



THE HOUGHTON STAR

School-Sponsored Dance Nears As Policy Undergoes Revision

By Rebekah Miller

It has been over two months since the announcement that Houghton College would allow dancing on campus. However, the school has yet to host its first official dance. Much of the delay can be attributed to the controversy over the official dancing policy proposal. This document delineates the creation of the College Advisory Board—a group dedicated to the approval of dances and all that comes with them—the music, the venue, the lighting and more.

Written by Vice President of Student Life Sharra Hynes, the proposal has incited varied responses. While the proposal was well-received by most members of the Student Life

Committee (SLC), the SGA senate felt it was less than satisfactory. The primary point of contention for many members of SGA was the procedure for electing members to the College Advisory Board. In response to the original proposal, Senator Joshua Nolen presented "Dance Dance Resolution, Part II" (DDR II) which, according to the minutes for the SGA Senate's March 13, 2008 meeting, addressed "the manner in which the two students on the College Advisory Board would be selected."

The original proposal drawn up by Hynes closely follows the directive of the Community Life Task Force—that the group that reviews dances will not be an official committee. Thus the College Advisory Board does not follow normal

procedures for committee appointment. Along with hand-picked faculty and staff, the board consists of two student representatives, one of whom is chosen by the chair of the committee, the other of whom is selected by Senate. Nolen, reflecting the thoughts of the Senate, remarked that the board ought to be kept "consistent with college policy, [which dictates that] faculty elect faculty, staff elects staff and students elect students."

A compromise was reached between the SGA and the Office of Student Life. Weighing the Senate's resolution, the SLC recommended that a third student be added to the committee, to be selected by the SGA, along with an assurance that the policy would be reviewed in one year's time. The

proposal was then passed on to the faculty.

It was important to both Hynes as well as the Senate to pass the dance proposal in a timely fashion. Hynes stated her desire to see a dance before the end of the year in order to celebrate all of the hard work that students, faculty and staff have put into the many resolutions and proposals. "I hope we will be able to come to a good conclusion that meets the needs of students, faculty, and staff," she said. It is also important, noted Hynes, that a dance be held in order to "signal that dancing can be a healthy part of our community." She wants to "honor seniors" by allowing them to participate in at least one school-sponsored dance before the end

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Houghton Music Department to Perform *The Marriage of Figaro*

By Elizabeth Thompson

This weekend, Houghton College's Music department will be producing four performances of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. It has been said that opera is the culmination of all great art forms: music, both instrumental and vocal; theatre, both comedic and dramatic; dance and the visual arts.

While originally written in Italian, this weekend's production will be sung in English. Professor Eric Thomas, the show's director, explains, "I think that, unless you are doing opera for an... audience who is at least [somewhat]

familiar with the original language, you are really shooting yourself in the foot, especially with a comedy." Thomas does note that many opera companies choose to project English subtitles above the stage in an attempt to resolve the language barrier, but insists that this tends to undermine the comic nature of most operas: "Comedy depends on timing, and Mozart's timing is perfect. The use of projected subtitles... undermines the timing, so that often the audience is laughing at a joke whose punch line hasn't even been uttered yet."

The English version being used was

written by Ben King, Associate Dean and Director of the Greatbatch School of Music, with some adjustments made by Thomas for this production's needs. The original story was a play written in 1784 by Pierre de Beaumarchais entitled *La folle journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro*. In fact, it was the second play of three following the character of "Figaro," the first being Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, from which we get the famous line "Figaro, Figaro, Figaro"—not this weekend's opera by Mozart.

Opera, more so than most forms of entertainment, requires a bit of audience preparation. While entirely

enjoyable without prior preparation, certain aspects will be more easily understood if audience members are acquainted with the plot. As Thomas recognizes, "As with all great art, *The Marriage of Figaro* is as relevant today as it was, at its premiere 222 years ago. Fashions change, but human behavior remains the same."

Thomas gave a brief plot synopsis: "Figaro is the personal valet to Count Almaviva. Figaro's fiancé, Susanna, is maid to the Countess Almaviva. The drama centers around the fact that the Count is conspiring to bed Susannah

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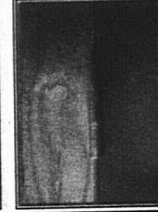
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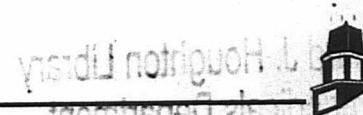
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THE WORLD OUT THERE

By Thomas Lerew

Campaign 2008 Update

Amidst heavy controversy over remarks made by his home-church pastor, Senator Obama has still managed to tie Senator Clinton in Pennsylvania polls. Senator Clinton was earlier expected to win the state by a wide margin, as Obama continues to maintain his lead in North Carolina. Clinton fired her head campaign strategist Mark Penn as Pennsylvania is seen as a "do or die" contest for her campaign. Several prominent Democrats have even called for her to end her campaign but the senator shows no signs of departing before the national convention in Denver this September. On the Republican side, McCain released his first series of television ads explaining his views of patriotism seen in his military service. McCain is yet to pick a running mate and speculation is hot among pundits as to who will best help him win in November.

