



Composition Students' Work to be Performed

ALEX DEARMORE
Regular Contributor

Tonight, the Greatbatch School of Music Composition Department will be holding a recital featuring works composed by students and performed by both students and faculty.

The composers include: Drew Bundy, Trey Burligame, Ethan Carr, Isabela Godoy, Derek Jaques, Nathaniel Parks, Kalani Ryan, Ernest Schelp, Jacob Searles, and Joshua Tebben. The performers are Matthew Amedio, David Clem, Amanda Cox, and Dan Zambrano.

Drew Bundy ('21), a Houghton College graduate student, became interested in music composition "after some turmoil in high school." He realized that "writing music was a good way to process what was happening and a way to bless others." He "listens to Tchaikovsky a lot," likes pop and contemporary Christian music, enjoys the work of Philip P. Bliss and Keith Getty, and he is "really into opera," including the works of Rossini, Belini, Donizetti, Verdi, and Puccini. The part of music composition that he enjoys most is collaboration.

His piece that will be performed tonight is "one of the movements" from the requiem that he is composing as his "large work" for his degree. The piece was written "a little over a month ago, just before [his] Grandma passed away." He did not "realize at the time that [he] would be writing it as a prayer that [he] finds so much comfort in now."

Trey Burligame ('20) has been "playing the guitar since childhood, and is currently studying it as part of [his] degree at Houghton. He finds that "music composition has improved [his] understanding of what can and cannot work on the guitar, and how to utilize the unique ergonomic patterns that the guitar has to offer." In addition, "music composition is a great way to decompress and channel creative energy. Not only is it useful for my own benefit," he says, "Writing music that other people enjoy is a great experience to have." Some of the composers that have inspired him include Frederic Mompou, Johannes Brahms, Agustín Barrios, and Igor Stravinsky.

However, the piece that Burligame has composed and is performing tonight, *One Note Piece*, was actually inspired by György Ligeti. The title "was the file name when [he] initially

started working on this project and the name stuck. [He] has noticed that the name catches peoples attention and draws curiosity." Because he only uses one note throughout the piece, "the only elements that [he] was able to use were rhythm and duration." He adds that "working through this piece has been a rewarding and challenging experience."

Ethan Carr ('21) enjoys music composition because "it is an amazing form of artistic expression. [He] gets to create a sonic experience that, when done properly, also instills a mental image within the listener." He stresses that he "doesn't try to emulate anyone else, but rather he tries to be entirely himself, forging his own style and identity within the music he writes."

The piece that Carr composed for the recital, *Phenomenal Sounds*, "explores some of the extremes of nature, and the kinds of sounds we may hear there...The second movement is about a wildfire, which is represented by a very tense melody that forces its way through very dissonant accompaniment." He adds that this "helps the audience feel that they are experiencing this fire themselves." Carr also commented that he was partially inspired by a portion of *The Hobbit*, as "the first movement attempts to portray the sounds one might hear if they stumbled across a similar cavern."

Isabela Godoy ('23) says of composing, that "[music] is a powerful and influential universal language that everyone understands, even though there are no words...being able to create music is so beautiful." She says that being a music composition student is "amazing" but "has its ups and downs." It's "difficult...requiring in-depth personal study and long hours in the practice rooms."

The piece that Godoy composed for the recital, *Heart Strings*, "is a tonal composition that features varying levels of dynamics and rhythmic contrast and the usage of feathered beaming to allow the performer greater creative expression." It "aims to tell the story of the complexity of human love and affection, expressing passion, longing, confusion and agitation" and does so through the use of bold "chromaticism and unique harmonic shifts." *Heart Strings* was completed November 26, 2019 and is the first of a three piece set that aims to give voice to the deeper emotions of

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A gratuitous picture of Leela because it's finals week and everyone needs a picture of Leela. Thanks to Anja Oberg for providing it!

Jill Jordan Assumes Position as Area Associate Dean of Paine

BURTON BREWSTER
Regular Contributor

Professor Jill Jordan has taken the position of STEM Director this semester as a result of the previous position being eliminated.

Before the establishment of STEM Director another position existed known as Area Associate Dean (AAD). The history of that position, however, stretches back to before there were such things as AAD's on campus. According to Professor Jill (Brautigam '99) Jordan, a similar role existed which was responsible for "[helping] coordinate things between the math and science departments, lend leadership and give a vision." It was only later on that Houghton adopted a more administrative approach when that incorporated the position of AAD. The responsibilities of the AAD included those of the previous coordinators, but also included form signing and working with academic counsel to make decisions.

