

# The Stentorian

THE NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS MONTHLY, EST. 1981 | VOLUME XLIV, NO. 4 | DURHAM, NC | APRIL 2025

## MODS



### Reynolds Moves to Mods

**MODS MOVE.** As a part of the campus’s renovation plans, all of Reynolds moved into the modular units over the February extended weekend to little fanfare.

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## CAMPUS VOICES

### Mediocrity is failure. And you are not mediocre.

**RISK FAILURE.** I received my college decisions. Now, I’ve never been the social butterfly winner of everything great and holy, but I consider myself fairly well-rounded as an applicant. Yet, when I started opening the letters, I realized I was mediocre.

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## METRO



### School Vans vs. GoDurham Buses

**BUS SPECULATION.** Are the plethora of school vans there for the sole control of being the ones transporting the students? If so, I then began to wonder why the topics of the public buses as rough or unsafe were viewed as the truth.

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## MUSICAL

## Creating “Cabaret’s” Kit Kat Club

**BEAUTIFULLY COMPLEX.** “Cabaret” was a unique story told through extensive set design, complex characters played by committed NCSSM students, and live musical accompaniment that brought the production together. **SEE PAGE 2**

NCSSM YEARBOOK

BY LILY FRANK  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

The Promethean Players of the Drama Department recently put on this year’s musical, “Cabaret.” The show, which ran from March 14-16, transported audiences to 1930s Berlin, where the decadence of the Kit Kat Club masked the looming rise of the Nazi regime. Directed by Adam Sampieri, with assistance from Leslie Knight and student directors Marcellus Day and Robbie Stoffle, the production brought to life the tale of an American writer, Cliff Bradshaw, played by

Aadi Kucheria ‘25, as he arrives in Berlin and becomes entangled in the lives of the city’s residents, including the performer from London, Sally Bowles, played by Faith Wagoner ‘25.

Unlike last fall’s lighthearted show, “Puffs,” “Cabaret” takes a much darker turn. Student director Robbie Stoffle ‘25 emphasized the stark contrast. “It starts out fun but does not have a happy ending. As things outside get darker and darker, the things inside get happier and happier until it’s too late.” This mix of festivity and despair was a defining element of the production, mirroring the

political and social turmoil of the period in which the show was set.

“Cabaret” follows the members of the Kit Kat Club, which, as Stoffle puts it, “has taken its own form throughout many different decades” and can be equated with 1930s Germany’s version of “Brat Summer,” through the carefree outward appearance of the club. The Emcee, played by Julian Burke, serves as the Master of Ceremonies, guiding the audience through the story with a mix of humor, charm, and unsettling detachment.

SEE PAGE 2

## REGENERON

### Applying to Regeneron STS

BY MABEL KENNEDY  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

As you meander or perhaps rush to your classes through the Reynolds breezeway, your gaze will linger on the rather demanding mural of all the graced students who have won the achievement of being crowned a “top 40 finalist” in the Regeneron competition. Soon, our very own senior Ava Cummings’ ‘25 name will be highlighted.

For all those who don’t know, the Regeneron competition is a

nationwide science competition for seniors, placing a particular emphasis on research. It is known as a “prestigious” competition as defined by their parent company. As Dante Tringale ‘25 states, “It is the largest and oldest science talent search in the country, where they look for the next leaders of the generation of scientific exploration.” They begin with all the applicants then slowly whittle down to the “Top 300 Scholars,” where you receive a \$2,000 (unfortunately taxed) scholarship and an internship

offer, and “Top 40 Finalists” where you can present your work along with a \$25,000 scholarship (taxed too, sigh) and a chance to compete for higher prizes. Both tempting benefits are when deciding whether you want to submit your work.

As someone unfamiliar with the inner workings of the competition and miles away from the science community committed to achieving some sort of title within Regeneron, I had the chance to learn about the competition from a fairly

SEE PAGE 3

## REVIEW

### Sunrise On The Reaping Review



## LOCAL ART

### Thank You Ben Bridgers



## STYLE

### 6 Flyest Fits From Your Favorite Faculty

**FASHION FORWARD.** From bold prints to vintage-inspired classics, these faculty members are redefining campus fashion with flair, confidence, and a whole lot of personality—whether you’re looking for outfit inspiration or just want to appreciate the sartorial choices of your favorite teachers.

