



THE VOICE

Winter 2023

President:

Lea McGuigan

Vice President:

Ellora Smith

Editors:

Jenn Yu

Divya Sambasivan

Graphic Designer:

Riya Jeena

Writers:

Jhanv

Kichannagari

Samhita Badhri

Samhitha Pai

Lea McGuigan

Jenn Yu

Ellora Smith

Misha Kapoor



Five O'clock Tea: A Sit Down with the Heads of the CHS music Program

By: Samhita Badhri and Jhanvi Kichannagari

Hello, and welcome to the first ever edition of Five O'clock Tea, a segment of the Voice where we sit down with people in our community to ask them questions to better understand and appreciate our community.

Oftentimes, there is more to be learned than what meets the eye. In this edition, we'll kick it off by interviewing an integral part of CHS--the heads of the music program.

The Chelmsford High School music department has been a driving source of pride in our town. Ranked as one of the best communities for music education by the NAMM since 2013, our fine arts department encourages students to take risks, explore, create, and collaborate. But what goes on beyond the surface of our music program? We sat down with Mr. Sexauer, Ms. Roeder, and Mrs. Comeau, to ask them a couple of must-know questions.

Mr: Sexauer: Band Director

Born into a family of musicians, Mr. Sexauer began playing the piano at the age of 8. As he grew older he had the opportunity to try many instruments including the cello and eventually switching to brass instruments like the trumpet, and finally settling on the saxophone in sixth grade. After graduating college, Mr. Sexauer found himself working as the music teacher at Center Elementary School, he moved on to Parker Middle School and finally found himself here, at CHS, for what has now been twelve years.

"I thought it was a cool opportunity to make a difference and give back to the program that helped me."

What is one of your favorite memories with your students?

"In 2015, the band represented Massachusetts in the national 4th of July parade in Washington DC. We had a piece of music written for us that we performed in the parade--it was a really cool experience, marching past the white house and performing on the Fourth of July."

Mr. Sexauer and the CHS band perform at a variety of events including their winter spring concert, graduation, MICCA, in addition to many school-wide sporting events.

When asked what makes the Chelmsford Music Department special, Mr. Sexauer says, "I can't speak for other music departments specifically but I'm really glad to know that our building administration is very supportive--they always support us, I feel really lucky about that."

Mrs. Roeder: Choral Director

A singer since birth, Ms. Roeder found herself shocked when her parents insisted on putting her into piano lessons in first grade. Contrary to her resistance, she began playing piano--an experience that would carry on with her for the rest of her life. However, another instrument caught the young choral director's eye and she found herself playing the flute in her middle school band program. After working in another district for some time, she felt as though it was time for a change. She was familiar with the staff of the Music Department here at CHS and felt it was for sure a team she'd want to be involved in. When she arrived, she decided to take the program in a different direction than her predecessor. For instance, she turned the previous jazz choir into an acapella, something she felt confident about. For the past nine years, the acapella program has flourished into an amazing and talent-rich community.

Ms. Roeder cites her favorite moments with her students not as specific moments, but as periods of time. She enjoys the chance to watch students be given an opportunity or piece of music and make something new out of it while building connections with each other.

Why do you think people should join the music program?

“Aside from the fact that making music is just a wonderful way to express yourself and explore what it is that makes us human. I think what made me want to be a music teacher is the sense of community between the ensembles. The relationships between the students and the teachers is so enriching and it also becomes a second home for the people involved in it. It's so important to have those connections—when I think back to highschool and Chelmsford it's the music groups that stick with me.”

“What's neat about music is that you can be in a room full of people that you don't know, but you are still creating something together. Even if you don't speak the same language as them, you are all coming together and speaking the common language--music.”

-Ms. Comeau

Mrs. Comeau: Orchestra Director

While living in New Hampshire, Mrs. Comeau started playing the strings in 3rd grade with her father's encouragement. Initially starting with the violin, she later switched over to the viola during her time in middle school. During her senior year at University of New Hampshire, Mrs. Comeau worked in CHS as an intern to begin her time at Chelmsford. She was later accepted into the role of a music teacher in Byam, and worked there for five years until moving to Parker for two years. Now, Ms. Comeau has been working at CHS for thirteen years.

