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IN THE NEWS

The Booster Shots

By Quynh Nguyen '23



With the emergence of coronavirus variants, there has never been a better time to get your booster shot than now. However, it is important to stay informed about the details of what you are receiving. People who are able to receive the booster should be aware of where they can receive it and the side effects they might experience.

While the first doses of the vaccine do help protect your body, over time their effectiveness decreases. This is due to the discovery of new variants since the first vaccine was rolled out. The booster shot can be altered to protect you from variants which the original shot cannot, as well as strengthen your immunity against the virus.

As of January 3rd, the CDC has approved individuals twelve years old and older who received the Pfizer vaccine to receive any of the three primary vaccines available - namely, those made by Pfizer,

Johnson & Johnson and Moderna. For those who received the original Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you must be at least eighteen years old to receive a booster. If you received the Pfizer or Moderna Vaccine, then you should schedule your booster shot for five months after your first dose. However, if you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccination you only have to wait two months to receive a booster.

New York residents can receive free booster shots at pharmacies, pop-up buses and health clinics. In order to make an appointment, you can either go to your previous vaccine location or search for a vaccination site in your area at www.vaccines.gov. At most vaccination sites, appointments can be scheduled online.

So, what should you expect after you receive the booster? It is important to know what to prepare for and how to deal with any potential side effects. Side effects of a booster shot may include muscle pain and headaches, but the most common one is fever. It is suggested that you prepare to take three to five days off to rest, as the effects can be quite extreme. Those who experience side effects can take ibuprofen to relieve their symptoms, and should ensure that they are well rested.

Please take care of yourself and receive full vaccination as soon as you can. While you may be healthy enough to defend yourself against the symptoms of the virus,



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there are many people who cannot, including the immunocompromised, the disabled, and the elderly, who rely on herd immunity to stay healthy. In addition, young children do not meet the minimum age requirement to receive their vaccinations. Remember that, by doing your part, you are not only looking out for your own health and safety, but for the health and safety of others.

The Omicron Variant

By Victoria Smajlaj '24

It is important to remember we are still in the fight against coronavirus, with the formation of new variants. Ever since the coronavirus was first spotted in December of 2019, it managed to spread across the world, affecting schools, offices, and stores, and life as we knew it, with widespread lockdown beginning in March 2020. Since then, scientists, doctors, and world leaders have worked hard to keep us all safe. New York in particular has managed to open up again with the development and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine and booster shot. Hospitalization and death rates have decreased overall since the start of the pandemic and people have begun to feel more comfortable with socializing, dining indoors, and traveling. However, we have also been introduced to new variants of

the virus, namely: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Omicron.

Omicron is the most recent variant, first spotted in November 2021 in several different countries. Interestingly, Omicron seems to be the most contagious variant to date. During the first week of 2022, U.S. hospitalization rates reached their peak since last winter. Because nurses and doctors have been treating the coronavirus for almost two years, medical workers are experiencing burnout from unrelenting stress. This has caused hospitalization statistics to rise, as medical workers are not always capable of working to their fullest potential under such continual pressure.

A majority of these hospitalizations were of people who tested positive for COVID-19, but suffered symptoms which seemed to be unrelated to the virus. Unfortunately, U.S. hospitals are suffering from a major staff shortage. This shortage has led to the government calling in the National Guard to work in hospitals, patients and doctors postponing elective surgeries, and infected, but asymptomatic workers, going back to work. Hospitalization rates have often been higher in the U.S. than the rest of the world - not because of the high number of Omicron cases in the country, but due to there being higher elderly populations, fewer "healthy" populations than in Europe and South Africa, and



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because the majority of hospitalized people are unvaccinated.

The severity of Omicron is still being studied, as many people who have been infected suffer from a wide variety of symptoms. Although Omicron symptoms seem milder in comparison to those of the Delta variant, it is still important to be careful, get vaccinated, and wear a mask in order to decrease the risk of infection. Studies show that symptoms of Omicron overall seem to be less severe than other variants because of increased vaccination rates and booster shots. There are theories that it is just a matter of time before our immunity builds up against coronavirus. Dr. Williams Schaffner of Vanderbilt University's Medical Center said, "We will always be coping with COVID-19 in some way...as we do with influenza."

"It is now more important than ever that we as a school community continue to take COVID-19 safety precautions seriously."

