



# Labyrinth





# Labyrinth Magazine

volume 53 • no. 1 • fall 2017

# MASTHEAD

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Dear Readers,

This first edition of the 2017-18 Labyrinth Magazine series was created on the theme of "Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards." This school has gone through several changes in the past few years, and this is the Magazine's attempt to bring light to the creativity and possibility that still lies within our walls.

Compiled in this magazine are several sections, each of which has a topic (visual art, dance, writing, etc.) and two interviews: one of a student who wishes to pursue that field in the future, and one of an alum who has done so. Not only does this magazine provide a window in to the life of the many people students see every day, but we hope it inspires you to express yourself and submit to Labyrinth! Thank you to all of those who submitted, and thank you for reading, enjoy!

Sincerely,  
Labyrinth Staff



**AVA BENBOW**  
class of 2019

What gives you greatest inspiration in your art?

My biggest inspiration for my art are the classes that I take. There is so much creativity and innovation in a lot of my classes, and I think that is really beautiful. As a student, I spend most of my time inside of a classroom, and I am always surprised about all of the creative and interesting things that I can incorporate into my work.

What shaped your specific style of art?

I think that my style of art was shaped by all of the people in my life supporting me. I never felt like I could make bad art, and that allowed me to take risks. I think that how I draw now is based on all of the times that I tried a method and failed, then figured out something a little bit better. Nobody ever made me feel like I had to create anything good, and I think that led me to make mistakes that made me better.

Are there any challenges that you face as a young artist in creating your work?

I think that the greatest challenge that I face as a young artist is time. I'm always busy, with school or activities or trying to get a normal amount of sleep, so it can sometimes be difficult to make time to create art.

Do you hope to continue professionally with your art?

I don't know if I will go into art professionally. It is an interesting and exciting field, but I

think that art will always be more recreational for me. Part of the reason that I love art so much is that it is a place that is not pressurized for me. I think that making it my career could add an element of stress to it, which would make it very hard for me.

What message do you want your art to give to its audience?

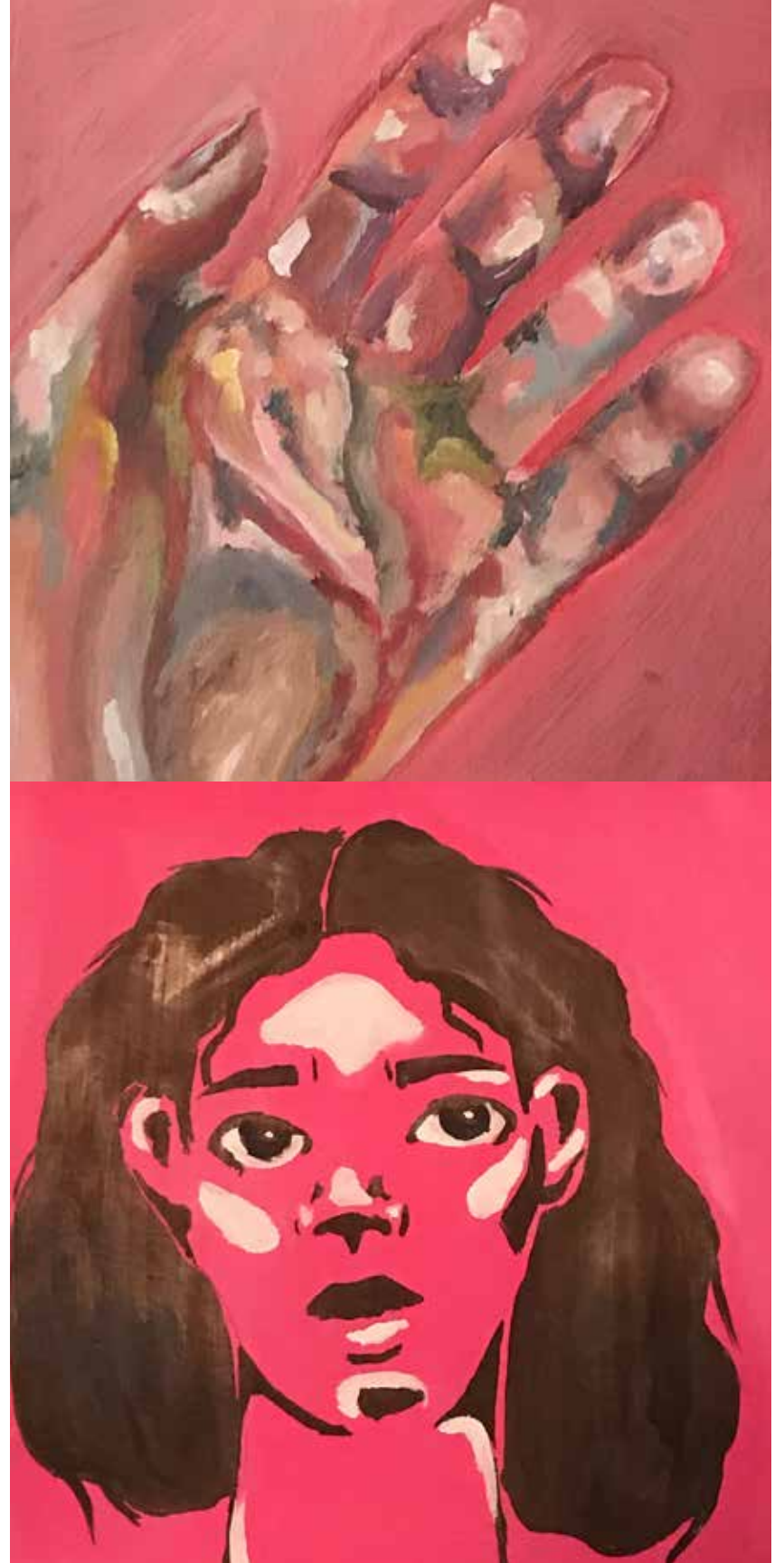
I don't know if my art has a uniform message. Mostly, I think that it shows whatever is going on in my head. I would say that most of my art deals with the things that I see and feel on a day to day basis.