The CHS orchestra performs at many events including MICCA, the Pops concert, and rotary lunches. Mrs. Comeau picks the Disney Trips that occur every four years because “those are probably the happiest memories with my students because I get to know them a lot at that time.”

Band, Chorus, and Orchestra all create unmatched and incomparably valuable experiences for students--teaching them hard work, collaboration, and creativity. Music--specifically ensembles allow you to make seemingly impossible connections and allow us to transcend barriers.

Are Finals Worth It?

By Ellora Smith

(Editorial)

Finals. As June slowly, but surely, approaches, this word seems to haunt students. We are now over halfway through the school year as midterms zoomed by. And now students are once again tormented by the idea of more exams – finals. But, are finals even necessary?

We as students work hard all year long just to ultimately be judged based on one test covering all of the material we study throughout the year. While cumulative tests can be an effective benchmark, a final gives a looming feeling and overwhelming stress to students at the end of the year. Last year, finals at CHS were only worth around five or ten percent of our total grade, so cramming hard for weeks preparing seemed pointless for such a small percentage.

In addition to preparing for finals, sophomores also have the overwhelming burden of MCAS in the same time period. Depending on the classes you take, some could have up to three sessions of MCAS, while also having to study for finals at the end of the year. All of this work throughout the year then has to be crammed into one test or project that happens in the last week of the school year when everyone just wants summer to start. Many of us spend hours cramming just for it all to be forgotten the minute after we finish the test.

In my opinion, I think that there should just be smaller tests throughout the year opposed to one large, cumulative one at the end of the year. Many teachers at CHS do this already, which means that they know which students are understanding the concepts and which students are not. However, cumulative tests seem to be going out of style because colleges are starting to rethink how important SATs are. This is significant because the SATs are considered the “ultimate” cumulative test.

While SATs are not being relied on as much by colleges, midterms and finals are still required in higher education and can count for a large percentage of your grade. If students decide to go to college, they will be faced with finals for their classes through all of their years there. Without practice in high school, they might not know what to expect in the upcoming long years ahead of them. However, these finals in college and in high school should not be focused on just memorization, but utilizing the skills we have learned in class to apply to real life, not just in the schooling world. Without these real-life applications, we will not be as prepared as we could be for after we graduate.

Additionally, there is the point that students are absorbing knowledge all year long, and therefore, should be tested on the materials when they are taught. For me, I know I retain information learned at the beginning of the year better during that time, and do not remember every specific detail by June.

Another factor to consider is finals are typically condensed into a short time frame leading to more stress. Although we get half days the last week of school, we have finals after finals consecutively for a straight week without any break days. This leads to kids becoming more stressed because many cram for something in such a tiny increment of time. While they should be studying periodically over time as opposed to cramming, that tends to not be the case.

Overall, we as students over exert ourselves preparing for this one grand exam pushed to the very end of the year. We cram and study for that hour and a half of test taking time per class, but is it all really worth it? Well, that’s for you, the students, to decide once June arrives.

Hot take: Elon Musk should have just left Twitter alone.

Jennifer Yu

(Editorial)

Layoffs, censorship, and paying to be verified? The massively popular social media platform, Twitter, has undergone massive changes just several months after being purchased by multi-billionaire Elon Musk. Many seem to have mixed reviews on this seemingly modern-day Louisiana Purchase, but I'm here to tell you that this decision just was not it.

So, who's the man behind it all?

Elon Musk – born in 1971 in Pretoria, South Africa, he is now the richest man on the planet, surpassing the likes of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and yes – Jeff Bezos. But how exactly did he do it?

Early Musk

Elon started his career in the tech field. Extremely interested in the sciences, he briefly attended Stanford University, before dropping out after just two days of class. He later went on to start a company you may be quite familiar with, SpaceX, making his life's mission to move mankind to Mars. Interesting, I know – but what has most people hooked is how he went from Mars to Twitter, and things are about to get interesting.