- Victoria Smajlaj '24

Omicron has significantly impacted our very own New York City, as schools had to close due to the rise in infections in December 2021. Masks became more

strongly enforced in many communities after restrictions had initially loosened in the fall. Many people cancelled holiday plans, and hundreds of flights were cancelled. Luckily, cases are decreasing again since the surge of Omicron. Since this has allowed D.A. to return to in-person learning, it is now more important than ever that we as a school community continue to take COVID-19 safety precautions seriously.

A Year Since January 6th

By Anna Genov '25



The sounds of sirens and broken glass rang through the streets of Washington DC. There were screams and shouts as massive crowds surged through the roads and barricades, rushing towards Capitol Hill. It seems like something that would occur in a dystopian novel, but these events genuinely happened in real life. Just over one year ago, on January 6, 2021, a massive crowd broke through the defenses of the



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U.S. Capitol. The crowd interrupted a Congressional meeting that was certifying the result of the 2020 election, in which Biden defeated Trump. The insurgence resulted in five deaths. Many politicians say that the insurrection was instigated by Trump via Twitter posts. This discussion is still being argued to this day.

As this conversation has continued, many people have attempted to sue Trump, which led to him using his executive privilege to block the Supreme Court from releasing records of January 6th. President Trump claims that he should have the special executive privilege to conceal the documents. (Executive privilege includes the president's right to conceal confidential documents.) The House of Representatives and an investigative panel is still attempting to gain access to these documents. A thirty-eight-page PowerPoint was found detailing plans to overturn the election. According to the information found in this PowerPoint, Trump was supposed to declare a national emergency to postpone the Election result release. Though the plan never materialized, it provided evidence for a second attempt to impeach Trump.

There have also been numerous arrests since the breach. A man named Jacob Chansley who was one of the more well-known participants due to his recognizable outfit: bull horns, bare chest, and a spear. He was accused of violence and

manhandling police forces. Jacob Chansley considered himself a leader of QAnon, and was sentenced to forty-one months in prison, during which he went on a brief hunger strike. It was later discovered that Chansley believed Trump would demand he be released, though this wasn't the case. In fact, Donald Trump didn't end up pardoning any of the insurrectionists.

January 6th is important to remember because it demonstrates the length some people will go to defend their political beliefs. The breaching of the Capitol came as such a shock to many because they realized that respect for the government isn't enough to keep officials safe. Many participants in the event were surprised how easy it was to enter such an important building after setting aside their social boundaries.

D.A. ALL DAY!

D.A. Family Christmas

By Zhiyi "Cindy" Chen '25 and Ivanka Beriwala '25

We attended the D.A. Family Christmas on Saturday, December 11th and felt that D.A.'s Parent Association (DAPA) did an admirable job enforcing COVID-19 protocols by requiring proof of vaccination, the wearing of masks, and social distancing. Not only were students and their families



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able to safely socialize, but we also enjoyed listening to Christmas carols and creating Christmas-themed crafts.

Ivanka Beriwala

From my perspective as an audience member and crafter, the D.A. Family Christmas was a great event for both parents and students. It started with performances by the Glee Club and Senior Ensemble, accompanied by the piano and flute. The Christmas songs performed included “O Come, All Ye Faithful”, “I Saw Three Ships”, “Silent Night”, “Mistletoe” and “Last Christmas”.



Cindy Chen

My perspective of the day is mainly through the lens of a Glee Club member. Even though the Glee Club had practiced

every Tuesday and Thursday morning since the beginning of the school year, I was still a little anxious, especially since I was also accompanying Glee Club on the piano for one of our songs. However, when we entered the Auditorium I was comforted by the sight of my friends sitting in the audience. When it was my turn to play the piano for the first performance of “Mistletoe,” there was a small mistake when we began the song, so we restarted our performance. From then on things went smoothly, especially the second time we performed. For me, it was a valuable experience since it was the first performance I had in D.A.



Ivanka Beriwala

After the performances we mingled with friends and found our way to the “activity rooms,” which offered all of the supplies needed to create Christmas gnomes, jewelry and ornaments. There was also a photo booth in the multi-purpose room and karaoke in the cafeteria. It was an exciting



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time to show our family members around the school and introduce them to our friends. Finally, the party came to an end with an ugly sweater contest! We didn't leave empty handed; as we exited the building we were handed a bag of assorted Christmas cookies. I am so grateful for the memories I made at this wonderful event and can't wait to make even more!

