

PRISM
News, p. #1-2

CRAFT FAIR
News, p. #1-2

GRACE VUOLO
Feature, p. #2

CHRISTMAS MUSIC
Opinions, p. #3

WICKED
Columns, p. #4

CHRISTMAS PRISM CONCERT

AIVERY SHUCK ('26)

It is that time of year again when Houghton University (HU) hosts the annual Christmas Prism Concert. So mark your calendars for this Friday and Saturday!

Prism is a Houghton Christmas tradition that celebrates the festive season with music, joy and reflection.

"The annual event started as a way to bring the community together to kick-off the Advent and Christmas season, with the intention to make the message of Christ's birth accessible to the larger community," Senior Director of Community Engagement Phyllis Gaerte explained. She added that "Christmas is a time when many people are more open to the Gospel story than any other time of the year."

It is a great opportunity for community members, Houghton students and people traveling from out



Prism

COURTESY OF MARCOMM

of town to see the wonderful production conducted by HU's music department. This year's 2024 show is called "What Child Is This?"

Emma Podobinski '27, a choir student participating in the concert, said that "Prism is a collective concert from many of the music ensembles on campus. You can expect many fes-

tive pieces from the choirs, orchestras, and smaller student groups! There will be some known and loved carols, but also some unique Christmas pieces! There will be scripture readings following the story of Christmas as well."

Audiences are invited to sing along to some pieces.

All of the students and

faculty participating in the show have been rehearsing in their individual ensembles long before the Christmas season even began. All of the performers have been working hard to prepare.

Susannah Denham '26, a member of the Houghton choir, encourages audiences to "listen carefully to the words in the pieces being performed, and even in

the carols you may be singing in the audience."

"These lyrics are often rich and deep," she added.

Denham mentioned a verse in "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" that speaks about "erasing Adam's image from us and being reinstated in Christ's love." She added that even pieces with no lyrics "glorify God in their beauty and excellence."

When asked how much the Prism concert impacts the Houghton community, Director of Student Engagement Jana Newberry said that "it is a beautiful moment in the typically hectic season, it calls us to slow down, despite all the work and effort that goes into the performance, and celebrate music and joy. Even if it's just one night where we can sit and listen and participate in the true spirit of the Christmas season, it's worth it!"

After Friday's performance, the Campus Activi-

See **PRISM** page #2

Christmas Arts and Craft Fair

KELSEY CURTIS ('27)

Each year, Houghton University holds a Christmas Arts and Crafts Fair in the final weeks of the fall semester. Vendors from surrounding areas will share their crafts in the Reinhold Campus Center (CC) next Friday.

Although the University Community Engagement Center sponsors the event, student interns help organize it. This year's interns include Rileigh Studley '25, Marjorie Gassler '25 and Lilly Turner '25.

Studley and Gassler highlighted a few changes to the fair from past years. First, Studley shared that student artists will be playing live music from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Although it is a small change, Studley believes



Christmas Craft Fair

COURTESY OF MARCOMM

it "will provide some extra holiday cheer for the craft fair."

Gassler emphasized a large change to the craft sale's layout. She shared that in past years, to accommodate more vendors, some tables were placed in the CC basement. But unfortunately, they got a lot less traffic because not everyone realized there were more

booths downstairs. This year, all vendors will be on the first floor of the CC so that everyone has an equal chance to see more customers.

Gassler and Studley expressed excitement for the event, not only as planners but also as participants. Both agreed that the fair is a great way of bringing the community together, especially

"to get local artists connected with students," said Gassler.

Studley added that it provides a way for "our student body to support local businesses and entrepreneurs."

Gassler reflected that helping plan the fair was useful because it "is a great way for me to apply what I have learned in my interpersonal and organi-

zational communication and social media marketing coursework."

As students attending the fair, they are excited about different aspects of it.

Studley said she looks forward to "listening to the Christmas music playing, sipping on a hot chocolate, and walking around looking at all of the cool products people have made!"

Gassler finds the fair is a great place to do Christmas shopping and loves supporting local artists and other students.

This year, over 50 vendors are participating in the fair. A vast variety of crafts will be sold "from baked goods to jewelry, to art, to alpaca socks" and "from pottery to baklava to goat's milk skincare products."

Studley said it is their "hope that there will be something for everyone!"

See **CRAFT FAIR** page #2

New Alumna Single!