Fighting Spikes in Southern Iraq

American troop casualties in Iraq reached the 4,000 mark two weeks ago as fighting continued to plague the southern region of Basra. The increased violence is due to a call to arms by insurgent leader Muqtada al-Sadr and both U.S. and Iraqi forces have begun a fierce operational response. Head General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker reported on the gains being made in Iraq to the Congressional committees overseeing the war effort and recommended that the surge reduction be temporarily halted. Democrats are expected to voice their discontent with the military leadership's handling of the recent increase in violence.

Zimbabwe Presidential Election Raises Concerns

As inflation reaches the 2000% mark, citizens of Zimbabwe are growing weary of President Robert Mugabe's

dictatorial policies in the struggling democracy of south central Africa. Mugabe faced strong opposition from Simba Makoni, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change Party in the March 29 presidential contest. The opposition party feared a tainted election leaving Mugabe's in power despite overwhelming voter opposition. Results from the election have *still* not been released and civil unrest grows and world leaders worry of violence similar to that seen earlier this year in Kenya.

Situation in Tibet Prompts Olympic Protests

The Olympic torch was temporarily extinguished as it made its way through Paris on its traditional world-wide trek to the site of the games in Beijing. Protesters, outraged by China's treatment of the citizens of regional Tibet hung signs from the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame cathedral. A similar reaction was seen in London a day earlier as protests led to 37 arrests by police. French President Sarkozy has not ruled out his nation's boycotting the games while British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said Britain will participate.

Actor Charlton Heston Dies at 84

Legendary actor Charlton Heston died early Sunday at age 84. The actor best known for portraying 'epic' characters fought a battle with Alzheimer's for the last six years of his life. Heston was most recognized for his works in pictures such as "The Ten Commandments," "Ben-Hur," "El Cid" and "Planet of the Apes." Originally self-described as a Hollywood liberal in the 1960's, Heston backed Reagan in the 1982 presidential election and served as president of the National Rifle Association from 1998-2003. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2003 from President Bush.

Student Initiate Spark Worship Service

By Anna Matejova

Over a hundred students gathered in the chapel for two and a half hours on Tuesday, April 8, for Spark, a unique blend of corporate musical worship and prayer. Led by a team of talented student musicians, the service was centered on a vision of spiritual awakening.

In the words of sophomore Sean Bennett, one of the event's co-leaders, the inspiration for Spark grew out of a desire to see Houghton "combat apathy and complacency while learning to live a lifestyle of worship and prayer." For sophomore Emily Delgiorno, this vision began in December. "I was getting frustrated with this attitude I kept seeing that since we're all Christians it doesn't really matter what we do," she shared, expressing a desire

to see the students of Houghton live out their faith "24/7". Both Delgiorno and Bennett acknowledged that this desire for change came as much out of their own struggles with apathy as from a frustration with the apathy they saw reflected on this campus. "We are all apathetic and complacent," Bennett professed.

A chapel message in January challenging Houghton students to not get stuck in the "status quo" prompted Delgiorno and Bennett to take the steps necessary to create an event to address issues of apathy and complacency at Houghton. The positive responses they received from their conversations with Dr. Brittain, SGA Chaplain Katherine Hamilton, sound head John Buteyn, and a variety of student leaders encouraged

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Lights! Camera! Action! Film Festival Showcases Student Work

By Joel VanderWeele

On Saturday, April 5, the Campus Activities Board hosted the Second Annual Houghton College Film Festival. The festival featured submissions from about 15 students, as well as two exhibition films from Professor of Communications Dave Huth.

Preceding the screening was a "Posh/Techno Soiree" held in the atrium of the Campus Center which worked the attendees into a dancing ecstasy with bumping bass, black lights, and discotheque decorations. CAB worked for six hours, transforming the atrium into a European-style dance club. There was some confusion about the dress code for the evening, but the low lighting and mixed drinks made up for it. Some showed up in ball gowns, others in jeans and a tee, and Dan Brubaker wore a vest. "I thought the pre-party was a blast, although I don't really think anyone knew what 'Posh-techno' really meant, so the clothing didn't match too well with the atmosphere, but hey, it's a party! Who cares!" exclaimed multi-Willard-winning senior Eric Stevenson.