D.A.'s NYSAIS Committee

By Demetra Chudley '24

We have all heard about the accreditation process that Dominican Academy is currently going through. You may have even applied to be a part of the student committee to help D.A. earn this accreditation. But what is the real significance of this accreditation?

Accreditation by the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) is a review process aimed at ensuring that a school meets certain standards of quality in education. This is a testament to the rigorous standards that the D.A. community is held to, both in and out of the classroom. The accreditation would provide a level of assurance in the quality of a D.A. education for potential students and their families, as well as colleges looking to admit students D.A. students. The accreditation would acknowledge not only

D.A.'s educational criteria, but also our caring and close-knit school community.

We hope to earn this accreditation by proving that D.A. consistently reaches and surpasses the standards of academic excellence and support set by other schools that have earned the NYSAIS accreditation. However, in order to achieve this, D.A. needs to perform a self-assessment of how our school functions - both where we succeed and where we fall short. This is where the student committee comes in. With the guidance of teachers, faculty, and staff, the student committee is helping to identify the areas where D.A. achieves its goals, and the areas that need improvement.

"With the guidance of teachers, faculty, and staff, the student committee is helping to identify the areas where D.A. achieves its goals, and the areas that need improvement."

- Demetra Chudley '24

The first meeting of the student committee was held on Tuesday, December 7th. While most D.A. students enjoyed a half day, twenty-five student volunteers from all four grades (including this sophomore), met with the accreditation



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committee, led by Ms. Reardon, to discuss the D.A. mission and what it means to us as students. After a few icebreakers, we split up into groups to define the four core tenets of the Dominican Academy mission, based on the founding principles of St. Dominic's order: study, community, just actions, and prayer. We were able to come up with definitions of each of these aspects of the mission and examples of how they are enacted in our school.

Now that the committee had these definitions to work off of, we were divided further into sub-committees focused on different parts of the self-assessment. In these different committees, we delved deep into different areas of the Dominican Academy experience. I was assigned to the sub-committee for D.A.'s mission statement. Led by Ms. Reardon, my sub-committee discussed the definitions of the goals that the larger group had come up with, and then identified specific examples where we had experienced the goals being carried out at D.A.. We talked about D.A.'s commitment to just action through the Urban Plunge and other service retreats, and to a search for truth through study with projects we had done in English class and labs we had completed in Chemistry. We discussed how we experienced the caring community of D.A. during study groups or while enjoying lunch in the cafeteria, and a life enfolded in prayer every time we prayed throughout the

school day. By the end of the meeting, my committee had made progress in defining and identifying examples of each of Dominican Academy's goals outlined in its mission statement, and I am sure that other committees made similar progress.

However, our work is far from over. The accreditation process is long, and the committee will continue to meet to work on this self-assessment. I know that mine and the other committees still have a lot of work to do assessing additional aspects of the school, and providing evidence for what we believe D.A. has already achieved. By the time the accreditation process is complete, I personally hope to have a deeper understanding of my D.A. community.

ARTS & CULTURE

Spider-Man: No Way Home & the Future of the MCU

By Julia Cramer '24

2021 was a very successful year for Marvel, with their "Phase Four" beginning in July 2021 with the release of *Black Widow*. Phase Four marks a new start for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), with new characters and plotlines being introduced, and the old ones being concluded. *Black Widow* was followed by *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*,



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Eternals, and *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. Phase Four also included numerous TV programs, such as *WandaVision*, *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, *Loki*, *What If...?*, and *Hawkeye*. Although all of Marvel's releases received praise and attention from fans, they pale in comparison to the success that was the highly-anticipated *Spider-Man: No Way Home*.

Since the release of *Spider-Man: Far From Home* in 2019, where Peter Parker's identity as Spider-Man was revealed by Mysterio in a shocking plot twist, fans had been anxiously waiting for the third installment of the MCU's Spider-Man franchise to arrive. Fans theorized about the plot of the movie for months, believing that it would be tied into Phase Four's recurring theme of the multiverse, a series of interconnected realities. This was hinted at in TV programs *WandaVision*, *Loki*, *What If...?*, and the yet-to-be-released film, *Doctor Strange: Multiverse of Madness*. Rumors arose that characters from the former Spider-Man movies would make appearances, and after a long period of speculation, some confirmation was given in the release of the trailer.