When did you first start making art and why?

I have been doing art for as long as I can remember. As a quiet kid, I found that there weren't a lot of ways to express what I was thinking. Even making bad doodles was kind of a happy place for me, and I just stuck with it. I loved being able to express myself and make up crazy ideas. I would draw made-up Rube-Goldberg machines with intricate parts and I was able to just let my imagination go.

Who is your greatest influence?

I think that the biggest influence on the things that I create are the people around me. A lot of my peers are some of the most intelligent and brave people that I have met. They influence me because I take the things that I learn from other people and put them into my work.





When did you first have an interest in art?

I can't remember when I first started having an interest in art... My parents always supplied me with various materials and eventually summer camp art classes, they dragged me to museums as a child, but I would come back inspired to paint, paper mache, sew my own clothes, or use Photoshop CS3 my dad copied from his office computer. Dance was always there, too, I always remember music in my house as a child, and it was natural to move -- this also influenced my creative flow.

How would you describe your art style, and how has your style changed over time?

I feel that my art style has probably evolved but not necessarily changed from what it always was. I would describe it as colorful, experimental and often utilizing mixed media materials. I like to create art that feels warm or nostalgic.

Who or what inspires you?

I am definitely inspired by dance and motion; artists/choreographers like Pina Bausch and Ohad Naharin are so inspiring to me. The way they are able to compose striking and often shocking pieces using the human form with such strong intentions and innovative movements never ceases to impress me. I am also inspired by my friends and family, and I'm surrounded by artists here in RVA!

How are your passions for art and ballet connected?

Again, I am often inspired by the fluidity, softness, but also the strength of dance and balletic movements, which is reflected in my work. I am interested in performance art, and hope to eventually expand on this idea in the future.



**EMILIA DAGRADI**  
class of 2017



How do you plan to pursue art as a hobby or career in the future?

I need art in my life; I have to create things to feel successful. Right now I am busy dancing with Richmond Ballet, which is a huge time commitment, and I've found it hard to find outlets for my art. With so many resources in Richmond and at VCU, I hope to find a way to incorporate more art into my schedule.

What would success in art look like for you?

For me, success means continuing to create art that I feel represents me as an artist, and has the ability to inspire people and other artists.

What advice do you have for T.C. students who want to pursue art or ballet in college?

If you are interested in art, pursue it! Even if it is just as a hobby, being creative is an important characteristic in so many environments so I encourage finding ways to make art whenever there is a chance. If you are interested in dancing in college this is a trickier question to answer, there are very few universities that offer classical ballet programs. The Dance and Choreography BFA with a concentration in performance with Richmond Ballet at VCU is a great opportunity for serious ballet dancers to gain experience in a professional ballet company while continuing their education! It is very rare for dancers to be hired into companies as soon as they graduate high school, so participating in a trainee program is a great step towards your career. Indiana University also offers an amazing ballet program, with numerous performance opportunities and chances to work with guest choreographers.



**KEVIN BATEN**  
class of 2018

How long have you been doing photography, and what motivated you to begin?

I've been taking photography for 3 years. My interest for photography has been developing over the past years and what has motivated me to keep doing photography is the fact that I enjoy expressing myself through my pictures.

Do you prefer to take photographs indoors or outdoors, and why?

I prefer to take pictures outdoors because I feel like there is always something new to shoot outside. Also I like the different types of lighting the sun gives throughout the day.

What is your favorite place to take photographs outside of school?

My favorite place to take photographs would be National Harbor or Washington D.C.

What is your preferred photo style?

Most of the time I do landscape photography because I enjoy photographing nature. I also like to shoot portraits because I like that every person has a different reaction to the camera.

What is your dream photography job?

My dream is to become a professional photographer and to travel the world to discover new places.

Have you had any of your work published in or out of school?

Last year, the photography class put up some of our best pictures for sale at St Elmo's coffee pub.







How long have you wanted to be a photographer?

I started shooting pictures with a film camera that my grandmother bought me when I was around 11 years old. However, I didn't think of photography as a career until high school. I was always interested in journalism, and was part of a children's journalism organization in DC called Children's Express when I was in middle school. After taking some art and photo classes at TC, I realized I could merge my interests in photography and journalism into a career.

Did you go to school for photography?

Yes, I went to Parsons School of Design in New York and studied photography, minoring in culture and media studies.

What about photography makes you so happy?

I really enjoy pictures that tell stories. I like that photography can take you to far-flung corners of the Earth to understand issues that diverse people are dealing with. Photography allows you to enter their world and relate to them on a human level. From an artistic perspective, I also really appreciate the visual aspect of photography -- strong compositions and colors that work together. I don't particularly like black and white photography in contemporary work because we see in color and color in photos can add so much information and context.

What is your dream job involving photography?

My dream job involving photography would have me based in West Africa, traveling around the world and working on long-form interactive documentary work that combines photography, video and design.



MARISSA SCHWARTZ  
class of 2008



Has anyone ever told you that an arts path wasn't a good idea?

Yes -- people often told me that an arts path wasn't a good idea or that art school wasn't a smart choice. However, there are a lot of photography/arts related jobs that don't necessarily mean you'll be a full time artist, such as jobs at magazines, newspapers, galleries, and increasing creative and visual focused positions in technology.

How did you fight that negativity?

I made sure to take classes and have interests in areas other than art (for me it was culture and media studies) to make sure my education was well rounded. I think this is important no matter what path you choose. At the end of the day, people will tell you whatever they think is right but only you can shape your education and career.

What would you say to someone in high school whose dream it is to become a professional photographer?

Follow your dream but also consider other career paths that involve visuals. I've had a lot of success as a photo editor at different publications. Study the photography in the publications you want to shoot for (magazines, newspapers, etc.) and see who they usually hire. Find out where those photographers went to school and how they got to where they are today. Apply for photo workshops like the Eddie Adams Workshop and Missouri Photo Workshop so you can meet editors. Once you have the skill set, the photography world, like most industries, is all about who you know.





**MADDIE WALDHOFF**  
class of 2018

What made you start writing?

