moksha will be so incredibly missed. She leaves an impression on absolutely everyone she comes across, from that gorgeous sweep of hair to having such a sweet and kind soul to such incredible dance and choreographic abilities.”

Photo Essay: Skylark Chamber Choir Group



Members of the Skylark choir stand poised to sing.



Skylark and their audience listen to composer Fahad Siadat speak about his music over a recorded virtual interview.



The audience gives the Skylark choir a standing ovation.



Skylark performers receive a bouquet of flowers and embrace upon completing the concert.

Photo Essay: Spring Soul Festival



Lower Ariana Thornton recites her original poem “Where I’m From.”



Uppers Grace Nivera (keyboardist) and Gwen Serrano (singer) and senior Aaron Karl Venzon (guitarist) perform “She Was Mine” by AJ Rafael.



Preps Altan Ünver, Eric Li, and Derrick Chu (left to right) sing passionately.



Students cheer as upper Oliver Brandes belts the Pokémon theme song.



Senior Toby Chan, along with seniors William Park and Elijah Porras, MC the event.



Students come to enjoy international treats such as Ukrainian Syrniki with jam, empanadas, bubble tea, and snacks.

Photo Essay: Dance Showcase



The Heels dance group beams after a dazzling performance.



Seniors Catherine Uwakwe, Kirstin Fontenot, and Marina Williams glow as their self-choreographed dance leaves the crowd in awe.



Members from Echappe coordinate a beautiful series of arabesques.



“Outkast” members lift up upper Riches Afolabi triumphantly in their finale.



Upper Dan Han and senior Anne Chen show off an upbeat performance.



Led by co-head Moksha Akil, Precision takes the stage with strong rhythm and movements.



Imani members look up at their senior co-heads after a mind-blowing final dance.



Dancers from Shakti move gracefully in their flowy skirts.



Upper Brooke Ottoway battles fellow dancer Ki Odums in a dance-off as the Majorettes group make their premiere appearance.



Academy Bellydancing Society (ABS) showed off elegant moves.

Op-Ed

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Criticism of *The Exonian* and Its Reputation

Dear Exonian

How are you doing?

- With love,
your readers + writers

Chloe Zhu/*The Exonian*

By **GAMZETOKSOZ** and **CHENGYUEZHANG**

At the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, in which students learned through the world of Zoom, *The Exonian* connected the student body, especially new students, to the campus's current events. Reading the paper and following its social media updates were easy ways for Exonians to stay in-the-know during an isolating time. However, as the school has returned to in-person programming, the newspaper has only grown more and more irrelevant by the week, or should we say fortnight, as the 144th Board has adopted a new bi-weekly schedule for publishing.

Though harsh, this criticism holds at least some truth. Most of the time, the stacks of papers in the dining hall or EPAC go untouched. Students seem to only pick up a copy or demonstrate any interest in the paper if they wrote in it, were mentioned in it, or just want to do the

crossword. If students are actually interested in the paper's reporting, they're more likely to read only the Humor and Opinions section, as you might be doing now, to read more personal and subjective student pieces.

Following the 144th Board's implementation of a bi-weekly publishing schedule, the News and Life sections inevitably became less relevant and up-to-date, unable to keep up with the fast pace of Exeter's events. What student would care to read on events that happened up to two weeks ago? Reporting becomes obsolete, and even when an event is reported on time, the quality of reporting is lower because there is a lack of information, as the writers were expected to write about the event two weeks before the publishing of the issue. The editors and the board are making an active effort to plan ahead to make the article topics relevant, but there are unavoidable holes in the system. This is not us trying to slander the new sched-

ule, though. It has reduced the writers' and editors' stress, and in the short term, the new schedule adds flexibility, but the long term consequences are worth contemplating.

Furthermore, an important question to ask when considering *The Exonian's* relevance is: who is the paper's audience? Is it the student body, the teachers, or maybe the parents? Most of the time, the paper may feel redundant for a student, but perhaps more useful for a parent, teacher, or someone outside of Exeter, as it reports mostly large-scale events that most students already attend. If the paper wants to stay relevant to students, it needs to increase students' engagement with the content of *The Exonian* and make the paper reflective of students' lives, not only through reporting school-wide events, but also by celebrating the individual experiences of the student body.

Additionally, it is universally agreed upon that part of what makes a good

article is the writer's genuine interest in the topic they are writing about. During recent article sign-up meetings, editors can be seen "bribing" or pressuring writers to sign up for pre-determined article ideas. No shame, it's their job to keep the paper alive, but the fact that few writers are enthusiastic in their sign-ups tells of *The Exonian's* culture. Writers' true commitment to the paper and what we report is an integral part of the paper's success, and the seeming lack of it should be addressed and discussed.

Perhaps it is worth looking at how the Opinions and Humor sections operate, as they appear to be the most alive sections of *The Exonian*. The common denominator of these two sections is that it is fully up to the writer to come up with what they want to write about. Giving the writers more power on what content the paper covers and possibly starting each meeting with a question like, "What is something that you

would like to share with the community?" could enhance the diversity of thought in the paper and help establish a community within *The Exonian*. It could even encourage new writers to join.

One way to achieve this is to report news that is not directly related to Exeter. We know, we know. The articles "should always tie back to Exeter so that there is a reason an Exonian is reading it," but this furthers the idea of the "Exeter bubble" and shelters us from the rest of the world. It would be beneficial to hear personal stories from students featured in *The Exonian* that don't necessarily relate to the school, but should be heard anyway; students' stories and lives are relevant to the paper simply because it features a member of our community. Furthermore, it would be great to see *The Exonian* picking up more columns, such as the Trend Watch on fashionable Exonians, or reports on fun events in town such as the Farmers' Market on Swasey.

The Exonian is a journalistic paper, but establishing an art section, maybe in collaboration with another club, where creative writing and artwork can be submitted and featured. Many students do not feel connected to the paper because student work outside of journalism is not featured. Though this is not the main focus of the paper, offering a section to feature student work beyond reporting could add more diversity to the writing and would be similar to blurbs in many newspapers. *The Exonian* holds the power of publishing high quality papers every two weeks, so why not branch out and make these resources more accessible to the general student body? There are so many ways in which *The Exonian* can improve upon its current reputation, and these are only a few of many other students' brilliant ideas to consider.

Course Rantings

By **CALISTA LEE '24**

The other day, I spoke to an English teacher in my dorm about senior winter and spring courses that get ignored by a lot of students. She told me that lack of interest has caused many of these courses to get canceled in favor of the more popular ones. This made me wonder— what English courses have been canceled since last year?

There have been a couple new courses, such as ENG535: Theater of War: Staging Race, Religion, and Empire, but I was shocked at the loss of some of the old ones. ENG540: Her Story, His Story: Plath, Hughes and the Two Ariels was the first I found when comparing the Course of Instruction 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 version.

When I saw this, I was

actually pretty surprised. This class taught the story of Sylvia Plath and her estranged husband, poet Ted Hughes. Plath had left a collection of poems on her desk before committing suicide, and gained posthumous notability for the quality of her writing. Hughes found these poems and published them, but not before editing them significantly. Some of Plath's original poems described Hughes' poor treatment of her, which he entirely left out before publishing. The class focused on the differences of the original and edited manuscripts as the story behind them.