REBECCA DAILEY ('25)

Grace Vuolo, a recent graduate from the Houghton University class of 2024, is gearing up to release her debut single between Christmas and New Year's. "Congratulations", an Indie pop track, featuring a hint of punk influence and showcases Vuolo's growth both as a songwriter and performer.

"I write all my songs from experience," said Vuolo, reflecting on the inspiration behind her new single. "I wrote this song after realizing that I needed to start taking care of myself instead of just being the peacekeeper I had always been. I had let others control my life and knew it was time for a change."

The song's themes of self-empowerment and personal growth are a central part of Vuolo's music, which she hopes will resonate deeply with her listeners.

"I've been singing since I was a toddler, and I've been songwriting since I was five years old, although I started seriously at twelve and singing at fourteen." She added that "Music has always been my expressive outlet, and I hope that my

songs help others feel seen and hopeful."

Vuolo's journey in music has been a long one, but she advises anyone interested in pursuing music to keep going, no matter the challenges. "If you love it, don't give up! The road to success isn't always clear, but passion and persistence matters more than anything," she shared. Her goal is to provide others with a means of self-expression, and she encourages young artists to think about the impact their music can have on others.

"Congratulations" will be available on all major streaming platforms, including Apple Music, Spotify and YouTube. Vuolo performs under the stage name "Ian."

Adding to the excitement surrounding the release, Vuolo has also directed the music video for the single, featuring fellow student Alaska Dunstan '25. Dunstan, who plays a role in the video, spoke about the unique experience.

"This is my first time acting, and it's been so exciting!" Dunstan said. "I've never worked with film before, so it's been fascinating to see how everything works. Grace has been amazing in guiding the

visuals, and we've had a lot of fun in the process." She noted that the set was full of energy and laughter, a refreshing balance to the serious work of bringing the video to life.

Dr. Sharon Johnson praised Vuolo for her maturity and growth. "Grace has an incredible ability to light up a stage, whether she's performing as a singer or actor," she said. "It's been a joy to watch her grow, not just as a musician, but as a person."

With the upcoming release of "Congratulations", Vuolo is not only marking a significant milestone in her career but also offering a piece of her heart and journey to all. Listeners can expect a song that's both introspective and anthemic, a reflection of the artist's evolution as she steps confidently into the spotlight. ★

PRISM from page #1

ties Board will be hosting the After Prism Gala in the Center for the Arts atrium from 9:15 p.m. to 11 p.m. ★

CRAFT FAIR from page #1

There will also be some student vendors located in the Encore Suite. Hannah Fish '27 will be a student vendor and expressed her excitement for the event. Fish began making ceramics in her senior year of high school and is excited to share what she's made. She will sell mugs, garden planters, jewelry platters, "juice-box cups" and more.

Fish also participated in the Harvestival Craft Sale this Fall, which was

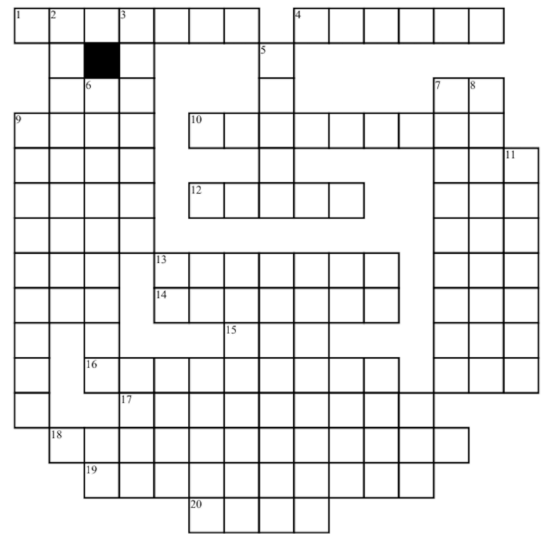
her first time having a table alone. She said that she was initially nervous, but "everyone [was] so supportive, excited, and curious" that it was hard to be anxious during the sale.

"I'm making things I enjoy making," Fish shared, "and I love Christmas and gift-giving so the fair helps me share unique handmade gifts, and I get to buy some too!"

She hopes to continue participating in craft sales like those at HU.