I've always liked books and stories. My dad read to me when I was a toddler, mostly fantasy novels: all of the *Wizard of Oz* books, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. My mom says that even before I could read or write I narrated a story to her and made her write it down while I drew the pictures. The first story I remember writing for fun was a picture book about a chicken who laid an egg that became the moon. I was maybe seven.

What about writing was so enticing to you?

When writing, you lose yourself in the world and in the characters and the story. Even when I'm not trying to think of anything, I have stories swirling around in my mind, characters and possible futures and "what if this thing happened?" It's better to write them down than let them fade into oblivion.

What's your biggest inspiration?

Sometimes something from another story, or something from history, or I think "wouldn't it be interesting if this happened," then I get an entire story from there. Sometimes it's something that I hear, people around me, or a story on the radio. I also really like Pinterest as a source of ideas, but it can be a bit of a black hole.

What kind of writer do you want to become?

A novelist. I want to write fantasy novels, mainly.



Who's your favorite author?

That's a hard question. I really like Patrick Rothfuss and his *The Name of the Wind*, which is a very "literary" fantasy novel. Maggie Stiefvater is great, I just read *The Scorpio Races* and I loved it, and, I mean, Oscar Wilde, he's very witty but also pretty sexist. I don't know, probably Patrick Rothfuss.

What's your favorite book?

Oh man, I don't know. It changes on probably a daily basis. I like fantasy novels the best, but I read lots of different stuff.

Favorite right now? You don't have to do of all time...

I really like *The Dream Thieves* by Maggie Stiefvater, just because the characters enjoy being around each other so much that it makes you feel like they're friends with you which is really

great...but my favorite changes. I could give you a top ten list, maybe.

Do you ever do writing competitions?

Not so much competitions. I've done NaNoWriMo [National Novel Writing Month], where you try to write 50,000 words in a month in November. I attempted and failed freshman year, then I did it successfully sophomore and junior year. This year has been too crazy to get even close to 50,000 words.

What do you want people to feel when they read your writing?

It depends on the book. I want them to feel kinship with the characters. Whatever particular emotion goes with the scene. I just want them to be absorbed in the world. That's one of the things I really like about Maggie Stiefvater and some of my other favorites -- you feel like a part of the world, like everything is really happening around you. I hope my books do that too someday.





**Labyrinth**—Bottom row: Stephanie Chaertel, Sibel, Laura Motta, Laura Bergheim, Patty; Top row: Walter Cockrell, Mark Rosdorf, David Bergheim, Jennifer Martin, Sara Rolph, Mrs. Hinnert, Mary Cliffe

LAURA BERGHEIM  
class of 1981

How old were you when you started writing?

As soon as I was able to hold a pencil, I started writing. At age five I wrote and illustrated a "book" about a dog called wags and my father "published" it using the mimeograph machine at his office (this was back in the 1960s, before they had xerox machines). I gave copies to everyone for christmas. As a kid, I filled notebooks with stories, and by high school I was writing really bad science fiction / horror novels. I come from a family of writers, journalists, and communicators, so it runs in the blood. By the time I was 10, there was no doubt about it. I was going to be a writer, period.

What made you want to start a business that focused on what other companies wanted to say?

I had a circuitous voyage to founding Wordsmithie; it's the third agency I've started, but all have been focused on brand storytelling, which is both fun and a great way to make a living. Along with writing, content strategy is a big passion of mine -- I enjoy figuring out how to create compelling content that connects with different audiences across an array of media (and that also translates well into other languages).

By the mid-90s, I was helping to build teams that shaped what we now call digital content. I joined google in 2005 as one of their early content strategists, and left in 2010 to start wordsmithie. I founded it because I realized while working at google that marketing teams were struggling to find experienced writers to produce everything from blog posts and social media to case studies and white papers, so I pulled together some of the wonderful writers I'd worked with over the years, and have slowly added more over time. Wordsmithie has become known as a one-stop-shop for the best content writers, all under one (virtual) roof.

What is your favorite part of running your company?

The variety of work we do -- we've helped google create the branding and messaging for some of its biggest consumer hardware products, including google home and the pixel phones; and we just wrote a history of the texas chainsaw massacre movie franchise for indiewire. There's never a dull moment!

I also love the people I work with -- on my team, as well as our partners, and our clients. They're smart, creative, and driven to do great things.

Do you ever write outside of your job?

I try, but don't have a lot of time these days. My goal is to start devoting part of every day (or perhaps one day a week) to writing fiction, which remains my first love.

Seeing that writing is an ever-changing topic, do you have any goals for your personal future in writing? Your company?

Personally, I'm hoping to write another novel in the year or so, and i'd also love to write a column again - this time about the nexus between technology and culture (covering topics like how dna testing kits are changing our sense of identity and heritage).

If you had to leave a reader with one thing about you which is imperative to understanding your writing, what would it be?

For me, writing is about finding the essential truth in something. A person, a place, a product: there's always some hidden purpose buried deep inside. As a writer, my role is to mine those depths and bring those truths up into sunlight for others to experience and, ultimately, understand.





**ANNLOUISE CONRAD**  
**Class of 2018**

When did you begin acting? What inspired you to pursue theater?

I started acting when I was about 6 years old at a theater camp. Every summer for all of elementary school I would go there for two weeks and have the time of my life putting on a show and meeting new people. It always felt like home, and I loved the sense of love and community that came with it. As a loud elementary school kid, it was amazing to be told that there was a place I could shout and sing and dance and be silly and it would be a good thing. I think I always knew that I would pursue theater or entertainment in some capacity in my future. I suppose it was because I watched so many movies when I was younger, and watching the Oscars is like a religious holiday in my house. Performing always felt like something I was born to do. The stage has always been my home and I can't remember not feeling like that.

What is one lesson that you've learned from your experience in theater?

The biggest lesson I've learned in theater is that being different is a strength. Whatever you think sets you apart from everyone else, or keeps you from being "normal," is exactly the thing that makes you great. It makes you an interesting creator and an interesting human in general. Whatever you bring to the table is valid and important to a production. In art, your own humanity is what sets you apart from others. This is definitely a concept that I still struggle with, but it's something that I've been trying to keep in mind as an artist and as a person.