With such a compelling history, this class being removed was shocking to me. I don't know the details of its removal, but such an interesting and important story must have been intriguing to others. So I'm curious as to

the circumstances that led to this course getting removed.

The next lost course I learned about was ENG545: Junot Diaz: The Diaspora's Fictionista. I won't lie— I probably wouldn't take this course. The course description is bland and it doesn't get into the history of the author or his books. The disappearance of this class wasn't really unexpected. A major factor in student interest is course descriptions. Students aren't going to go out of their way and spend their precious time looking up information on English courses, so when a description isn't alluring, they just won't sign up. That's reasonable, but it's still sad to see a class with a contemporary writer disappear.

This next one made my jaw drop. I had been scrolling through the Course of Instruction book when I saw

the ENG549: Faulkner and Woolf: Finding Your Way in the 20th Century Novel class. Recently, I've been really into Faulkner's writing after my dad recommended one of his books to me. I got so excited when I saw this, but I realized I was looking at the 2020-2021 edition. I quickly looked it up in the most recent version, and imagine my surprise when it wasn't there.

I reached out to Mr. Nathaniel Hawkins, the Department Chair of English, and he told me that class had been removed due to an ongoing low enrollment. The course description isn't that interesting, but wow. Faulkner and Woolf were revolutionary writers, and it's sad that these courses got removed.

The last English course that I noticed was ENG587: Beyond Korean Cool. With

the amount of students in Exeter heavily engaged with Korean culture, I'm really confused as to why this class is no longer listed. The course details talk about K-pop as well as Korean history, which I'm sure interests many students. I'm assuming the instructor may have left the school, but that's just a guess.

A solution for interesting courses falling by the wayside could be to generate interest and hype around them. As I said before, some of the course descriptions make the classes seem boring or laborious. Many students have no prior knowledge of these topics or authors, so all their information comes from the course details. In other cases, a teacher will tell me that they're going to teach a senior English class in the future, for example, and that makes me more curious

about it.

Classes can look boring when they aren't talked about or described well, and I feel like there would be a more even distribution of student interest if the more unknown courses were simply discussed more. A lot of the subjects for these are important, and it's crucial that we don't let them fade away.

Although many English classes were canceled for next year, it's important to look on the bright side of things. There are still many interesting courses that offer a wide range of topics, as well as new ones that have a fresh start. I'm pretty upset about some of these courses being taken away, as I wanted to take a couple of them, but these courses getting removed offers space for new ideas and new lessons.

Abolish StuCo Signature Sheets



Ava Zhao/*The Exonian*

By **ETHANDING '25**

The start of the Exeter election season marks the beginning of a week-long cringe season when Exonians run and hide whenever they see clipboard carriers walking around. With their signature sheet, the aspiring class rep is such an identifiable and widely dreaded character—an annoyance, really. Unless they are your friends, you shake and shudder when you see them. I have witnessed people running and hiding to keep from interacting with those who carry clipboards. What must have started as a practical and sensible measure has evolved into a futile and pointless obstacle that potential candidates and the Exonians of the general public have to overcome.

Let us examine the potential purposes that signature collection has or may have had. Drawing from personal opinions and consultation with my peers, the signing of sig-

nature sheets accomplishes (or aims to achieve) two main things. First, as a way to make sure that candidates have support from the student body. And secondly is a barrier that candidates have to overcome to show that they are committed and genuinely interested in representing their class. Both were meant to ensure that the candidates are well-liked and dedicated. However, as the process is today, the signing of signature sheets has strayed away from whatever purpose it was meant to serve initially. Ask any student about their experiences and how they approach signing candidates' signature sheets, and the answer will be the same. During election season, aspiring candidates can be seen wandering Elm and Wetherell, posting themselves at Grill or other hotspots around campus to catch any unfortunate signatories.

I have observed people blocking the entrances to academic buildings, in

effect only letting people go about their business if they sign their sheets. With strategies such as these, the majority of candidates collect signatures. Candidates often don't take the time to explain what they are running for or why members of their class should vote for them, especially in situations where time is of the essence, such as some of the previously mentioned situations. I am definitely not alone when I say that some candidates will ask you multiple times, despite you having already signed their sheet already. Routinely, candidates will simply just ask whether someone is a part of their class year or not, and Exonians, with the spirit of non sibi so dear to their hearts, don't hesitate to sign. In short, people sign the sheets, no matter the candidate or whether they support them or not. Because of this, the hundreds of signatures that candidates collect aren't an accurate reflection of whether their intended

policies are popular or of the candidate's popularity with their class. Even the most (hypothetically) undesirable candidate who won't represent the class well and has the worst policies, if given adequate time, would be able to reach the number of signatures required to run.

One could stop here and declare that signature sheets are a deficient system already, but one more point has been commonly brought up in its defence. That requiring potential candidates to collect that particular number of signatures proves that those candidates are committed and passionate about running and, by extension, will "weed out" those who are not serious or running as a joke. Although this is true, signature sheets take lots of time to complete and are an arduous task to power through; there are vastly better ways for candidates to show their commitment. Instead of requiring candidates to fill in the signatures sheets,

candidates could be required to put additional work into their candidate statements, a more demanding application system for the candidate ship could be implemented, or we could just let the election run its course and see which candidates put the most effort into their respective campaigns.

But, how do we continue to prevent students who are not running seriously from becoming candidates? The simple answer is that we shouldn't have to. The fear of having people who are not serious or lack dedication become candidates rests in the possibility that these candidates will actually get elected. But, this fear is misplaced. Our election system is meant for the class to elect the best representatives, and unless it is the preference of the class to elect a representative who ran as a joke, these candidates should pose no problem to the election system. If we can't trust the voters themselves to make the best decision

for their class, what can be said about the efficacy of our elections? Signature sheets shouldn't be needed for candidates to prove their commitment; the election system itself should be adequate enough to select the most committed candidates and have the best ideas for the class. Even if we are still confident in our elections and assume that the system isn't broken already, we can require candidates to show their devotion in other ways, such as in their candidate statements and candidacy applications.

As they are now, signature sheets are nothing more than a "time fee" that aspiring candidates have to pay to run for representative. They are not reflective of a candidate's legitimacy or popularity, rather a nuisance to the candidates themselves and every peer whose days are consistently interrupted during week-long election periods.

In lieu of signature sheets, Student Council has a variety of ways to continue to run elections. One potential solution is to introduce preliminary elections, where students nominate a reasonable number of candidates, say fifteen or twenty, and then let the election continue as it does now. Student Council could think of a fair and sensible way to conduct these preliminary elections. Student Council definitely has more resources and more experience than I do, which reinforces the idea that the signature sheets could be replaced with a much-improved solution. The removal of this broken system would improve the well-being of voters, the lives of candidates alike, and finally the efficacy of our elections.

The Exonian

We would like to acknowledge the Squamscott/Penacook peoples who were the first peoples of this land. We would like to honor their ancestors, descendants and future generations for caring for this area and allowing us to be here today.