From 2014 until the summer of 2019, the Area Associate Dean of Paine was Professor Mark Yuly ('76), who currently teaches physics. However, last summer the position of AAD disappeared from campus. Predictably, this led to a conundrum for Paine. As Jordan ex-

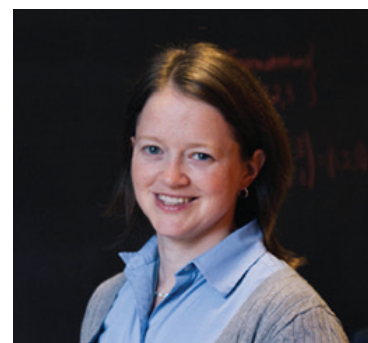
plained, "The majors in Paine often draw from multiple disciplines. We needed to make sure that someone was keeping an eye on the overall picture."

Professor Paul Young, teacher of Psychology and now Dean of the Faculty as of March 2019, summarized the process succinctly: "The position was requested; the request was approved."

According to Mim Case, Academic Departments Coordinator on campus, "The new position of STEM Director was proposed in the spring, [however, the position was] not implemented until the fall as the details of what the position entailed were [still being] discussed."

It was eventually agreed upon that Professor Jordan would take up the mantle and become STEM Director on campus. "We had talked about it, starting in October," explained Professor Jordan, yet the role was not fully implemented until November 1st.

When asked about the difficulties involved with taking on the new position mid-semester, she explained, "The challenge is that you have your end of the semester and schedule worked out—how much time you can commit to what you're doing and when you can have that



COURTESY OF HOUGHTON.EDU

Jill Jordan, STEM Director

time...and then all of a sudden you have the equivalent of another full course dropped in your lap. Now make time for this too!"

Professor Jordan is technically a part-time professor, as she only teaches "6 credits" worth of classes. (Professors are required to be teaching twelve credits before they are considered full-time). "But now it is like the equivalent of 10 each semester. Not quite full-time, but five-sixths," she said.

There is only minor variation between the role of AAD and STEM Director. According to Case, "This position retains functions of the AAD that are most essential to the departments: overseeing common activities and those that fall between departments and management of the building. Two

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humans.

Derek Jaques (‘22) has written a piano piece for the recital titled, *Three Lamentations*. It is a “look” or a “glance” into the world of simple folk songs. Each song has a simple melody, modelling the simple and complex nuances of human emotion. Jaques encourages audience members to “have eyes closed and not simply hear the melodies, but to feel them as well.”

Nathaniel Parks (‘20) loves music and arranging music compositions in his spare time. He has found that taking lessons has helped him to “understand the thought process behind collecting your ideas, getting inspiration, and putting the music on paper.” He hopes to be able to use the music composition skills he learns here at Houghton after he graduates.

The piece Parks has composed for tonight’s recital is called *Reaching the Summit*. Explaining his piece, he says “with a slow, chorale-like start, it gives a small idea of the theme, like looking at the challenge before starting it. The fast pace, and later on, the driving

rhythms, intend to move the listener forward, urging them to continue on. Many sections end on an open chord, leaving the listener with the feeling that the piece can go to many places and further shows that there is more that needs to be done to reach the summit.” His inspiration for the piece came from the recurring idea of “aiming to achieve a goal that stands right in front of you, like climbing a tall mountain.” Another inspiration was *Dusk Falls* from the videogame *Fire Emblem Fates*. According to Parks, the main driving rhythm is similar in both. He hopes to “bring out a sense of adventure” through the piece he has created.

Kalani Ryan (‘23) has written a piano piece for the recital that is based on the hymn, *Be Still My Soul*, having gotten the idea for her piece when she was learning the original hymn on piano. The title of the piece is *Fantasia*, which Ryan says has a “double meaning.” The piece does not follow a strict musical form, and *Fantasia* is also the name of a fictional world from the novel *The Neverending Story*. She adds that this piece “is a milestone of a new season in my

life where I am finally reaching my dream of writing music.”