Once all the shot glasses of white M&Ms were consumed, students made their way to the red-carpet adorned steps of the John and Charles Wesley



Photo by Margaret Boecker

Daniel White and Jessica Stoddard hosted the Second Annual Film Festival.

Chapel. Highlighting the screening was a documentary by Wesley Dean, a brilliant music video by the DelGiorno sisters, and a number of projects submitted by Kerry Brogan. The intermission featured a special musical performance by the Mojós.

After all the films had been screened, Willards were awarded to the best Comedy, Commercial, Drama, Documentary, and Music Video. Kerry Brogan, Andrew Vogan et al's "Performance" took home the Best in Show award and Jordan Smith took home the Houghton-centric award for his humorous portrayal of the

"Daily Commute." Fan-favorite Eric Stevenson also took home a number awards for his humorous pieces. His self-proclaimed non-gay partner Jimmy Dutton claimed, "I don't think Eric Stevenson deserved any of his awards. You can quote me on that."

Following the event was a post-party cleanup in the Chamberlain Center, as well as a number of undoubtedly dance-filled after-parties. Dutton and Stevenson invited the entire campus to a party in Leonard 21, boasting that there would be cupcakes and juice. There weren't.

The Film Festival began last year when

Andrew Parks organized the project into a campus-wide event. The event was a huge success and plans were made to re-create the event this year. Parks and CAB representative Jessica Stoddard have been working hard since the beginning of the semester to garner submissions, organize judges, and prepare the films for viewing to ensure the success of this year's Festival. Junior Margaret Boecker is "glad that the Film Festival is now an annual event at Houghton. The [Fest] is a tremendous way to expose our campus to this type of media—the art aspect of film—which is a little different from the more traditional art forms that we're used to."

Boecker was not the only one to express enthusiasm about the event. According to Stoddard, there has been a lot of positive student feedback about the diverse selection of films, as well as the rave-like soiree. "Like last year we feel it was a huge success, and everyone who helped out was excited to be apart of one of Houghton's newest traditions. When you give out glow sticks and have a bubble machine... Who couldn't have a good time? We were happy with the way things when at the pre-party, the place was packed and everyone seemed to enjoy their Italian sodas."

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on her wedding night, even though he has supposedly given up his *droit du seigneur*—the supposed medieval right of the Lord to have sexual relations with a bride on her wedding night, before she sleeps with her husband). Outraged at his employer's betrayal, Figaro vows revenge upon the Count. Hilarity ensues as Figaro, Susanna, and

the Countess conspire to bring the Count back to his senses." One aspect of the opera's comedy that stands out as particularly clever is the "pant's role." In *The Marriage of Figaro*, the character of Cherubino is a role in which a female singer portrays a male character. "This is made even more bewildering in our opera by the fact that, in [our performance], Cherubino dresses as a girl for a while. Thus,

***The Marriage of Figaro* is as relevant today as it was at its premiere. Fashions change, but human behavior remains the same.**

you have a woman pretending to be a boy pretending to be a girl!" Thomas elaborated. Suffice it to say, this provides opportunity for a lot of laughs.

This weekend's performances are unique in that the lead roles are double cast. Thomas explains, "Opera is sufficiently difficult on its singers, so it is rare for a singer to perform on consecutive nights. So, by double casting the major roles, we lighten the load on the singer while we increase the performance opportunities for our students." The title role of Figaro is shared by Drew Burke and Christopher Olsen. Susanna is portrayed by Ashlee

Miller and Rebekah Kenote, and Rebecca Farley and Chelsea Keane alternate as the Countess. Grace Weidman and Elizabeth Thompson share the role of Cherubino. The one main character who is not double-cast is Nathanael Dickinson who plays Count Almaviva. Thomas tells us, "Singing four back-to-back performances as the Count is grueling, but Nathanael is handling it as a true professional." The cast is rounded out by Ruth Kenote, Adrienne Schierer, Elizabeth Kelley, Joshua Moore, Kevin Dibble, and James Schmieder.



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Bennett and Delgiorno to design the event.

Reflecting on the inspiration behind this event, senior Marc Smithers remarked, "They are addressing something few people want to admit is occurring on this campus." Similar sentiments were expressed by Hamilton.

"The criticisms on this campus are criticisms of the Christian sub-culture in general," she observed. "Because the message of combating complacency is one the Western church needs to hear, it is also an issue relevant to the people on this campus."

As SGA Chaplain, Hamilton provided Delgiorno and Bennett with guidance and support in the process of making Spark a reality. Commenting on her involvement in this process, she shared, "What attracted me was the heart

behind what they wanted to do, the call for people here to think about their role as worshippers of God, for how to integrate worship into all of life, to be 'alive in Christ' as a person."