BY CAROLINE DOWNS  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

There is no doubt that Ms. Stefan is the fashion expert of Fourth Bryan. From a tasteful fanny pack to a purple monochromatic fit, she is guaranteed to make a statement while staying comfortable. If you want to add some Stefan flair to your next outfit, adding some knee-length boots would also keep you warm and cozy!

Dr. McInnis, although a millennial, awes us all with their trendy fashion pieces and expert combinations. Whether it’s a pair of funky earrings or a flowy skirt, their wardrobe is no doubt the envy of their students.

Dr. Mallory’s beautiful dresses and perfect pairings suggest that she has a keen eye for fashion. Paired with a mid-length skirt, her sneakerhead style is both trendy and chic. When asked about her favorite outfit, Mallory said, “I really love these pants, which I bought when I was on spring break in Cartagena a few years ago. I’ve never seen anything else like them.” After choosing one of her favorite statement pieces, she loves matching it up with simpler pieces to show them off. This summer, bring out your colorful sundresses and bold statement pieces for a Mallory-inspired look!

Mr. Ji’s quirky t-shirts will brighten up a morning lab

SEE PAGE 3



DR. MALLORY POSES FOR THE CAMERA. CAROLINE DOWNS.



MUSICAL FROM PAGE 1

# Creating “Cabaret’s” Kit Kat Club

But, more than just a host, the Emcee acts as a symbolic figure, reflecting and responding to the shifting political and social climate around him. He provides commentary on the unfolding events, highlighting the increasingly relevant rise of the Nazi Party and the characters’ varying levels of complicity or ignorance.

Stoffle noted, “There are many, many parallels between the events of “Cabaret” and what’s happening in politics today in the U.S. The timing has only gotten better and better—almost too well.” The show’s themes of political apathy, rising extremism, and societal complacency are frequently exemplified by the Emcee. “Cabaret” serves as both a historical reflection and a warning about the dangers of ignoring warning signs in a shifting political climate.

In addition to its historical and political themes, the production explored gender fluidity within the Kit Kat Club. Stoffle highlighted this aspect of the show, explaining how the club represented a space of freedom and self-expression, something that was eventually threatened and dismantled by the Nazis. “That same targeting of queer expression is happening in the U.S. today. We wanted to make that parallel clear.” The show’s portrayal of gender nonconformity and its

suppression was a stark reminder of how history continues to echo in modern times.

At its core, “Cabaret” can act as a cautionary tale. “The reason we tell stories like “Cabaret,” even though they’re sad, is to remind us of what’s happened in history,” Stoffle said. “Because history repeats itself.”

Beyond the heavy themes, “Cabaret” also fostered many friendships among its cast and crew. “A lot of seniors at NCSSM get to know juniors through the musical, and people definitely make friends they otherwise wouldn’t have made,” Stoffle noted. Long rehearsals and shared challenges brought the team together, forming a close-knit community dedicated as they worked together to tell this story. One of the cast’s pre-show traditions was performing a dress rehearsal for an audience of stuffed animals, a small moment of calm and lightheartedness in an otherwise busy production. “We all took stuffed animals from our rooms and set them up in the audience to watch our final dress rehearsal,” Stoffle recalled.

The team behind “Cabaret” was extensive. Sampieri devoted countless hours to directing, ensuring that every aspect of the performance was polished and meaningful. Leslie Knight served as assistant director, providing

additional support for the production. Mr. Rowe, the technical director, managed set construction and lighting, often staying late to help cut wood and hang lights. Miss Perez led the pit orchestra, an essential component of “Cabaret’s” immersive experience. The music was an important piece in this production, with numbers like “Willkommen” and “Cabaret” setting the tone for the performance. The pit’s role was particularly crucial given the show’s musical integration with the actors’ performances, ensuring seamless transitions between dialogue and song. An audience member noted that the performance left them “wanting to watch it again, to notice all of the subtle foreshadowing, and to listen to pieces like If You Could See Her, again.”