The official trailer for *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, released in November 2021, gave a small glimpse into the plot of the movie; after his superhero identity is revealed, Peter Parker goes to Doctor Strange to ask him to conjure a spell that

makes everyone forget he is Spider-Man. However, the spell is botched and figures from other universes begin to enter theirs. This includes Willem Dafoe's "Green Goblin" and Alfred Molina's "Doc Ock" from the Spider-Man films starring Tobey Maguire. Another notable reference to earlier films in the trailer included a scene where MJ, Peter's love interest, falls from the Statue of Liberty, and he reaches out his hand to catch her. This directly paralleled the scene in *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, where Andrew Garfield's Spider-Man attempts but fails to catch Gwen Stacy, and she falls to her death.



Spider-Man: No Way Home was released on December 17, 2021. It immediately broke box office records by making over 1.5 billion dollars worldwide and becoming one of the highest grossing films of all time, along with other Marvel



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films, such as *The Avengers*, *Avengers: Infinity War*, and *Avengers: Endgame*. It is the first film since *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* to surpass 1 billion dollars in revenue and it had the second highest opening weekend for a feature film - the first being *Avengers: Endgame*. *Spider-Man: No Way Home* has since become the highest grossing movie of 2021.

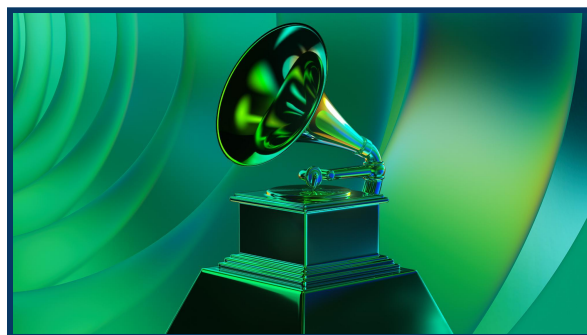
The third installment of Spider-Man's story renders one question to be answered: what is next for Spider-Man in the MCU and the universe as a whole? Luckily, *Doctor Strange: Multiverse of Madness*, premiering later this year, should begin to answer this question. The trailer for the new movie was included after the credits and post credit scene of *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, in which we see Strange and Wanda, now the Scarlet Witch, meet again after the events of *Avengers: Endgame*, and Strange asks her for help and knowledge regarding the multiverse. Similar to *Spider-Man* and many other Phase Four movies, *Doctor-Strange: Multiverse of Madness* will tackle the concept of the multiverse, including the consequences of disturbing it after *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. We also see an evil version of Doctor Strange appear in the trailer - something that people have been speculating about for a long time.

Finally, another trilogy starring Tom Holland as Peter Parker has recently been

confirmed, which Marvel fans assume will explore Peter's college years. Fans also predict that this universe's versions of the characters Gwen Stacy and Harry Osborn will make appearances in the new trilogy. However, with these projects in such early stages of development, it is hard to know exactly what they will bring for the future of Spider-Man's character, as well as that of the larger Marvel Cinematic Universe.

2022 Grammy Predictions

By Aisling Kelly '25



On November 23, 2021, the Recording Academy announced their nominees for 64th Annual Grammy Awards. The award ceremony was set to take place at the end of January, but due to an increase in COVID-19 cases, the event has been postponed. The new date still has yet to be announced, but there are numerous outstanding artists from this year who are clearly awaiting an award. This year, there will be eighty-six different categories, with



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the main four awards being Album of the Year, Song of the Year, Record of the Year and Best New Artist.

Album of the Year is usually the most anticipated award, with nominees this year ranging from Olivia Rodrigo to Kanye West. However, many music fans are disappointed in the Recording Academy for excluding BTS from the main categories, as well as Tyler the Creator's album, *Call Me If You Get Lost*, which was only nominated in rap categories. Last year's Grammys involved a similar controversy, as the Weeknd's record-breaking album, *After Hours* was not nominated for a single Grammy.

That being said, there are ten artists nominated for Album of the Year in 2022, which is the largest number of nominations for this category in Grammy history. The main contenders are likely Olivia Rodrigo's *Sour*, Billie Eilish's *Happier Than Ever*, and Lil Nas X's *Montero*. Kanye West's *Donda* and Doja Cat's *Planet Her* are also strong nominees in this category, as well as Taylor Swift's *Evermore*. However, it is highly unlikely that Swift will receive the award for a second consecutive year. Some fans predict that there will be a repeat of what happened with Billie Eilish in 2019, except with Olivia Rodrigo, given the popularity of *Sour*; it is certainly possible that Rodrigo will win all four main categories.