Ernest Schelp (‘22) really “enjoys writing music for its own sake” and would love to go into game scoring sometime in the future. Composers that he is inspired by include John Williams, Hans Zimmer, Howard Shore, Gustav Mahler, and Jeremy Soule. He says that in composing musical scores, “the road to success is consistency.”

His piece, *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, was not written “programmatically,” like much of the music that he normally writes. He says that “there’s not really a story behind the piece the way that there normally is,” and that it was a “very different experience to write.” It is written in the key of D major, and is “inspired by the sense of tension and movement created by the interval of a seventh.” The piece comes together in a way that “evokes a gentle sense of longing.”

Jacob Searles (‘23) is interested in music composition primarily because “you can take something as fleeting as an emotion, thought, or harmony you’re hearing in your head, and make it into a physical reality.”

He says that he “might struggle with words or ways of understanding [himself] until [he] uses the art of music to reflect those things, and it makes everything seem more attainable.” As a composer, Searles says that he is inspired by Franz Strauss, who was a French Hornist like Searles himself is. He says that the biggest challenge of composing is being creative and original, and that the only way to really do those things is to “follow what you feel and what you ‘hear’ in your head.”

The piece that he has composed for tonight’s recital, *Tre Fjorder*, is an unaccompanied solo for the French Horn. There are three short movements, each of which is “inspired by the magnificent picture of the mighty Scandanavian fjords which riddle the nordic landscape... High cliffs are caressed by ever flowing streams, reflecting the beautiful greens, blues, and greys upon the rocky precipices.” The piece ends when “the third movement brings the tune to a dynamic halt as the seemingly infinite river reaches the open sea.”

Joshua Tebben (‘23) has composed *Four Dances for*

Trumpet for tonight’s recital. This is his first composition of a piece for a “solo instrument with piano accompaniment.” This piece allowed him to really “explore the genre.” He says that an important part of the piece is “understanding how each instrument in an ensemble interacts with each other instrument in each register.”

The musical composition recital will take place at 6:30 pm in the Recital Hall in the Center for the Arts.★

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unique and significant programs operate in this division: the Summer Research Institute and Science Honors. These are not department or discipline specific programs, which benefit from having someone providing oversight from a larger viewpoint.” Additionally, the STEM Director is responsible for representing the Paine majors to people that are internal or external to the college, especially when it involves more than one department.★

Russian Teacakes

Courtesy of Melissa Hodde (‘20)

1 cup margarine or butter, softened
½ cup powdered sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
2¼ cups all-purpose flour*
¾ cups finely chopped nuts
¼ teaspoon salt
Powdered sugar

Heat oven to 400. Mix margarine, ½ cup powdered sugar and the vanilla. Stir in flour, nuts and salt until dough holds together; shape into 1-inch balls. Place about 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake until set but not brown, 10-12 minutes.

Old Fashioned Popcorn Balls

Courtesy of Riley Gustin (‘21)

2 qts. Unsalted popped popcorn
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup water
¼ cup light corn syrup
½ teaspoon vinegar
½ teaspoon vanilla
¼ teaspoon salt

Butter the inside of the mixing bowl and pour in the (popped) popcorn. In the saucepan combine the sugar, corn syrup, vinegar, salt, and vanilla extract. Mix thoroughly. Heat to boiling point and stir until the sugar melts. Cook slowly to hard ball stage (250F). Remove from heat. Immediately, but slowly, pour mixture in a fine stream over popcorn, mixing as you do this. After the popcorn is fully coated, rub butter on your hands and quickly mold the popcorn into balls. The size determines the number of popcorn balls made.

Tips: Make your own popcorn fresh, don’t attempt alone, and make sure to move fast or the sugar will harden too quickly.

Monkey Bread

Courtesy of Erica Durbin (‘20)

4 cans buttermilk biscuits
⅔ cup sugar
2 tablespoons cinnamon
1½ cup sugar
1 tablespoon cinnyamon
1 cup butter
1 teaspoon vanilla

Cut biscuits into fourths. Shake to coat in ⅔ cup sugar and 2 tablespoons cinnamon. Place in greased bundt pan. Place sugar, cinnamon, butter and vanilla in saucepan. Heat until butter is melted. Stir. Pour over biscuits. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes. Let set 10 minutes. Place plate over pan and tip out. Sauce will ooze over top of bread.

