

THE CORTILE

2023



VOL. XXIII

» CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE » RICHARD TRYTHALL - IN LOVING MEMORY » OUR SOCIETY TODAY » ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

4. Welcome from Head of School Jill Muti

PART I: IN LOVING MEMORY



6. In Loving Memory - Richard Trythall

8. Richard Trythall's Event Program

PART II: CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

30. The Ethics of Climate Justice: Peril and Promise

BY JEN HOLLIS, IB HISTORY TEACHER

37. A Stark Warning and a Call to Action

JAN CLAUS DI BLASIO '04, CITY OF ROME II TEACHER, SERVICE & SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR



PART III: OUR SOCIETY TODAY: STUDENT OP-ED PAGE

44. The Impact of Ageism

BY ELIJAH MEYERHANS '24

45. The Phenomenon of Elder Talk

BY ADAM HUSAIN '26

46. Mass Incarceration - The New Racial Control

BY EMMA CARP '23

49. Combating Sexism in All Its Manifestations

BY LUCA MEROLA '26

51. The Psychological Underpinnings of Gender Stereotypes

BY MATTIA BENTSON '26

54. A Collective Effort Is Needed to Achieve Gender Equality

BY MATEO LARIO '24

PART IV: CREATIVE WRITING



56. Spring 2023 Creative Writing Portfolio: The Look of Things

BY WILL SCHUTT, CREATIVE WRITING TEACHER

**PART V
CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS**

67. I Am 'The One Who Loves'

BY ALEX MWENDA KAARIA DELVE '23

68. Basketball is Life

BY CHRISTOPHER MOI '24

70. Student Council

**PART VI:
DEPARTMENTS**

72. Boarding Life Snapshots

80. Giving: Why Giving Matters

BY ALLISON KEMMIS-PRICE

**84. Robotics and Physical Computing
in the St. Stephens iLab**

BY ELIZABETH DI CATALDO, LIBRARIAN
AND DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL
TECHNOLOGY

88. Around the School



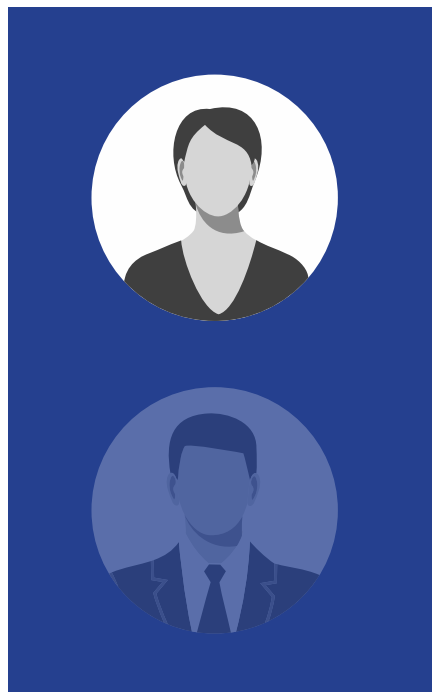
**PART VII:
SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW**

94. Sylvia Poggioli

FORMER SENIOR EUROPEAN
CORRESPONDENT, NATIONAL PUBLIC
RADIO BY NATALIE EDWARDS

**PART VIII:
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS**

BY NATALIE EDWARDS '14



**99. Marina Roeloffs von Hademstorf
'08**

CEO & CO-FOUNDER META MONACO

102. Lorenzo Fornari '95

**108. Eva Perez de Vega '93 & Ian
Gordon '91**

117. Nathan ('Thann') Buck '87

**123. Richard Porath '14 & Davide
Albeggiani '14**

128. Alumni & Friends Trip

**PART IX:
FREE FROM CHAINS**



132. Di Rebibbia so poco / *Rebibbia*

BY AUGUSTO FELICE

**134. L'esperienza in carcere e il
perdono / *Prison and Forgiveness***

BY ASIA VAUDO

**139. Laboratorio di Poesia / *Poetry
Workshop***

BY OTTAVIA POJAGHI BETTONI



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Greetings, St. Stephen's Community!



Photo by Julia Lynn

“

It is with great pleasure that I share the latest version of The Cortile magazine with you. As I am coming to the end of my first year at St. Stephen's, I am excited for the journey ahead, not only for the school as it enters a new phase of its continuing growth and evolution but also for our college-bound seniors. We've included a personal statement of one St. Stephen's twelfth-grader – Alex Delve – whose personal essay warmed the hearts and minds of admissions officers of colleges to which he applied. Congratulations to Alex and the Class of 2023!

In this issue of *The Cortile*, we pay tribute to Richard Trythall, whom we lost unexpectedly last December. Our beloved friend and colleague was an extraordinary musician, teacher, and kind-hearted soul whose warmth and care touched every person he came across. The academic year closed with a beautiful celebration of his life for his family and the community.

Two of our teachers – Jen Hollis (IB History) and Jan Claus Di Blasio (City of Rome/Sustainability Coordinator) – examine the climate crisis in depth, taking a deep dive into the ethics of climate justice and the long-awaited release of the final installment of the IPCC– United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change–Report.

In our Op-Ed section, several students share their opinions about ongoing issues in our society today and the need for us to address and tackle the enduring effects of ageism, racism, and sexism. Along the lines of the transformative process of observation, St. Stephen's creative writing students express their talent and opinion through poetry, prose, and short story writing that delights, inspires, and captivates the reader.

The Director of Educational Technology, Elizabeth Di Cataldo, brings us up to date with activities in the St. Stephen's iLab and the international competitions students are participating in to hone their skills and sharpen their talents in robotics and programming.

A *Cortile Spotlight* Interview with **Sylvia Poggioli, NPR's longest-serving reporter on the International Desk and an NPR icon**, is of special interest. After 41 years, Sylvia says, "It's time for her to hang up her headphones." Former Classics teacher and alumna Natalie Edwards conducted this exclusive interview.

Our Alumni section highlights the accomplishments of five former students and looks at where they are now. And lastly, the magazine features poetry and short stories collected from a project founded by past parent Zingonia Zingone, #FreeFromChains.

I am eager to share details about several upcoming changes we hope to make soon. Many of these modifications are based on the work of the Board of Trustees and our Strategic Plan, which was approved at the end of last year. This is the School's fourth **Strategic Plan (SP4)**. As a reminder, the strategic plan establishes what the school wants to achieve in the future and how it intends to get there. *Strategic Plan 4: Pillars of Excellence* charts a five-year, high-level course of action for St. Stephen's School based on emerging priorities and abiding institutional values that are targeted to meet this moment in the School's development effectively.

The School is fundamentally healthy and thriving. *Strategic Plan (SP4): Pillars of Excellence* addresses some challenges the School faces as it moves to maintain its competitive edge as a global destination of choice in a new era. It is an overall adaptive strategy that can be adjusted or amended along the way as circumstances dictate.



“

A Cortile Spotlight Interview with Sylvia Poggioli, NPR's longest-serving reporter on the International Desk and an NPR icon, is of special interest. After 41 years, Sylvia says, "It's time for her to hang up her headphones."

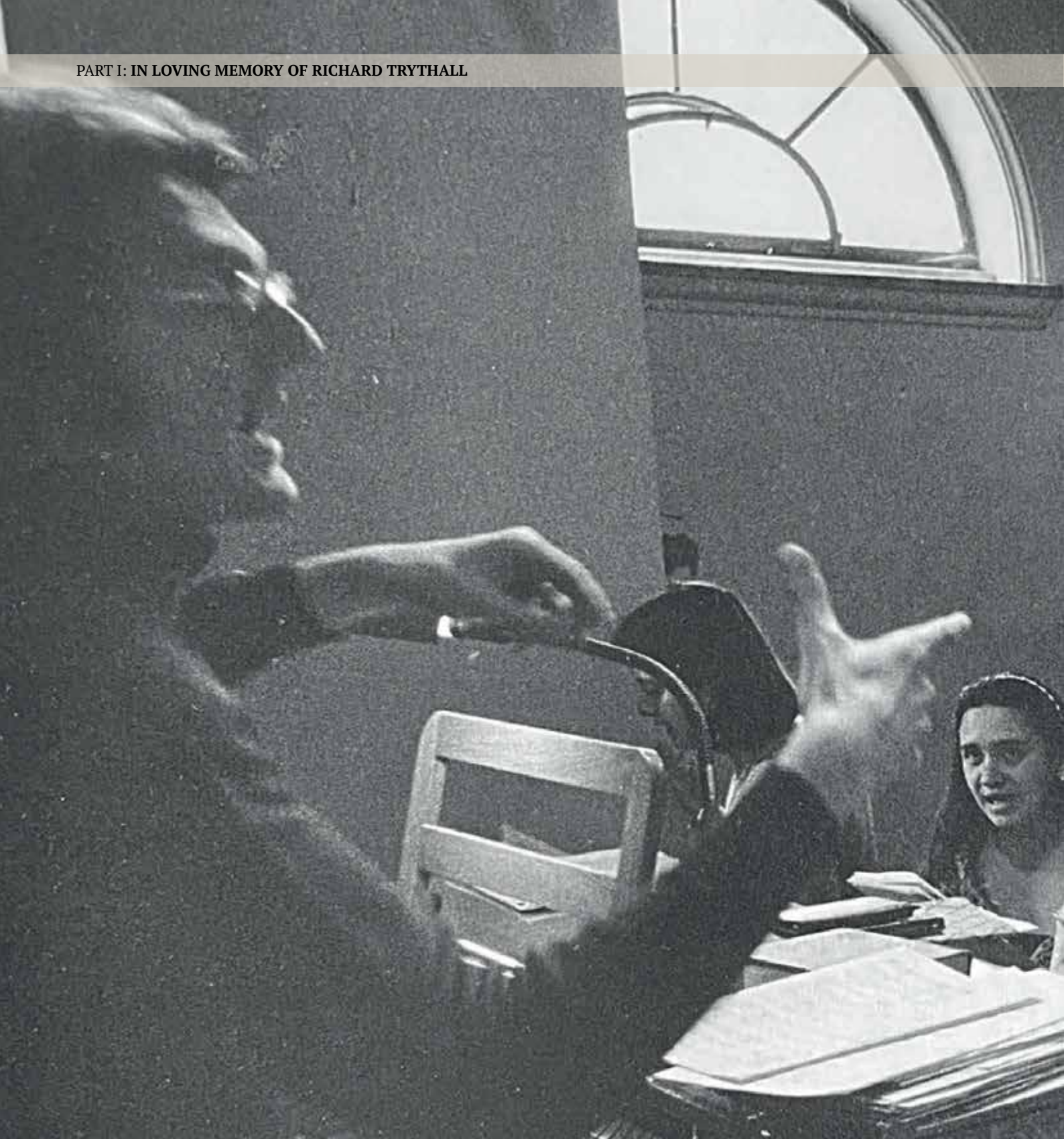
The **four overarching objectives** and **thirteen initiatives** in *Pillars of Excellence* address **academic excellence, boarding, student facilities, and the School's financial health**. Some items entail significant expenditures, but funds will be set aside in the School's annual budget to cover those costs.