Which has been your favorite production that you've been involved in?

My favorite production...that's so hard...  
My favorite characters to play were Ursula in The Little Mermaid and Mae Peterson in Bye Bye Birdie, but in terms of the overall experience in

the production it has to be when I played Fagin in Oliver! That's because I was in a cast of my personal theater heroes at the time. Also, it was my first lead in a musical and allowed me to work with of my favorite directors in the D.C area, Ryan Sellers.



When did you begin writing plays?

I started writing plays freshman year for the T.C Writer's Festival. I had always been a writer before that, but only of short stories and poems. When I first said I would do writer's festival, I just expanded on an idea I already had and went

from there. My first play, The Incredible and Ridiculous Misadventures of Miss Lillian June, was a comedy about a newly rich woman who didn't know how to be rich. It was so fun to see my work interpreted by actors and come to life around me. Telling stories has always been fun, but using this platform is even better because I get to combine my knowledge of theater with the fun of writing creatively.

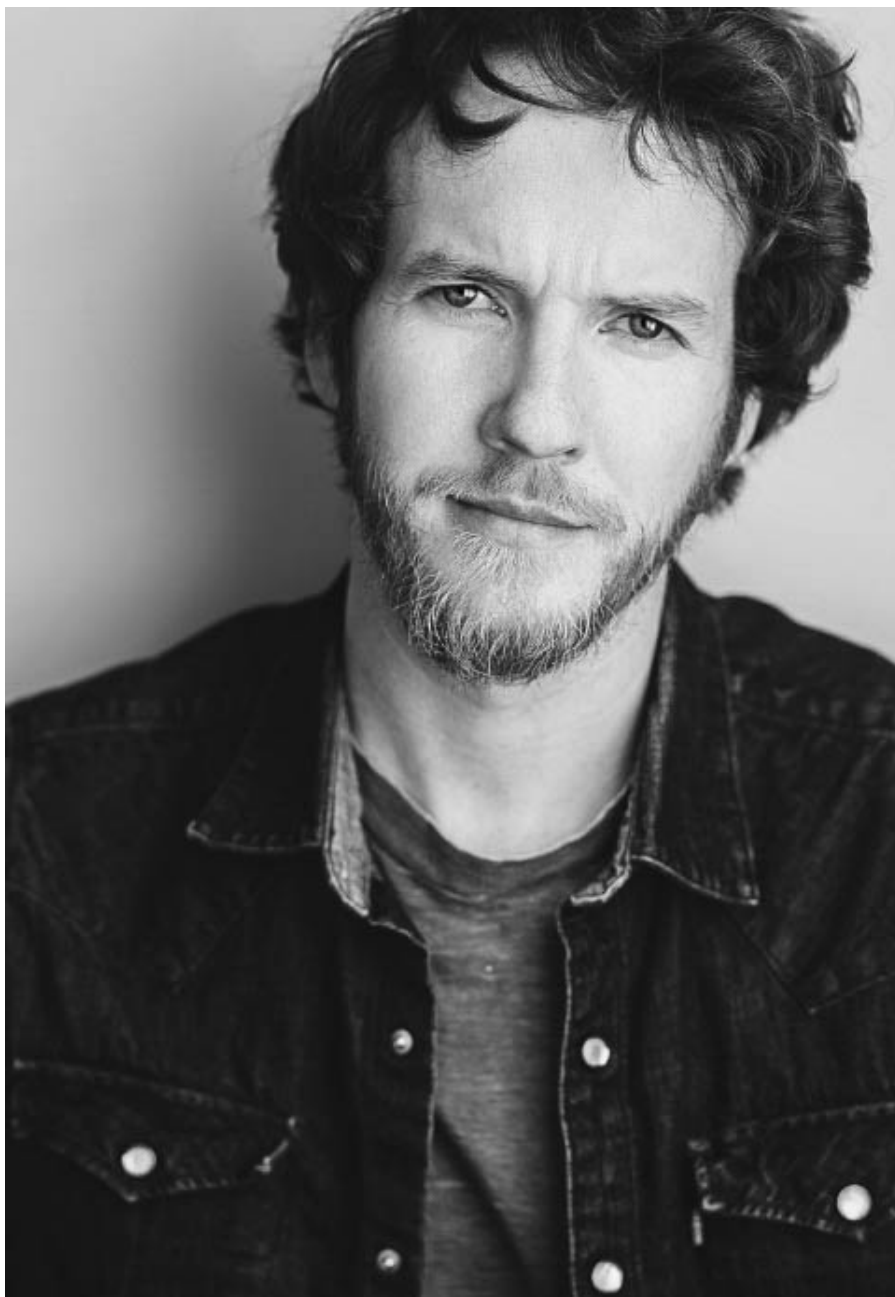
What are some of the main themes in your writing?

I used to be focused on humor and satire in my writing, but ever since I came out as queer I've had much more inspiration to tell stories about dealing with the feelings and social consequences that come with that. I realized that this platform was not just for my own enjoyment anymore, but for those who needed someone to describe and sympathize with the queer experience. I needed to be a voice. So, I wrote about girls. The good and the bad. I wrote about my first love and dealing with the aftermath of rejection. I wrote about the depression and anxiety that came with that. Soon I hope to be presenting something about gender and how that has affected me in addition to my sexuality and my general perception of the world. In this regard my plays are incredibly personal, but someone once told me that you shouldn't write or present art unless it scares you a little. My work definitely tends to scare me a lot, but in the end it's always a deeply cathartic experience for me.

Do you plan to pursue playwriting as a career?

I definitely hope to, yes. Most of the places I am looking at for college have strong playwriting/screenwriting programs. I want to make sure that I am writing in my future as well as acting because sadly, diverse stories like the ones I tell do not often play a part in mainstream media like they should. By going to college and getting in the industry, I hope to change that.





BRIAN MCCARTHY  
class of 2001

When did you begin acting, and when did you decide to pursue acting as a career?