Brittain also reflected on the value of occasionally setting aside a time for members of the Houghton community

Spark challenged the misconception that worship has to be limited to Sunday or a particular experience.

to come together for something other than the weekly chapel services. Brittain served in the role of unofficial advisor to Bennett and Delgiorno during Spark's planning process and was asked

to lead one of its opening prayers. Pondering the relevance of the challenge Spark presents for the specific place of Houghton, Brittain shared, "One of the Wesleyan emphases is the idea of growth in grace. We never arrive at a finish point in this life, but most of us tend to get comfortable on the plateaus of our spiritual life. One of the

challenges is to not get comfortable, to always strive for growth."

Another part of the vision behind Spark was to challenge the stereotypes about prayer and worship that exist in our community. "Worship is not something we do," Bennett shared. "We ourselves are worshippers. It is intrinsic to who we are." In an attempt to challenge the misconception that worship is just something that happens on Sundays, or that it is limited to a particular experience, Bennett's original idea had been to have a "concert of praise," a musical event incorporating less familiar songs and styles of worship. Tuesday night included elements of this original vision. Delgiorno talked about the conscious effort made to create a welcoming atmosphere in which students did not have to feel the pressure to express their worship in a specific way.

Spark also sought to challenge students to question misconceptions

about the role of prayer on this campus. Throughout the night, prayers were offered from the passages of Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 5:14, both of which express the cry for awakening from deadness that was the vision behind Spark. Asked to offer the closing prayer at Spark, Senior Tineke Hegeman articulated the need for God's Spirit to bring "revival of people in all places of stagnation, burn out, doubt, and addiction" on this campus. "Revival comes through an actual encounter with Jesus, when we are more compelled and moved by Jesus than anything else, so we don't need to turn to these other things to fill our desires," she said. Reflecting on Spark, junior Daniel Ballard echoed her words. "Spark is a prayer and worship event and this is part of our prayer, that revelation of Jesus would cause us to see following Him as more worthy than all these lesser things."

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Students, too, look forward to the first official dance with anticipation. Nolen qualified this, however, in his Student Life Committee report to the Senate by claiming that the controversial proposal was passed, not because it was met with universal agreement, but because the proposal sat poised between a rock and a hard place. "Either we go along with [Hynes'] proposal," he said, "or we wait to change the constitution."

With all the emphasis on expedience placed on the proposal by the SLC and SGA, Hynes, SGA President Peter Savage and former SGA President Amy Labzantis were all surprised when the faculty decided to table the proposal in order to discuss what they considered to be more pressing issues. According to Professor Carlton Fisher, one faculty member inquired as to "why [the dance policy] was a more urgent matter for faculty than the IS proposal." A movement was presented by Fisher to give Hynes permission to hold a dance without a dance policy. The movement was passed with Hynes' consent.

While the creation of the College

Advisory Board was one major difficulty within the proposal, a second difficulty also exists. Some have commented on the excessive amount of planning that must be done for a dance in order for it to be approved. For example, one must indicate the music playlist as well as the venue for the dance in any submitted proposal. Fisher, remarking on the amount of red tape contained within the proposal, acknowledged his desire to "respect the college officials who have responsibility for overseeing a dicey transition in policy and practice."

On the other hand, however, Fisher expressed his preference of a shorter, less complicated dance policy without "all of the heavy lifting and caution." Hynes, in contrast, emphasized that the requirements that many see as red tape exist to "assure it will be an appropriate event" as well as to "encourage and ensure more proactive planning" to avoid last minute difficulties. Instead of red tape, Hynes referred to the stipulations as a safety net to ensure well-planned events.

In the midst of this contention, Houghton students have managed to come together and celebrate their

newfound freedom.

Taking advantage of newly approved act of spontaneous dancing, the Leadership Committee of Gillette instigated a dancing craze on the dance floor of the Old Library during the annual Gillette Hall Banquet.

Students poured on the dance floor with a big sigh of relief and excitement. Dances included a variety of music, from swing to the Electric Slide and the Macarena. Mark Satta, an attendee of the event, commented, "It was a wonderful opportunity to have

fun with friends." Lindsay Hansen, a sophomore who also attended the event, remarked, "I am fully 100% in support of it. It was the most wonderful event



Photo By Rebekah Miller

"Spontaneous dancing" broke out at the Gillette Hall Banquet.

not be stopped. In addition, students can look forward to an official school-sponsored dance before the end of the year.

that has happened so far on this campus."