Bringing such a complex and emotionally charged show to the stage required immense dedication from the entire cast and crew. “Cabaret” was a unique story told through beautiful set design, complex characters played by uniquely talented NCSSM students, and musical accompaniment that brought the production together. With a dedicated cast, a committed production team, and a timeless story, “Cabaret” will be a memorable show for all who watched and were involved in its production. ■



FAITH WAGONER '25 PERFORMS AS THE FEMALE LEAD IN CABARET. NCSSM YEARBOOK



JULIAN BURKE '25 PERFORMS AS THE EMCEE IN CABARET. NCSSM YEARBOOK



NCSSM YEARBOOK

STUDENT LIFE

## Reynolds Moves to Mods

BY MARCELLUS DAY  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

As a part of the campus’s renovation plans, all of Reynolds moved into the modular units over the February extended weekend to little fanfare. Both Greynolds halls and half of 1d1c2c moved into modular one, and Reynolds 1c2e2d and the other half of 1d1c2c moved into modular two. While this move was warranted with the plethora of issues the building was facing, many Reynolds’ students advocated for the move not to happen, due to it being so late in the year. Regardless, on March 2nd all were moved into the modular units, where Reynolds will likely stay until Spring 2026. “The facilities are nice, but we still haven’t gotten soap dispensers (we’re having an intense soap shortage and have learned the art of violently pressing the bare soap box skeletons with our palms and rubbing them together for a slim hope of making bubbles) and it’s too far away from classes.

However, there’s a dual-edge sword to its far location; at the end of the day it feels satisfying after a long walk to finally settle down in your dorm room. It feels like a sense of coming home, though in a weird, temporary way.” - Lily Galaplan

The class of 2027 can also expect to live on the modular units, which might shift campus perception on them as they move in at the start of their NCSSM careers. In the meanwhile, all current Reynolds people are preparing to move out for the second time, with the seniors saying goodbye to campus forever. ■

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LOUISA WEINARD

REGENERON FROM PAGE 1

# Regeneron STS Wins

unbiased point of view. What I found particularly interesting was their inclusion of the story behind the research when considering the students’ applications. They take this into account when reading the additional essays that applicants were required to write when submitting their research. Tringale ’25 brought this to my attention during our conversation about the application process saying, “It’s a completely separate application process (not through the school), similar to a scholarship application you write additional essays about what you researched, why, and what your future contributions to science will be, as well as turning in the 30-page research paper.”

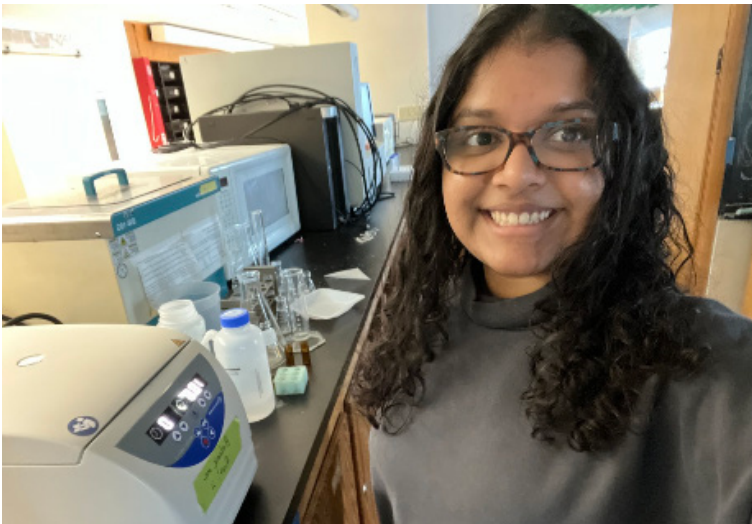
Your journey, if you so choose, might start through one of the various research programs our school offers, such as RBio or RChem, among others, or through

an Independent Study. Either one has its benefits or disadvantages depending on the person or topic.

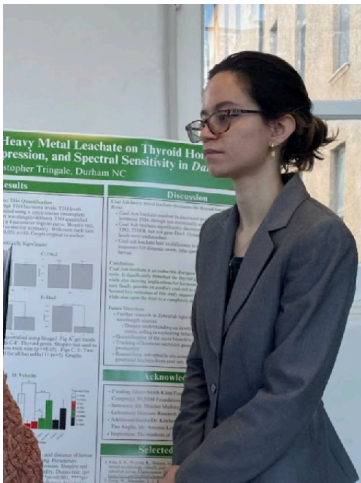
I learned after spending my afternoon with Aretha Datta ’25, a “Top 300 scholar,” that the competition wasn’t exactly the end goal for many students in NCSSM’s research programs. Regeneron wasn’t on the front burners, despite my impressions after passing by the large mural in Reynolds breezeway every day, I simply chalked it up to be another example of the school favoring science rather than encouraging interdisciplinary work and the inclusion of the humanities, something ever-present in my school life. However, I learned that their research was much more than that after hearing how they wanted to continue it in college, hopefully ending up benefiting their community. I also noticed, as I passed by all of the research

presentations on February 19th, that most of the researchers began their work after noticing a humanitarian issue and wanted to make a change. I’ve actually noticed that it was the student’s passion for their topic that far surpassed the sponsor’s support in some cases.