To address the priorities outlined in SP4, the School convened a Master Planning Committee this past year to develop the action steps for executing the Strategic Plan. While the master planning process is near completion, we are working to implement the following in the upcoming school year:

- streamlined academic schedule that effectively uses the school day in our current space while reducing students' lunch breaks from four to two periods;
- modification of the Cortile to improve the use of space and circulation of students and faculty;
- effective use of our outdoor spaces;
- upgrade of the mensa;
- an assessment of additional space requirements.


The School is a unique and special place that transforms students and each individual that crosses its threshold. I am grateful for the time I have spent getting to know students, parents, staff, and teachers—past and present—and I also know that I will continue to have meaningful exchanges in the coming year. To that end, **I hope you will save the date to celebrate St. Stephen's 60th Anniversary and join us in Rome from June 7-9, 2024.** Stay tuned for more details in the coming months. Until then, let's celebrate the graduating class of 2023 and all that awaits them. Please enjoy the latest edition of *The Cortile*!

Tanti auguri!



PART I:

In Loving Memory



In early May, the St. Stephen's community came together to celebrate the life of one of its most treasured teachers—Richard Trythal, who passed away unexpectedly in December 2022. It was the second such event to honor his legacy. His family, close friends, colleagues, and former and current students were in attendance as Head of School Jill Muti led the hour-long event. Ms. Muti, Moira Egan, Chair of the St. Stephen's Arts Department and Creative Writing teacher, and Paige Short, Director of Music at Ambrit International School, did a superb job organizing a beautiful and heart-warming tribute. The program, *The Power of Music*, is shared over the following pages. And for those who were unable to attend, there is still a chance to record a video for Richard; below, you will find the instructions. We will keep these videos in the Richard Trythall Memorial Folder, both to preserve the community's memories and to share with Richard's family.

INSTRUCTIONS TO RECORD A VIDEO FOR RICHARD TRYTHALL

Click or copy and paste the link: <https://flip.com/db3d967d> into your browser. Click on the CAMERA icon at the top left. When the screen opens, click on the white circle to record your message. When you have finished recording, click on "next" to review your video. If you're happy with it, click on "next" again, and finally, "post" to the topic, Richard Trythall's Memorial.

For better audio, please use a mobile phone headset microphone, if possible. If you don't have a headset, be sure to be close to the mic on your phone or computer when you record yourself. If you are using a mobile phone to record, make sure you are filming horizontally, not vertically. And please make sure you don't have your back to a window or bright light source.



The Power of Music

A TRIBUTE TO RICHARD TRYTHALL



“ALL RIGHT GUYS AND GALS, YOU
HAVE THE NOTES, NOW LET'S TRY
AND MAKE IT SOUND LIKE MUSIC.”

- Richard Trythall
1939 - 2022

EVENT PROGRAM

Duo for Flute and Piano - Allegro

Aaron Copland

Jill Muti & Paige Short

If Music be the Food of Love, Play On

Twelfth Night, Act One

William Shakespeare

Michael Brouse

How Can I Keep from Singing?

Robert Lowry/arr. Paige Short

Chiara Cortez '98, Soloist

Trythall Community Choir

Piano

D. H. Lawrence

Sandra Provost

Three Preludes

George Gershwin

Richard Trythall performing in Concert 2017

EVENT PROGRAM

The Victor Dog

James Merrill

(transl. Abeni/Egan)

Fabiana De Rose '98 & Damiano Abeni

Che Quest' Occhi Miei

Giovanni Palestrina

St. Stephen's Singers

Fields of Gold

G.M. Sumner

Trythall Community Choir

Rondeau for Richard

Maira Egan

Dona Nobis Pacem

Traditional

Aperitivo will follow on the Terrace

IN MEMORIAM



Richard Trythall came to Rome as a composer-pianist in 1964 when he was awarded the "Rome Prize in Music Composition" by the American Academy in Rome. The third year into his fellowship, he began teaching music at St. Stephen's. Over the past five decades, Richard taught various courses, including Music Appreciation, Music History, and Music Theory. He founded the School's instrumental program and directed the St. Stephen's School chorus. He was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and was educated at the University of Tennessee (BM), Princeton University (MFA), and the Hochschule fur Music, Berlin. He also received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Fulbright Fellowship, a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, and numerous composition commissions. As a concert pianist, he won First Prize in the "Kranichsteiner Competition" (Darmstadt, Germany, 1969) and had an active performing and recording career for over fifty years. In addition to his role at St. Stephen's, he was a music consultant for the American Academy in Rome and taught "Twentieth Century Music Theory" at New York University in Florence.

Richard's ability to inspire and ignite students' passions and curiosity emphasized his care and dedication. Richard excelled in developing the artist in each child, bringing out their unique talent. He is part of the DNA and the very fabric of this institution. He will be remembered as the quintessential gentleman, a masterful artist, composer, and pianist; we will all miss him more than words can express.

"In teaching, I think the example you set is absolutely the first thing. I don't think there's anything you can say that is more powerful than your example."