The Christmas Arts and Crafts Fair will be held from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. ★

Christmas Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 1. What forms when snow starts to melt but then re-freezes while dripping
- 4. Traditional Christmas beverage
- 10. A minty treat that is usually red and white
- 12. What people traditionally put on top of their Christmas trees
- 13. The most famous reindeer of all
- 14. When you get cold, you put them on your hands

Down

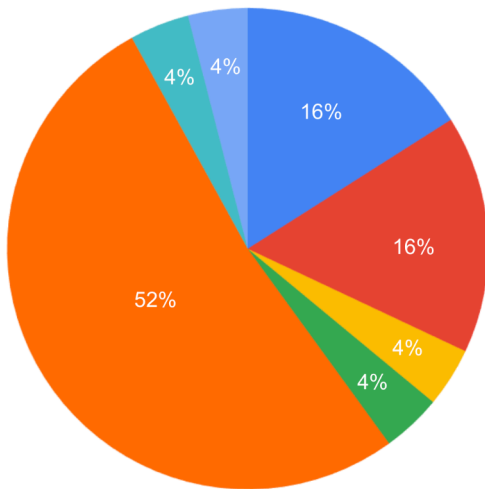
- 15. What you put on top of a present when all finished
- 16. Not anyone is alike
- 17. "Its the most _____ time of the year!"
- 18. Where Santa and his elves live
- 19. The flower associated with Christmas
- 20. The drink you leave out for Santa

Down

- 2. What we are counting down to
- 3. Santa comes down the _____ to deliver the toys
- 5. Who delivers toys to kids every December 24?
- 6. What people hang above their fireplace
- 7. What you make when you lay in the snow and move your arms back-and-forth
- 8. The birthplace of Jesus
- 9. When 2 people walk underneath it, you are supposed to kiss
- 11. The sweet treat you leave out for Santa

Crossword provided by wordmint.com.

Which academic building has the best bathrooms?



- Center for the Arts
- Chamberlain Center
- Equestrian Center
- Nielsen Physical Education Center
- Paine Center for Science
- Stevens Art Studio
- Willard J. Houghton Library

Respondents:

- Current students (19)
- Former students (0)
- Faculty/staff (4)
- None of the above (2)

Out of Season: The Death of Christmas Music?



JACKSON COLLINS '27

The day is November 28, 2024: Thanksgiving. Location: my house. I was minding my own business listening to Christmas music out of a speaker as my father walked by. “Not in my house,” he responded, and astonished at his remark, I reasoned with him. “Santa’s already here! The parade!” I insisted. “No,” he said, and he demanded that I turn the music off.

Now, this response

from my father was sensical and good intentioned, but I was taken aback. I love Christmas music. Those nostalgic songs sung during Christmas time seem to have that “special sauce”. While I love Christmas music, there are some songs (you know them) that are deeply irritating. I can speak for the people on this one, we all want Mariah Carey to stay in the freezer as long as possible, but we shouldn’t toss out all

“God sending His Son as a baby is the culmination of many generations' hope for redemption from the Lord.”

pleasing to the ear for a time, we cannot forget the timeless classic, the meaning of Christmas; that is, Lil’ baby Jesus. Those defending prematurely sung Christmas songs frequently rebut that

kids say. But songs of worship to the timeless God of glory, Jesus Christ, are always worth listening to. Not to mention, this is the season celebrating the Virgin Birth and the Word made flesh. We are told to “Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen” (2 Timothy 2:14 NIV). This verse is speaking about reminding each other of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and faithfulness towards us.

nativity of our Christ? Has the awe and the wonder of Emmanuel been sapped out of us by superficial music? Do we regard Christmas music about Jesus the same way as other songs? Regardless of the reason, the real purpose for Christmas—embracing God’s gift of Jesus—is not something I cherish enough. I encourage you all to think upon these things and “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16). ★

“But songs of worship to the timeless God of glory, Jesus Christ, are always worth listening to.”

Christmas songs. Friends, brothers, comrades in Christ, I plead with you. Although some seasonal songs might be

“Christmas music always hits,” but this is simply not the case. Not all Christmas music “hits,” as the

Jackson Collins is a sophomore, who partakes in Mercy Seat. He is also a team member on one of the Koin teams. He participates in the Houghton Track and Field team.

Have an opinion you want to share?