When applying to NCSSM’s research programs, students are met with encouragement that no matter their background and previous experience, they have the opportunity to pursue research. ■



ARETHA DATTA '25 COUNDUCTING HER RBIO PROJECT ARETHA DATTA



DANTE TRINGALE '25 PRESENTS THEIR RESEARCH. MABEL KENNEDY

CAMPUS

# Mediocrity is failure. And you are not mediocre.

BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“I’ve set myself to become the King of the Pirates, and if I die trying, then at least I tried” is one of the many great lines from “One Piece” (1999-present) I think about often. Monkey D. Luffy, a silly but optimistic boy with the ability to stretch his body like rubber, accurately captures a rather fantastical but current perspective on attaining excellence in life—if I do not excel, then why would I pursue? I would rather be unknown than know failure.

A few weeks ago, I received my college decisions. Now, I’ve never been the social butterfly winner of everything great and holy, but I consider myself fairly well-rounded as an applicant. Yet, when I started opening the letters, I realized that the feeling of satisfaction was very rare. In other words, the results were unexpectedly expected.

I was mediocre. What does it mean to be mediocre? Merriam-Webster defines mediocre as “of moderate or low quality, value, ability, or performance: ordinary, so-so.” It already sucks to be called “so-so,” but even further I’d argue that the modern use of mediocrity is much simpler (and more brutal). Mediocrity is the failure to excel.

There’s nothing wrong with being mediocre. The only problem was that my computer screen did not match my ego and pride. I felt humiliated. Let down by none other than myself. By living this day alone, I knew that other people would also be doing this, and they would ask me in return. It is embarrassing to be reluctant to reply.

I went on spring break with my head hanging low. Upset at myself, not for being

mediocre, but for feeling embarrassed to be mediocre. Is my self-esteem this fragile? That I can’t even tolerate the possibility that I may not excel at everything I do? So pathetic.

I am pathetic, but so are most people. It’s our nature to excel because it feels good.

The minute our binary perspectives designated ourselves as mediocre, we find ourselves stuck between judgment and self-consciousness. What value do I have if I can’t get out of here? If I’m anything but exceptional?

Why would we be so



Being handed a blue ribbon warrants us a little more pep in our step. The pleasure and glee are multiplied when we post and promote these ribbons to the rest of the world through likes, comments, and shares.

There’s nothing wrong with being mediocre. The only problem is that we feel there is nothing worthy of celebrating in mediocrity. There’s nothing impressive about learning your way around using public transportation. Seeing zero assignments to do on Canvas. If it’s not worth celebrating, then it’s not special.

In the same way judges rule people guilty or innocent, we deliver our own verdicts as mediocre or exceptional. In a time where anyone can easily leave a mark on the world through social media posts and 10-second shorts, being mediocre is almost like a crime (in the least flattering, least interesting way). We perceive being mediocre as an either-or option.

stringent with our happiness? Leisure is frowned upon, and failure calls for punishment. We may not all be content if we had a “the great” attached to the end of our names, but there is just a big difference between being recognized and being “great-less.” It is appealing to be recognized, but there is also so much freedom abandoned in settling for mediocrity. Do we always have to excel to have value? Have we regressed enough to times when not attending an Ivy for undergrad is embarrassing rather than endearing?

There’s nothing wrong with being mediocre. The only problem is that we believe mediocrity to be a problem. What if we expanded our narrow, binary perspective across a scale, into a spectrum? What if I valued the result not by my performance in comparison to others, but by its influence on my outlook on life? Indeed, the “oh, Yale!”

and “where’s that college again?” still exist on this scale—but not necessarily at the endpoints. The value of my life is not evaluated by the decisions, but by the process. Was it a meaningful process? Did it give me joy and sometimes misery? Yes, and even if I could have done some things differently, my accomplishments are valuable experiences.

Hence, let’s redefine mediocrity as not a failure to excel, but just one experience of many on a spectrum of a set standard. Mediocrity is not a shameful measure of performance, but a measure of meaningfulness. That way, even a poor performance, which you can consider a mediocre experience, can be a learning opportunity. These learning opportunities drive us to discover the world and society, inviting new discoveries about the world and, perhaps, ourselves.

