# Table of Contents

1. Passing the Time, 6 Feet Apart  
   Sarah Yildirim '23
2. Normalcy  
   Rebecca Denhart '23
3. Empathy Through Dance  
   Laura Jiang '21
4. "Blackbird" Cover  
   Tiffany Xiao '23
5. On Avatar: The Last Airbender  
   Reka Bajus '22
6. Grocery Store  
   Audrey Kaye '22
   "If I Ain't Got You" Cover  
   Jarett Jean Jacques '22
7. Flutterfish  
   Senching Hsia '21
   Ballet Dancer  
   Yuko Tanaka '22
8. Studio Ghibli: Advocacy Through Animation  
   Audrey Lim '23
9. Lockdown  
   Paola Diaz del Castillo Rosique '23
10. Meet the Masthead  
    'The Artist' Cabinet

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**Editor's Note:** This issue was compiled during Fall 2020, though was not published at first due to complicated scheduling during the COVID-19 pandemic.
WELCOME TO THE ARTIST.

It means the world that you stopped by.

This is our space to discuss culture and current events through self-expression—drawing, performing, writing, the like. We believe that anything you create is a reflection of your views and values, so send in your oddly specific playlists, your cursed class sketches, and your long-winded love letters. There’s so much to discuss and even more to make.

Let’s get started!

Yours in person (thankfully) and in passion,
Audrey Kaye '22 and Abby Lu '22
PASSING THE TIME,
6 FEET APART
by Sarah Yildirim ’23

The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly impacted the lives of so many. With more time on their hands, people have been branching out and trying new activities. While limited to staying indoors in order to continue practicing the Pandemic’s social distancing procedures, one popular pastime has been seeking out and trying artistic projects, including at-home DIYs and learning new instruments.

During this time, singer Taylor Swift and artist Francesca DiMattio have created music and sculptures. Taylor Swift created the album “Folklore” while in quarantine. She mentioned how she recorded the whole album from her home in Los Angeles. At the same time, Francesca DiMattio spent almost five hours in her home in New York sculpting. So far, she has already sculpted a chandelier, porcelain cups, and much more.

Though there are many professionals in the artistic field continuing their projects, many novices just now picking up artistic projects from home. In order to help with artistic creations, the app “Korg Kaossilator,” which allows users to create their own music, became free for a month during quarantine for musicians around the world. Additionally, many have been creating arts for Black Lives Matter (BLM for short). Starting in cities within New York, people have been painting on signs, creating murals, producing music from black artists, etc. Artist Liliana Rivera created the piece Dominique Alexander, which was inspired by Dominique Alexander, who was hung in Fort Tryon Park located in NYC. She told reporters about her disgust when she discovered that Alexander was killed in his own backyard. She hopes to make a difference through painting murals around the city.

From murals depicting BLM to professional artists producing albums from home, people have been coping with the pandemic in different ways. As the cases of COVID-19 start to decrease, artists will continue to create pieces, and beginners hope to continue the new hobbies they have picked up.
"In this piece, I wanted to capture some of the feelings that I have observed during my time in quarantine/isolation in a calm way. Being at home has mostly sheltered me from experiencing the chaos and unrest that is happening outside. This piece displays feelings of being withdrawn from others or from unwanted tension within our own households which have been normalized. It's a human thing to adapt to new normalcy, and many of us have done so while our lives are anything but normal."

Background Graphic by Audrey Kaye '23
EMPATHY THROUGH DANCE
How Choreographers Fight Racism Through “Movement”
Answering the ills of society through the language of dance

As a student artist who has been deep-diving into the art of dance, I’ve come to internalize the common faceted definition of art — the communication of lived experiences. The social impact of dance embodies the power art has to form bridges between segregated communities through fostering genuine empathy. Learning works of Black choreographers in my dance history courses at Choate has educated and changed my perspective of the black experience in America more than any general history textbook. In this recent period of a national-reawakening of racism in America, Black choreographers have used their bodies as instruments of emotion, essential stories, to tell America: wake up, feel our pain, listen to our stories, and stand with us.

From Pearl Primus’ Strange Fruit in 1945 to Alvin Ailey’s Revelations in 1960 to the now Jamar Roberts’s “Cooped,” these works of Black choreographers mirror the persistent plight of African Americans in the face of racism across American history. To me, these works hold special significance right now in that they show the roots of the BLM movement, that behind the hashtag, there is hidden and deeply rooted pain, the agony of loss, unacknowledged giving, and the urgent need for a shared perspective to be embraced by all.