Cheese Grits

Courtesy of Erica Durbin (‘20)

4 cups boiling water
1 cup grits
Salt to taste
1 tablespoon worcestershire sauce (optional)
1 stick margarine
½ pound sharp cheddar cheese, grated

Cook grits in boiling water until completely done and thickened. Add Worcestershire sauce, margarine, and cheese. Stir until margarine and cheese have melted. Serve hot.

Buckeyes

Courtesy of Anna Judd (‘21)

1 cup creamy peanut butter
1/4 cup melted butter
4 tsp brown sugar
1 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

Mix, chill, roll into balls, and dip in melted chocolate. These have been a Christmas tradition in my family as long as I can remember. (You can also make simple chocolate cookies, then press the peanut butter balls into the tops as soon as they come out of the oven and drizzle chocolate on top!)

Shortbread Diamonds

Courtesy of Phoebe Mullen ('21)

¾ cup butter, softened
1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
2 cups pastry flour *
2 cups chocolate chips
1 to 2 cups roasted pecans, coarsely chopped

*all-purpose flour works just as well

Cream butter and sugar, then mix in the flour. Press into a 9 by 13 baking pan and bake at 325 for about 15 minutes. Check them at 12 minutes; they should not be much darker than you put them in the oven.

Sprinkle chocolate chips liberally over the top. To speed the melting process, put a sheet of tin foil over the pan for a few minutes. Once melted, carefully spread the chocolate. Sprinkle on the nuts, then allow the chocolate to harden. You can put them in the fridge to hurry this along. Don't like pecans? Replace with chopped walnuts or almonds. (Or just leave them off...though I PROMISE you're missing out.) Or, if you're anticipating serving them to a mixed crowd, leave the nuts off half.

Once the chocolate has set, cut into diamonds (or squares or rectangles or rhombuses or whatever floats your boat).

Molasses Cookies,

Courtesy of Phoebe Mullen ('21)

Mix thoroughly in bowl:

¾ cup shortening
1 cup brown sugar
¼ cup molasses

Stir together in another bowl:

2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ginger
½ teaspoon cloves
¼ teaspoon salt

Mix dry ingredients into shortening mixture. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and chill 2 hours or overnight.

Heat oven to 375; lightly grease baking sheet.

Roll teaspoonfuls of chilled dough into balls the size of large walnuts. Roll balls in sugar and place three inches apart on the baking sheet.

Bake 10-12 minutes, or until just set but not hard. Cool on wire rack.

Makes 4 dozen cookies.

Lemon Bread

Courtesy of Phoebe Mullen ('21)

Lemon bread has been a Christmas Eve tradition in my family at least since my dad was a kid, maybe longer. Why Christmas Eve specifically, I don't know. My dad thought it might be that a one time lemons were more available in cold places at Christmas, though my grandmother thought it was just something her kids liked. Whatever the reason, it says Christmas to me.

1 cup sugar
6 tablespoons shortening or butter
Grated rind of 1 lemon
2 eggs
1 ½ cups flour
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ cup milk
A few pecans for garnish
¼ cup sugar
Juice of one lemon

Cream sugar and shortening. Add lemon rind and eggs. Sift together flour, salt and baking powder, and add alternately with milk. Pour into greased loaf pan, add almonds or pecans on top, and bake at 325 for 35-45 minutes.

Dissolve additional (1/4 cup) sugar in lemon juice and pour over hot bread. Allow to cool in pan.

Zucchini Bread

Courtesy of Erica Durbin ('20)

3 eggs, beaten
2 cups sugar
3 cups zucchini, grated
1 cup oil
2 tsp. vanilla
3 cups flour
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 ½ cup nuts, chopped (or raisins/coconut)
1 tsp. cinnamon

Mix eggs and sugar; add zucchini, oil and vanilla; mix well. Combine flour, salt, baking powder, cinnamon and baking soda; add to zucchini mixture. Stir in nuts. Pour into 2 greased loaf pans and bake at 325 for 1 hour.

Variation: replace cinnamon with ½ cup cocoa for chocolate zucchini bread.