What if our drive to be not mediocre is just a purpose to excel? What if we didn’t have a purpose? What if I applied to college for fun? What if all I went through in the November and December grind was to enjoy the feeling of that grind being over? What if I could laugh, be carefree, and celebrate the one single instance of confetti filling my screen? There is so much joy, happiness, satisfaction, and freedom in these experiences.

There is so much untouched potential in mediocrity, to be free of judgment and simply live for the experience. Rather than saying the generic “don’t be afraid of failure,” how about we recognize it as “risk failure” instead? Embrace our mediocrity, and celebrate just being able to be here.

At the end of the day, I realize that I’d rather know failure than be unknown. ■

STYLE FROM PAGE 1

# Flyest Faculty Fits

His graphing calculator t-shirt is sure to get you excited about math! To spruce up your wardrobe this year, try finding a signature statement piece like Mr. Ji’s many pairs of neon glasses.

Mr. Severance’s bold prints and pattern mixing are nothing short of iconic. When creating his outfits, Severance likes to experiment with matching patterns and colors. His favorite outfit features a floral shirt and matching purple pants: “I like the bold color of the pants as they aren’t your standard black, khaki, or blue.” Top



RYAN SEVERANCE

it off with a man-bun and you’re sure to have a look that dazzles. Patterned shirts are all the rage this season as we try in vain to imitate Severance’s signature style!

Dr. Cantrell is an expert on preppy and timeless fashion. Dressed to the nines even for an evening class, Cantrell manages to look both professional and effortless as his students file into the classroom already wearing pajamas. When asked about his style, Cantrell provided a thoughtful statement about the story behind his clothing - he considers how the choices to wear a certain article

of clothing influences our self-expression. He also addressed his style evolution in eloquently nostalgic prose:

“As you grow older, or so I have found, what you would be is strangely related to who you once were or wished to be, as you imagine that relation in sensations of memory. So these clothes—an old hunting jacket and boots, both from LL Bean, a wool tie from Orvis, a cap from Paul Stuart and, for inclement weather, a slouchy tweed hat from Brooks Brothers (before it was sold in bankruptcy to some soulless purveyor of ‘brand names’)—these, with wool sweaters which always somehow smell of wet leaves, old tweed jackets, and shabby corduroy trousers, create or conjure up a kind of wondering continuity between a younger self who, in memory was green and carefree, famous among the barns

About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home, In the sun that is young once only

and the self of an older sun awakened to ‘the farm forever fled from the childless land.’ I have worn some version of this ‘outfit,’ for fifty years or more, first walking in mellow autumn light over the fields and along the mountain streams of our family farm in my early teens with poetry in my head, and now wandering in another world, following that other, younger self into a time ‘out of grace.’”

The next time you wear your favorite outfit, consider what led you to these choices, and how you might look back upon your current life as inspiration for your future self. ■



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While exiled to the Modular Buildings, AKA Mods, Reynolds residents have one advantage: a huge room with walk-in closets. Rejoice and remember the good old days of being part of BBR. Alas, now it is simply BB.

Hello Hunt Kitchen! Cook up a MasterChef meal or heat up your ramen-- the choice is yours.

Visit Counseling on the 2nd floor for the best snacks, coffee, and chats across NCSSM. Sit next to the mini waterfall and dream of the next extended weekend.

“Pickleball @ 8,” your friend texted in the groupchat. While the courts are for tennis, feel free to play any sport, even pickleball, batminton.

Gym after school, anybody? Get on your fitness grind with friends or simply put headphones on to drown out the world-- everybody is welcome!

The rumor is true-- a Fifth Bryan does exist! Catch a sneak peek of it between your classes.

Happy Half warriors unite! Starting from 9:30, spend the final half hour hanging out with friends before being banished to your hall.

“Happy birthday!” Watts Porch exclaims. Throw a party for your friends or simply have a study session on a sunny day.  
  
P.S. Mentorship students know this part of campus very well...

Bryan Lawn, better known as Blawn. Try to snag a spot in the hammock nestled between two trees get ready for lounging on the grass with friends after classes.