I was in my first play at G.W. when I was in the 7th grade -- I played King Dune in *The Little Mermaid*. But even before that, I'd say I was getting some valuable acting experience. My mom, Mary McCarthy, as you probably know as a very professional guidance counselor at T.C., was always goofing around with my brother Will and me at home. We would speak in accents and sometimes spend entire days as ridiculous characters. In high school I became a bit more torn between visual art and acting, because I loved painting and graphic design. I ended up going to JMU for fine arts and graphic design, but I knew deep down that after college I'd head to New York or LA to give acting a shot.

Did you participate in theater at T.C. Williams? Which productions were you a part of, and which was your favorite?

I got involved with T.C. theater during my junior year. I was in *Inherit the Wind*, *Grease*, *The Foreigner*, and *Li'l Abner*. Of these, I think I'd have to say *The Foreigner* was the most fun. It was more comedy than any of the other plays I did, and we all had such a blast and so many laughs putting it all together.

What challenges have you encountered in the acting industry?

Oh man, where do I start... Initially the hardest part is affording life in an expensive city. Side jobs will often get in the way of auditions or consume the energy required to pursue acting at all. I've been lucky enough to play a string of small parts and I don't need a side job, but I still never feel certain that there's another acting job coming my way. I really have to work hard to manage my fears and try to have faith that I'll be on set again soon. Auditions are

always challenging and it's easier to have faith if I really put everything I've got into each one.

Describe your experience working on the set of TV shows like *Orange is the New Black* and *Law & Order SVU*.

My scene for *Orange is the New Black* was shot in the middle of a polar vortex. Everyone was kind and welcoming and FREEZING! The whole crew was dressed like they were on an arctic expedition and between takes they'd throw quilts over us to warm us up. It was my first co-star role so I couldn't have been happier to be there. Incredibly nervous, and cold, but mostly very happy. I've now been on *SVU* twice as two different characters. It's such a well-oiled machine of a production. They shoot episodes so fast, and the crew is practically on autopilot because they've got so much experience. It's really impressive to watch. And of course, it's a lot of fun to get arrested by Ice-T.

Which has been your favorite role to play and why?

I'd have to say Randy Chilton on *The Americans* is my favorite of the roles I've played. It was an important scene for the season, and I had a lot of dialogue. And I got to be murdered by Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys. It was a great way to go! For such a serious and heavy show, everyone is having a surprisingly good time working on it. The cast, the crew, the writers... it felt like a big happy family that I got to stay with for two days.

Would you shave your beard for a role?

For sure! I had to shave it off completely for my role on *Blue Bloods*.

What advice do you have for T.C. students interested in studying theater and acting?

I didn't go to school for theater, and sometimes I wish that I had, and other times I'm thankful

that I didn't. There are plenty of people that are working actors right out of college. However, a lot of my acting friends feel loads of extra stress carrying the debt from going to expensive theater programs. Also, there's no reason to wait until college or after college for some on-camera acting experience. I'm sure there is so much acting and comedic talent inside of TC right now, why not try to write and shoot something now? There may even be castings or extra work in the DC area listed on actorsaccess.com. As far as acting technique goes, I'd say the most valuable thing I've learned studying in New York is to embrace my quirks, faults, and insecurities and use them. If we're all just aiming to be a lead character, we might be covering up those unique ingredients that can bring more humanity to a role.



*The Americans*



*Paterson*



HERO MAGNUS  
class of 2018

How did you become involved in music?

I'm a latecomer- I started seriously pursuing music as a freshman. I sing, and I play guitar and ukulele. My main focus is songwriting; the dream would be to write music for other artists and bands, and for myself.

What is your favorite instrument?

The human voice, no question. There's no filter or translation: it goes straight from your soul to the sound in the air. Next to that, I think drums are great. Last year I started working with my friend Lee, a fantastic person and musician; her talent on the drum kit fleshes out all of my songs. When the two of us are building arrangements for my original music, I am always impressed by how much the drums add body and structure; they almost serve as a bridge between the insular world of the singer and the experience of the listener. If a lyric makes me smile, the drumbeat makes me move.

How would you describe your style of music?

Probably indie rock, but I draw influences from so many places. One of my favorite artists, Maggie Rogers, said that "genre only exists to sell music... it doesn't exist while you're creating." I've just tried to stay true to my own voice.

What is your inspiration for your music?

Everyday life. My songs come from love-life debacles, for sure, but I'm just as easily inspired by sunshine and politics and parking lots. I try to let the events and emotions I experience take me to stories that aren't mine.

Is there a particular musician that inspires you?  
Why?

Regina Spektor. She combines really intense, witty lyrics with her inherent sweetness and love for life. Musically, she is very innovative, and refuses to conform only to traditional song structures. Listening to Spektor helped me to understand how important it is to be genuine and forge your own artistic rules. (Last March I finally got the opportunity to see her perform in person and I cried a ton.)



What is your favorite song/lyrics (that you have written or otherwise)?

I always write lyrics and music at the same time, and I don't consider them to be separate! But here are a few lyrics that I like:

"I bent down to kiss a tree / opened my mouth  
and there was a bee / I don't know why you buzzed  
at me / I'm not a flower girl"

"Open up my drawer 'cause it's all for you /  
carefully curated and brand new"

"Baby, you've got a hundred dollars / money I  
could use / baby, you've got a chipper nose / it's  
making me confused"

When is your best time to practice?

When I begin to practice, I have let go of everything else (good and bad), so anytime I can do that is the best time. I play for an hour or so on weekdays and 2-3 hours on Fridays and weekend days.

What is your favorite genre of music to listen to?

I listen to everything, and I'm always looking for new music, so hit me up! But some consistent favorites include Joni Mitchell, the Runaways, the White Stripes, Prince (I miss him), early Sheryl Crow, the Police, etc etc etc.

What has been your best experience performing?  
Why?

Can't name a favorite, but recently I had a great time in DC at Busboys and Poets. About a hundred people show up for their music showcases; I played some originals in between the DJ pumping Roberta Flack and the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. (Also, I'm getting ready to begin recording my EP and I'm setting up many more performances for the upcoming year. Follow @hero.magnus to stay tuned and for little song snippets!)