So I ask myself, what makes dance an effective way of communicating lived experiences? Reflecting upon dance pieces made by Black artists, I realized the answer lies in the simple idea that the instrument of dance is one’s body, which is an instrument we all share. Using a universally shared device to fill in the cultural, emotional gaps between us — that’s what the art of movement does.
For example, Pearl Primus’s *Strange Fruit* (1945) is a piece in which a woman reflects on witnessing a lynching, using the poem by the same name written by Abel Meeropol (Lew Allan). Primus, along with other second-generation modern dancers, has thoroughly redefined the potential social impact dance had. These dancers created dance works referencing music and visual art, such as Martha Graham's 1937 "Deep Song," which has been referenced as Graham's "Weeping Woman" (a reference to Picasso’s work). By adding movement to disciplines of art that already been recognized as mediums to carry social and political messages and creating incredible work reaching hearts, American choreographers in Primus' time were the first to utilize dance to foster empathy. Primus said, "I dance not to entertain but to help people better understand each other." Her works concretized her words, indeed.

Among many dances attuning African Americans’ issues during the period between the two world wars, none was as searing as *Strange Fruit*. In the piece, she depicts the anguish of a white woman who had witnessed a lynching and who subsequently was filled with regret. The movement created a significant impact because it identified herself with a white woman, further demonstrating that her message was a statement to the world delivered through a concept painted by dance.

Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* in 1960 was yet another beautiful example of how movement fills cultural gaps by depicting the rich African American heritage that should be recognized as America’s treasure.
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Judith Jamison, artistic director emerita of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, says that "Alvin was making a statement about African-American cultural experience, saying, 'Hey, this is who we are, we live here, we were born here,' It was a brave action. Civil rights were roaring, and our protest was our performance." Revelations is the most widely seen modern dance work in the world because of how the African heritage was explored destroyed the walls of race, nationality, and faith. And the need for revelations is perhaps more urgent now than ever.

Jamar Roberts, the resident choreographer of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, used his short video "Cooped" to express the state of emergency we're in by revealing the pain and beauty of the black body. Filmed in his garage basement, "Cooped" is one of the most powerful responses to the Covid-19 crisis, and the resonance only expands as the harsh reality of systematic racism is revealed to more of the American public. With a siren sound in the background signifying the state of emergency, Roberts used his own body to "make visible the psyche of a marginalized people and their resilience and their beauty." He adds, "Seeing the destruction of the physical body gets people going. That's why I wanted my body up close to the viewer so that you can feel it and really understand what I'm talking about." These words sum up the power behind dance as a weapon to fight against racial injustice, the idea that the instrument of dance brings the issue closer to the heart of all.

Referring back to Primus' quote, "to help people better understand each other" appears to be an oversimplified solution to the injustices in our world today. Still, it is precisely what's needed, and the bare minimum everyone must meet in their mission. I'm glad that the art of dance has fostered empathy in me and many others and, more importantly, reminded us that the fight for more compassion is won by continuation — keep feeling, communicating, and learning the lived experiences of those you must stand by.
"Music fans probably know of the hit song, "Blackbird," from The Beatles, but it is unlikely that you would be familiar with the historical significance of what has become one of the most popular guitar cover songs of all time. On the surface, the lyrics seem to refer to an injured blackbird that must gain its strength to learn how to fly. However, the blackbird is meant to represent a metaphor for a black girl, as 'bird' can be used as another word for 'girl' in England. Paul McCartney had written the song in April of 1968, a time where issues centered around segregation and racial inequality were very prominent in the United States. It was a series of events in Mississippi, Alabama, and especially Arkansas (concerning the discrimination of nine black students who joined an all-white high school in Little Rock) that inspired him to write 'Blackbird.' Although Paul was still living in England, he was deeply touched by the American civil rights movement and felt great sympathy towards those suffering from injustice. He hoped that through his music and this song, he could bring light and hope to those fighting for their rights."
ON AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER

My middle school Mandarin class was a shaping factor in my life. As required of most language classes, the curriculum had elements of the language literally and culturally, and my teacher made a sincere effort to include culture in everything we did. She brought candy from Taiwan, and taught about Asian representation in the media. Most memorably was fifth grade, when she showed the class Nickelodeon’s Avatar: The Last Airbender. She pointed at the Chinese characters in the intro: the character for “water,” then modern characters for “earth,” “fire,” and “air.” It took five minutes for us to get hooked on it.