Why *It's A Wonderful Life* Is A Timeless Christmas Classic

EMILY ALLEN

There is something truly lovely about sitting down to watch Christmas movies with family and friends during the holiday season. Returning to the same films every year, together we eagerly relive the wonder and joy, along with the occasional heartache and drama of classics such as *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *White Christmas*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *Elf*, *The Polar Express*, and many more. For some, the Hallmark Channel’s movies, with their heart-warming, albeit predictable, endings are more appealing than the classics. Yet, despite the popularity of each of these films, few compare in their depth of plot and integration of timeless themes to Frank Capra’s 1946 *It’s a Wonderful Life*.

Set in the imaginary town of Bedford Falls, NY, *It’s a Wonderful Life* tells the story of an affable young man named George Bailey who wants nothing more than to “shake the dust off my feet of this crummy little town and see the world!” George is a man with a vision, but his responsibilities at home to his family’s business keep him from pursuing his dreams. The movie begins by telling the story of George’s life as it leads up to a certain Christmas Eve



COURTESY OF BBC.COM

It's A Wonderful Life stars Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey.

when everything around him has fallen apart, and he considers taking his life. Before this can happen, however, George is given the chance to see what the world would be like if he had never been born. Without giving the ending away, you can imagine how different the town of Bedford Falls is without George Bailey, and how this changes his perspective!

What is it about a black and white movie from nearly 75 years ago that tugs at the hearts of so many still today?

Certainly, there are the famous quotes, “Every time a bell rings, an angel gets its wings!” and, “No man is a failure who has friends.” It’s also a beautiful love story between George and Mary Hatch. But more importantly, *It’s a Wonderful Life* tells a story of everyday people learning to live and love well, even in the face of difficult circumstances.

George Bailey is a good-hearted man who is willing to sacrifice much for the sake of those in need. As owner of the

Bailey Brothers Building and Loan, George offers help to hundreds in Bedford Falls who would not be able to get by without his generosity. Meanwhile, Mr. Henry Potter, a rich and stingy old man tries to buy out the Building and Loan at any chance he gets. George opposes him bravely, even when it means that he must live on modest means and never gets to pursue his dream of seeing the world.

Though sincere Christian faith and the true meaning of

Christmas are never mentioned in the movie – Clarence the angel can hardly be described as a biblical figure! – the film takes seriously the ideas that every person can make a difference with their own life, and that it is worth it in the end to do the difficult work of standing up for good. These are truths that both Christians and nonbelievers can embrace. In a special way for us as Christians, we can see embedded in *It’s a Wonderful Life* a Christ-like love that subverts the cultural norms to offer radical love to people who do not deserve it. Not only that, but this love is portrayed by a non-believer!

As it has for so many years, this Christmas *It’s a Wonderful Life* offers a challenge to us: Are we living lives that prioritize others, especially when it means sacrifice for ourselves? Like George, we may doubt ourselves and the ability of our actions to have any widespread effects. But also like George, all we may need is perspective. If you are looking for a movie to share with friends or family this season, *It’s a Wonderful Life* will charm and provoke you in a way that many other Christmas films do not. Step into the life of George Bailey and learn just how wonderful life really is! ★

The Knight Before Christmas: A Review

SHANNAN JOHNSON

Ah, Christmas. The time for cheesy rom-coms to truly shine. ‘Tis the season to come together with those you love and bond over the Christmas movies of your choice. Generally, there are two options when it comes to what Christmas movies to watch: either the classics like *Home Alone*, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, *Elf*... or the cheesy, which is basically every Hallmark Christmas movie. And Netflix has recently tried to create the latter, making their own original movies each year such as *A Christmas Prince*, *The Princess Switch*, and *The Knight Before Christmas*.

The Knight Before Christmas is one of Netflix’s latest Hallmark-wannabe movies this holiday season. It is directed by Monika Mitchell and produced by Vanessa Hudgens, who also plays the main character. *The Knight Before Christmas* is about a science teacher named Brooke Winters who meets a knight from the 14th century named Cole, who is played by Josh Whitehouse. Cole is sent to the present day in order to complete a quest given to him by a magical old lady in the woods; and if he does not complete said quest, he will fail to be a true knight. Throughout the movie Cole attempts to accomplish his

quest, while falling in love with Brooke.

This movie is mostly everything you’d expect this kind of Christmas film to be, hitting several Hallmark notes. For those of you who have not seen any Hallmark movies, they tend to be set in a small town, one of the characters owns a business, and there’s always a Christmas party at some point in the film. This movie provides all of this.