Kelsey Bickford, a member of the Leadership Committee commented on the plans for the banquet. "We had these rocking tunes on a CD and decided if we play it and dancing spontaneously happens, there's nothing we can do." Hynes was in full support of the event, saying that as long as spontaneous dancing is not used as an excuse to avoid submitting official proposals, and the event maintains a degree of common sense in terms of its appropriateness, events like these will



After Final Coffeehouse, Three Seniors Leave Mark On *Lanthorn*

By William Airhart

On Wednesday of this week, the *Lanthorn* staff released its Spring 2008 literary magazine at a coffeehouse themed "The Trippy Teapot." Elizabeth Mizelle, editor-in-chief, and Matthew Hepler and Laura Thompson, assistant editors, planned the event. All seniors, it was the fourth and final coffeehouse hosted by the trio before they are due to graduate in May.

More than 120 people attended the coffeehouse as students, faculty and community members mingled amongst strangely dressed literary characters. Tweedledee, Tweedledum, and Alice (of Wonderland fame) all made appearances, while a number of students shared original poetry and music at an open mic. Many felt the highlight of the evening was a particularly terrifying rendition of "The Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll, superbly performed by Hepler. The coffeehouse was "as much fun as Shakespeare must have had writing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," gushed junior Alaina Williams.

Apart from the release of the Spring 2008 *Lanthorn*, however, the occasion also marked the end of the editorships of Mizelle, Hepler and Thompson. The trio assumed the editorial positions on the *Lanthorn* as juniors in the fall of 2006. That first semester, they received just forty submissions for publication. This spring, thanks to the work of Hepler, Mizelle and Thompson, the staff was almost overwhelmed with close to 180 submissions. "It's just exploded," said Thompson. "We're having to rethink how we even do the *Lanthorn* to accommodate the interest."

All three seniors bring different strengths to the magazine. Hepler commented, "Meetings and printing wouldn't happen without Liz's hours of correspondence, and the coffeehouse would fall apart if it weren't for Laura's amazing planning abilities and ideas." (He made special mention of Thompson's most popular coffeehouse



Photo by Elyse Drum

Elizabeth, Matt and Laura have worked together for two years on the *Lanthorn*.

"brain children," the pink flamingos and the chocolate-covered cranberries.) "And the book wouldn't get designed if I didn't do it," he added.

Mizelle, serving as editor-in-chief, has stressed the history and legacy of student writing at Houghton, a point emphasized by this year's *Lanthorn* advisor, Professor Susan Bruxvoort-Lipscomb. "I've been impressed with Elizabeth's sense of the continuing tradition of the *Lanthorn*," said Lipscomb. "She's approached the magazine not as her individual project for this year but as part of a tradition of creative writing at Houghton that connects to the past and will extend to the future."

When asked, professors were unanimous in their praise and appreciation for the hard work of the *Lanthorn* staff. Professor Cameron Airhart taught the three seniors when they were still freshmen as a part of the First-Year Honors Program in London in the spring of 2005. "This is the best *Lanthorn* that I've ever seen," he said. "I couldn't be prouder of these students." "They are all quietly brilliant, each in his or her own distinctive way," said Professor Stephen Woolsey. "They are remarkable for their resourcefulness, creativity, energy and teamwork."

Junior Chloe Ackerman will serve as next year's *Lanthorn* editor. Looking forward to the challenge, she is grateful for the work done and progress made by this year's editors. "I wasn't a part of the *Lanthorn* staff before they were editors," said Ackerman, "but I've seen from former *Lanthorns* what it was like before. Basically, Matt, Laura and Liz recreated the *Lanthorn*." One of their greatest accomplishments, she believes, is the inclusion of a greater array of student work. "They made the publication representative of the

Houghton College student body – all of it, not just the ones who projected a certain image. They made the *Lanthorn* accessible to the student body, and paved the way for it to be as well-known as the *Star* in future years."

Expanding the *Lanthorn*'s sphere of influence has been a particular goal of this year's editorial staff. "Our biggest challenge was getting the *Lanthorn* to a wider audience," said Thompson. "It seemed like most people regarded the *Lanthorn* as something for writing majors and artsy people. We wanted to make it about the different kinds of artists on campus and get it into the hands of everyone." Former co-advisor Professor Linda Mills Woolsey affirmed this goal. "I think that they've shaped the *Lanthorn* as a magazine in which art and text are in a genuine dialogue, sometimes in quite witty ways," said Mills Woolsey. "They've done a lot to make the editorial process fair and professional. And I think they've encouraged talented students to share their work through the *Lanthorn*."


Mizelle revealed that she "would do it for another two years if she could, without a doubt." "Would I do it again?" mused Hepler. "Heck yes." Thompson agreed. "I'd definitely do it again, but I wouldn't buy so many cranberries." 