While 11-year-old me was more worried about defeating Fire Lord Ozai, I was appreciative of the diversity; specifically, the elements of Asian and Inuit culture and history woven into every aspect of the show. The character and city names, architecture, dress, even background details such as posters written in Mandarin proudly showed a deep, layered cartoon, not another repetitive one about predominantly white American kids getting in trouble with school or family for a silly reason, meant to be entertaining because of its ridiculousness. As someone with neither opportunity nor desire to watch such shows as a kid, I was disappointed by the cartoons my friends showed me in middle school because frankly, a lot of them were shallow. They were generic, meaningless, and comprised of tropes that graduate into high school drama TV. Especially after watching Avatar, a show with so much under the surface, I was weirded out by the emptiness of other American cartoons.

When my dad would get home from work, he’d sit on the couch and flick through TV channels until he saw a title worth watching, and I’d look to see if there was anything I wanted to watch. In 2017, I was sitting on the couch and saw Avatar: The Last Airbender— but it was formatted as a movie title, not a TV show, so I asked him to go back. When I read the description, I was ecstatic. Why hadn’t I known they made a live-action Avatar movie?

I soon realized why. On the screen was a young white girl with blue eyes and brown hair in traditional Inuit clothing. It dawned on me it was supposed to be Katara, who has dark skin. I later learned the actor playing Sokka played Jasper in Twilight. This, too, was a white actor, one pale enough to play a vampire, playing a dark-skinned character. Aang’s arrow was changed, and he was white but dressed as a Tibetan monk. The movie was heavy, when humor is a pillar of the show’s popularity.
But most confusing was when they showed Zuko. In the show, ethnically Fire Nation characters are pale. Water Tribe and Earth Kingdom characters are shown with tan or dark skin, and while Air Nomads are shown with pale skin in comparison, it’s clear the Fire Nation are meant to be the whitest. The character playing Zuko had dark skin and appeared to be Indian. I was confused because the physical distinctions between the four nations are not just important, but obvious. If they were going to cast dark-skinned characters as white, why not cast all as white? Why cast an actor of Indian descent for the palest character in the series, especially when there’s little to no reference of India compared to China, Korea, Tibet, and Japan? It didn’t make sense to have Asian representation for “diversity points” in a show purposefully rooted in Asian culture and history, and beloved by many for such reasons.

After rewatching and reading about Avatar as a teenager, I realized my discomfort with the movie, specifically, Zuko in the movie. The show has heavy themes of imperialism and colonialism, the main conflict being a devastating war started by the Fire Nation to conquer the other nations, just as Nazi Germany did in the west and Imperial China and Imperial Japan did in the east. Although it's written as digestible for a young audience, it's a serious topic, and understood as such. As a middle schooler, I was able to reference Azula giving a speech to rows of Fire Nation soldiers to Darth Vader giving a speech to rows of Stormtroopers in Star Wars, but failed to connect either to Hitler giving a speech to real-life stormtroopers in Nazi Germany.
The paleness of the Fire Nation is a smaller detail, but a choice by the creators as a nod to white imperialism and white colonialism. By whitewashing the entire cast but casting the Fire Nation antagonists Prince Zuko, Fire Lord Ozai, and Admiral Zhao to name a few as dark-skinned and Indian, it paints a clearly stated yet contradictory message in the context of what the show is trying to create; the whiter or paler characters are the heroes, and the darker characters are villains. Additionally, I noticed re-watching clips that the Fire Nation military uniforms in the movie, which in the series draw from historical Japanese and Chinese dress, are heavily laced with Roman and Hellenistic influence. I was disturbed that after unnecessarily casting the intentionally pale antagonists as dark-skinned, they were dressed as Roman emperors in what had to be an attempt to keep the imperialist themes in the show.

Even then, I am further disturbed in that if it was an attempt to keep true to the themes, they did it by firstly erasing the outlined ethnic distinctions between the nations, and secondly felt it appropriate to substitute the original Imperial Asian-inspired Fire Nation dress with visibly European, specifically Ancient Roman, attire to show that they’re a militant nation. The whitewashing goes beyond the casting, and the icky feeling I had when first seeing it I have even more so now. I felt the same sense of emptiness in the live-action that I did from the other American cartoons I watched in middle school.
Most unsettling for me, and the biggest umbrella phrase I can group a lot of issues with the movie under, is that the movie was changed in the way it was to make it digestible for a white audience. From changing Fire Nation backdrops and uniforms to mimic Ancient Rome, to whitewashing all diverse characters to paint them as heroes but casting villains as dark-skinned, and in doing so, erasing much of the original intent, the live-action movie by M. Night Shyamalan took a show that brilliantly made serious topics engaging and accessible to a younger audience, highlighted and celebrated elements of Asian and Inuit cultures and diverse characters, referenced significant historical events that still affect societies globally today and presented them in a way that neither diminished their impact nor fetishized them, and basically took a cartoon for children that is as educational and important as it is hilarious and good-natured and threw it in the gutter.