The movie also reminds me of *Enchanted*, a Disney movie about an animated princess sent to the live action world of New York City. Similar to *Enchanted*, there is a main character disillusioned with fairy tale tropes, like “happily ever after” and “true love,” and the main character is related to a little girl (Brooke has a niece). Cole is also similar to the Prince Charming character in *Enchanted*, too.

This is the kind of movie you can build a bond laughing about with friends. The dialogue is honestly pretty cringy, particularly when Brooke and Cole says things that sound forced. And while I really enjoy Cole’s goofy character, I felt both his and Brooke’s character had little depth to them. The story also doesn’t make much sense, but honestly, I still liked it. Once you realize that the movie is not trying to blow anyone’s mind at



COURTESY OF NETFLIX.COM

The Knight Before Christmas is available to stream on Netflix.

how good it is, but to tell a story of something that could never happen in real life, you can look beyond its flaws and enjoy it for what it is.

And ultimately, I think the objective of these Netflix Christmas movies is not to make sense but to make sequels. *The Christmas Prince* already has two sequels, and Hudgens’

previous Christmas movie *The Princess Switch* gets one next year. And apparently, they’re already planning a sequel for this one. Fun fact: There is a scene that comes after the credits roll that I suspected meant that a sequel was at least an intention. And of course, I was right.

If I could describe this movie with a drink, it would

be black coffee with whipped cream (that Hallmark charm) and sprinkles (the *Enchanted* undertones). Black coffee is an acquired taste, and so are Netflix Christmas movies. So take a sip, maybe two, and if it’s not for you, you don’t have to drink it again; but at least you gave it a try. ★

Winter Views at Houghton



Creek: Macro View (photo by Jakob Knudsen '21)



Creek: Micro View (photo by Frances Mullen '23)

Two Views: When is it Time to Deck the Halls? Right Now!



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

MOLLY BRIZZELL

Deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.

This is the traditional call to preparing for the Christmas season. Its celebration is contagious—the spirit of giving, the widespread love, the smiles and songs full of cheer—it’s hard to resist. Yet, every year, it still becomes a controversial debate as soon as the sun sets on Halloween night. When is it *truly* time to celebrate Christmas?

The best way for me to attack this problem is by going

through overlapping seasons/holidays of the year where people take the most issue with Christmas’ premature celebration. We’ll begin with many Houghton students’ favorite time of the year: spooky szn (season).

Spooky Szn: The Extended Celebration

Spooky szn, spooky szn, whatever you may call it is a very hyped time of the year. This sees people blasting their favorite Halloween bops and planning their Halloween costumes as soon as the first leaf turns. That could be as early as late-August or as late as mid-September, which are both still well over a month before Halloween happens. Yet, no one

they wait to celebrate until after Thanksgiving—which is typically less than a month before the holiday! So, it’s not like it’s impossible to imagine that we can’t celebrate Christmas just as early as we celebrate spooky szn. If people can put a Jack-O-Lantern emoji in their Twitter names two months before Halloween happens, then I can put a Christmas tree emoji in mine a month and a half before Christmas.

Thanksgiving: The Forgotten Celebration

I will now go on to put your *What about Thanksgiving?!* worries to rest. Thanksgiving is not forgotten when Christmas is celebrated early. There’s a reason why people sing *Happy*

to celebrate that birth with (and most definitely for the food, too). Santa even appears at the end of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade to bring the two holidays together! Before the day’s even truly begun, we’re thinking of Santa. And that’s not even mentioning all of the Christmas themes within the parade itself, including the famous Rockettes Christmas performance. You can’t escape those Christmas commercials, either. My mom doesn’t watch Thanksgiving movies while she makes dinner: she watches Hallmark Christmas movies. Christmas is *everywhere*—which makes it an essential part of Thanksgiving. They are evidently sister holidays.

Conclusion: Christmas Should be Celebrated More

So, when is it *truly* time to celebrate Christmas? The answer should be *always*. Take Christmas down to its roots: we’re celebrating the birth of Jesus here. This is the birth of a Savior, He who saved humanity. What’s so wrong with extending that celebration all the way to November 1st, at least?

Yes, I am likely one of the world’s largest Christmas fans

and supporters. Yes, my name rhymes with both holly and jolly. Yes, my mom and I always end up listening to at least a little bit of Christmas radio a few days prior to Halloween. But that shouldn’t be something to frown upon—that’s something to celebrate! The spirit of joy transcending into other months is definitely a good thing. Hallmark Christmas movies don’t all talk about Christmas miracles for nothing.