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Appeasement and Diplomacy

By JOOHYOUNG HEO '25

Throughout the history of global politics, the policy of appeasement has been presented as a viable means of making peace. Arguably, its greatest selling point is that it seems as though it should work. There's something logical about "appeasing" a sovereign power to avoid direct conflict; as long as the party interested in maintaining peace gives the aggressor what it wants, typically by making key material and territorial concessions, it appears to follow that the aggressor will be satisfied, consolidate its profits, and keep to itself. This simply is not the case. Time and again, foreign diplomacy has been reduced to the barren playing field of appeasement—a pernicious field where tensions are held at bay in the short term, and where the inevitable conflict is only given time to ferment. Once the yellow tape comes undone, diplomacy is entirely impractical. Direct conflict often becomes the singular alternative.

Perhaps the most famous example of appeasement is the 1938 Munich Agreement. This was a last-minute conference between German dictator Adolf Hitler, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini, and French Prime Minister Edouard Daladier in Munich, Germany. Some two weeks before the conference, Hitler had started to move into Czechoslovakia, and the Allies were desperate to stop him. In particular, Chamberlain feared that Hitler's invasion would spark global warfare. He was willing

to do anything to prevent it. With Mussolini's help, the emergency conference was scheduled and, very shortly, four political giants shook hands in a boardroom. There it was agreed that Hitler could have the Sudetenland, a portion of Western Czechoslovakia whose annexation had been his principal objective; in exchange, Germany would maintain peace with the rest of Europe. Hitler himself put it in no uncertain terms: "The Sudetenland is the last territorial claim I have to make on Europe." Once the Munich Agreement was signed, the Allies breathed a sigh of relief. Chamberlain returned home to crowds of cheering supporters. Then, about a year later, the Second World War broke out.

Knowing what happened next, it's not difficult to see where things went wrong. Generally, the problem with appeasement is that the aggressor cannot ever be appeased. It's as though you are leading a child through a toy shop; the moment you let him buy one, he wants another one, then another one, then another one. This is the fundamental flaw in making concessions as a diplomatic policy. In the short term, the new toy will serve, as intended, to pacify the child, but it very rarely stops there. Now picture Hitler as the child, Europe as the toy shop, and the Sudetenland as the first toy, and all the pieces fall into place. Hitler wanted Lebensraum, "living space" for the Aryan race, and he was never going to keep his promise.

What is more, the semblance of a diplomat-

ic resolution only inflated the magnitude of warfare. Once the Munich Agreement was signed, the European powers believed that the crisis had been averted. In a short speech after returning from Munich, Chamberlain declared to the British populace that he had made "Peace for our time." In reality, he had merely delayed the conflict for another year—and in that year, Hitler had time to cement his dictatorship at home and consolidate his foreign assets. He had time to plan his multifaceted attack, to think through the contingencies, to supply his soldiers with guns and tanks." It could be argued that, had the Allies struck as Hitler was moving against Czechoslovakia, they had a much higher probability of winning the war. Instead, appeasement took to the stage, and the looming conflict only escalated in magnitude.

Of course, Chamberlain was certainly not a fool. Hindsight bias makes it trivially easy to think him naive; on the contrary, it is understandable that he should have wanted to avoid war at any cost. Europe had just come out of the First World War. Chamberlain was horrified by the prospect of putting a loop on the suffering and the violence he had witnessed firsthand. Yet his attempt at peace was misguided, and it serves as an effective testament to the futility of appeasement.

On occasion, inaction can be the equivalent of appeasement. In 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria, both the League of Nations and the United States asked for its withdrawal and offered to me-

diate a peaceful negotiation. Japan declined, and it eventually occupied the entirety of Manchuria—despite the fact that it had recently signed the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, an international agreement to outlaw war altogether. And as it continued advancing further into China, Western civilization stood by and watched. The League condemned the administration in Japan, but they did nothing else in retaliation. Japan was a world away; they did not care to be involved in direct conflict. Perhaps it was believed that Japan would simply stop after Manchuria, and when it continued forward, stop after China. Here again we see the pattern of appeasing a foreign power as the West managed to forget its commitment to an international anti-war pact—and here again it was mistaken. Japan's imperial ambitions, like those of Germany, multiplied tenfold over the course of a decade, and they would ultimately peak in the Second World War with far-reaching consequences.

Appeasement is not a policy of the past, either. Even today there are familiar patterns of concessions and false promises on the global stage of diplomacy. The most relevant example can be found in the Russo-Ukrainian War. When Russian President Vladimir Putin annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, NATO was caught off guard, and its reprisal was minimal at best. Direct military conflict was obviously impractical, but even the sanctions imposed then had little to no effect on the Russian economy; one could essentially argue that Pu-

tin went scot-free. As in the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the response to the Crimean annexation is not a textbook example of appeasement, but it amounts to the same thing. The West's reaction—or, more appropriately, a lack thereof—to Putin's invasion can be likened to a formal concession. After all, one party took what it wanted and the other did little to stop it.

Once this concession was made, it was erroneously assumed that Putin would be satisfied, and that Russia's imperial ambitions were no longer a threat to Europe. Moscow was quickly forgiven; indeed, many world leaders tried their best to pull Russia out from a state of international ostracization. Throughout his tenure, former US President Donald Trump was always loath to condemn Putin, choosing instead to maintain a relatively friendly, diplomatic relationship with the Kremlin. Several European politicians, including French President Emmanuel Macron, supported Russia's "unconditional return" to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in 2019—despite Putin's blatant refusal to amend the issues that led to Russia's initial expulsion in 2014. At the Munich Security Conference in 2020, a plan to end armed violence in Ukraine was presented to diplomats in attendance, but it seemed to benefit Russia more than Ukraine itself. The twelfth point of the plan even advocated for Moscow's hand in the search for "a new Ukrainian national identity."

Now Putin has shown

the world that Crimea was never enough. His second invasion of Ukraine in February, less than a decade after the Crimean annexation, proves that the West's inclination for diplomacy is entirely ineffective when its vessel is a policy of appeasement. When Putin made his first move in Crimea, NATO should have punished him for it. Instead, it let the incident slide, and what began as a small territorial concession at the tip of Ukraine has swelled into a fierce struggle with no end in sight.

This is not to say, of course, that there is something inherently problematic with diplomacy. Countless conflicts have been averted by diplomats at the negotiating table. When two parties get what they truly want, and when neither party is at an immediate disadvantage, a peaceable exchange is feasible. Appeasement, on the other hand, is a one-sided negotiation in which a desperate party bows down to an aggressive power, accepting its terms in an attempt to avoid conflict. Essentially, there is no compromise—and under these circumstances, conflict is usually inevitable. History has taught us the dangers of appeasement in the likes of Munich and Manchuria. It seems as though we have a lot left to learn.

A Critique of *The Exonian*

By NHAN PHAN '24

From the perspective of a two-year writer for *The Exonian*, the newspaper club no longer is a place where students feel compelled to take part because of the journalistic rigor it strives to offer; instead, *The Exonian*, damningly, has become more of a burden.