SpaceX, Tesla, and everything in between

Soon after, Elon became a man of many titles, as he founded a second company Tesla. This time, he worked on producing electric cars for “the future”, while developing some of the most high end AI technology the tech market has seen to date. During this time in his life, everything seemed to be going quite well. He had a family, founded two companies, and was pretty filthy rich, but he wasn't done yet.

On October 27, 2022, Elon Musk bought Twitter for a hefty sum of \$44 billion, putting the entire company, and all of its employees, under his leadership and acquisition. Now, I have two words for this sudden shift in power: dangerously volatile. And now that a few months have passed, I think it is safe to say that these words still hold true when describing Elon's role in the company.

A new era of Twitter

Just shy of a month after acquiring Twitter, Elon Musk made headlines for laying off – yes, firing – thousands of its employees. In fact, 3,700 employees of the previously 7,500 employee company had been let go. And just like that thousands of workers, and their families were left without paychecks to support themselves. Not only that, but the world was left wondering why the man who has everything, decided to leave his employees with nothing.

Since then, Elon has warranted this mass layoff with talks of keeping Twitter financially afloat. To support that, Elon has now launched a new Twitter campaign, Twitter Blue, that charges \$7.99 a month for a user to become verified. Interesting, right? To most, a company with such influence on today's society like Twitter wouldn't seem to be going bankrupt. So we beg to ask the question: is Twitter really financially struggling, or is Musk just using it as an excuse to ride the oh-so fruitful capitalist wave.

Short feature: Gen-Z's got a taste for politics, but not in the way you'd expect.

Often thought of as too young, ignorant, and uneducated to have a voice in politics, younger generations are slowly beginning to prove their influence in the political landscape, and it all boils down to two words: social media.

One of the most prominent examples of this is the 2020 presidential election. This election was without a doubt one of the most stressful and tense elections of our time as it took place during the height of the pandemic. It was important that the American people showed up to make their voices heard during a time of economic and emotional hardship. In order to push more people to cast their ballots, Gen-Z leveraged the full power of social media, and memes, as a more unconventional way to make their message heard.

During the weeks leading up to the election, Tiktok, Instagram, and Twitter flooded with memes educating voters on political issues they should care about this election season. Some examples include, but are not limited to, infrastructure, healthcare, and climate change all being portrayed in fun and goofy ways.

Fortunately, these unique methods worked as polls saw that 50% of citizens between ages 18-29 voted during the 2020 cycle, meaning that social media (and yes, memes too) may seem to have a larger impact on the political landscape than we think – and it might actually be something that could benefit voting turnouts for elections to come.

Works Cited (for voting article)

Lopez, Ashley. "Turnout among young voters was the second highest for a midterm in past 30 years." NPR, 10 Nov. 2022, www.npr.org/2022/11/10/1135810302/turnout-among-young-voters-was-the-second-highest-for-a-midterm-in-past-30-years. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

Tisch College. Tufts University, 29 Apr. 2021, circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/half-youth-voted-2020-11-point-increase-2016. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

Most Timeless Holiday

By: Samhitha Pai

Holiday songs are a fun and nostalgic concept. They play from the start of December to sometimes the end of January. Most of the songs that we hear are fun and cheerful. There are many holiday songs from “Christmas Tree Farm” by Taylor Swift to “All I Want for Christmas is You” by Mariah Carey. Now with the wide variety of holiday songs, which one is the best? We could go by the charts to find out. Today, the Billboard Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 songs reports that the number one song is “All I Want for Christmas is You” by Mariah Carey. This song was released on October 29, 1994, which was 29 years ago! Despite being released so long ago, this song is still played all the time during the holiday season, and since its release has sold 20 million copies and streamed 1.4 billion times. However, just because this song seems the “best” based on statistics does not mean that it is. There is a wide variety of other songs that anyone could make the argument that it is the best. Although, we might have to wait until next December to have that discussion.