Richard Trythall, 2022

RONDEAU FOR RICHARD

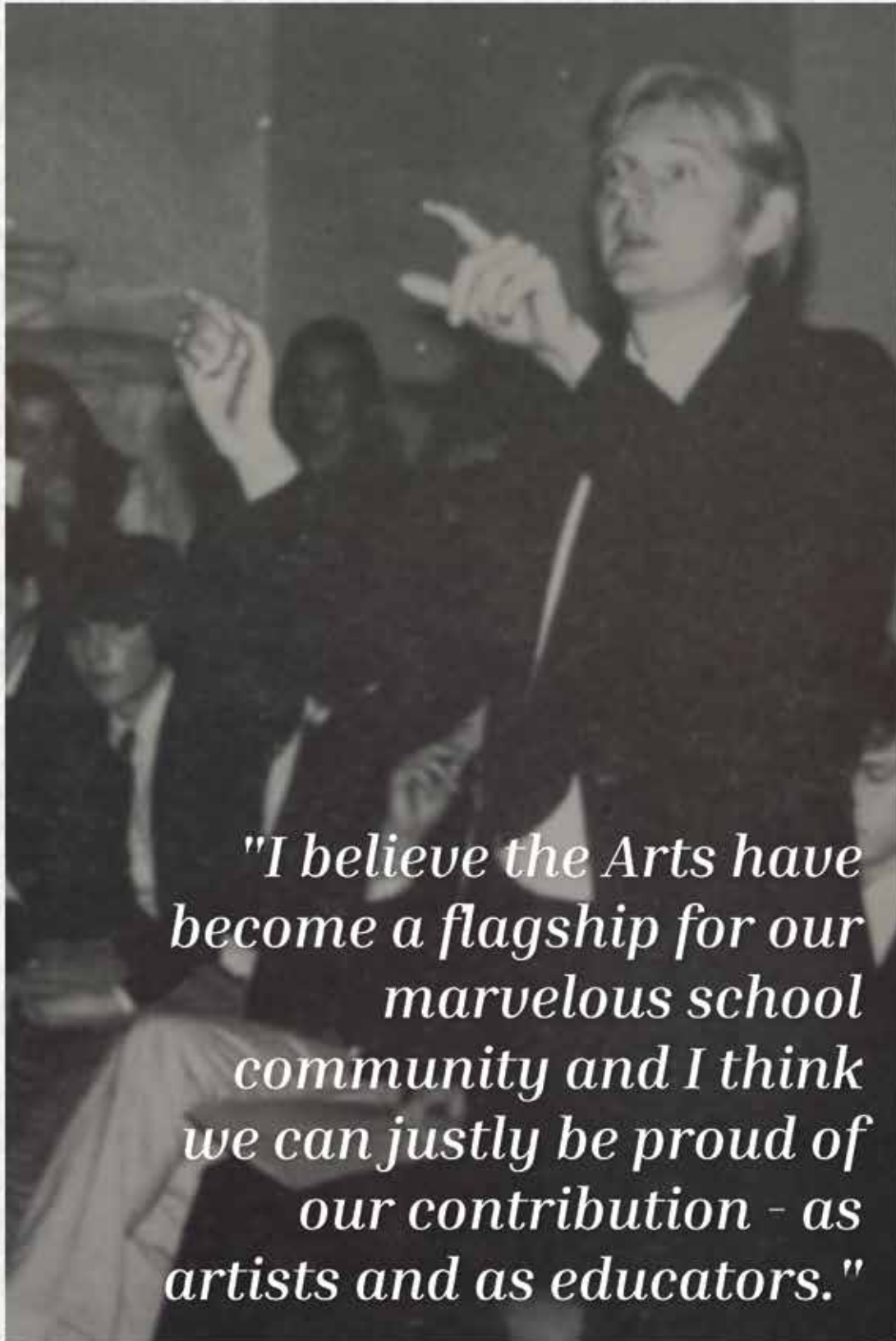
by Moira Egan



For fifty years he's helped us nail the notes
and clarified our chords, altissimo
and stoked our hopes and pacified our fears;
brought us to laughter, helped us dry the tears.
Glissando, tremolo, fortissimo.

And yet, we have no "Mr. Holland's O-
pus" here, oh no, the grand miracolo
is Richard's life in music, without peer,
for (more than) fifty years,

He's carved out time and energy, composed
exquisite works, avant-garde, piano.
How blessèd are we all to have you here,
our most beloved Capo, Richard dear,
we wish you love and health and - sostenuto -
another fifty years.



"I believe the Arts have become a flagship for our marvelous school community and I think we can justly be proud of our contribution - as artists and as educators."

Richard Trythall

in his own words

1966-2022

I began teaching at St. Stephen's School in the fall of 1966. The job was described as a part-time position for "a teacher of music and director of the school choir" and its duties remained substantially unchanged for decades though, naturally, the content of what was taught changed considerably. Only recently, with the introduction of our instrumental program (fall of 2009), of the International Baccalaureate's Musical Perception course (this fall), and the acquisition of a proper, dedicated "Music Room" has the job expanded to full-time proportions. When the teaching position was initially offered to me by the founding headmaster, Dr. John O. Patterson in 1966, I had already been living at the American Academy in Rome for two years as a recipient of the Rome Prize Fellowship in Music Composition. The idea of earning a little extra pocket money (the salary was \$1,500 per year) to supplement my third-year Fellowship at the Academy combined with the opportunity of trying out my avant-garde aesthetic views by teaching Music Appreciation and conducting a choir at St. Stephen's was too good to pass up. My students of that epoch, therefore, in addition to traditional music studies were treated to frequent references to the aesthetic thought of Kandinsky, Klee, Schoenberg, Cage, Stockhausen, etc., and to exhortations regarding the value of avant-garde artistic thought. In turn, I was treated to their curiosity, their observations, their questionings, their objections, and, above all, to their love and enthusiasm for music. It was heady stuff. They were an intelligent and talented group of young people and I thoroughly enjoyed our interaction and discussions - all of which, I am pleased to confirm, continue to this very day.

In effect, the students offered a young, inquisitive point of view which balanced quite well with the intellectual paradise provided by the Academy. Little did I realize at that time that these two institutions, the American Academy in Rome (with which I began a part-time working association as Music Consultant in 1970) and St. Stephen's School would remain my constant companions throughout the rest of my working life - a truly unique and fortunate pairing. The Academy has kept me in touch both with some of the finest musical minds of our century and with the "cutting edge" of contemporary American music.

The students of St. Stephen's, on the other hand, have kept me in close touch with their constantly evolving taste in popular music and this in turn has kept me scrambling to keep up with their times. If I had not had a high school chorus to conduct, I certainly would not be as profoundly grateful as I am today to Andrew Lloyd Weber who for several decades supplied us with marvelous melodies which the world loved to hear and, more importantly from my point of view, the students loved to sing. And if I had not had student Rock groups to conduct, I would never have found myself writing large instrumental arrangements of Stairway to Heaven, Master of Puppets, September Rain, et al., nor wondering why, since I had grown up in Tennessee during the rise of Rock 'n' Roll, I had spent those years practicing classical piano pieces rather than having the good sense to learn how to play a guitar! Luckily, I did learn how to play a pretty good piano boogie during the Saturday night dance jobs I played back in the late 50's and, in truth, this has proved as useful in coping with the requirements of teaching at St. Stephen's as have my music studies at the University of Tennessee and Princeton.





In any case, in addition to pocket money the part-time position at St. Stephen's offered me the possibility, once my Fellowship at the Academy had ended, to procure the work papers necessary to my stay in Rome. I had, by the fall of 1967, been completely seduced by the city of Rome and felt I should put off returning to the States. Accordingly I had turned down teaching offers from Harvard, UC Berkeley and Columbia Universities. I believed that I needed more time to develop my own musical thought and that this could be accomplished by deepening my roots in Europe's contemporary musical life. My decision was facilitated momentarily by a Guggenheim Fellowship (1967-68) which allowed me to continue living abroad for the next two years and, ultimately, by my musical contacts with Germany. I had spent the year prior to my arrival in Rome studying at Berlin's Hochschule für Musik on a Fulbright grant (1963 - 64). Subsequently, I had continued my contact with Germany by returning each year to participate in the Darmstadt Summer Courses in Contemporary Music. During the summer session of 1969, I competed for and won the Darmstadt Festival's "Kranichsteiner Prize" in Piano. This international recognition jump-started my professional career as a pianist-composer and this career, in turn, permitted me to remain permanently in Europe.

My professional career as pianist and composer has intersected with my teaching duties at St. Stephen's in a number of ways – some of which, in fact, turned out to be decisive to my own personal musical development. Throughout the years, of course, I have played numerous solo piano concerts for the school as well as appearing on various school programs as a soloist or as an

accompanist for the students or, for that matter, for faculty members.

In the course of these many years, St. Stephen's has had several excellent student instrumentalists and vocalists at the school and I frequently accompanied their performances as well as those of the chorus and the instrumental ensembles. There is, I have often found, a unique, deeply moving emotion that can surround these performances by young people. One senses the exposed, still fragile connection which they have with their own budding musical spirit as well as their excitement and awareness of the challenges they are facing. In such cases the performance is not only about the notes and the composer's musical intentions, it is also very much about the young performer's spirit and how that spirit is learning to express itself through those notes. When both messages mesh and reinforce each other, the result can be heartbreakingly beautiful. This too is heady stuff and nurturing it, bringing the student's individual voice/spirit out into public view, is both one of the challenges and one of the special pleasures of educating young people in the Arts.

As a composer, I have also often shared my new compositions with the students of my Music Appreciation classes. In the 70's I shared my tape studio work with them. I remember, for example, their surprised reactions when I first played them my "Omaggio a Jerry Lee Lewis" – a musique concrète manipulation of Jerry Lee Lewis performing Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On (1975). I believe the general student impression was that I must be "on something" in order to compose music like that! It wasn't until the early 90s, when one of my students used the term "Remix" to describe it, that I discovered the commercial pop world might be catching up with me. I've always treasured this as a good example of a student's response serving as a reality check for the teacher.

During the 80s, I returned to using more traditional musical means as a composer and I frequently played my latest piano pieces for the entire school during morning assemblies. This, too, was a sort of reality check and I was encouraged by the positive response. It particularly pleased me, therefore, that *Insieme*, a piano piece that was written during that period and which I have frequently played at the school, was selected as the background music for the recent video presenting St. Stephen's School to the general public.

More directly, however, I have also composed two large works for the St. Stephen's chorus. The first, A Christmas Cantata, for narrator, four part chorus, guitars and piano was written in honor of St. Stephen's Tenth Anniversary (1974) and dedicated to Fr. Patterson and Donald Stewart – also a founder and a beloved teacher at the school for many years. This setting of the Christmas story according to St. Luke used popular musical styles and fell somewhat in the line of the Rejoice Mass, a “folk” mass which the chorus had performed frequently during my early years at the school. The second work for chorus, The Education of Ebenezer Scrooge, was composed under the Carter Endowment Innovation Award of 2005 and premiered in December of 2007. It was dedicated to the three members of the St. Stephen's community who played essential roles in making the performance possible – Ted Carter, Sandra Craig and Phil Allen. This was a complete evening adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic A Christmas Carol as sung by the St. Stephen's Chorus, read by the Faculty and narrated by Lesley Murphy. I would also gratefully add here that Lesley Murphy went on to become our esteemed Head and quite literally St. Stephen's “Angel of Music” thanks to her unwavering support of the development of St. Stephen's music program over the past five years. It was the Music Appreciation class, however, which most strongly influenced my professional career.