Altogether, it’s okay not to celebrate Christmas early. But, please, let us listen to Mariah Carey’s “All I Want For Christmas Is You” and eat a gosh darn candy cane once in a while before December 25th. We try to maintain our Christmas cheer for ten months out of the year just to celebrate this season to the fullest extent once it comes, and that’s why we go all out. We promise we’ll try to shut up once Christmas ends. ★

Molly is a sophomore majoring in Writing.

“So, when is it *truly* time to celebrate Christmas? The answer should be *always*.”

seems to have a problem with spooky szn creeping into the late summer. I’ve never heard anyone complain about it. This is even earlier than most people celebrate Christmas, assuming

Holidays (Happy Holidaaays): Thanksgiving is just an extension of the Christmas season. It’s important to be thankful around this time of year, thankful for a Savior and for family

The Case For Snow



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

PHOEBE MULLEN

It’s that time of year again when I start hearing the words, “Snow’s so disgusting.” And so, somewhat teasingly, I told one of my friends a few weeks ago, “Now’s the time I start arguing with you about the value of snow.” Full disclosure: I love snow. The same friend I mentioned believes that if I had grown up with snow, I would hate it as much as she does. That if I had a car to scrape off every morning, or if I’d lived through twenty dark and depressing winters, I’d hate it. I’m not so sure.

I grew up in southern California. I have never had a snow day. (I have had days off from

school due to wildfires, which we somewhat jokingly dubbed “fire days.”) I don’t drive (in snow or out) and I have never been through an entire New York winter, due to Christmas breaks, and to London freshman year. My winters in college have been somewhat bizarre: a few weeks of snow and cold, a month at home, and then back for another few months of snow and cold. I go home to dry sidewalks, sunny or foggy days, and the occasional rain shower (always met with enthusiasm by the water-starved locals).

I can attest that snow is not necessary to create a “Christmas spirit.” We can do that perfectly well through music, ginger cookies, decorated trees; a candlelit service on Christmas Eve. I can drink hot apple cider when it’s warm out, and some of my best Christmas memories come from years when it was sunny and well above 65 degrees. I’ve had people who grew up in snowy places tell me it doesn’t feel like Christ-

“The first step in recognizing snow’s value is separating the hustles—the slippery roads, the icy cars, the slushy sidewalks—from the things that make it beautiful.”

mas without snow. And while I can understand how that feeling would arise if that’s what you’re used to, I think there’s a value in realizing we can’t wait for circumstances to be perfect for us to have a good time.

So if we don’t need snow for Christmas, what value does snow have?

While Christmas lights look great wrapped around the porch rails and the oak trees on my street at home, there is no deny-

ing that Christmas lights are much more beautiful when they can reflect off the snow. A thin layer of clean snow delicately outlining the bare branches of the trees is one of the most gorgeous things Western New York has to offer. I’ve noticed that after a new snow, Houghton’s buildings are much more aesthetically pleasing, especially white-trimmed buildings like Gillette, Luckey, and the Chapel. The brown stone contrasts with the snow, and the snow picks up the trim. It’s almost like the buildings were waiting for the complementary winter weather to show them off.

Probably my least favorite thing about winter here is how dark it can get. But snow actually helps with that, by reflecting and magnifying what little light gets through the clouds. Often warmer days which melt the snow are ac-

companied by sun; however, days when there is no snow and no sun are downright depressing. Snow lightens the landscape, which would otherwise overwhelm us with browns and greys.

When we allow ourselves to forget, for a few minutes, about bitter wind or black ice, we can recognize that snow is beautiful when it highlights the bare branches of trees, or when the light from Fancher’s electric candles shines on it at night. The first step in recognizing snow’s value is separating the hustles—the slippery roads, the icy cars, the slushy sidewalks—from the things that make it beautiful.

The second step is allowing ourselves to love it for what it is. There is nothing better than snow for forgetting about trying to be adults and simply messing around. Who doesn’t love lobbing a snowball at a passing friend’s back? Once in a while we all need to drop down and make a snow angel, or spontaneously make a snowman on the quad at midnight. When we let snow give us joy, it can make the winter days brighter inside us as well as out. ★

Phoebe is a junior majoring in Writing and English.