Earlier this school year, *The Exonian* announced a switch to a bi-weekly publishing schedule in order to accommodate students' mental health. Perhaps, this move was a step to address the stress that Exonian writers face when writing articles for the newspaper, as well as the culture of *The Exonian* in general, that the club viewed as the right move. However, as a writer, I would argue that this move did more harm than good.

One of the biggest issues that I, as a writer, observed within *The Exonian* is the disconnect between the Executive Board, editors, and writers themselves. There is barely any community being created here in *The Exonian*. This is also the root cause behind why *The Exonian* is alleged to have such a toxic culture. The weekly Writing Workshops only do so much as to help writers hone their journalistic skills; yet, it does not ful-

ly make *The Exonian* a welcoming environment for new writers joining. When I first joined *The Exonian*, I wanted to join a community of journalism and writing enthusiasts. I wanted to be part of a community where I can rediscover the joy of writing and how thrilling it is to interact with other members of the community. After two years of writing, I have yet to find the community within *The Exonian* that so many new writers like me hoped to see.

Perhaps, the clearest definition of this lack of community here at *The Exonian* is best shown through the transformation of the newsroom itself. Writers and editors hanging out in the newsroom the day before publishing has become the norm for Exonian culture. More importantly, the newsroom was a place where editors and writers really got to connect with each other on a more personal level. For instance, on Wednesday afternoons, the writers and editors would blast songs from the soundtrack of Hamilton while the Layouts team would frantically obsess over the "laying-out" of the paper itself, all while munching on Front Row Margherita pizzas. Moments like those disappeared; the newsroom is no longer as inviting a space as before. The room now feels

emptier, less boisterous, and less noisy. It doesn't feel as Exonian as before. This shows how much the disconnect between the upper and lower board expanded within the newspaper.

When *The Exonian* decided to convert into a bi-weekly schedule, the schedule rendered the newspaper irrelevant, and outdated. My friends best put it, "Why would I be interested in reading news that was like two weeks old?" The events covered in an edition of the newspaper do not report anything new. It is not up to date. It doesn't reflect what's happening in the school. The fundamental keys of what makes a newspaper a newspaper, relevancy, and urgency, are essentially gone. Furthermore, when visiting theexonian.net, the site itself is closed. The last post from *The Exonian*'s Instagram page was from February 24, in which it was a clarification of the typos and editing mistakes made on the Editor's Note of the paper that edition. Even *The Exonian*'s Business Board posted more recently than the main account itself. There has been no online interaction between the newspaper and the Exeter community. A possible solution to compensating for the irrelevance of the news reported in bi-weekly editions could have been frequent brief

news updates on the newspaper's social media; *The Exonian* did not take advantage of this either. Hence, *The Exonian* failed to deliver its core purpose: delivering urgent, relevant news to the full community.

Furthermore, it is also this lack of urgency that dissuades writers from writing. Part of being an Exonian writer is that one has the opportunity to report on the latest topics that are trending around schools. It is that "oh, I've been to this, I want to write about this" that drives writers to write. It is that relentless high-octane flow of Exeter that excites writers. With this bi-weekly schedule, writing about events that are two weeks old feels boring, out-of-place, and frankly, burdensome.

How then, can we go about reinstating *The Exonian*'s reputation and excellence within the Exeter community? First, we need to think about the way we treat the club itself. Many say that "*The Exonian* should not be like the New York Times," but I frankly think this is a harmful view to have. By using the New York Times, for example, as a standard for excellence, we, as a newspaper, are actively professionalizing the craft of journalism. One could argue that this will provide writers with a more realistic ex-

perience of journalism in the real world, where the world does not wait for our reporting. By setting ourselves to a high standard, but not to the point where we are obsessive about being perfectionists and realizing that there is always work to be done to reach the NYT's level of professionalism, *The Exonian* is sure to build its reliability and relevance among its target audience: members of the Exonian community, and beyond.

To address the toxic culture of the newspaper, one needs to look at the community. *The Exonian* needs to reflect upon the exec-editor-writer relationship and ask itself, "is *The Exonian* a positive experience?" The Exonian needs to place an emphasis on developing interpersonal connections between writers and editors in order to foster a fun, comfortable, and supportive environment. This can be in the form of field trips, group meals, or simply making the newsroom a more fun, more inviting space for writers to enter. These community changes can go a long way toward repairing *The Exonian*'s alleged toxic culture. A writer needs to feel compelled to write, and building an interpersonal network of other writers and editors with them along the way is the key. Moreover, finding the balance

between managing writers' and editors' mental health, as well as keeping the newspaper relevant and updated is not an easy task. Perhaps, a system of alternating sets of editors and writers can be the compromise the newspaper needs. By having alternating groups of editors and writers, with one group writing a certain week, and the other writing the following week, and so on, *The Exonian* is able to keep publishing while ensuring that the writers and editors get the break they deserve. This method also allows the groups to build a closer connection with their own editors and writers, which is also a way to address the toxic culture here at the club. Overall, fundamental changes to the way *The Exonian* operates are crucial to its future success; building community and enacting procedural change to ensure the newspaper's relevancy are just two of those changes.

Humor

New Courses for 2022-2023

By ARIANNA BOCCHINO and LAYLA WHITAKER

With a new year comes new opportunities for profound education! One of the many perks of attending Phillips Exeter Academy is the amount and variety of courses offered each and every term. There are over 450 (not to brag). However, do not fear the risk of growing bored at the available courses, because there are new ones every year! The time to register for next year's courses has come. So, for the convenience of our dear readers, us writers here at The Exonian have taken it upon ourselves to shed some light on the rather exquisite options right here.

Overheard in passing along the many stairs of Phillips Hall: there is a brand new course, worthy of

making a music-lover go wild. ENG404: A Deep Dive into Lyrical Complexities. This intriguing class calls for a momentous examination of the genius of our generation's musical prodigies. Immaculate lyricists such as Ye West, Bo Burnham, Sza, and of course the timeless Justin Bieber are only some of the many whose work will be featured in lessons throughout the curriculum. An example of a musical text students may toss around the Harkness table includes a zesty line or two found in 2018's smash-hit-single Lift Yourself: "woopety-scoop-di-poop". The beautiful simplicity of the rhythm, the deluxe composition of each syllable, or even the intellectual proposition of the rhyming schem. All of these insights are detectable in such a line,

and all will be thoroughly examined and mastered upon completion of this course. Offered winter-spring term. Not open to preps or seniors. Prerequisite: three terms of computer science.

If you've ever wondered what it takes to live in the Stone Age, this next course may be the perfect match for you! Rumor has it that Mr. Hamilton is in the process of developing a course close to his heart by the name of HIS5000: Into the Stone-Age. In this once-in-a-lifetime course, students compare modern-day necessities for daily life in our society to those utilized by prehistoric-peoples. Parents and guardians of students must complete the waivers attached to the back of this newspaper (yes, they're right there behind the last page) for permission to participate

in the final, which involves a field trip to the outback of Australia. Students must survive three unsupervised weeks in the outback to pass. Offered winter term. Open to new-lowers only. Prerequisite: one 400-level course or one firm handshake with your closest friend.