Another leading category is Song of the Year, an award that focuses on songwriting. Olivia Rodrigo, Lil Nas X, Doja Cat and Billie Eilish are some of the biggest artists nominated in this category. Billie Eilish's *Happier Than Ever*, Doja Cat's *Kiss Me More* ft. SZA, and *Leave the Door Open* by Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak), are perhaps the top contenders in this category. *Fight For You* by H.E.R., *Montero* by Lil Nas X, or *Driver's License* by Olivia Rodrigo may win, but I think it is most likely that Billie Eilish will take home the Song of the Year award for *Happier Than Ever*.

Record of the Year, often confused with Song of the Year, recognizes the production and recording of a song, as opposed to the songwriting. This year's nominees include Olivia Rodrigo, Silk Sonic, Doja Cat, Billie Eilish, Justin Bieber, Lil Nas X, Brandi Carlile, Jon Batiste, ABBA and Tony Bennett with Lady Gaga. This award is likely going to be a contest between Olivia Rodrigo's *Driver's License*, and Silk Sonic's *Leave the Door Open*.

The final award from the main four categories is Best New Artist. Olivia Rodrigo is nominated in this category, and based on the popularity of her debut album *Sour*, it is almost too obvious that she will walk away with this award. Other notable nominees include Saweetie, the Kid LAROI, and Arlo Parks, as well as FINNEAS and



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Glass Animals, although they have been around longer than any of the other artists nominated.

Overall, the nominees for the 2022 Grammy awards are a mix of well established artists, such as Taylor Swift and Kanye West, as comparatively newer artists like Olivia Rodrigo, Billie Eilish and Lil Nas X. To me, it seems as though the younger generation may just take over the Grammys this year, especially in the main categories. But who knows? Any of the outstanding artists nominated could win and we'll hopefully find out in just a few short weeks.

Album Review: How Blue Banisters Perfectly Encapsulated 2021

By Natasia Shivers '24



With 2022 just beginning, it is time we reflect on 2021. No album has better captured the turbulent yet hopeful essence of our past year than Lana Del Rey's *Blue*

Banisters. The eighth studio album of the enigmatic popstar, *Blue Banisters* serves as a musical memory capsule of the tumultuous year that was 2021. Aided by soft piano chords, Del Rey's lyrics reference the pandemic, recent political strife, and climate change.

On the very first track on the album, "Textbook," Del Rey roots her classic (textbook) romance tale in the present, singing "There we were, screamin' 'Black Lives Matter' in the crowd." The title track, which falls second on the album, ruminates on learning to love and to appreciate the familiar; Finding satisfaction in our closest family and friends is a skill we've all had to develop due to the restrictiveness of the pandemic. Here, Del Rey also mentions recent environmental disasters admitting, "I'm scared of the Santa Clarita Fires, I wish that it would rain."

Del Rey turns introspectively whilst name-dropping Californian hotspots in the song "Arcadia" and explores her past in "Wildflower Wildfire." She paints dreamy visuals of "girls running 'round in summer dresses with their masks off," and expresses her joy in these simple, unextraordinary but unequivocally important moments.

Perhaps the most important anthem on the record, "Black Bathing Suit," speaks on loneliness in a seemingly apocalyptic world, as Del Rey sings about zooming in Target parking lots and quarantine. "And if



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this is the end, I want a boyfriend,” she confesses unabashedly.

“Blue Banistersshows a raw, incredibly human reaction to our 2021 instability, and how it is only by turning to each other and to ourselves that we can begin to heal.”

- Natasia Shivers '24

Overall, *Blue Banisters* represents a shift of focus for Del Rey. Its mention of current events is not a reflection of the world, but of us. It shows a raw, incredibly human reaction to our 2021 instability and how it is only by turning to each other and to ourselves that we can begin to heal.

Film Review: Steven Spielberg's West Side Story

By Melanie Robichaux '23

Steven Spielberg's signature 'larger than life' style was certainly not put on hold for his latest feature film, *West Side Story*. The musical numbers, choreographed dances, and cinematography were all overblown in the best possible way. The film was colorful, intricate, and overall beautiful to watch.

Throughout the film, themes of immigrant identity, the impact of gentrification and racism are developed. Spielberg emphasizes the struggles of marginalized groups through the focus on certain characters and their outlooks on their atmospheres. For example, Ariana DeBose's character, Anita, is constantly encouraging both Bernardo and Maria to assimilate into American culture, while Bernardo continues to fight for his Puerto Rican identity.