With many others, I was overjoyed to learn the movie is being remade. I hope this time, with more communication with the original creators, it will represent what it was supposed to, with the right casting. I hope current middle schoolers watch it and pretend to be waterbenders with their friends when they go swimming too, and that it’ll have the same positive influence it had on me and my generation on theirs.
"When I was younger and took Sunday trips to the grocery store, I put my toddler hands all over everything, probably getting toddler grime on the cartons of milk and crates of oranges, as toddlers do. With the pandemic (and I suppose growing up), I now keep my hands to myself in the produce aisle. I’m too scared about spreading germs now, so if I accidentally knock a pack of chips off the shelf, I end up buying it."

Jarett Jean Jacques '22 is a musician in Choate's Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble, and Arts Concentration program. He plays multiple different instruments but specializes in the trumpet. Here, Jarett is playing Alicia Keys’ 2003 song, "If I Ain't Got You." Scan the QR code here to listen to his remote performance.
Yuko Tanaka '22 is an artist in many senses of the word—she dances, draws, and plays the piano. She approaches everything, from music history with Mr. Wie to art history with Bill, with a profound sense of creativity.
Studio Ghibli has long been known as the Japanese animation and filmmaking company that produced timeless, hit movies such as Spirited Away, Princess Mononoke, and Castle in the Sky, three of Ghibli’s most well known names. Hayao Miyazaki, who co-founded Studio Ghibli, directed several of these award-winning films, touching on topics of love, friendship, family, and kindness. Studio Ghibli movies are individually distinctive because the animations are meticulously hand-drawn, rather than computer generated, giving the films a warm, authentic feel. The settings of Ghibli movies range from adventures in the spirit world, to small towns by the sea, to bustling cities where both old-fashioned and invented architecture and clothing meet impressively futuristic technology and aircrafts, a signature Studio Ghibli style appearing in many different films, due to Miyazaki’s childhood love for airplanes. Hayao Miyazaki, who has personally drawn, written, and directed several Ghibli films, echoes the importance of caring for nature and being concerned for it. His personal fondness of nature and Earth spills into his work, and very lovable, very notable work it is.

While incorporating fantastical elements into their productions, Ghibli has been consistent in delving into the theme of environmentalism. Some films touch on this subject briefly, while others have a direct correspondence and a main theme of love for the Earth. Howl's Moving Castle, released in 2004, includes a gorgeous scene where the protagonists are in a brilliant flower field, complete with sparkling lakes, mountains in the background, and bright, elegant wildflowers dancing in the breeze. The mood of the scene darkens when a warship flies into view, implicating the negativity that technology can have, and contrasting the lightness and stunning beauty of nature at its finest. In another scene in Spirited Away, which premiered in 2001, a sludgy, dirty river spirit is portrayed, mistaken for a stink spirit because of all the debris, junk, and litter that it has collected. The spirit comes to the bathhouse of the spirits, where the movie takes place, in an attempt to cleanse itself, and the main character Chihiro is able to free the spirit from the garbage it has collected. Said garbage includes a bicycle — whose significance comes from Miyazaki’s childhood — and an assortment of large metal junk, a nod to the carelessness humans have and have been known to have with littering and garbage disposal.
A famous Ghibli movie that relates to environmentalism explicitly is Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, which was in fact one of the first movies that Miyazaki worked on and directed. It is set in a destroyed future world, where most of the land has been intoxicated and few humans remain alive. The movie follows Nausicaä, the princess of The Valley of The Wind, working to save her world from the antagonist’s motives to destroy a jungle filled with giant, mutant insects. The jungle is toxic, yet the plants and trees in it act as a filter and purify the pollutant-infested soil, and underneath the jungle runs clean water and pure soil. The film is more than just entertainment; it’s a warning, advising us to maintain the beauty of our Earth and not remain clueless and careless, or else the premise that Nausicaä is set in could become reality for us soon. Remaining indifferent about global warming, environmentalism, climate change, pollution, etc. will destroy our world, its resources, and its beauty. Nausicaä speaks as loudly and clearly to its viewers as it did when it was released in 1984, stressing the importance and diligence of continuous care for our planet, which ultimately leads to care for our future selves, who won’t have to live in a harmful environment if we prevent it now.