The new course MAT169 Math for Procrastinators, is a math course that Exonians could actually use in everyday circumstances! This course places emphasis on the life skill of procrastination and maintains low standards on proper calculation. Classes will teach students how to effectively wait until the last minute to start assignments as well as how to calculate the lowest possible grade you may receive on each assessment in order to

pass the course. Stop stressing out doing assignments at 2 AM while running on Red Bull and start doing the bare minimum responsibly! Offered to seniors spring term.

A new bio-chem elective has opened up called BIO520: Muscle Growth and Population Observation. In this course, students will first study gym rats from different establishments examining their muscle building progression. These communities will be used as control groups to compare with Exeter students. The purpose of this study is to conclude why Exonians of all fitness levels continue to be out of breath and struggle after climbing stairs such as those in the Phelps Science Center. Exonians climb many sets of stairs each day going to class or even

just going to one's dorm room, yet it still feels as though the air is robbed from your lungs every time. Why are students' muscles and staminas not growing despite the daily physical activity of climbing stairs? Why does it never get easier? Offered fall term. Prerequisite: All four years of science.

So, although the list of courses offered this upcoming academic year is a seemingly endless one, Phillips Exeter Academy ensures that all students pick the path that's right for them. Students should not hesitate to reach out to their advisors, teachers, or peers with any questions regarding their classes or registration. Have fun with course selections!

333 Survival Guide

By DAVID CHEN '23

As an Upper who has defied Death itself and survived the 333™, I thought it'd be my way to give back to the community and share some of my 5 Survival Tips for your 333 so that you can still end up getting 4 hours of sleep a night (looking at y'all lowers (and preps tryna take U.S. History lower year; or uppers tryna take U.S. History senior year))!

1. Do your research early! Starting your research early means that when you inevitably decide to change

your topic, you will still have two days left to write your 20-page 333!

2. Sleep a lot! Sleeping is critical to your critical thinking skills, which are critical to your success in writing your 333! It is also critical to your procrastination!

3. Drink water! You gotta make up for those tears somehow!

4. Just write! If you don't know what you're talking about, just put stuff down on the paper! It doesn't have

to be good because your teacher will probably destroy it during your conference anyway!

5. Join *The Exonian!* Learning to write articles will help with your ability to structure your 333 (it definitely helped for me)! Also, it means you can have even more work to do which will totally totally totally motivate you!

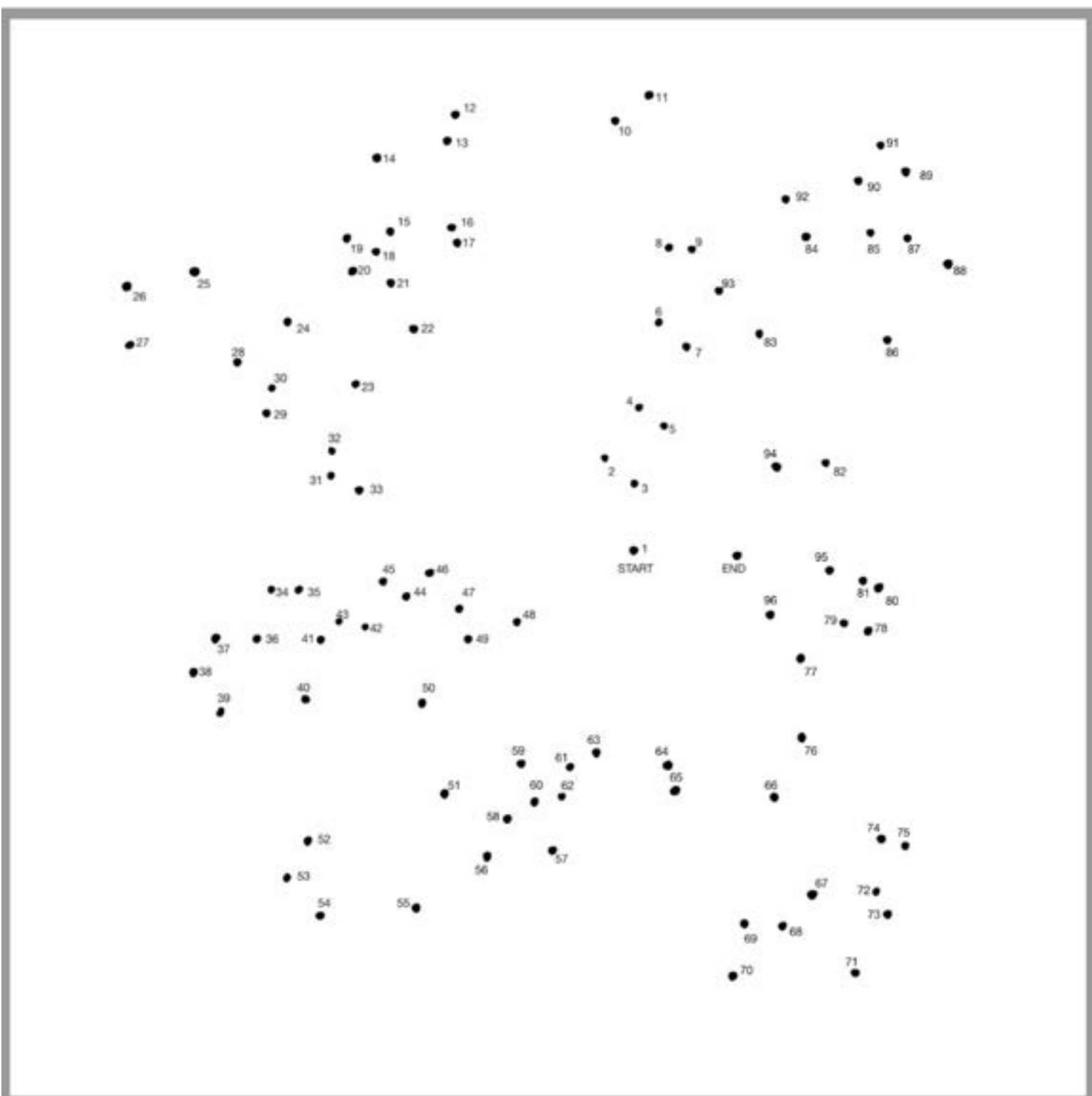
Signing off for now,
Your Favorite and
Funniest News Editor
EVER!!!



Courtesy of Discover Magazine

Connect the Dots!

By Alysha Lai '23



Kakuro Corner

Each puzzle consists of a blank grid with sum-clues in various places. The object is to fill all empty squares using numbers 1 to 9 so the sum of each horizontal block equals the clue on its left, and the sum of each vertical block equals the clue on its top. In addition, no number may be used in the same block more than once. Puzzles below from “Kakuro Endless.”

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			14				
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	39						
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Sports

Varsity Track Win Over Portsmouth and Exeter High

By CATHERINE WU and ALAYSHAZHANG

Runners of the Academy's varsity boys' and girls' track and field teams raced towards the finish line and claimed their victory on April 16. With both girls' and boys' teams celebrating first during the interscholastic meet against Portsmouth and Exeter High, the track team began their spring season with an electrifying start.