Who is your favorite audience to play for?

Any audience I am in tune and in touch with is an audience that I love.

# GABE HARR

## class of 2019



What initially prompted you to become involved in music?

As long as I can remember, my dad has cycled through four CDs whenever we are in the car -- Anthology by Tom Petty, Rattle and Hum by U2, Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits, and Paul Simon's Graceland. That really helped me develop a love for music early on. I became truly in love with music when I was four years old and saw a preschool friend playing the violin. I nagged my parents for about a year until they gave in and bought me a beat-up old thing.

What led to your choice to join or create a band?  
What's your band's name?

I played in symphonies from age 10 until 15 and that was my main outlet for music, but the way classical music is performed and practiced was so inorganic and sterile, to me it completely drained the soul and beauty away from the pieces. At around 12 years old I picked up the guitar, and searched for others to play with, leading me to School of Rock where I joined a band with a couple of older kids. Since then I've been playing with different musicians in various bands as often as I can. The band I'm playing with right now is a really good fit, and we are Hanoi Ragmen.

Do you think being part of a band has changed you as a musician? How so?

Absolutely. Playing with other talented musicians in a small ensemble setting forces you to improve. When your part is essential to the song, you have to take it upon yourself to be perfect. Additionally, with just you and the other band mates, no composer to dictate what goes, you have to learn to inject your own musicality and subtlety into the music, which is what is at the core of music itself.



Do you think your music affects the outside community?

I work and play at a place called ROAM in Alexandria, which is a rehearsal space and coaching for bands in the area. The bands in it have drummed up somewhat of a local music scene with performances outside over the summer and concerts at the Birchmere Concert Hall. So in a small way I think I have contributed to the development of music in the community. But directly and personally? I don't think I have yet. Hopefully before too long I'll be able to make some change.

Are there any challenges that being a young musician can sometimes pose? Any advantages?

There are countless advantages to being a musician. Increasing your critical thinking ability, helping your mathematical thinking processes, as well as learning new skills and how to overcome challenges. Music can also bring people together. Many of my closest friends I have met through playing gigs. But, if you truly want to be a talented and great musician, it takes time. It's often hours a day, and a lot of insecurity about your skill level before you start to see any positive improvement. But, being able to produce something that others can experience and relate to is immensely satisfying, even if it is in a very small way.

Do you plan on continuing with music in the future? If so, how do you plan to do so?

Yes I do. I plan to go to a music conservatory, and make a career out of it, whether it's through lessons, sound engineering, music management, or making a lucky break. Or all of the above. When you truly are passionate about something, the adversity that stands in your path doesn't really matter.



"Music, like any art, creativity, or work, is a way to show one's collection of experiences and thoughts."



DERMOT MULRONEY  
class of 1981

What is your favorite instrument, and how did you become involved in music?

For the first questions, my favorite instrument in the world is the cello. I knew it the minute I saw it, when the elementary schools in Alexandria, Virginia, had a field trip day that took us to T.C. to see the Alexandria City Orchestra. They did a demonstration day where they played *Peter and the Wolf* and displayed each of the instruments. They came around and they played the cello, and right at the moment I decided that's the instrument I wanted to play. My older brothers were already string players so I had an eye on that side of the orchestra. That's what led me to an amazing life filled with music.

I play a bunch of instruments now, like mandolin, a little piano, and guitar, but that all came from the music program in the Alexandria City Public Schools. I have a lot of gratitude, especially, for the great music teachers, including F. Wayne Taylor, Ms. Elliott, and Mr. Brobst at T.C.

Where did the band name "Cranky George" come from?

Part of the mythology of the name Cranky George is that we don't really remember how we came up with the name Cranky George. It's somehow connected to a line from the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, where they call George Bailey "Mossback George" because he never wanted to leave home. It was something to do with that George is all I recall.

How would you describe your particular style of music?

I would try to refer to it most accurately as "punk folk music." That's the best I can come up with. Generally speaking, it's rock'n'roll but it has really strong Celtic elements, and country, and balladeer, and dark undertones and happy heartbreak throughout.

Would you say that your style has changed? If so, how?

In the 90s I was in a band, Low End Sweet Orchestra, and at that time it was a big record deal kinda thing. Even recently, with the making of Cranky George's album, *Fat Lot of Good*, it was homemade and a self released type of thing -which shows the difference in how the industry worked then and works now.

How would you describe your album, *Fat Lot of Good*?

The whole experience of making the album *Fat Lot of Good* took a long time because each of the members of the band are doing any number of different things and are hard to schedule and all that. Some of the songs are from 2017, but summer 2016 we finally got enough time to track most of the album and pieced it together after that, and it's great music... hard to describe what it is. We have 14 or 15 songs on that album, and many of them varied from one another.

What is/are your foremost muse(s)? Have they changed?

I guess that my experience as a professional musician is a pretty interesting one, in that it's always been a sideline gig to my main job. But when it's all said and done, I really came full circle from the Alexandria School Orchestras to what I do as a musician in the scoring orchestras for a composer named Michael Chucino. He's known for the Pixar films and *Planet of the Apes* and *Mission Impossible* and the *Star Trek* films, so I've played on all of those scores in an orchestra as a cellist. For the record I sit last chair. Proudly. And I feel that I've come full circle, and I'm back to playing in orchestras and I love it just as much when I started playing in Alexandria.



PHOEBE TOMSU  
class of 2019

How did you get your start in videography?

My mom is a film critic, so I was always surrounded by production and videography, but the way I got MY start in videography was in 9th grade. I had always been interested in using film to visually tell a story, and getting my start in TV1 introduced me to that.

What is your favorite aspect of videography?

My favorite aspect of videography is the freedom with which you can express yourself. Videography is used to tell a story, and the time that goes into telling that story is one of the best ways to make sure it turns out the way you want. You have to have a lot of patience and passion to do well in this field, and it's very rewarding.

What kind of work in videography do you usually do? Is there any difference between your work in the past and present?