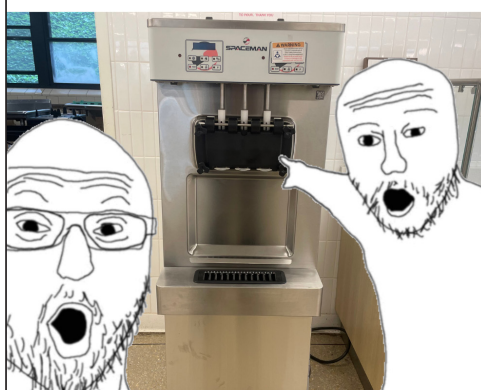
Bryan Lobby, AKA Blobby. Wait an incredibly long time for your friends before all of you go to Ninth Street, steal a few fries from your friends when they Doordash, and get ready for late night lock-in sessions.

Beall or Bell? Beall’s lounges are like no other- even if it means killing a cockroach every night.

Walk by Reynolds construction to reminisce of the good times: an easy way from 2nd floor down to the Greynolds hallway.

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STENTORIAN EDITION



METRO

# Battle of the Buses: School Vans vs. GoDurham Buses

BY MABEL KENNEDY  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

As I walk around the perimeter of the school, a crisp but pleasant chill in the air, my friend and I pass by the long, dizzying row of white school vans. I began to wonder why there is a need for such an excess, it seemed unnecessary.

Perhaps it is just a result of overanalysis, however, paired with the circulating beliefs I've heard, it reinforces my curiosity. Statements like downtown seems dangerous and a shared sentiment about the Durham buses have been thrown around like they hold no weight. Are the plethora of school vans there for the sole control of being the ones transporting the students? If so, that would only further these beliefs that the outside world of Durham, Raleigh, and Chapel Hill are dangerous.

I then began to wonder why the topics of the public buses as rough or unsafe were viewed as the truth. Was it the fact that locals make use of them too? That it's not full of other peers from the same sheltered bubble



NCSSM POSSESSES SEVERAL GAS VANS, WHICH SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME PARKED IN THE BRYAN PARKING LOT. TERESA FANG



that this school can turn into? Or is it the fact that the majority of people that you will find riding the bus are black? These are questions I cannot answer and probably don't have a definite answer to; however, the subject of the school being a sheltered place is definitely one of interest.

The reality is that many of the residential students here rarely leave the school grounds, or if they do, it's to the comfortable stretch of 9th Street. This could be the result of the burdensome workload, but it can cause a limited worldview and create a bubble around NCSSM. Although downtown may not be a walkable distance for some, the free buses are available and easy to use, and downtown has been nothing but hospitable in all the months I've been here.

Now, my experience has not been everyone's, however, I'd still argue that both downtown and the buses are safe and something that should be taken advantage of more often before we have to start paying for bus passes. ■

PUZZLES THINK ABOUT WHAT THIS MONTH IS FOR...

2		9				
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			9	8	2	3
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May						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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STAN'S DAILY CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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51					52	53						
54					55					56	57	58
60					61				62			59
63					64				65			

ACROSS

- Giant of industry
- Sports cable network
- "Constrictor" snakes
- Get out of bed
- Unexciting, informally
- "That hurts!"
- What an athlete shoots into a hoop
- "Do \_\_, others as..."
- Weight loss plans
- Acquire, as expenses
- Climbed, as a mountain
- Receive willingly
- More agile
- Earth tremor
- Wild animal's home
- Spa's steam room
- "Be quiet!"
- Any line on a shopping list
- Unmannerly man
- Just a single time

- Small plateau
- Heart's pulsation
- Fully aware of
- Bird's chirp
- Balance sheet pluses
- Milk container
- Capital of Greece
- Be very fond of
- Hot chocolaty drink
- Back of the neck
- Where nonswimmers can splash around
- Improves, as wine
- Gave approval for
- Wine fruit
- Not as much
- The Loch \_\_ monster
- Linked, as oxen

DOWN

- Bar bill, informally
- Keogh plan alternative
- "My country, \_\_ of thee"
- Make a request
- Tailor's pointy tool
- Receded, as the tide
- Narrow plank
- Close friends
- Sports group with pucks and goalies: Abbr.
- Rental put on lawns for kids to jump on
- Fraction of a pound
- Behave badly
- Brief in duration
- Levels of stadiums
- Exclamation like "Yuck!"
- Sudden outpouring
- Sheds tears
- Camper's sleeping surface
- Small cylindrical battery
- Thin in physique
- Fraction of a gallon
- Open, as shoelaces
- Have sore muscles
- Turn loose from a corral
- Traditional kilt wearers
- Barnyard birds
- Smallest two-digit number
- Relay-race stick
- Misfortune
- Long-haired, as a sheepdog
- Waterway through Panama
- Wise maxim
- Lassos
- Corrosive liquids
- Birthday party dessert
- Poems of praise
- Was victorious
- Athlete who's paid
- Tree with acorns
- Unlock, in verses
- Was in first place