The film's screenwriter, Tony Kushner, also incorporates the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community with the character "Anybodys." This transgender, wannabe Jet follows the gang around and is constantly rejected and demeaned until the end of the film, when he is accepted with the phrase "you did good buddy boy." This seemingly minuscule statement held a tremendous amount of weight to both the character and the audience. While the original *West Side Story* film from 1961 treated Anybodys' gender as ambiguous, this film asserts that Anybodys' identifies himself as a boy.

The film's true star was Rachel Zegler. At just twenty years old, Zegler's acting debut is as leading lady, Maria. Not only are her acting abilities displayed, but also her incredible vocal talent. She has since won the Golden Globe for Best Actress, and is nominated for a Critics' Choice Award for Best Young Performer. Her performance is just one of the many

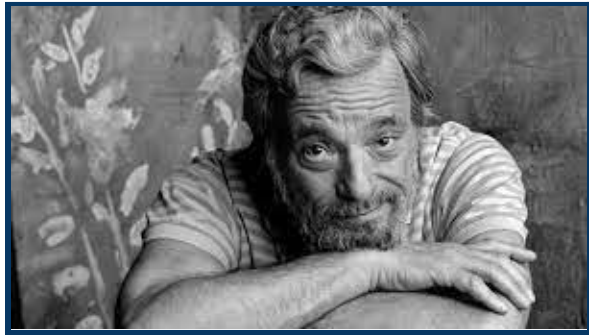


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ways in which the new *West Side Story* honors the original film and tugs at your heartstrings the way only a Romeo and Juliet story can.

Remembering Stephen Sondheim

By Julia Sheehan '23



In November 2021, the musical theatre community lost one of its most influential artists, Stephen Sondheim, who was behind iconic musicals such as *Company*, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *Into the Woods* and *West Side Story*. Born in New York City on March 22, 1930, Sondheim traced his love for theatre back to a Broadway musical he saw when he was nine years old, *Very Warm for May*.

Although Sondheim had a complicated relationship with his biological parents, he had a father figure in legendary playwright Oscar Hammerstein II. Sondheim wrote his first musical, called *By George* in high school, and the show

generated mostly positive reviews from his peers. However, when the elder Oscar Hammerstein saw it, he said it was awful. He gave Sondheim advice on what to change to make the musical better, including lyrical rhyme, characterization and story development. While attending Williams College, from which he graduated in 1950, Sondheim wrote several shows with Hammerstein's advice in mind.

At a party in 1954, Sondheim met Arthur Laurents, who told Sondheim he was working on a musical version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Laurents offered Sondheim the opportunity to write the lyrics for the adaptation, entitled *West Side Story*. Sondheim was initially reluctant to join Laurents as the lyricist for the show, because he wanted to be a composer. *West Side Story* opened in 1957 and has since become one of the most iconic shows in Broadway history.

In 1963, Sondheim won his first Tony award for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, which he not only wrote, but also scored. After this success, Sondheim shifted his focus to writing both the lyrical and musical components to a score. In 1970, he collaborated with director Harold Prince to create *Company*, a show which lacked a straightforward plot, but centered on themes of marriage, loneliness and personal commitment. In 1971, it won Tony Awards for Best Musical, Best Music, and Best Lyrics. In 1971, Prince and



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Sondheim worked together again to create *Follies*, as well as *A Little Night Music*. Prince and Sondheim also created *Sweeney Todd* together, which was based on the 1973 play of the same name. However, the duo's 1981 musical *Merrily We Roll Along* was not a success like their previous works. Thus, in 1987 Sondheim created the musical *Into the Woods* with new collaborator James Lapine. It combined many Brothers Grimm fairy tales and was adapted into a 2014 movie-musical.

Despite his success and status as an icon of musical theatre, Sondheim was known to be more of the introverted sort. In a 1966 interview with *The New York Times*, he said, "I've never found anybody I could work with as quickly as myself, or with less argument."

In 1993, Sondheim received the Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime achievement, and in 2015 was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama.

"He risked leaving them uncomfortable by conveying the world as he saw it."

- Julia Sheehan '23

Sondheim was one of the first Broadway composers to write about serious facts of life and be successful in doing so.