Photo by Elyse Drum

Over 120 people attended "The Trippy Teapot" coffeehouse on Wednesday.



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The HOUGHTON STAR is dedicated to the free exchange of ideas, and encourages community members to participate in the discussion. Ideas expressed in these pages reflect solely the opinion of the writer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit any contributions for reasons of length or decorum. Letters to the editor (signed) should be 350 words or fewer and be submitted by Tuesday at 12 p.m. to STAR@houghton.edu.

Names may be withheld upon request.

Political Ideology: What Does It Mean Anymore?

Shallow partisanship clouds decision-making and inhibits voters from developing a meaningful political ideology.

By Lindsay Yandon

My desk is messy and I get that from my mother. My joints are bad and I get that from my father. A great deal of who I am hinges purely on who they are. Similarly, I grew up in a home that embraced the mindset that "any good Christian votes Republican."

In the midst of recent delegate hunting, party nominations, and presidential candidacy, I am plagued with an unwelcome skepticism. In the past few weeks, I have been skirting around a question that is conceivably hard to answer: what is stark political ideology doing to this country?

The pundits that I admired in high school were of the Bill O'Reilly and Anne Coulter line of thinking, and if I ever let the television linger on a CNN breaking news headline I was accused of giving in to the Communist News Network. I am a registered Republican, but pride myself with a distinct apathy toward party obligation. When asked the never-innocent question of my party affiliation, I always respond, "I'm a moderate." I usually receive quizzical looks in return. My parents would probably be ashamed and I can't help but wonder what that makes me.

As party lines begin to blur, informed voting becomes a more pivotal issue. Party loyalty is not a negative phenomenon by any means, but uninformed party obligation is one of the most disheartening tendencies of democracy. Aside from views on abortion and the death penalty, the average American probably couldn't distinguish many of their party's beliefs. These seemingly informed but mostly along for the ride voters are just as detrimental as those who vote based

on good looks or charisma.

A study done by Ron Shachar of Tel Aviv University revealed, "In most democracies, at least two out of any three individuals vote for the same party in sequential elections... vote-persistence is partly due to the dependence of the utility on the previous voting decision." It is not difficult to predict that most voters will vote within a certain party line due to their personal political beliefs and influences from their social, economical and religious lives. How many voters, on the other hand, offer their loyalty based on uneducated party obligation in and of itself?

Shachar goes on to write, "This dependence is termed 'habit formation'. The structural habit parameter implies that the effect of previous votes on the current decision is quite strong." The fact that one election decision has the potential to form habit is shocking

and possibly even discouraging. It breeds a tendency to develop weak (and perhaps faulty) political ideology based on alleged party beliefs, and presents an easy out for those who would prefer

not to apply educated awareness of political issues to voting.

At the request of my high school social studies teacher, I recently visited her junior and senior classes to discuss how I developed my political ideology. As I pondered what I would say to her students, I remembered a test that I took when I was one of her students that categorized political beliefs to a party affiliation. I was frustrated with the black and white nature of most of the questions, and, unsure of what a progressive tax even was, I pushed through and received my label: Republican. Well of course, anything else and I would probably have been

run out of town.

Five years later, I stood in front of her classes and spouted my story. Feeling unworthy of speaking in front of anyone young and impressionable, I couldn't help but think, "What of us moderates?" I don't think that the middle is such a bad place to be. I told them that my political ideology is constantly changing and swaying based on specific issues and I don't think that classifies my views as unsure. The majority of Americans lean toward the middle, and I am frustrated with the common trend of shame or denial towards such a position. An open mind is often misinterpreted as a tendency to disagree, when in reality it should be the ability to believe anything based on informed decision-making. I revealed to the students that I am hesitant to flaunt my party bias because I don't want it to consume my beliefs or cloud my decision-making.

I don't want to claim that party obligations take advantage of the democratic voter and spout nothing more than mendacities from callous politicians. I wish, instead, to encourage every registered voter to make political ideology mean something again. In a recent *New York Times* article Noah Feldman wrote, "Empires inevitably fall, and when they do, history judges them for the legacies they leave behind. It would be both sacrilegious and ahistorical to believe that our power will last for eternity. If liberty and self-government are among our legacies, then our strength will not have been squandered." The legacy of this country shouldn't be one of pushovers. Inform yourselves, develop true political ideology, and when you vote for a Democrat, a Republican or even a Green party candidate, know what you're voting for.

Lindsay is a senior Writing major and served last year as editor-in-chief.

I don't think that the middle is such a bad place, and I don't think that classifies my views as "unsure."