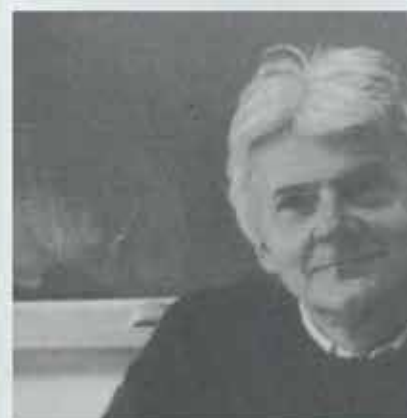
I taught a fairly standard Classical Music course at St. Stephen's from 1966 until 1990. In 1991, however, I introduced an American Popular Music Appreciation course in response to student requests. My research into the roots of American Popular music turned out to be a decisive learning experience for me. In a 1991 summary, I wrote that my course preparation “had significantly altered the way I perceive this music and brought me an enormous number of ideas and concepts which, I believe, will bear fruit in my professional work in forthcoming years.” This final comment was prophetic. My solo piano programs increasingly contained the Ragtime music of Scott Joplin, the boogies of Meade Lux Lewis, and the early Jazz of Jelly Roll Morton. In fact, my original transcriptions and performances of the latter's solo piano music were released on CD in 2002. This was a particularly fortuitous situation where, in fulfilling my teaching duties by carrying out research on a vital area of American music, I also opened up new areas for my own musical development as a pianist and as composer.

This is, I believe, the kind of creative interaction that Fr. Patterson had in mind when he established the tradition of hiring professional, practicing artists to teach at St. Stephen's. Let me close with the following thought. I have spoken a good deal about the students of St. Stephen's School, but a great school is also made by the faculty, staff, and all of those who support the school in one way or another. It has been a privilege over these years to work with so many fine, caring, and qualified persons in all areas of St. Stephen's. In particular, as the long-time Head of the Arts Department, I would like to say that I have been honored to serve alongside such a gifted group of artists who, while maintaining a single-minded dedication to their respective arts, have given so much to the students and to our community as a whole. I believe the Arts have become a flagship for St. Stephen's marvelous school community and I think we can justly be proud of our contribution – as artists and as educators.



"Music is music, and it's an expression of all kinds of different spirits. And that is very beautiful."

Richard Trythall





In Loving Memory

Mr. Trythall felt like dad for me. I will never forget the moments, where he held my shoulders, and told me to practice playing the scales and not to rush the notes.

Student

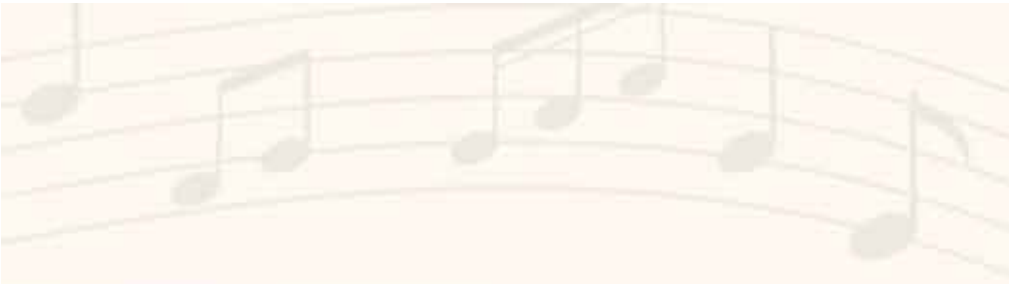
Mr. Trythall always had a smile on his face and was a great teacher here at St. Stephens with a great talent in the music department.

Student

I didn't know Mr. Trythall too personally, but I could tell and have been told by many that he was a passionate musician and teacher who was extremely dedicated to his work. His music transcends beauty and is filled with devotion and integrity. Thank you so much for being and integral part of the St. Stephen's community.

Emma Cardillo





Richard was a wonderful colleague. I have the fondest memories of eating lunch with him in the mensa and working with him to steward the support of our donors to the Arts department.

Allison Kemmis-Price



I remember this one time back in 9th grade, Mr. Steinberg brought all of his class to watch Mr. Trythall play the piano. We were all so impressed with how good of a pianist he was. We all miss seeing him having lunch and being so friendly with everyone in the lunchroom.

Isabella Cambiaghi



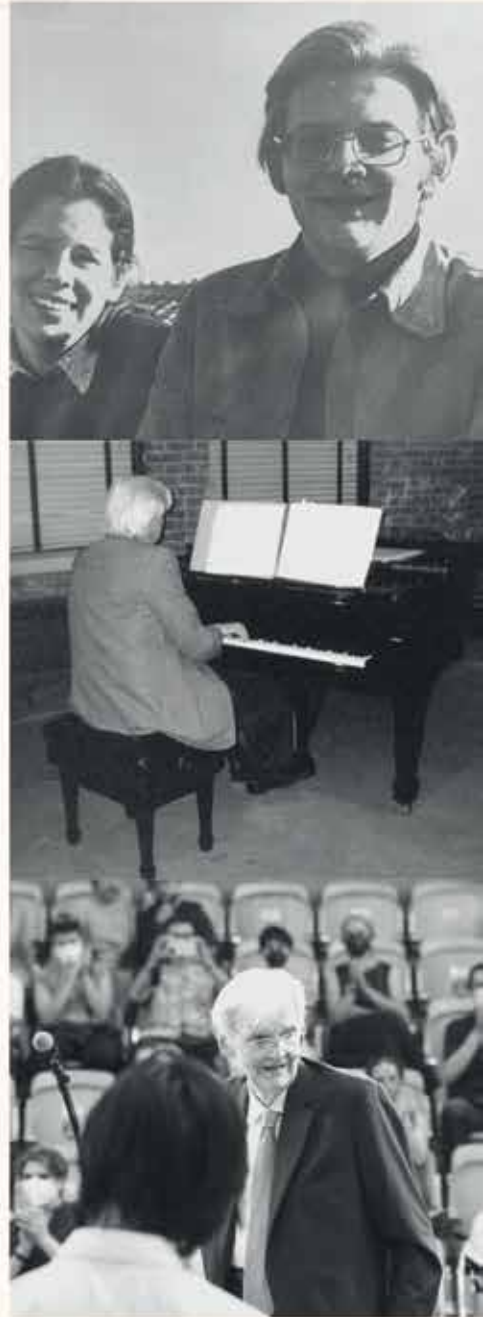
When I started teaching at the school and Richard heard that I used to play the piano, he encouraged me to resume doing it and often asked me about it. When a couple of years ago I finally did it I thought of Richard and his encouragements.

Claudia Monesi

Richard/Mr. Trythall was a fantastic person, friend, and colleague. Often, when we would see each other in the lunch room or cortile, he would always ask, 'How's Liz Runner doing today?' He was always so easy to talk to and so interested in how others were doing. I remember how he would always comment that he thought our older daughter Isabella had 'a good sense of rhythm' after seeing the way she reacted and danced during a talent show where he was one of the guest judges.

We also had lots of fun conversations over our frustrations with the ever-broken photocopying machine. He was always such a kind, courteous, 'southern gentleman' and I am still sad to know that our paths will no longer cross in the cortile or the faculty room nor will we get to enjoy his beautiful music in person. I feel privileged to have seen him perform many times in our school auditorium and to see his true love and care for his many, many students.

Liz Johnson-Mottola





We couldn't have asked for a better music teacher or a better person to be at St. Stephens with us to help guide us through the wonderful and magical world of music.

Student



Mr. Trythall always had a smile on his face and was a great teacher here at St. Stephens with a great talent in the music department.

Student



I was new to the school this year and I really appreciated how Mr. Trythall made music and chorus accessible to everyone, even to those who don't know how to read musical notes; he was always very welcoming and kind.

Student

Mr. Trythall helped me improve my music and gave me the confidence to express myself more with my violin. Before my freshmen year, he was the first teacher I met when we were touring the school. I walked into the music room, and his face lit up, and he immediately welcomed me and the two others in the group. Fast forward around a year and a half later, after I had him as a teacher for a few months, I was amazed because he had dedicated so much of his time to our class and he had managed to teach us to play some of the most challenging pieces that I have ever encountered. He jumped right into place after Ms. Jones had left, coming out of retirement, and assumed the position, and we ended up playing one of my favorite pieces ever, Howl's Moving Castle, and it really ended the year well.