Sondheim's works did not often have happy endings, representing the duality and loneliness life can hold. Instead of writing the fairytale-esque happy endings that audiences were used to, he risked leaving them uncomfortable by conveying the world as he saw it. His meditations on creativity, love, madness, and memory were seen through each of his shows. One tweet after Sondheim's death in November 2021 stated, "Incredible that Sondheim himself gave us the very lexicon of expressions through which to grieve him."

Variations on a Life: Joan Didion

By Ava Filocamo '23

Joan Didion was a study in contrasts. She was both a reporter and a novelist. In her memoirs, she was both expressive and guarded, gritty and gentle. She wrote extensively about death, suffering and pain, but with such liveliness that it felt as though her words had a heartbeat. She refused to be a poster-child for feminism, but through the simple act of being a woman in the 60s who unapologetically and passionately pursued a career, she became a feminist icon. She defied the limits of her gender at the time.

When I first read about Joan's death in December 2021, and subsequently was reminded of her extraordinary life, it struck me that she specially captured the D.A. spirit. She was intellectually brilliant - both



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a thinker and a doubter. Much like D.A. students do, from when we first walk up the red stairs to when we wear white on graduation day, she evolved and grew in her intelligence. The process of her evolution was not easy or simple, and there was no clear set of instructions for her to follow.

“At D.A., we break the ceiling, cut the cord, shift the balance – all while clinging to a history and reaching for our future. Without contrast, the world is just an echo of itself.”

- Ava Filocamo '23

Joan won the 1961 Prix de Paris, the preeminent Vogue essay contest, with an essay on self-respect. A magical line from the essay, written about her feelings of imperfection from not making it into Phi Beta Kappa reads, “I lost the conviction that lights would always turn green for me.” For many of us, our first and most notable disappointments and losses happen during our time in high school. The blinking red light forcing us to stop or pivot can make our experiences here at D.A. either a springboard or a cocoon, depending on who we are and what we need at any given time. Joan used what she had, and most

interestingly, what she had lost, to feed the motor of her life, which was the ultimate study in contrast. At D.A., we break the ceiling, cut the cord, shift the balance – all while clinging to a history and reaching for our future. Without contrast, the world is just an echo of itself. Joan Didion put a spotlight on counterculture, creating a dimension in the space between light and dark, big and small, giving and taking. In that rift she defined herself, and invited us to join her.



JUST FOR FUN

The Fall of Cable Television

By Damaris Lindsay '23

Cable television has always been a staple of the entertainment industry. From sitcoms to dramas, it has provided small screen entertainment to millions of viewers since its inception in the late 1940s.



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However, the rise of streaming services and other forms of entertainment begs the question: is cable TV dying?

The first real threat to the cable television empire was, of course, the formidable Netflix. Born in 1997, what started as a DVD rental company soon turned into an entertainment tycoon. Streaming on-demand allowed viewers to watch an entire show in one sitting. Many found this experience to be much more convenient and enjoyable than having to be in their living room at a specific time to watch a new episode of their favorite show. In addition, Netflix allowed viewers to watch television shows free of commercials, and at a much cheaper price. Soon, Netflix started producing their own shows to compete with those on regular TV. However, Netflix was just the beginning of the growing threat to the cable television industry that was the world of streaming.

Not before long, Amazon Prime Video and Hulu came to compete with Netflix for the #1 spot in streaming service - each with their own unique qualities. Prime Video gave viewers the ability to buy or rent almost anything they desired to watch, while Hulu gave their subscribers access to plenty of past and current shows on cable. Both were worthy contenders, but Netflix remained on top. With the streaming industry growing in popularity, many cable channels wanted to join the business.

Cable channels began to make apps which users could sign into using their cable subscription, in order to watch TV shows on their phones. Though this form of media worked well for a few years, cable companies began to seek more out of streaming services and decided to create their own. Two prime examples of this can be seen with Disney+ and HBOMax. Both streaming services popped up around the same time and are now immensely successful. Disney already had a huge entertainment empire when it launched Disney+, so its streaming service was destined to be successful. With original content like *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series*, the streaming platform took off immediately. By turning to streaming with HBOMax, HBO made all their shows, as well as blockbuster films, accessible at the fingertips of their subscribers. HBO now offers a balance between streaming and cable television; when new episodes of a show are released on HBOMax, they are also aired on the HBO television channel.