Letter To The Editor

Dear Editors:

Tonight I was spending what would have been another exciting Friday night of practicing in the CFA when I heard loud exclamations coming from outside my practice room. Eagerly abandoning the Beethoven, I dash out to find my comrades ecstatically singing the praises of this week's edition of the Star. We are all so very overjoyed that such a quality issue has finally graced the halls of Houghton [Community] College.

As pleased as we are about so many of the recent developments here at Houghton, we think further improvements are needed. On reading the first headline, Ms. Jennifer Newgent was quite indignant that the bridge was not being built from the music building to the library; however, when I reminded her that we never use that place anyway, she withdrew her complaint. Mr. Benjamin Hoffmann conceived the stunning idea to siphon off a little of the \$1.6 million of the bridge fund to put toward construction of a water slide from the top floor of the CFA to the present site of the Gazebo, the latter structure being razed to make room for an Olympic-sized swimming pool/ice-skating rink.

I, however, was simply thrilled to read that President Mullen's plan for eventually abolishing all academic programs at Houghton jives so well with the faculty's desire for as few preps as possible.

Overall, job well done on this latest issue—I know it brightened many a student's day and, if he/she was willing, hopefully caused him/her to think just a little bit, and that is a major goal/accomplishment here at Houghton.

With deepest gratitude,

Clara Sanders, Class of 2010

From the Editors' Desk...

Glamorous Indie Rock 'n' Roll

The ascendance of the indie rock genre - even at Houghton - deserves a critical examination.

By Jason Fisher

I don't know if you've realized it yet, but our campus is a veritable whitewash of 18-22 year olds. As such, the preferred genre of music here at Houghton is known as indie rock. You know it well. It's the kind of stuff you hear on Mac commercials, too pretentious to be catchy, too meandering to be a hit. In a feigned effort to prove their commitment to counter-culturalism, young white people eat this stuff by the plateful. But what is indie rock, anyway?

The nebulous genre of indie rock derives its name from the contractual status of the bands falling under this heading. A band may properly call themselves "indie" if they aren't on board with one of the four major record labels (Universal, Sony-BMG, EMI, Warner). This, however, doesn't tell us anything about the *music*. Of course, hipsters will point out that indie rock bands have a godly form of artistic freedom; while creativity flows forth from the studios of indie rockers, only cookie-cutter pop rock is mass-produced by the big record labels. This sort of blanket praise and criticism simply isn't warranted.

Most of the stifling that major labels exercise goes on entirely outside the studio. It takes the form of marketing campaigns, long tours, strict album production deadlines, and contributions to the next Heath Ledger movie soundtrack. For the most part, being signed to a major label only limits creativity if the band so chooses. The assumption that major labels don't produce anything worth listening to is quite arrogant. These labels account for over 70% of the global market share, and have thousands of acts that I suspect have a very "indie" feel and would be christened as such if it weren't for that pesky contract.

Indie labels, too, don't have a

monopoly on creativity. Fueled by Ramen, a prestigious indie label, gave the world Fall, Out Boy, Jimmy Eat World, Yellowcard, and Panic! At the Disco. The originality of those bands is stunning, as the creativity just drips from every disc! And, as with many indie labels, Fueled by Ramen actually employs a major label to distribute their records. Now that's sticking it to the man!

So what are we left with? "Indie" refers to bands that aren't with a major label, but may still be signed with mid-major labels with plenty of money in their coffers. The name "indie" certainly doesn't refer to any sort of consistency within the genre. Take a random selection of three: Arcade Fire, Sufjan Stevens, and Drive-By Truckers—you'll be hard pressed to find many similarities.

If, however, I'm pressed to identify one characteristic that most indie bands have in common I can only come up with one ambiguous adjective: weird. They all usually have one element that is just strange, whether it's an odd instrument, a unique (read: bad) singer, or an intentional lack of cohesion. Somehow, these things are taken as a testament of the band's worth to many hipster music lovers regardless of their qualitative import. These oddities are a reaction by indie rockers against pop music. It isn't hard to determine that the goal of the pop music industry is to create something that will stick in your ear on the first listen. No time wasted, they've created a new fan instantly. Pop music, however, can be lacking in other areas.

Many indie rockers have perverted this observation into a twisted maxim: if something is catchy, it is useless; music must be *hard* to listen to the first few times through. Sometimes, shockingly, something that sticks in your head the first time *also* has real value and turns into an album you

can listen to for years. This isn't to say that music that takes effort to like isn't good, on the contrary. It is simply to observe what should be a fairly intuitive situation. Catchy tunes can be good or bad (qualitatively) as can more "complex" difficult music. Indie rock completely rejects this notion and wants its fans to struggle through the out-of-tune guitars and ridiculous flute solos.