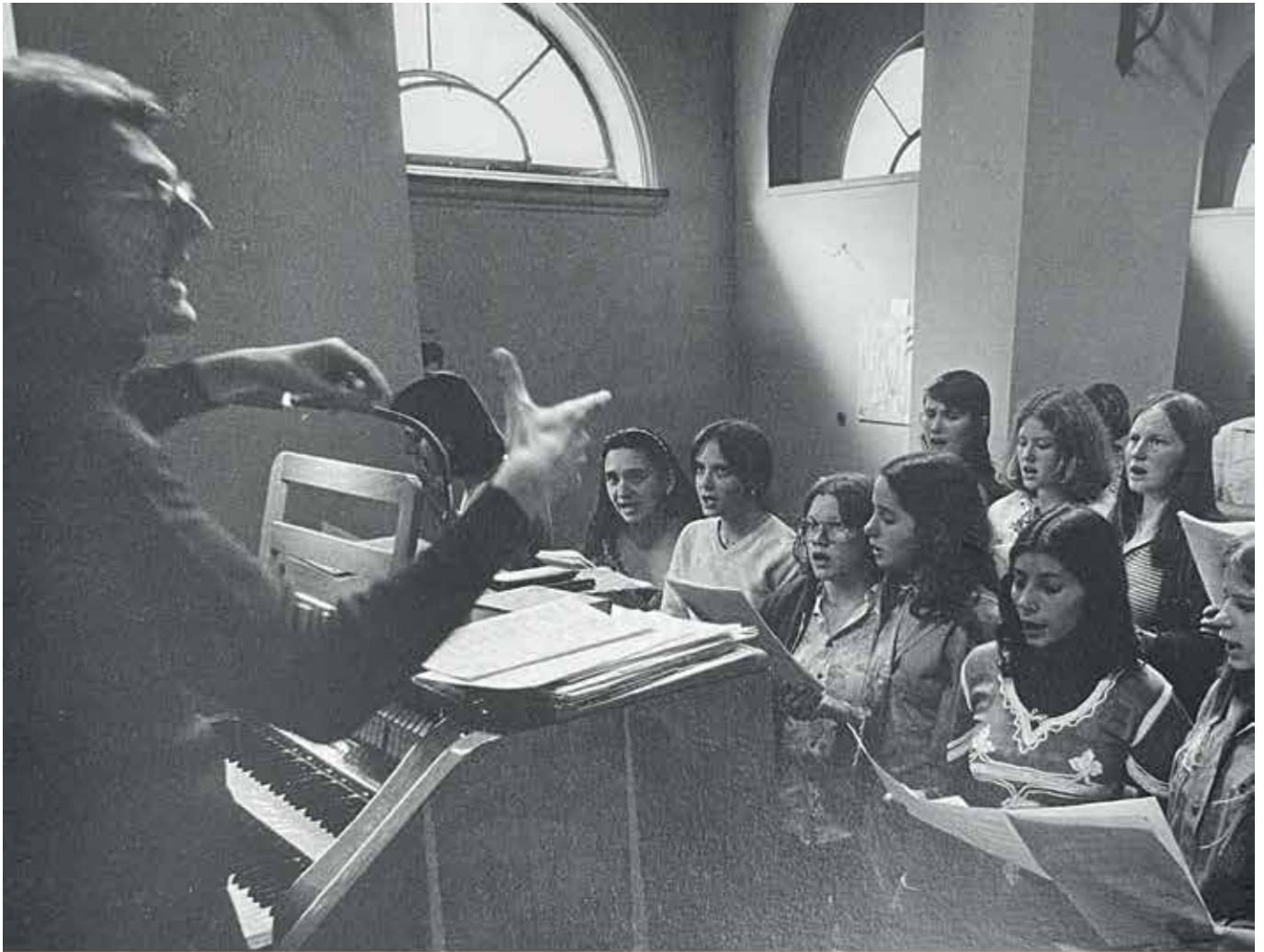
Student





Mr. Trythall was never one of my teachers. He never taught me but he taught my friends, and all the things I heard about him were always quite peculiar (in the best way possible). There was this one time when the fire-drill bell had started ringing and students started getting out of the classrooms slowly. I was in my core class, in the music room, and Mr. Trythall had recently entered the room and started working on something. When we came back from the drill, our teacher told us that he had stayed back to finish his work. It was funny at the time, but thinking back to it is nice I know this probably won't be a really funny story since what he did wasn't exactly safe, but this really showed me how much he was dedicated to and passionate about his work.

Student



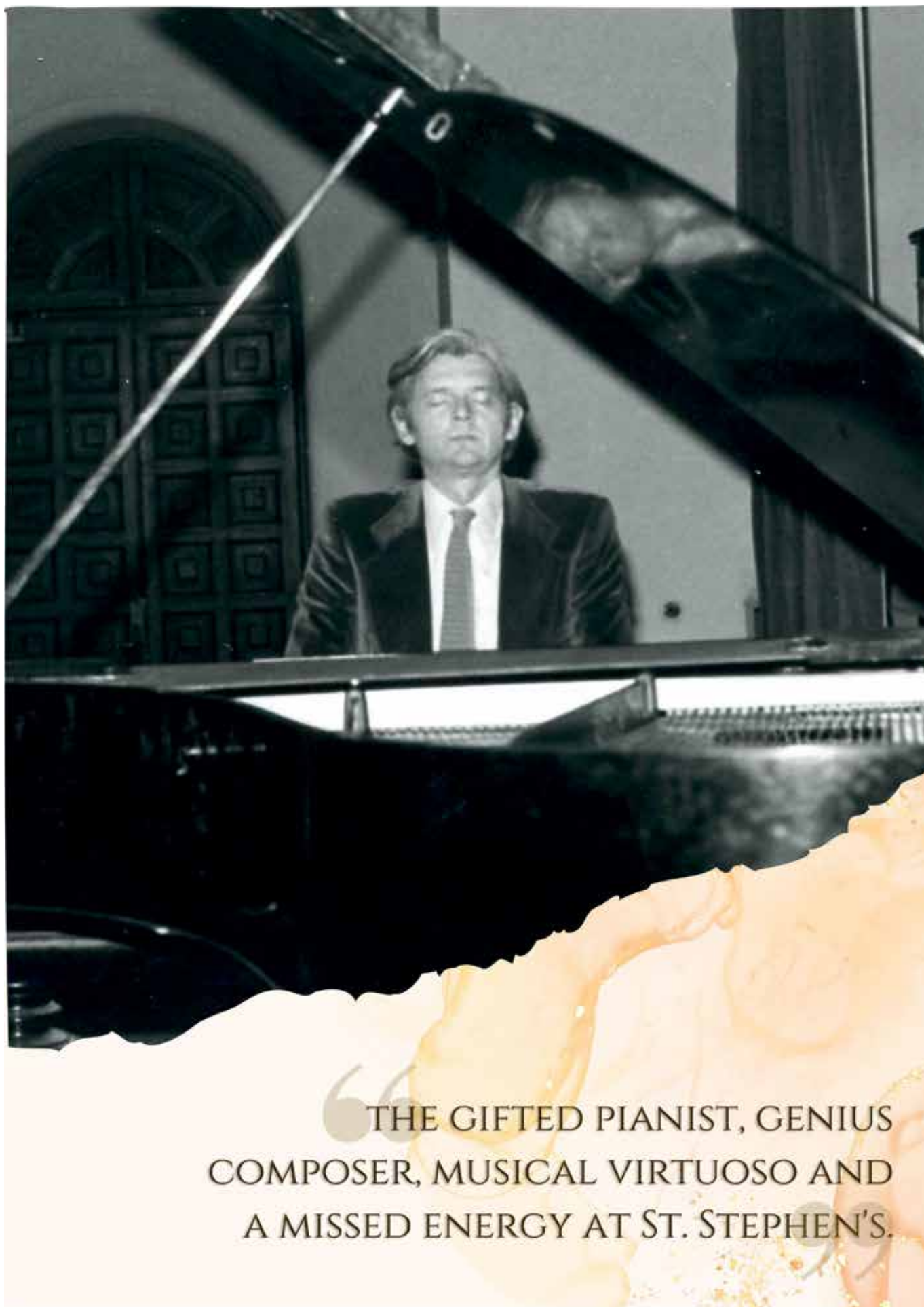
Mr. Trythall was an extremely kind person. The word kind doesn't even do justice to the goodness in his heart. His smile was always encouraging, and when he spoke, he did so with full attention, making people feel heard and cared about. When Mr. Trythall taught about music, he taught with enthusiasm. His passion was obvious in the joy that lit his face when he spoke, and he cared deeply about sharing that joy. He was always encouraging, and built everyone up. When he complimented my playing/music, it made me feel so supported because he was so genuine. When people were frustrating or a situation was difficult, he took it gracefully and remained optimistic. He was inspiring, as a musician and as a human being. He was humble, honest, and an incredible person to know.

Student



***H**e was a role model to us as his students, his passion for music and his sheer skill at it made him a truly unique teacher. Moreover, Mr. Trythall wasn't just our music teacher, he was a friend and mentor, one who showed great patience with all of us, one who showed kindness in face of any challenge. Mr. Trythall never missed a beat, he was there for the highs and lows, and even during the toughest of times, he brought an optimistic and leading voice we needed. Although Mr. Trythall is no longer with us here, he lives in the heart of every person he has taught, every person who has had the utter privilege of meeting this kind soul.*

Student



“THE GIFTED PIANIST, GENIUS
COMPOSER, MUSICAL VIRTUOSO AND
A MISSED ENERGY AT ST. STEPHEN'S.”