Varsity track and field coach Hillary Hall pointed out the differences between the winter and spring track seasons: "We are very different from indoor. And part of that is this indoors is so very different from our outdoors, 17 events outdoors, and only 11 events indoors. So we've got an influx of new people to sort of sprinkle on top of all the core groups that we had in the winter and that always just changes the dynamics. But same, really good work ethic, same playfulness."

Athletes discussed their overall experiences at this first outdoor meet. "This meet was actually my first outdoor track meet, and the overall atmosphere was super fun and supportive," lower Tenley Nelson said. "We saw a lot of great performances for this season opener, and I think the whole team worked really

well together."

"I feel like this meet demonstrated a lot of our team's resilience, especially when it comes to the weather. It could be sunny, rainy, and our teammates will still show up and do their best. So even though everything wasn't exactly ideal, I loved that we were able to still put it together and represent," senior Indrani Basu said.

Throwers who competed at the meet shared their thoughts. "The meet for me was a mixed bag of emotions," lower Max Sheldon said. "It's my first year throwing and this was the first time I tried javelin."

For lower Zuzanna Szul, "the meet was really fun." "I really liked watching the 4x400 relays because they are usually my favorite part of the meets since they're super exciting to watch," Szul said.

Compared to winter term's indoor track meets, however, lower Michael Zhu preferred indoor track. "I feel like the atmosphere for indoor track was honestly better. Since the proximity of events and spacing was smaller, there was more cheering and spirit overall," Zhu said.

Even members of the team who were unable to compete shared their thoughts on this meet. "It was good. I was injured so I was just watching people

race, and it kind of made me a little sad, but it was happy overall. I think the team performed great." senior Naisha Deora said.

Many runners new to the team applauded the track's overflowing team spirit. "As a member of the track team so far, I have found track and field to be one of the most fun, exciting, but most of all, accepting environments I have ever been a part of," prep Melani Dowling said.

Lower Ugo Barrah said a strength the track team has is the cheering and supportive atmosphere, "Everyone's lining up near the track to cheer on their teammates. And I feel like that's a really great thing to have at a meet."

Older members of the team similarly remarked on the team's supportiveness. "I love how supportive the team is!" senior Emma Chen said. "During events, I love hearing (and being a part of) all the cheering that goes on. And of course, it's awesome having your teammates cheer you on when you run."

When senior Akili Tull-och reflected on his most memorable moment during his past track seasons, he recalled a memory of when he was running the 400 meters: "I went around the bend and like, I went into that straightaway, when you finish your first 200

meters, there's just like a point where mentally I'm like 'oh, this is halfway. And I'm so fatigued. At that moment, I think that point it's like the toughest mental battle. I got to the 200 meter and there was nobody there except for Bradley [St. Laurent]. He was like, 'go, okay!' It was pretty impactful. It definitely helped me throughout the race."

Hall talked about the meet as well: "There were a couple of really incredible performances at that last meet, and it's always fun with track and field where there are PRs or good performances, and you can kind of pull that out and highlight it." Hall shouted out senior Avery Hastings -- "She just crushed the old record by 10 feet. And she's just getting started. It wasn't even good discussing weather, so she's gonna be one to watch."

Hall continued to discuss senior Caleb Holloway, upper Oliver Brandes, upper Owen Dudley and lower Max Lacombs' performances in recent meets. "Holloway was just off a hall of fame in the shop put, and that's a newish event for him. So I look forward to him doing some great things there. The boys 800 meter was incredible with Oliver and Owen and Max."

A number of personal

records (PR) were accomplished at this first meet. "Ran the 3K, and got a PR by almost 50 seconds from last year, so that's kinda cool," lower Advay Nomula said. "A lot of good times from other people in general too, some good 1500s and 800s."

Throwers on the team PRed in their respective events as well. "The team had a solid performance with inclimate weather. I PRed in the discus and the javelin," lower Tanner Boulden said.

Many teammates gave shoutouts to individual races. "Big shoutout to Sheala! She not only came in first in the 3k race, but it was such an exciting win too. Her competitor started off just in front of her, but Sheala stayed with her and passed her in the end. We were all so proud of her!" Chen said.

Similarly, lower David Goddall shouted out his fellow teammate's race. "Big shoutout to Paul Kiesling! He did really well in his 1500, and I'm excited to see his development. Overall, everyone did super well and I'm excited for our next meet!"

Similarly for prep Paul Kiesling, "I also need to work on my kick. As well as staying engaged throughout the race and not slowing down."

"I think I need to get

more experience with blocks and spikes," prep Sam Benochi agreed.

Hall commented on runners who ran in the winter season, and will continue to improve in this upcoming season. "It's sort of the two uppers, [Brandes and Dudley] that were strong in the winter, really stepping up and then Lacombe showing young developing skills, moving up. So all three of those people, super optimistic about them."

Looking back, athletes shared their hopes moving forward in the season. "I hope to get faster as the season progresses, as well as become a better teammate. I loved spring track season last year so it feels good to get back into it," Nomula said.

"I imagine myself working hard and progressing to be the runner and athlete I have always aspired to be. Relying on my training and the people around me who are helping me achieve these goals. Not only do I want to focus on track and my running physically, but as an athlete, I want to learn the values of becoming better at sportsmanship and supporting my teammates as I become more of a leader on this team," Dowling concluded.

Varsity Boys Lacrosse Bests Portsmouth Abbey

By LEOZHANG and LYVIA ZHOU

On Saturday, April 16, the Academy's varsity lacrosse team overcame Portsmouth Abbey by a scoreline of 11-4. At halftime, Portsmouth Abbey kept the game close, but Exeter found their rhythm in the second half and ultimately proved to be too much, adding a fifth win to their successful season.

Senior Shep Seba applauded his teammates' great plays. According to Seba, senior Wyatt McLaughlin "anchored the team down," with strong saves as goalie. Seniors Michael Popik and Charlie McGurrian played great on-ball defense. Senior Will Gephart stepped in for face-off and skillfully utilized the wings to "battle for the ball," while upper Drew McClutchy led the

team in transition to offense as long stick middle. Prep Ryan Erghott scored a goal that aided in changing the game's momentum after halftime.

Senior Jack O'Brien thought the game went well overall: "The weather was kind of rainy at first but kind of cleared out at the end. It was a bit physical towards probably the start of halftime. During the second half, we started to pull away from them and at the same time, the weather also started to improve."

O'Brien also described his opponents: "They were just like a big team in terms of physical stature, and they moved the ball pretty well. I also think they had a good two-man game, which they utilized. They also played a zone defense, which worked in the first half, but once we figured out started moving the ball opening and creating more

space, that didn't work as effectively."

Seba pointed out the team's tendency to start out slow in their matches: "The first half was very slow on both sides of the field. I think defensively we let in a couple of unforced errors..., and I think that that caused a couple of fast breaks and kind of kept the game pretty stagnant. On offense, we couldn't get anything going."