Book Reviews By Lea Mcguigan

Book #1

Title: The Giver of Stars

Author: Jojo Moyes

Rating: 5/5

Summary: British-born Alice is trying to make the best out of life in a small, nose- Kentucky town. When an opportunity for change presents itself, she is quick to seize it and joins the Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky. Along with four other women, Alice takes on the job of delivering books to children who live in the rural, Kentucky mountains. The Giver of Stars is a tale of five heroic women but at its core, a tale of loss, justice, love, and compassion.

Review: The title is very fitting for this beautifully written novel. Alice is a stunning heroine and the other librarians are amazing, developed side characters. I was just as invested in their stories as in Alice's. The antagonists of the novel are so perfectly unlikable and watching their downfall was part of the satisfying ending. This book is one I would recommend to anyone looking for an uplifting and exquisite contemporary novel.

Book #2

Title: Meant to Be

Author: Emily Griffin

Rating: 3/5

Summary: Joe is a lawyer, while Kate is a model. Joe's life was planned out from the moment he was born and spontaneity is her middle name. He grew up under the watchful eye of the media, she grew up under the watchful eye of her abusive step-father. On paper, Joe and Kate are polar opposites with nothing in common. Reality tells a different story. When tragedy strikes both, a fateful flight to Martha's Vineyard for a wedding may make or break them.

Review: Meant to Be retells the dramatic and highly-publicized romance of John F. Kennedy Jr and Carolyn Bassette. With this in mind, the characters, events, and ending seem unoriginal. The ending was predictable to anyone who is familiar with their story. The biggest problem with the book was the characters. I never read a less likable side character than one in this book, and even the main characters lacked some depth. All in all, this was a cute, light read but if you hate cliches and unoriginal characters, I would skip it.

Book #3

Title: The Bean Trees

Author: Barbara Kingsolver

Rating: 1/5

Summary: Taylor Greene doesn't ask for much. In rural Kentucky, there is not much to ask for. She only desires two things: 1. Not to get pregnant and 2. Leave. Not too much to ask for. After leaving Kentucky for Tucson, Arizona, Taylor is forced to take care of an abandoned child. Maybe her dream of not becoming pregnant came true, but her maternal instincts are put to the test in this tale about belonging and love.

Review: I was supposed to like this book. Apparently, everyone likes this book. I didn't. There are two words that can be used to describe The Bean Trees: confusing and boring. I looked at twenty pages but read nothing. The flat, one-dimensional characters frustrated me to no end. Common sense is clearly not something that Taylor is in possession of. There was nothing in the book I could connect with. Maybe this book was written for people who have way more life experience than an eighteen-year-old because The Bean Trees is a book this eighteen-year-old regrets spending any time on.

Groundhog Day

Misha Kapoor

Every year, February 2nd comes around, and the country turns to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, where they await with bated breath for the arrival of the famous groundhog. Phil the Groundhog is tasked with predicting the weather for the rest of winter. The legend goes, if the groundhog peers out of its den and is able to see its shadow, Winter will continue for six more weeks; however, if the sky is cloudy and the groundhog is unable to see its shadow, spring will come early. Groundhog Day is a fun tradition, but how accurate is it?

Groundhog Day is a holiday in which people are brought together by what we now know as a silly tradition. The holiday has its roots in a Christian tradition that was expanded on by German settlers. A clergy would bless candles, which would then be distributed out. The candles were said to run out at the end of winter. The Germans celebrated a similar tradition but chose a patron animal to conduct the honors. Their chosen animal was a hedgehog. Groundhog day was brought to America by German settlers in the Pennsylvania area. These settlers adopted the groundhog instead of a hedgehog as groundhogs were plentiful in the region. Now that the history of the holiday has been covered, let's answer the long-awaited question.

At 7:25am every year, the pressure is on Phil as the country looks to him as their weatherman for the season. In total, Phil has guessed the season about correctly only 40% of the time. This conclusion seems to be the end of the story, but it becomes stranger when we look closely at the data. If Phil is to predict a short winter, he is 47% more likely to be correct. Most weather reports are typically 60% or higher accuracy, which is much more reliable than the groundhog. Therefore, while Groundhog day is a fun tradition, you can recreate it at home with more accuracy by simply tossing a coin.