PART II:

Climate Change and Climate Justice

The Ethics of Climate Justice: Peril and Promise

BY JEN HOLLIS, IB HISTORY TEACHER

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LAST SUMMER, A THIRD OF PAKISTAN WAS UNDERWATER, AND JUST A FEW DAYS AGO, A RURAL TOWN IN MISSISSIPPI—THE POOREST STATE IN THE US—WAS FLATTENED BY HEAVY STORMS. WHILE NO SINGLE EVENT CAN BE LINKED DEFINITELY TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS, THE INCREASING FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF SUCH CALAMITIES ARE A DIRECT RESULT, AND THE CRISIS IS SET TO GET WORSE. DROUGHTS AND DESERTIFICATION WILL DRIVE FOOD SHORTAGES AND MASS MIGRATIONS. WILDFIRES AND SEA LEVEL RISE WILL DISPLACE EVER-LARGER COMMUNITIES. IF ECOSYSTEM COLLAPSE CONTINUES, THE HUMAN SPECIES AS A WHOLE WILL BE IMPERILED. THIS IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT TRUTH OF OUR AGE. ADVOCATES OF CLIMATE JUSTICE INSIST THAT THE SYSTEMS BY WHICH THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO’VE CONTRIBUTED THE LEAST TO THE PROBLEM WILL SUFFER FIRST (AND MOST) ARE THE SAME SYSTEMS DRIVING THE CRISIS.



To take one of the most universal illustrations of their point, the UN Environment report states that 80% of the people displaced by the climate crisis are female—a fact that intersects uneasily with the knowledge that 75% of the over fifty million enslaved people in the world today are also women and girls. These two realities, climate justice, will argue, feed off each other. As the climate crisis worsens, this displacement bias will increase the already disproportionate susceptibility of women and girls to forced marriage, sexual violence, and enslavement. And yet, although 80% of those displaced by the climate crisis are female, the Pew Research Center reports

that refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe from non-European countries are overwhelmingly male—in the case of many affected countries, ninety percent or more—underlining the causality that tells us that while women are far more likely to be displaced by climate change and far more likely to be enslaved or exploited, they are far less likely to be able to seek refuge abroad.

In another intersection between social injustice and climate inequality, campaigners point out that pollution tends everywhere to be most poorly regulated near underserved communities. In the U.S., economic marginalization disproportionately affects ethnic minorities. Studies for Medicaid have shown that people living in predominantly Black communities in the US face a higher risk of premature mortality linked to air pollution. In perhaps the most famous example, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, was considered by many to be such a case of “environmental racism.”

Forty percent of Flint residents live below the poverty line, and around half of the population is Black, compared to 16% of the population overall. The town of Rolling Fork, Mississippi, mentioned at the outset of the article, is three-fourths Black, with 37.1% of its residents living below the poverty line.

Members of these groups typically have little agency in engineering the climate crisis. For example, the poorer and disenfranchised among us contribute only a fraction to the crisis compared to their rich and empowered peers via their “carbon footprint.”

In these and other cases, climate justice activists point to a causality, even a positive feedback loop, connecting social ills like poverty, sexism, racism, enslavement, or child labor to the mad drive to strip the rainforests, dirty the waterways, collapse ecosystems, and heat the atmosphere with emissions. To save humanity from itself, their thinking supposes, the problems must be tackled together.

But how?

Roughly speaking, two approaches are discernible.



THE “RICH NATIONS” CAMP

The first approach presses for a moral responsibility of the “rich world” towards the impoverished one. This model creates agency at the level of the nation-state, or in the case of the EU, a conglomeration thereof, and seeks action at that level via government contributions. Proponents of this model advocate some combination of international redistribution and a loosening of immigration restrictions.

It should be noted at this point that, taking “the rich world” to refer to the EU and the US, it is already the case that EU member states and the European Investment Bank are “the biggest contributors of public finance to developing economies, providing 23.04 billion in 2021” alone, according to the European Commission on Climate Finance. What’s more, at COP27, the EU agreed to a “loss and damage” fund that would provide aid to those most affected in the poorest nations. The US is, according to the OECD, already the world’s largest donor of foreign aid, contributing tens of billions every year to the least developed countries. More needs to be done, but more of this approach may not get the job of tackling climate change done. To succeed at arresting the drivers of climate destruction, only a model that goes to their heart is likely to succeed.

Worsening matters, from a moral-philosophical perspective, the “rich nations” formulation is based on the notion of collective guilt; however, ascribing moral agency to national populations is contentious as a question of “justice.” Critics of collective guilt ask: *Are large populations capable of intent? How should costs be distributed when benefits are unequal within populations?* And relatedly: *Does collectivizing blame let the guiltiest off the hook and put the innocent on it?*

In historical application, there isn’t much precedent for collective guilt as justice policy. The closest examples follow from war: we think of the reparations paid by Germany or Japan after the Second World War. In these cases, however, the governments in question were militarily occupied, and reparations paid after wars have long been a norm, even in the absence of any question of justice. Today most of the actors responsible for mass violence, genocide, and enslavement around the world remain untouched, and no one thinks to blame the populace. In the past, where justice was exacted, it was done by force, not consent. And there is no consensus on the question in our current discourse. For example, those who propose collective guilt in cases of religious (or other ideological) terrorism or extremism meet the riposte that individual and peaceful members of a group should

not be held responsible for the behavior of bad actors in their communities, even when their beliefs are shared. It is difficult, then, to see what principle of responsibility we might apply to all members of ‘rich nations’ which are even less elective.

This is especially true given that advocates of climate justice invoke intersectional questions of class, sex, and minority status. It goes without saying that associated social ills and exploitation exist *within* “rich countries”—not just between them. Proponents of the “rich nation” model can and do argue that states, as a whole, were enriched by the polluting choices taken in the industrial era; however, it is also true that the power over policy, whether via voting rights or representation in government—to say nothing of the profits made—was at no point distributed evenly among citizens. To give one example, during the industrial revolution in the U.S., women as a class were barred from voting, higher education, holding office, and many forms of property ownership, i.e., disenfranchised as state actors. This renders culpability hard to assess for half of the population.

Worse, having citizens pay *as if they had benefitted* would reinforce inequality: with schemes that draw funding from whole populations, poorer and marginalized groups, the non-beneficiaries of climate



destruction would pay more than the profiteers. One need consider that where state governments pay into climate funds, they rely, necessarily, on taxation. The U.S., a top climate offender, has a poverty rate of almost 17%, with one in seven children living below the poverty line. Black, Latino, and Native American citizens are overrepresented in these figures. At present, socioeconomic mobility is lower in the U.S. than it is in most EU countries. That means, in almost all cases, one's class at birth is a fixed affair. Taxes on unearned income, the kind that accumulates over generations, are lower than taxes on labor. Ergo, at the state level, poor Americans would pay more for the climate crisis than its authors and their descendants, even as they suffer its costs more heavily. And the profit divide is stunning. Oxfam reports that since 2020 the top 1% of U.S. earners have captured two-thirds of all new wealth while paying a federal tax rate of 8%. The average American taxpayer, by contrast, paid a rate of 13% in the same period. Thus, taxing at the level of "rich nations" would achieve, in practice, almost the opposite of climate justice, according to its own logic.

Even between rich states, the problem recurs. In the European Union, Italy and Greece are the first ports of call for the migration crisis, which is set to worsen as the climate crisis accelerates. However,

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ARE LARGE POPULATIONS CAPABLE OF INTENT? HOW SHOULD COSTS BE DISTRIBUTED WHEN BENEFITS ARE UNEQUAL WITHIN POPULATIONS?

Italy ranks 18th in GDP per capita among member states in the EU. It currently has a youth unemployment rate of around 30%, a high debt level, and a public welfare system unlikely to survive its aging population intact. Roughly 10% of its citizens live in absolute poverty. The European Parliament reports that of the 1.7 billion Euros in reception costs Italy paid for asylum seekers in 2016, the EU covered only 2.7%. Here again, climate justice deployed at the level of nation-states, or groups thereof, must address equity in distribution to honor its own premise. When it fails to do so, it sacrifices not only ethical continuity but its best shot at practical success.

The political challenge facing climate justice activists is becoming clearer by the year. Far-right populist parties are on the march from Italy to Sweden. Democracy is on the decline around the world. Climate justice activists must think carefully about their strategy. The dilemma is obvious: the "rich nations" model relies on the consent of populations in democratic countries.