During halftime, Seba emphasized coach Matthew Callahan's positive influence in the locker room: "Coming out of halftime, most guys have it in their head that we're doing this for us and he's just there to help us along the way. He's really stepped into that new leadership role, bringing lots of energy to the game."

When the second half started, Seba noted the shift in playing. "I think

during the second half, we came out at halftime, and we stepped on the gas. The offense started cooking and putting some shots in, and we started seeing a real change of tides." He attributed the shift of momentum to a specific moment in the game. "[Portsmouth Abbey] might have gotten a one-minute unnecessary roughness, and we were able to get momentum in our way. Once you see a team break down like that, even the smallest bits, you know, you've already won the game."

Senior Will Gephart corroborated Seba's remark, noting "we kept our composure well." Going in the game, "we wanted to try and focus on playing our best lacrosse just regardless of who we were playing and making sure that we executed the way we wanted to."

O'Brien remembered

his favorite moment of the game, which also added to the team spirit in the second half. "I think probably my favorite moment was that one of our defenders, Shep, shot a long stick goal, which was pretty awesome. It was good for him and gave some good energy to the team."

After the game, coach Callahan shared some of the things the team needed to improve on. "We did a lot of things well but can always have better stick skills and less unforced errors in the clearing game."

Seba agrees, "Keep playing fundamentally, keep it to the basics. We've got to go out there with a creative mindset. I want to see a full game from both sides of the field. I want to see people flow in. I want to see people having fun. I want to see people celebrating because I think that once we get to a point

where things are happening naturally, it's going to feel a lot better as a team."

O'Brien suggested working on moving the ball around more. "I think we're going to have to work better on our communication and just working the ball around on the first touch. I think that'll help open up offensive spaces especially, but then also moving up the field as we're breaking out the ball."

Looking to the future, coach Callahan shared his hopes. "We have many strong opponents coming up, but we're focused on taking the season one game at a time to make sure we are playing our best lacrosse."

Varsity Softball Crushes New Hampton

By RISHI GURDEVAN

A metallic twang echoes through the field as varsity softball's bats make repeated contact with New Hampton's pitches. Everything is silent for a moment, then suddenly cheers erupt from the bench as the ball goes flying. From the first inning, New Hampton had no chance as Exeter rapidly got into a steady rhythm. With the first batter hitting a double, the team built up momentum ending strongly with a 15-4 win.

Lower Haley Alden commented on how the game started: "We were able to get things going the first inning of the game," the pitcher said. "First batter of

the game got a double and then scored with a hit from the second batter. Taylor Nelson, our third batter, hit a two-run homerun in the first inning and we were able to keep the momentum going for quite a few runs."

Senior Taylor Nelson came right back and praised Alden for her pitching performance. "New Hampton was a close game for us. It was pretty back and forth, but Haley Alden, our pitcher, threw a great game and kept us in it."

Alden humbly said, "I kept my pitches over the plate too much and so they were able to make good contact on the ball. Our team did everything they could when New Hampton

got hits but we made up for those on offense."

Designated hitter Janelle Bobb thought that the team's greatest strength during the game was their teamwork and camaraderie. "We hit very well and kept our energy up. We are always there for our teammates and hype each other up no matter what," she said.

Nelson added on speaking of the team dynamics: "I'd say our greatest strength is our chemistry on the field. Everyone is talking to each other and cheering all the time and I think that kind of energy is really what's put us over the top this year."

While the team certainly

kept the spirits high throughout the game, lower Caroline Ciaschini credited the victory to consistency: "We were hitting more consistently compared to other games, we were able to make contact and base run well," she said.

It was very clear that Exeter came in and claimed the win from the beginning. "This year, the lineup has been far more aggressive at bat than usual. This has resulted in a lot more contact with the ball, a lot more hits, and a lot more runs," prep Maria Fotin said.

This aggressiveness resulted in a one-sided game, with Exeter coming out the winning end. "We were

able to get ahead in the early innings and maintain the lead throughout the game," Ciaschini commented.

This win didn't come easily though. Fontin spoke on how this game was different from previous years. "Before this year, varsity softball had not won a game since 2019. This decisive victory helped turn things around and boosted team morale a lot. It showed us that even after years of not having the best outcomes, the team has started a new chapter this year," Fontin said. "It's been amazing to be on a winning streak for the entire team, but especially all of the seniors who are spending their last spring at Exeter play-

ing with us. This was our second double-digit win of the season, and it's a great feeling."

Alden showed optimism for softball's growth throughout the season. "Our team has a great dynamic and every game we are learning how to work with each other more and more. I can't wait to see how the rest of the season will play out," she added.

If the team keeps this up, a NEPSAC title is surely not far away. From their team chemistry, to their aggressiveness, and their consistency, the varsity softball team is in fantastic shape for the rest of the season.

Captains of the Week: Girl's Varsity Crew



Girls' Varsity Crew senior captains Charlotte Pulkkinen and Emma Lyle.

By ROHINKANTAMNENI and ARIANA THORNTON

It's a balmy afternoon at Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester, Massachusetts, for the girls' crew captains' first race of their senior spring. Large clusters of family members and athletes, decked out in their respective school colors, gather near a hill's edge to watch the G1 boats start off. When the call is made, the Exeter G1 boat becomes a slim dart streaking rapidly through the water; cheers and the rattling of cow bells echo as the racing boats become smaller in the distance. Within seconds, Exeter G1 pulls ahead, and a mere minute passes before they reach open water. They cross the finish line an astounding 25.1 seconds before the boat in second place.

Throughout all aspects of crew—races, practices, and casual gatherings—senior captains Charlotte Pulkkinen and Emma Lyle are a source of inspiration, passion, and camaraderie.

"They're both extremely great role models—both in skill and in character," upper Cindy Su said. "They also have great attitudes towards rowing that are infectious to everyone. Both of them work extremely hard, push us to keep improving ourselves, and are always there to offer an encouraging word before a 2k or when we launch onto the water."

Lower Jane Park, a coxswain, also shared this sentiment. "I think their diligence and their motivation encourages not only me, but also everyone else to work really hard. As a coxswain, it's really important that we take rowers' feedback, and both captains have come up to me and helped me develop some calls. Just seeing how hardworking they are, and how physically and mentally strong they are, motivates me to do better for the team and for everyone else."

Coach Sally Morris expressed her insights on the respective journeys of Pulkkinen and Lyle through crew. "They each have had different kinds of journeys, where Charlotte came from a rowing program and had already done a significant amount of rowing. Emma got started in our program and worked her way up," Morris said. "What makes them similar is their commitment to the team, how much they love the sport of rowing, and how much they love their teammates. They are so positive and so supportive of everyone, and I think that their open-mindedness has helped them become better athletes."

Pulkkinen, who came to Exeter as a new lower, described her experience with crew from the beginning. "I started crew before I came to Exeter, in my freshman year. I came to Exeter with the intent of rowing, but I played volleyball my first fall. I did winter [crew] training my lower year, and was really looking forward to having the sophomore spring season, but that got canceled because of COVID," Pulkkinen said. "The older girls on the team really took me under their wing, and I knew that was something I wanted to bring to Exeter Girls' Crew (EGC) when I was older on the team."