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SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor should be less than 600 words

SUBMIT TO
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The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton University since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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Review

Wicked (2024) Review

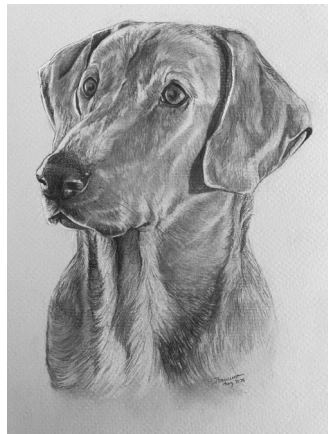
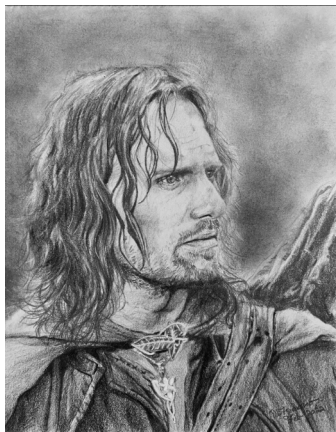
Kat Tiedemann

On the eve of Thanksgiving, I headed to my local theater with my eyelids and lips painted green, excited to watch *Wicked: Part One*. I have been a fan of the musical for many years, having watched the show on Broadway twice, and having listened to the soundtrack more times than I could possibly count. I was definitely nervous about the movie, and I made the decision to keep my expectations low so that I wouldn't be disappointed. It turned out that this was not necessary, because I was simply astounded. The movie held very true to the original Broadway musical. Now I'm not saying there weren't changes- there were many. But the heart of the show was there, the plot was not tampered with, and the majority of classic lines were kept. In terms of adaptations, this one was one of the best I've seen. The wardrobe and set were both full of texture and color, the score kept close to the original while also allowing room for creativity, and the choreography was breathtaking. It is clear that this was a passion project for all involved.

The performance put on by the entire cast was stellar. I didn't think there was a single actor that didn't pull their weight. Even those who are not traditional singers (I'm looking at you, Jeff Goldblum) gave good musical performances amidst their acting. Ariana Grande-Butera and Cynthia Erivo both honored the original characters and actors by capturing their essences so well. I must ad-

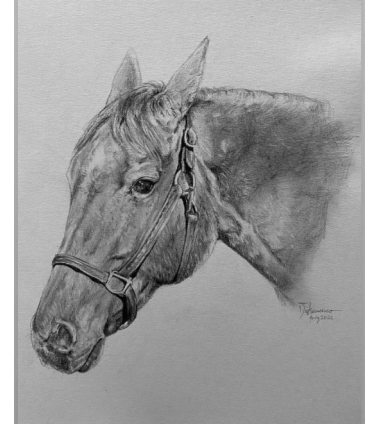
mit, I was nervous for such a large name playing Galinda- but so was director Jon M. Chu. He put her through five rounds of auditions, and we are all grateful that she came out on top. She brought so much energy to the role, wonderfully mimicking the original performance of Kristen Chenoweth. Both Grande-Butera and Erivo showed immense skill and talent, performing the majority of the music live, and with Erivo even doing many of her own stunts. Between this and absolute minimal use of CGI, director Jon M. Chu held fast to the standards of a Broadway production. After successfully pulling off as well as the movie adaptation of *In The Heights*, Chu is healing the hearts of theater kids everywhere.

I, for one, simply cannot wait for Part Two. Many people were dissatisfied with the movie broken into two parts, but I think that this was a wise creative choice. It allowed Chu to bring along more characterization, depth, and world-building to the entire story. We got to have more lingering, meaningful moments between characters that the timing of the Broadway production didn't allow. It also gave us the intermission that the onstage performance gives, creating the suspense for what happens next. The only downside to this is that many people who have already read the book or seen the musical are currently spoiling Part Two for others! If you watched Part One and don't know what's coming, do your best to avoid spoilers! ★



Artist of the Week

Mia DiFrancesco ('27)



Hello there! My name is Mia and I am a sophomore majoring in

BFA Studio Art. My favourite mediums to work with are graphite and watercolours. I enjoy drawing animals, people, and my favourite movie and book characters. I also love to make art for people and I hope my artwork will illuminate God throughout my pieces and bring joy to those who see it! I am grateful for the opportunity God has given me to not only reveal my inner creativity but also share the love I have for the things God has made for each and everyone of us to enjoy! I hope you have a

blessed day!

(Psalm 19:1)