It really depends. When it comes to TC videography for example, I shoot and edit different academic and athletic activities, guest visits, and other, sometimes separate, events. My personal projects can range anywhere from fun, short movies with friends, to nonfiction, serious topics I feel strongly about. There is a huge difference between my past and present work, mainly because I have advanced in the topic, but also because I've gotten a lot more confident in my work, not to mention that now I focus a lot on graphics and effects. I'm still learning new things everyday, and still have a long way to go, but that's just part of the process.

What are your goals within vidography?

I have many different goals and ambitions when it comes to videography. These goals include learning more about motion graphics, being introduced to different equipment, and discovering new styles



of shooting and producing. I think one of the main ways I plan on achieving these goals is by shadowing people with more experience and taking any advice I can get from my mentors and other professionals.

Do you make any specific choices in your work that help define you as an artist? If so, what are they?

I think that ultimately, everyone has their own style of shooting and editing, as with art or music, and it's about making each individual's own dream or vision come to life. In film, there are hundreds of different genres and styles. An animation film, for example, would not be viewed the same way as a horror movie, or a comedy. Specific choices I make while working on a project vary from the style of my writing to the way I like to transition from one scene to another. Editing is also a huge factor in determining a specific style. Some people like to edit to a beat, others may like to have a slower paced video. In the end, it all depends on the person, and their inspirations.

What inspires your work?

My mentors, seeing a movie I really like, or seeing other independent and young creators who work off of a small budget, reminds me to focus on things that interest me, even if I can't think of anything or I get distracted. I also love seeing filmmakers put a personal touch on their movies or other projects they do, because it makes them very human and relatable.

How has videography helped shape you as an artist?

Videography has helped shaped me as an artist and as a person because it has opened my eyes to what all filmmakers go through, and the hardships that filmmaking entails. There is a ton of rejection, not to mention the physical and emotional toll it takes: running around, holding a five pound camera

with other equipment, and putting in a lot of work only to have outsiders, who have no idea what they're talking about, complain and critique every little thing that they don't understand. It's very humbling in the end, and it gives me another perspective on things. It's helped shaped me as an artist, because I can use filming as a way to address many of these issues, and bring light to many others.

Do you plan on continuing with videography in the future? If so, how?

I most definitely plan on continuing with videography in the future. I plan on doing so by going to college and getting a degree in production and graphic design, and then taking whatever opportunities I'm given. Honestly, it's very hard to secure any type of job in this field, and in that sense it's exactly like being an artist. I want to make stories about things that are important to me, stories that are fun and emotional, and generally stories where I can express myself as a human being. I'm so lucky that I have had a lot of great people looking out for me and securing things that will help me in the long run. I have a lot of incredible opportunities and resources that many other don't have, and I plan on fully taking advantage of that.



CHRISTOPHER QUINN  
class of 1983

What inspired you to become involved in filmmaking?

I was inspired by great filmmakers like Stanley Kubrick, John Ford, Ingmar Bergman, Jacques Tati, and Andrei Tarkovsky. This was passed down from my father, who loved great movies too. I remember watching *The Last Picture Show* by Peter Bogdanovich in Mrs. Hinners' filmmaking class at TC and saying okay, wow, I want to do that -- I want to make a film that great. My inspiration from film was also coupled with my love of journalism and learning about the world beyond Alexandria.

What were some main themes in your work when you first started and now?

The human condition has always been a major theme in my work. It didn't matter if I was making something for MTV, National Geographic, or something that ended up in movie theaters -- I was always drawn to the anthropology of people making their way through space and time. Having an individual relating or contrasting against the rest of the world is what makes great, dramatic stories. Themes in my work now are human migration and man fighting nature.

How and why has your filmmaking evolved over the years?

I started with the Super 8 camera making three-minute films, and now I make full-length films with an elaborate camera that most Hollywood films use. My stories are told at greater length, but I find that shorter films can, in fact, be harder to make well. I always have a lot of respect for short form.

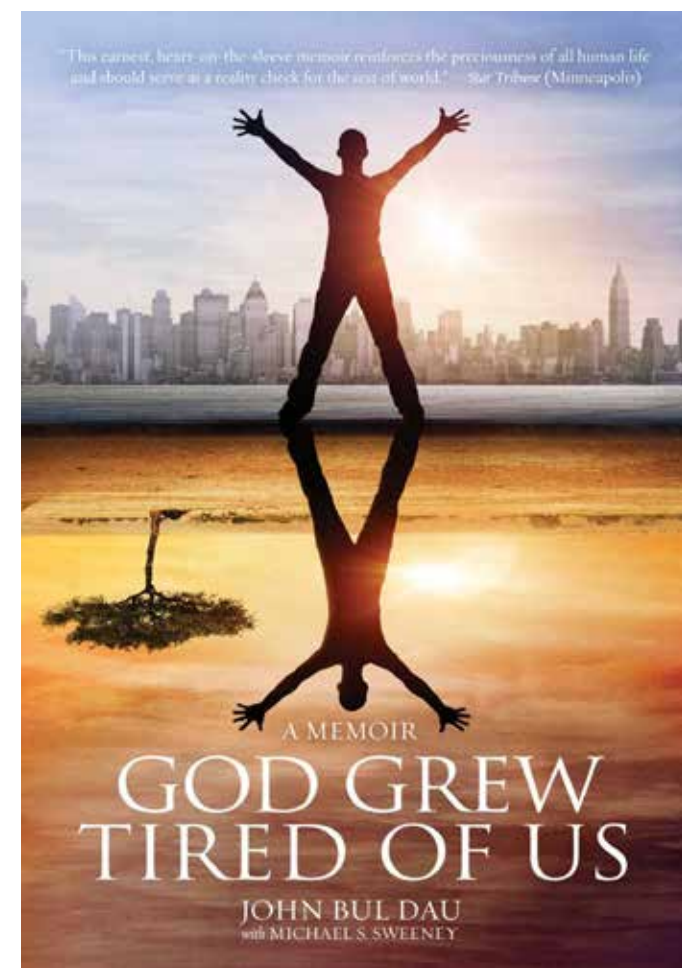
Has your inspiration changed at all throughout the years?