“...I think there’s a value in realizing we can’t wait for circumstances to be perfect for us to have a good time.”

Two Views: When is it Time to Deck the Halls? Please Wait.



COURTESY OF CALB FESMIRE
ANNA WRAY

I have a confession: I am one of those grouchy people who complains about how the Christmas season seems to start earlier every year. Until last year, I assumed that people who talked about starting Christmas the day after Halloween were exaggerating. Then, I woke up on November 1st to find that a certain person across the hall, whose initials might be MB, had entirely gift-wrapped her door. It's not that I dislike Christmas, but starting it too soon can be problematic. While I know it does not have to be this way, much of the ever-lengthening holiday season appears to be rooted in commercialism. The growing trend to start Black "Friday" on

Thanksgiving night, sometimes as early as four or five p.m., reflects this. Certainly, the deeper problem here is that Christmas should focus more on the birth of our Savior than selling Barbies and Hot Wheels. It would take continuous effort from all of us to push commercialism out of Christmas, but attempting to contain it is an excellent place to start. Recognizing that constant advertising for potential gifts is currently an inescapable part of Christmas in the United States, the least we can do is keep it from creeping earlier each year, even as we press toward recentering the season on Jesus. Furthermore, Thanksgiving

“Gratitude is a value that our culture does not often appreciate, but it is important, especially for Christians.”

deserves to be observed in its own right, not as the last remaining barrier until we can fully begin Christmas by fighting over discounted goods. Gratitude is a value that our culture does not often appreciate, but it is important, especially for Christians. Allowing Thanksgiving to be fully about counting our blessings and spending time with

“...Thanksgiving deserves to be observed in its own right, not as the last remaining barrier until we can fully begin Christmas by fighting over discounted goods.” loved ones is a more appropriate beginning to the holiday season than rushing out to begin the Christmas shopping. Turkeys and pilgrims should not have to fight with Santa and reindeer for space as we decorate our homes. There is plenty of time during the final days of November to

decorate for Christmas, and I would argue that it could be fun to let the process of preparing for the season spread out over the month of December. This brings me to another point: restraining the Christmas season can lead to a fuller appreciation of Advent. At the church I've attended during my time at Houghton, we observe a seven-

week Advent. At its earliest, this would start November 6th, still not early enough to begin before the two-month Christmas season. Like Thanksgiving, I believe Advent should be given its own moment in the spotlight before we rush on to Christmas. I am not advocating that we refrain from any Christmas decorating until the last Sunday of Advent has passed, but perhaps a more gradual transition would help us to more fully prepare our hearts for the season. Advent is about, among other things, waiting, not only for the birth of the Messiah, but also His promised return. During this season, I try to imagine the mindset of the people of Israel, attempting to rest in the assurance that they have been promised a Savior, but also wondering when, if ever, He will arrive. For me, Advent is a time to acknowledge the darkness around us while being steadfast in hope, even when it seems impossible. In this way,

we prepare intentionally for the coming joy of Christmas. This posture of anticipation can be hard to maintain when everywhere we look there is another inflatable snowman and a sprig of mistletoe, even though it is barely November. As previously stated, much of the early Christmas season is focused on these superficial things. If we instead chose to engage in Advent to remind us why we need Christmas, the experience would be richer. However, I do not believe we should limit the Christmas spirit to one day. Seasonal activities such as baking cookies for neighbors, caroling at a nursing home, or spending extra time with family and friends do not have to be limited to the holiday season. Unlike more superficial and commercial aspects, this part of Christmas is fine to continue throughout the year. If you are still concerned about my desire to contain Christmas, I have good news: in a traditional liturgical calendar, there are twelve days of Christmas, lasting from December 25th to January 5th. I suggest we continue celebrating more fully through this time as an alternative to beginning the celebration in November. ★

Anna is a junior majoring in TESOL.

Have an opinion
you want to share?

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More Houghton Christmas Scenes



Safety and Security’s Christmas tree
(photo by Johanna Florez ‘21)



A frosty-nosed Houghton horse (photo by Erin Ozminkowski ‘23)



Paine’s biology lounge, all dressed up (photo by Johanna Florez ‘21)



Photo by Frances Mullen ‘23



Photo by Abby Aguirre ‘21

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