May 28 Daily Crossword by Stan's Daily Crosswords on USA Today

LOCAL ART

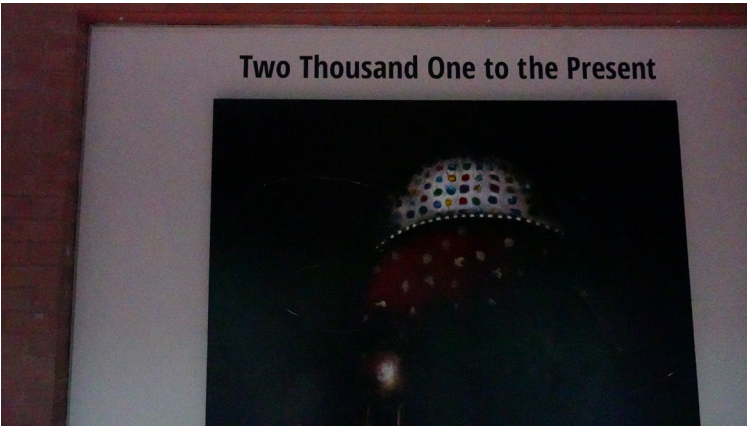
# Thanks Ben Bridgers, For Your Patience

**EXPLORE ART.** Ben Bridgers is a North Carolina-based painter known for blending classical oil techniques with themes drawn from personal memory, nature, and subcultures like skateboarding and punk. His work often explores the tension between representation and abstraction, creating imagined worlds that reflect on transience, loss, and the emotional resonance of everyday experiences.

BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I went to Ben Bridgers' exhibit in ETC lobby on April 25, and after checking out his works, I talked extensively with the artist about his process of making art from sketches to varnish, and a little about things I had heard before, read about, but never did, like mixing paint or stretching canvases. I had observed from his charcoal drawings that they were more abstract, and even when they weren't inherently in the shape of any discernable object, they looked like familiar objects. On the other hand, his paintings felt like whimsical little furry creatures shrouded in darkness. It was cool to see the composition of things that the human brain thought up of and finding out that they somehow worked when executed like this.

The darkness of the black paint impressed me, and the varnish on the entire painting was so reflective that it served as a sort of mirror as I waved my hands in front of it. It revealed the smoothness of the layers of paint, and it was like the painting was created on just one layer. The fur on the creatures was



SPECIAL THANKS TO MS. CARRIE ALTER AND THE HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT FOR MAKING THIS EVENT POSSIBLE, AND THANKS BEN BRIDGERS FOR SHARING HIS ART WITH NCSSM. TERESA FANG

one with the black background itself; the white fur trailed into the abyss like the creature had simultaneously materialized and crawled out of it. I wondered if this effect was created using a fine fan brush, one so flexible if I ran a finger over the bristles, the bristles would bend a full 90 degrees.

So, I asked Ben Bridgers about it. He replied it was not pure black, and shared a recipe for the black: crimson alizarin, ultramarine blue, a bit of something something yellow, a bit of some other two colors...he had multiple recipes for different toned blacks. I respect that mightily. I told him I preferred prussian blue and crimson red hue myself, and we compared recipes briefly. Color theory became more real as I imagined a palette knife digging into turds of color and producing a black splat on a piece of palette paper. And I had never met someone who mixed their own paints before, and as much as I would like to try mixing white lead powder, for starters it'd be hard to find some legal sellers, and if I

did acquire some, my heart does not lie so much in the processes before paint hits the canvas.

But for Bridgers, that process was evidently very important. He made his own canvases his way, from start to finish, at around five or six per 0.5-1.5 years at a time in his studio. My initial thought was how big his studio had to be, but he alluded to so many trips outside his studio that I had to readjust my thoughts. Perhaps his studio was the whole world; he had traveled abroad to Italy during his time at the University of Georgia and sketched people, parks, animals, and trees on small pieces of paper to bring back to his studio and inspire his works. I, too, find a particular cuteness in making art on tiny things, which makes trips outside like this precious condensations of creativity. But still, I am not one with the patience to stretch canvases, cover it with rabbit skin glue, wait three months, then do some extra stuff before being able to paint on it.