Early in my filmmaker career I was definitive and absolute with everything. I was more concerned

with proving a point and getting to the truth of something. Now I like to tell stories by living somewhat in the ambiguities. In my latest film, *Eating Animals*, I purposely avoided telling the story of industrial farming from one perspective. I did my best to showing the complexities, the grey areas, of how we got to the place of making our farms into factories. To ask/lead the watcher to a question: Where are we (collectively) going? I like to leave enough room for viewers to draw their own conclusion. This is what Kubrick did with his films like *2001: A Space Odyssey* -- he made us think and ask the question way back in 1968 -- do we want to have computers to take over our lives?

What inspired you to create the film *God Grew Tired of Us*, rather than focusing on another worldly issue?

I remember learning about the Holocaust in Mr. Goldberg's history class at Minnie Howard and saying thankfully that could never happen again... but it did happen again, in Sudan, the Congo, in Syria and other places in the world. There was something deeply tragic and compelling about 25,000 orphan boys wandering sub-Saharan Africa searching for safety -- I knew I wanted to document their incredible story, so I grabbed my camera and headed to the enormous refugee camp on the border of Sudan and Kenya, and started filming. This was the beginning of *God Grew Tired of Us*. Today, there are more people on the planet displaced from their homes than in any time in our history, and those millions and millions of displaced people will, on average, spend 17 years away from their home and way of life. Human migration is a massive world problem not to be overlooked.



How did you think people responded to your work when you first started, and how do you think they respond now?

When I first started out very few people saw my films. Mostly friends and fellow filmmakers saw them, but the generally positive responses kept me going and I want to make more films and make them better and better. It's hard to answer this question, because today many more people see my films than when I was first starting out. I always wanted to reach the widest audience I could with my films. As I write my responses to these questions, I am sitting in a hotel rooftop restaurant in Amsterdam about to show my latest film to an international audience at a film festival here. When I was at TC I dreamed of showing my film to the world, and it has come true!



When did you start dancing?

I've danced since I was little but got serious in 6th grade. Then, when I moved to California in 8th grade, I started taking hip-hop classes in Hollywood. After that I started getting more and more support and I wanted to do my own thing (my own choreography).

What drew you into dance?

I went to a school that had uniforms, so it was a way to express myself. Also when I was kinda down in the dumps, dance was a good way for me to vent through my body movements.

What dancers inspire you?

Wildebeest, Ariam, Matt Steffanina, Beyoncé, Usher, and Chris Brown inspire me.

What has dance taught you?

Dance has taught me how to love being me and how lit I am. It taught me how much I love performing and how the support of others can influence me. I learned what I wanted in my life through dance

What's your favorite thing about dance?

My favorite thing about dance is taking a dance routine, making it my own, and doing it on beat, so I guess personalizing different dances.

What is your favorite style of dance?

Animation is cool, but I like hip hop, tutting gets on my nerves honestly -- making all those boxes and 90 degree angles it looks cool but it's just not for me.

What was the best routine you've performed?

The best was probably "Anaconda" by Nicki Minaj.



What feeling do you get when you perform?

Euphoria. I feel like different person, it just feels dope knowing all eyes are on me and knowing how to keep them there. You go on the stage nervous but once you start dancing its like your adrenaline rushes and you can't be stopped.

What are some of your goals for dance?

I would love to dance on tour with somebody like Rihanna. I want to see other people take my choreography and make it their own. I want the world to know I can dance and either want to learn from me or just sit back and enjoy the show.

Have you ever been injured while dancing?

No this is why you STRETCH!! I have seen people pull hamstrings and even break bones from dancing or dancing too hard. Stretching is important because you can't go into a bunch of sudden movements, twists, and turns without your body being prepared.

MYA HARR  
class of 2016



How long have you wanted to be a professional dancer?

All I knew is that I wanted to dance, all the time and everywhere. I don't know exactly what age I knew I wanted to turn it into a career, maybe around age ten. I think I just figured that if I kept moving I would resolve in that direction.

Was it difficult to balance school with dance?

As a full time dance student in academic school, you quickly learn to juggle. I never knew anything besides balancing school and dance, so while I understand that it was difficult, I never fully realized it because it was what had to be done; it was my normal. Dance at its core is a curriculum for discipline. With discipline drilled into our minds, focusing and prioritizing is something that comes naturally to a studying dancer.

Did anyone ever tell you that you weren't going to make it as a dancer? How did that affect you?

I was never told that I would not make it as a dancer. I am terribly lucky for all the people who have supported me and believed in me to this day. While no one ever told me I would not make it as a dancer, self-doubt and insecurity are looming in the dance industry. My greatest struggles as a dancer, to this day, are mental. Once we get out of our own heads, and ego is forgotten, growth and exploration are limitless.

What are your favorite performances you've ever danced in?

Any opportunity to be on stage with people I love and trust, to share and dance together, is a wildly beautiful thing. That being said, I don't think there is such thing as a "favorite performance." One life-altering one for me though, was the opportunity to dance Alonzo King's "Ocean" with my peers during my junior year: a gift from

him to us that made me realize my body and my spirit were happy dancing in his movement.

Have you ever or do you plan to choreograph?

I expect my curiosity for choreographing to grow as I age. As of now I have not choreographed, nor do I plan to, but I wonder if through my work in self discovery I will want to explore more external portals for creativity.

Do you prefer ballet or contemporary?

I prefer contemporary ballet! I have a deep respect for classical ballet, but also a deep hatred for it..

What makes you so passionate about your art form?

My art form is generous. We dance to serve, not to indulge. There is no ego or selfishness, only exploration and giving. I am deeply in love with the detachment from the shallow self that comes from working to become the purest definition of being. I am so passionate about my art form because it is honest.

What would you say to a TC dancer who dreams succeeding as you have?

To any TC dancer dreaming like I still do, I would tell them to be honest. If you go through your work every day truthfully, listening to your own spirit, you will grow how you're meant to and find yourself where you need to be, because you have given all you are, all your truth. You will find your happiness there.

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