Lyle, who began rowing in her prep spring, also discussed the starting point of her crew experience. "Girls on campus would tell me that I was tall and that I should try crew," Lyle said. "I got to row with the JV-Varsity mix and it was fun. I didn't feel like much of an athlete before crew, but crew seemed like something that I could start to get really good at."

"My lower year, I quit JV volleyball to do crew year-round. I rowed in our Head of the Charles eight in my lower year, which was a really meaningful experience to me," Lyle continued. "I really started to understand

what it meant to be on a team, and feel—for the first time in my life—that I was a meaningful part of the team. Unfortunately, we lost my lower season due to COVID, which was really disappointing. Upper year, it was really strange. We usually do sweep rowing, but I got to do some single-sculling because we couldn't be in seats together. I didn't love it. I missed having other people on the boat and I missed having a coxswain yell at me."

This onset of the COVID-19 pandemic heavily impacted both captains' crew experience. "Crew is so team-oriented that it was hard for me to motivate myself to do the individual training when there was no race to look forward to, no season to look forward to," Lyle said. "We didn't know when we were going to be back on the water again. When I did train, it was just to feel good physically and stay in shape. I'm really grateful that things are a little bit back to normal in the athletics world, because it was really difficult."

"I was rowing on an erg alone in my basement for almost a full year," Pulkkinen said. "I wasn't getting any faster. I really didn't have much to motivate me. So my sophomore into junior year, I kind of hit a big plateau. In the beginning of spring 2021, just being back in the Exeter crew environment, my times immediately began to drop and I was a lot more motivated, excited, and happy to row."

Group camaraderie and support is a key factor of Exeter crew. Both captains and their coaches commented positively on Lyle and Pulkkinen's leadership dynamic. "Charlotte and I have been good friends for a while and I really like rowing with her. We both really value this team, and it means a lot to us in different ways," Lyle said. "I think we complement each other really well. She

brings this competitiveness and positive intensity that's really valuable on the team. I really admire that about her and she is just an incredible athlete, very dedicated. I definitely draw energy and inspiration from that."

In a separate interview, Pulkkinen used nearly the exact same phrasing. "I think that we complement one another really well," Pulkkinen said. "We have slightly different energies. Emma's incredibly approachable and super positive. Everyone on the team loves talking to her. I'm more so in the gym all the time and people love to come to me if they're looking for exercise plans or lifting plans. I think that we cover different bases and we provide different things that the team needs. Without one captain, it just wouldn't be the same."

Lyle further discussed team culture and how the captains cultivate it. "I really like leading team stretches. That's something I think I'm kind of known for: Sun Salutations and stuff I make everyone do. I think it's actually really fun and I think it makes everyone's bodies feel a little bit better. I like having everyone together in a big circle, face to face, and when we do the Squat Song."

"I also really like it when, at the end of practice, we ask each other, 'What was something good from your row?'" Lyle continued. "Especially on days where it's a stressful or difficult practice, it's really important to ask each other what you did love about it. Even if it's just a cool bird you saw."

"One of the things I like best about how Emma's been leading is saying something positive at the end of the day when we're in a circle," Morris said. "With Charlotte, it's this same openness. I see [Charlotte] greet people, looking people in the eye, encouraging people when

they're doing things. If she's finished her piece, she doesn't just sit there; she encourages other people to keep going on theirs. She compliments people who row in the boat with her, and always has something good to say about everyone."

"Both Emma and Charlotte also model teamwork in the way they co-captain in such a collaborative way," coach Rebecca Moore added. "We are lucky to have such generous and spirited leaders."

"Emma brings her direct manner and thoughtful comments to all team gatherings, giving teammates ways to talk about inclusion, team effort, and respect. Charlotte brings a steady model of how to challenge oneself athletically—her teammates can aspire to her strength and commitment," Moore continued.

"[The captains] lead every dynamic stretch and are always a welcoming face in the boathouse," Su shared. "They're the rocks of our team."

"My favorite thing about Charlotte is the difference between when she's on the water and off the water," Su continued. "On the water, she's a beast, pulling away on the port side and hitting her famous focus face, baring her teeth as she uses all her quad power. However, when we get off the water, she'll often start joking around, a master of facial expressions, and a serious arm smacker when she finds something to be funny. She's always ready with a quip or a comment that gets the entire team going."

"My favorite thing about Emma is that she's our resident boathouse expert on yoga, birds, and fauna," Su said. "Whenever we see a bird or a plant that we're curious about, we'll just point it out to Emma, and she'll almost always know the answer. She's also the reason why we started calling 'G-B-H!' whenever we

see a Great Blue Heron out on the Squamscott."

Both Lyle and Pulkkinen reflected on their joys of crew. "On a personal level, what I really like about crew is that it is so meditative," Lyle said. "I really like getting out on the water, the repetitive motion, and the physical challenge of it. I find the form very complex; there's a lot of elements there. So having so much to think about and just repeating it, I find it soothing."

"I absolutely love the team this year. I have never had a team environment where everyone is friends with one another. There's really no toxic activity on the team," Pulkkinen said. "Exeter has such a bright future. There is such young talent and I'm just so incredibly excited to see what some of the younger girls do in the future."

Both captains reflected on what they feel is their biggest accomplishment. "I would say my biggest accomplishment is that I feel really honored to be captain of the team and I never would've seen myself as a sports captain—or even an athlete, really," Lyle said. "The fact in and of itself means a lot to me, almost more so than any 2k time or race."

"I think Head of the Charles was my greatest accomplishment as a rower," Pulkkinen said, referring to her boat's second-place medal in the world's largest regatta. "Two underclassmen on the team were in our boat, and I think that that goes to prove the incredible future that Exeter Girls' Crew has. The team is so young and the talent is so young. After I graduate, the boats are going to be so fast, and I'm so excited to see what they do."

The captains shared some of their plans for crew once they graduate Exeter. "I'm really excited to be rowing with Tufts next year, and at the prospect of participating in collegiate athletics just to see if I like it or not," Lyle said. "I'm going to give it at least a year, and I don't know if it's something that I'll continue for my entire college experience, but if it is, I think that's great."

"This summer I got selected for the Youth National Team World Championship Selection Camp. So that's kind of crazy," Pulkkinen said. "I'll be rowing with other Junior National Team rowers this summer in hopes of making a World Championships boat. Then in the fall, I'll be rowing at Dartmouth."

In the swing of spring season, though, all of Exeter Girls' Crew is excited. "I'm feeling very excited this season—we've already made incredible improvements through this season and have gotten really fast and strong," Su said. "We're starting our race season off with the PEA Invitational, and will keep racing every Saturday. Hopefully, we're going to be able to attend NEIRAs, which is the New England Interscholastic Rowing Association Championships. If we get to go this year, it will be the first time in two years, and exciting for the whole team as no one on our team currently has had experience going to the regatta. It will be a fun first time for everyone, and hopefully, we'll see good results!"

Courtesy of Emma Lyle