I am impressionable though, and I will scratch "handmixed

paint" off my bucket list sometime soon. One thing that will not come to me soon, however, is an eye for abstractness. Bridgers calmly said the eye to come up with new ideas for abstract work takes time and practice, and even he brings four-ish of his works with him to people-watching trips, just to remember his style and have a starting point for the final work. I look at this man, bald, maybe in his 40's, and I think of his classical art training and years of teaching art to college students. I think of my tendency to not sit still, especially in foundational, technical art courses with private instructors. I think back to my paintings, each one of them based off a photo or multiple photos clipped together, and I cringe at my inability to be original.

Maybe that is just pessimism and strict standards. It is normal, if not encouraged, to be inspired by other works in life-natural and artificial. And it is normal for an 18-year-old to have less art experience as a middle-aged experienced artist—maybe this summer I will sit myself down and finally practice skeletal anatomy, which was a promise to myself made years before. As I prepared to leave this exhibit, stealing the last of the tangerines from the snacks table of course, I hear Bridgers talking about him working on multiple paintings at once. And so, to my 26 paintings blocked out in thin burnt umber but rotting in the corner of my studio space, I'm inspired once again to throw upon each a stroke of color—or prussian blue black—before I leave them alone again. ■

REVIEW

# Sunrise On The Reaping: A Review

BY LOUISA WEINARD  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

On March 18th, 2025, acclaimed author Suzanne Collins published Sunrise On The Reaping, the second prequel to her iconic Hunger Games trilogy. This tale, which follows the thrilling journey of Katniss and Peeta's mentor, Haymitch Abernathy, was met with great fanfare from the dystopian fantasy world. Collins' new novel rode the wave of momentum from the popular film adaptation of The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes and quickly became a worldwide success with more than 1.5 million copies sold, as found by Scholastic. After buying, readers were not disappointed. Sunrise on the Reaping delivers an action-packed retelling of the 50th Hunger Games, with Abernathy presented as an unconventional tribute who creates close connections between familiar faces and newly introduced characters and struggles to survive the cruelties of the corrupt nation of Panem.

The character development and intricate plotlines leave readers captivated by the connections between past and present worlds, with many going to popular social media sites to share their thoughts. Popular theories and new insights on the original Hunger Games trilogy are trending all over apps like TikTok and Instagram, and for good reason. Collins is known for using her clever and meaningful writing to reflect pressing real-world issues. In Sunrise on the Reaping, she explores the dangers of propaganda and media manipulation, which are becoming increasingly apparent in the polarizing nature of the United States. At just about four hundred pages, Collins' new book is sure to zoom by for readers, but its unique perspective is likely to linger. A film adaptation is already in the works, and will be making its way to theaters in August 2026 to bring Haymitch's story to life! ■

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# “Cabaret”

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**LIFE IS A CABARET.** “Cabaret” is a musical set in 1930s Berlin, centered around the Kit Kat Club and the entangled lives of British writer Clifford Bradshaw and cabaret performer Sally Bowles, as political tensions rise with the Nazi party’s ascent. Against a backdrop of decadence and moral ambiguity, the show explores how individuals cling to personal freedom and illusion even as the world around them collapses into authoritarianism.

Book by Joe Masteroff  
Based on the play by John Van Druten and  
Stories by Christopher Isherwood  
Music by John Kander Lyrics by Fred Ebb

**FEATURING:**  
Aadi Kucheria, Blaney Blizzard, Cade Hartsell, Elliott Wait, Ella Rose Holley, Faith Wagoner, Jack Betz, Julian Burke, Louisa Weinard, Micah Wascher, Pedro Munoz-Benitez, Perry Kim, Rhynn Alligood, Rosa Miray, Sadie Albright, Sam Lewis, and Tabea Nett

**DIRECTION BY:**  
Adam Sampieri, Leslie Knight, Marcellus Day, Robbie Stoffel

**CHOREOGRAPHY BY:**  
Louisa Weinard, Perry Kim

**STAGE MANAGEMENT BY:**  
Anna Liu

**ORCHESTRAL DIRECTION BY:**  
Carolina Perez

**CHORAL DIRECTION BY:**  
Chad Cygan