Princess Mononoke, one of Studio Ghibli’s highest grossing movies, also emphasizes the need for sustainability. The film portrays the conflicts and interactions between spirits, humans, and nature, each one struggling to dominate over the others. Princess Mononoke is perhaps most well known and admired for depicting no clear contrast between good and evil, hero and villain.
Minnie Driver, who voices one of the antagonists, Lady Eboshi, in English, noted that, "It’s one of the most remarkable things about the film: Miyazaki gives a complete argument for both sides of the battle between technological achievement and our spiritual roots in the forest. He shows that good and evil, violence and peace exist in us all." This shows to be true, for as the movie goes on, many note that it’s hard to tell who’s the villain and who is merely short-sighted. Through his creations, Miyazaki expertly illustrates the push and pull, the give and take between good and evil, but also between nature and humans. The human population is expanding rapidly, while resources and space for all those humans are declining. Yet, it is impossible to live without nature, as a huge portion of our oxygen comes from Earth’s greenery. We take our freshwater from rivers and glaciers, the latter of which are cracking and melting under a blazing sun. The Earth loses about 15.3 billion trees annually to logging machines, while the Pacific Garbage Patch, which is currently 1.6 million square kilometers, or 617,000 square miles, grows speedily. Yes, there is a give and a take relationship, but what have humans been giving to the environment? Not as much as we’ve been taking. It’s a worrisome supply-and-demand-like exchange that must remain at the forefront of our conscious minds. We must be aware of it.

The urgency to prevent our world from sliding down that treacherous cliff can feel hopeless, sound hopeless. Ghibli has so exquisitely drawn all the conflict and turmoil we deal with, trying to save the Earth from what was so emphasized and portrayed in Nausicaä and Mononoke: the toxic land, the seemingly never-ending wars, humans willingly fighting what they had lived so peacefully with before. It’s a prediction, a reminder, a foreshadowing to what could possibly happen if we do not do everything we can now to save tomorrow’s world. Studio Ghibli frequently reiterates that life is beautiful, and Miyazaki himself acknowledges this, saying, "— even in the middle of hatred and killings, there are things worth living for. A wonderful meeting, or a beautiful thing can exist. ... We depict hatred, but it is to depict that there are more important things. We depict a curse, to depict the joy of liberation."
"Lockdown"

PAOLA DIAZ
DEL CASTILLO
ROSIQUE '23

Paola Diaz del Castillo Rosique '23 is truly a wonder to work with. In the Visual Arts Concentration program, she creates exquisite three-dimensional collages with ink drawings and metallic paper. Go check out her work on the gallery wall in the PMAC this winter!
MEET THE MASTHEAD

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HOW CAN I SUBMIT?

Fear not, it's super easy. Submissions are always open, so just email your work to Audrey at akaye22@choate.edu or Abby at alu22@choate.edu.

WHAT CAN I SUBMIT?

We'll publish anything as long as it abides by Choate's Statement of Character, which in my opinion, makes us pretty cool. If you're feeling uninspired and your brain oasis is presently enduring a dry spell, here are some ideas:

- A catalogue of incomprehensible handwriting that frankly, doesn't mean much, but just feels sort of artistic in a round-about way.

- Assessing Choate dorm rooms according to the principles of Feng Shui.

- An video interview series on resourceful dorm cuisine—for when you can't make a CRH Grilling event or your Tang Kitchen reservation doesn’t work out.

- A collection of the most unhinged student-made sports posters.

- An article on writing-prompt twitter bots—how tech is keeping young writers inspired.

- A comprehensive ranking of NFL mascots, arranged by aesthetic appeal.

- How do the freshmen of Mem House decorate their crusty crusty space? A short film.

- An emotional rendition of John Cage's renowned composition, 4'33" (look it up).

- A guide to all the hidden old super expensive paintings on campus.

- A poem about love and longing and pomegranates.

- Will Choate ever attain Fukuyama's "Denmark?"

- Your three page analysis of The Great Gatsby from EN300
... yet there's still so much more to talk about. stay tuned for our winter issue!

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