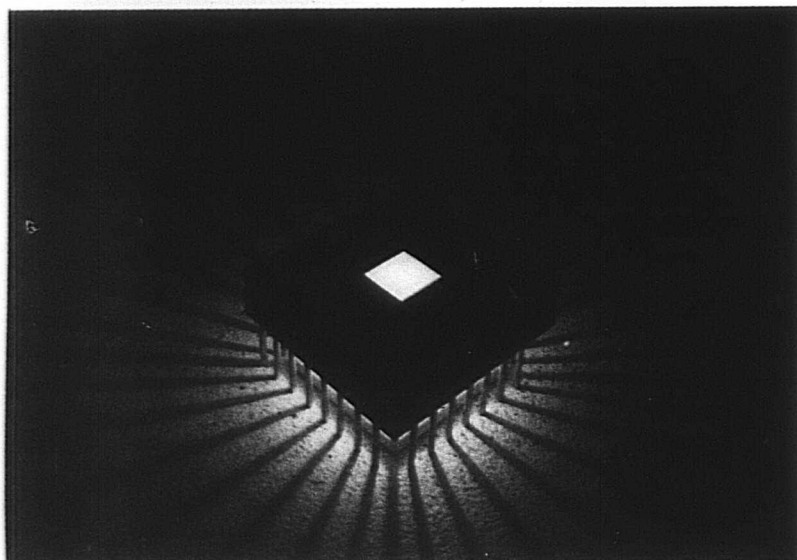
This attitude lends itself, often, to bad song writing. It isn't hard to write a simple song. In fact, it's amazingly easy with a moderate understanding of the musical medium you choose to employ. What is difficult is writing music that flows from one movement to the next. Indie rock, as the borderless genre that it is, too often ignores this aspect of song writing. The song doesn't have to flow because the listener will simply get used to the awkwardness of the progression after the obligatory fourth listen. In an attempt to avoid predictability (a common theme of heretical pop!), indie rock slides towards sloppiness. Please, don't try to sell me a bad song in the name of creativity. This objection, however, runs the risk of someone dismissing me with a roll of the eyes, sipping his or her latte, and telling me that I don't "get it." With astute articulation like that, we'll have to agree to disagree.

All of this criticism comes from a guy who enjoys a lot of music that is deemed "indie." If the term is taken literally, then it is really quite useless and shouldn't be considered a genre at all. Any relevance attached to the term, however, tends to be misguided. Either way, if indie rock isn't dead, someone should kill it.

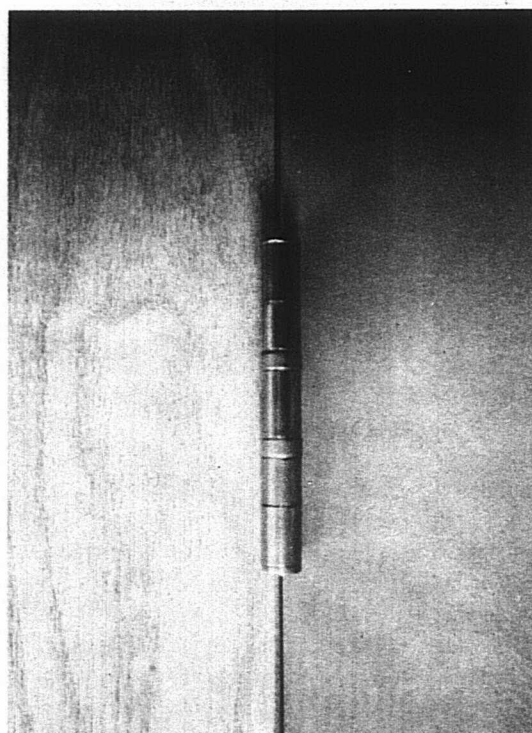
Jason is a senior Philosophy and Political Science double major and serves as news editor.



featured artwork | NATHAN GERARD



Artifact, photograph



Artifact, photograph

NOTE from the artist:

Dust of Snow

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

-Robert Frost

In my work, I've always
sought to show others the
world as I see it - a place
with startling beauty
hidden in the everyday
things we often take for
granted.

Nathan is a junior Art/Bio double major, with a concentration in photography.

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

Submit completed puzzles with your name at the Star office. One correct puzzle will be selected at random and the winner will receive a Sudoku puzzle book!

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

APRIL
FOOLS!

This week's puzzle is by Eric Liddle,
a freshman Math and Computer
Science major from Albion, N.Y.

He is currently in London, but
remains a diehard Sabres fan.

Answer to last week's Sudoku
puzzle is printed to the left.

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