Back to our original question: Is Cable TV truly dead? Well, as tough as it is to say, I think it is. But these innovative changes happen often. For example, landlines used to be in the homes of nearly every American, but if you survey present-day Americans, many don't own a landline. So, although cable television has



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made a lasting impact on the entertainment industry, I feel that it is time we let good 'ol cable TV wander on into the sunset while "Thank You for Being a Friend" from *The Golden Girls* plays in the background.



COVID-Safe Ways to Spend Time with Friends

By Maisie Aniello '25

During the pandemic, there are many instances in which it may be safer to hang out with friends online. When you live far from your friends or some of them are sick, staying in contact can become difficult. So, spending time together virtually is an easy way to have fun while also staying safe.

There are many convenient ways to stay in contact with friends, including FaceTime, texting, and Zoom. Texting is an

easy way to stay in touch with others because you can do it quickly, all you have to do is spend a few minutes a day checking in with your friends. FaceTime and Zoom can facilitate longer conversations and feel closer to a face-to-face conversation in person. Seeing each other face to face can help keep a relationship strong even while taking classes virtually.

Another good way to hang out is through Jackbox Games. Jackbox has many different video games available, as well as games to play with people over Zoom. Although there is a fee, Jackbox is well worth it for those who want to add some extra fun to their virtual hangouts.

Another similar resource is called gather.town - a website where you can create and play in worlds with others. You can design your own worlds or join premade worlds. There are adventure worlds, mystery worlds, and conventional worlds that you can walk around in with your friends, and interact with many of the virtual things around you.

We all know that maintaining our friendships supports our mental health. Even if you can't see your friends in person, there are so many virtual ways to spend time with friends while also staying safe amid the coronavirus. Staying in contact with all of your friends during a pandemic can be difficult, but these are just a few ways to hopefully stay more positive and connected.



Talking Science Over Zoom

By Mariacarla Bettocchi '25



On January 10, 2022, Rockefeller University hosted its 63rd annual Talking Science lecture. The university, which has made many advancements in the field of medicine, brings new information discovered in their labs to the public sphere, making it accessible to high school students, teachers, parents, and science enthusiasts. As the lecture was on Zoom, even more could attend the lecture than usual; five hundred-fifty participants from various countries logged on to watch three presentations made by Dr. Jeremy Rock, Ph.D., Dr. Leslie Vosshall, Ph.D., and Dr. Christian Gaebler, M.D. all on the topic of infectious diseases and immunology.

Dr. Rock spoke on tuberculosis (TB) and how his team was attempting to understand what makes the disease survive and reproduce once it has infected a human. The sickness has been around for centuries, and it has evolved to withstand the immune cells that are programmed to kill it, making

the illness much more difficult to treat and eradicate. While TB isn't very present in our country or in our minds at the moment, the disease is still very present in places like Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia. In fact, in the past years cases have been rising because of difficulty finding proper healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Rock's team is trying to program an enzyme to bind to a certain genome in TB and turn off the disease's gene, which would stop it from reproducing. Dr. Rock and his group are further exploring which genes in TB are vulnerable to this method, so that they can work with pharmaceutical companies to find better antibiotic treatments to treat the disease.

Dr. Leslie Vosshall, Ph.D., gave a presentation on how long mosquitoes continue to pursue their prey once they have sensed it. The spread of deadly diseases by mosquitoes is a particularly relevant issue because of climate change. In the next few years, as temperatures continue to rise, mosquitoes will be able to inhabit more places in larger numbers, leading to increased transmission of diseases carried by mosquitoes. The lab found that a female mosquito looking for blood can pursue its prey, once sensed, for up to fourteen minutes. The team also concluded that mosquitoes are more attracted to humans with increased concentration of carboxylic acids on their skin; this information can help



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scientists create better mosquito repellents. The findings of Dr. Voss hall's lab show that mosquitoes are extremely persistent, making them effective micro predators that, despite their size, can cause great damage.

The third and final talk, given by Dr. Christian Gaebler, M.D., shared methods for finding antibodies to treat infectious diseases like HIV and COVID-19. In 2020, Dr. Gaebler's team started looking for antibodies against COVID-19 by using those found in people who had already recovered from the virus. Although there is a long process to find ways to treat diseases using antibodies, Dr. Gaebler hopes that his findings can be used as preventative medicines for COVID-19 in the future.

This freshman found these presentations both fascinating and accessible. As one who wishes to become more knowledgeable in the field of medicine, attending the Rockefeller lecture gave me a new perspective on immunology and diseases that haven't been at the forefront of public scientific discussions during the pandemic.