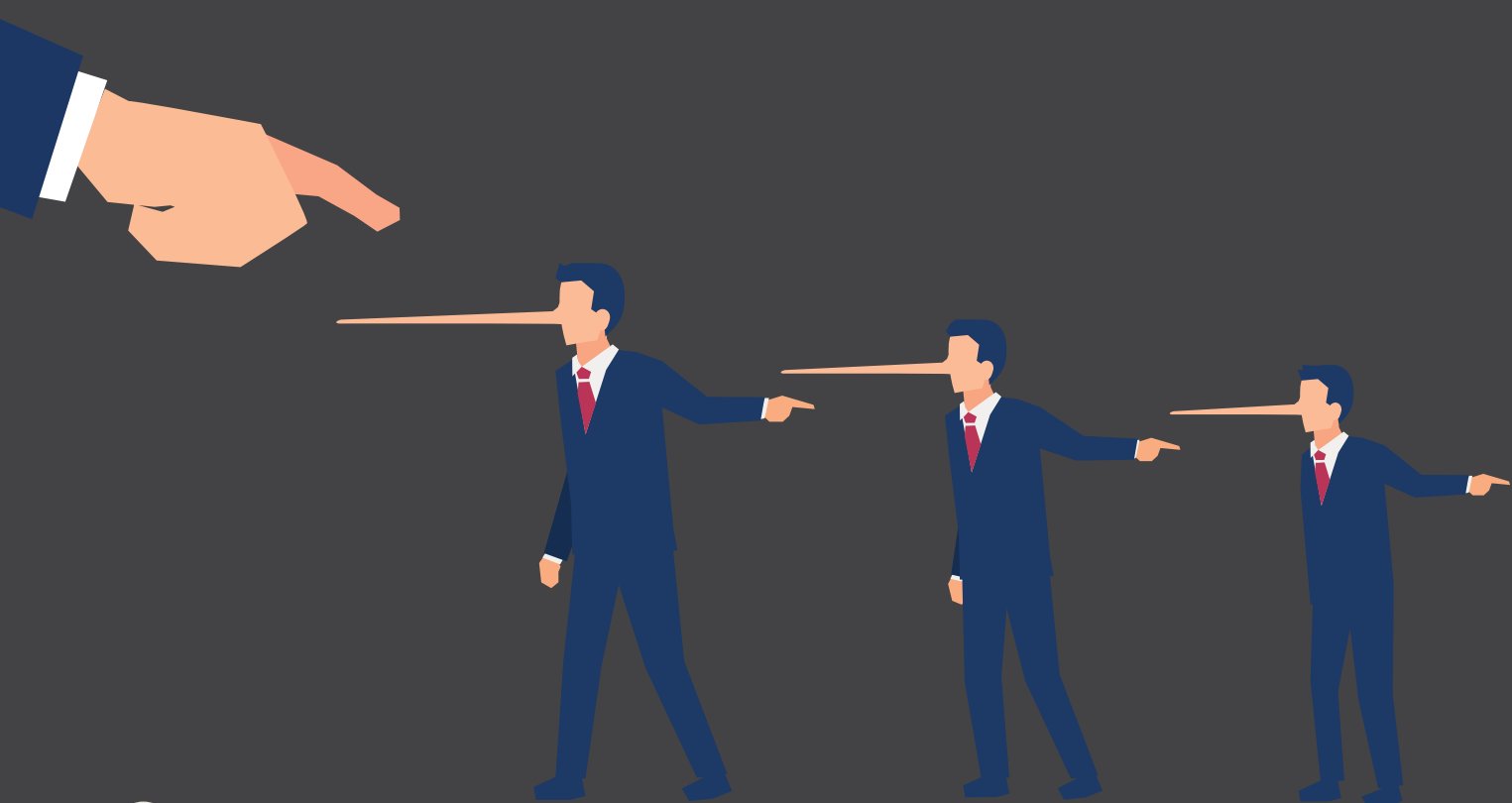
As inequality increases, worsened by the climate crisis, the political left must address the concerns of working-class majorities to have any hope of winning elections and implementing policy. However one feels about the formulation of justice, policy solutions that place the costs of the climate crisis more heavily on the shoulders of the public, and the middle and lower classes, are likely to alienate the majorities who decide elections. Without popular support, policy solutions will remain theoretical. The crisis will worsen. The battle will be lost.

To have hope of success, climate justice proposals must address inequality, not only between countries *but within them*. While the intentions of the 'rich nations' model may be good, in democracies, we are often righteous at the cost of any power to actually do right. To both seek justice and change the trajectory of the crisis, the better model for climate justice goes directly to the source.



THE CULTURE AND LAW CAMP

If the European Union is performing relatively well on the Climate Change Performance Index—speeding up its transition to green energy sources—China and the US, the world’s biggest economies, sit at the bottom of the list. Between them, the Chinese economy overtook that of America this year by some metrics. In 2023, its government issued more permits to build coal factories than it has at any time in the last seven years—more than any other country. This, ironically, was done in response to increased demands for energy driven by heat and drought resulting from climate change. In the U.S., the Biden administration has just signed off on “Willow,” the Alaskan oil drilling project set to produce six hundred billion barrels of oil in the coming decades. Continued high emissions by these, the world’s biggest economies, will spiral climate change past critical tipping points leading to rapid warming and ecosystem collapse.



Though acting with full awareness of the cost to the world and future generations, neither the US nor China has agreed to a “loss and damage” fund to offset the damage. Though some point out that in the case of China, the country is not responsible for historic emissions. The logic here is a bit fuzzy. In moral terms, awareness (intent) is greater than it was in the 18th and 19th centuries. In practical terms, when it comes to suffering or survival, it makes no difference who was responsible for emissions year by year. The collapse of ecosystems will not slow so that more recently industrialized nations can catch up. Solutions to the climate crisis must go beyond funds for mitigation straight to the modes of production and sources of destruction wherever they occur.

When playing the fault-finding game, there has, at points, been a tendency to blame generations past. This view holds that our forebears, even as late as the Baby Boomer generation, are guiltier than current generations for “making most of the mess” and leaving younger people with the cost. The reasoning is dubious, but it gets us to a fundamental problem with the collective blame approach. Consider how our justice system accounts for intent in assigning guilt: accidents don’t carry the same legal penalties as planned crimes. By this reasoning, a young person taking a flight or visiting McDonald’s today, being more aware of the climate consequences than was her grandmother, is arguably guiltier since previous generations lacked

knowledge. Today, fully cognizant of the crisis, Americans throw away sixty million plastic water bottles—a product mass marketed after the Millennial generation had begun to appear. In light of this, it makes little sense to try and render guilt generational. After all, if you swapped grandfather for grandson, poor citizen for rich, any one national for another, how likely is it that the damning choice itself will change? John Steinbeck famously observed that the poor in America “see themselves not as an exploited proletariat, but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires.” Even if we blame the wealthiest, is it not likely that, given the chance, the poor will make the same choices? At the heart of all moralizing over human behavior is the haunting question of whether being perpetrator or victim is ever more than a matter of luck.

This observation need not undermine the premise of climate justice but rather point us to a more durable solution than shuffling the cards with redistribution, which, desirable or not, isn’t likely to change the deck itself.

The better chance for climate justice lies in refashioning the ideologies, the behaviors, and the modes of production that encourage overconsumption and pollute the environment. Conveniently, these tend to be the same ideas and processes that engender exploitation, alienation, and inequality.

Let’s start with our cultural mentality. According to the UN and Oxfam, the world’s richest 10% were responsible for 50% of global emissions in 2015. The wealthiest 1% alone contributed a shocking 15% of global emissions. The poorest 50% were only responsible for 10%. This stunning disparity is consistent across history and geography. Even the well-intended played a role. In 2017 Bill Gates contributed 1600 tonnes of greenhouse gases—the equivalent of 105 Americans’ yearly emissions—with his flight habits alone. Compare that to 90% of the world’s population, which has never flown at all, and contextualize it in an age when most meetings and talks could happen without long-distance travel,

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THE BETTER CHANCE FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE LIES IN REFASHIONING THE IDEOLOGIES, THE BEHAVIORS, AND THE MODES OF PRODUCTION THAT ENCOURAGE OVERCONSUMPTION AND POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT.

thanks to Gates’ own innovations! The problem becomes obvious, and the limits of using population-level blame become apparent.

At a cultural level, we will not be able to fight the root causes of either climate change or the inequalities driven by exploitation so long as the lifestyles of the wealthiest glorify overconsumption. Indeed, without changing our ideal of consumerism, growing wealth in any country is likely to worsen the climate crisis, not help its victims. To give a common example, if car ownership in China increases to the level currently seen in the U.S., the number of vehicles in the world will grow by 40%, spiraling emissions well beyond anyone’s control. The same would be true for other aspirational habits: international travel, multiple homes, big homes in sprawling suburbs, fast cars, burgers, and steaks, all of the showpieces of wealth in our modern culture are driving our species off a cliff. The future of humanity must be urban, low consumption, and mostly vegetarian for humanity to have a chance. Compensation for damages wrought is key to justice, but changing our values going forward is central to any realistic hope for survival. We must dethrone our travel influencers, fast food restaurants, our retail therapists from their perches as pinnacles of aspiration. We must change the system that exploits the poor to put them on those perches; otherwise, redistribution will be for naught.

Those pursuing climate justice through the legal system are trying to do just this. Lawsuits targeting exploitative businesses and lax regulatory environments go directly to the sources of both emissions and injustice to seek systemic change. To offer one salient example, in the last few years, more than twenty lawsuits have been filed by states and interest groups to hold oil companies, which took home two hundred billion in profits in 2022, accountable for misleading the public and causing harm to the environment. The lawsuits wending their way through the appeals system so far are meeting with success, even as oil companies argue that the state, not they, should have to deal with climate change—fully cognizant that their business model of pollution with no penalties will make that very thing impossible. This kind of regulatory and corporate accountability is a second must if we are to have any hope for either change or climate justice. A system of production that offers wild, unalloyed rewards to those who despoil the natural world and then offloads the costs of its destruction to the victims of that destruction can never offer a survivable path forward. The advocates of climate litigation around the world are seeking to use the law to change the model so that the costs of environmental destruction must be paid by the destroyers rather than managed as fallout after the fact by states and their populations.

This approach bypasses the murky questions of collective guilt. It steps over the limits of changing compensation models without changing systems. It addresses injustice by cleaving exploitation from profit in principle, seeking to repair the engine that drives inequity. More must be done in conjunction with this; more must always be done, but without this fundamental change, nothing else can succeed.

Ultimately, the solution to climate injustice must be to steer not just profits but the values that frame them. To shift from a society that equates material accumulation with “success” and equates exploitation with power to one that values our duty to honor what we’ve been given and gives primacy to the recognition that the common good of the natural world, of which we are a part, is key to our survival; that ensuring its health precedes all other forms of good.

This needn’t be framed as sacrifice. Research is clear that past a point where an individual has secured basic security—housing, food, and medical care—increasing wealth does not increase happiness. Luxury purchases do not create contentment. Longevity, health, and happiness have consistently been shown to derive from strong relationships, an outcome of what we invest in our experiences of one another. Doing good for the world, as it turns out, is self-serving.

Beyond questions of justice, of who should pay, or how to get the public onboard lies this deeper one of how to get our species as a whole to see how badly we’ve been misled and misled ourselves. And how to change the model so it reflects the truth of us.



A Stark Warning and a Call to Action

JAN CLAUS DI BLASIO '04

CITY OF ROME II TEACHER, SUSTAINABILITY & SERVICE COORDINATOR

The end of March was marked by the long-awaited release of the final installment of IPCC—the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which closes the Sixth Assessment Report that began in 2021.

The Synthesis Report follows the Working Group 1 report, *The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change* (2021), the Working Group 2 report, *Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (2022), and the Working Group 3 report, *Mitigation of Climate Change* (2022). The next installment will not be released until 2027, so this enormous scientific undertaking will hopefully inform the policies of the world's governments in this crucial time in history.



ipcc
INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON climate change

Global Warming of 1.5°C

An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty

Summary for Policymakers

WHAT IS THE IPCC REPORT?

The story behind these reports is one of extraordinary international collaboration between scientists from all of the 195 nations that govern the panel, and, despite the political tug-of-war and conflicting interests that determine climate politics these days, the official endorsement of governments adds political legitimacy to the reports' already strong scientific legitimacy.

This work collects and synthesizes tens of thousands of scientific contributions from around the globe to present a clear, transparent assessment of one of the greatest challenges we are facing this century. Though the staggering size of these reports makes War and Peace look like a novella, politicians and ordinary citizens can access the synthesis reports, which are more digestible and accessible in both terminology and scope.

Following is a summary of what I believe are some of the most valuable findings that ought to be known to all of the members of the St. Stephen's community, who are, after all, also citizens of the Earth.

To begin, the report confirms what my professor at Lund University, Kimberly Nicholas, author of *Under the Sky We Make*, one of our guest speakers two years ago, taught us at the start of our academic career in the field of Sustainability Sciences:

- It's Real
- It's Us
- It's Bad
- Scientists agree
- There's hope!

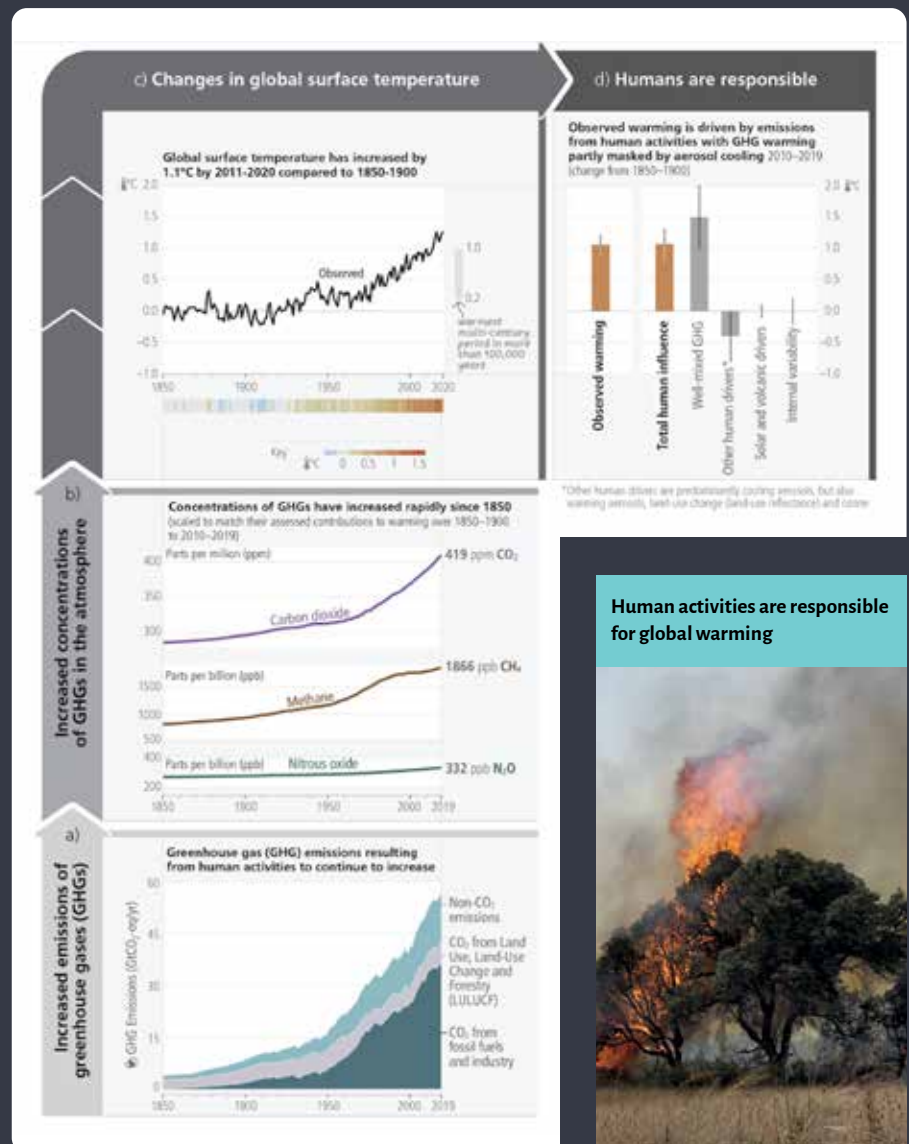
LET'S
**SAVE THE
WORLD**
TOGETHER

But that window of opportunity will be open for a while: the uncertainty in our feedback mechanisms and the inherent complexity of our life support systems challenge their resilience under the pressure of anthropogenic activities!

One of the key figures in climate change negotiations is the 1.5 °C target which identifies the threshold above which our average global temperature should not rise within the next seven years, that is, 2030. To be honest, the world will still be a different place even if we do succeed in implementing this ambitious but feasible global action plan that is required to achieve this goal, but, according to scientists, the impacts will not be as irreversible and devastating (yet for some ecosystems, such as the Arctic ecosystems irreversibility is very close; tipping points are within reach). Mitigation and adaptation are necessary at this

stage because, accordingly to the report, adaptation to climate change "does not prevent all losses and damages."

We currently find ourselves edging towards 1.1°C compared to preindustrial levels of 1850-1900. And there is no doubt in the report that 100% of these changes are to be attributed to the emissions of greenhouse gases from "land use and land use change, lifestyle and patterns of consumption, and production." The informative infographic from the report (IPCC 2023 Fig. 2.1) shows the increase in greenhouse gas emissions until 2019 (a), the rising concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (carbon dioxide currently peaking at 419 parts per million, (b), the changes in global surface temperature over the last 170 years (c), and the contribution of human activities to the observed warming (d).



There is an absolute scientific consensus on the issue of Climate Change; the global community of researchers agrees on the anthropogenic causes of climate change, and we can no longer waste any time accommodating the views of a small minority who use doubt as a weapon to slow down, or even halt, the political action that we need to see (*I strongly recommend the ever relevant book Merchants of Doubt - How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway*).

One of the most powerful statements is the following, and this should leave room for no doubt:

- Human activities have “unequivocally caused global warming,” which is stated with high confidence, indicating the second highest qualifier used to support the statements and findings in the report.
- Scientists have collected evidence to demonstrate that “widespread and rapid changes” are already affecting the atmosphere, the ocean, the cryosphere (where water is in solid form, i.e., glaciers, ice caps, etc.), and the biosphere with “losses and damages to nature and people.”
- In this final instalment, the impacts of climate change are far-reaching and include mental health with climate change contributing to anxiety, trauma, depression, and grief, among others, the rise of zoonoses, infectious diseases that originate in animal vectors, and the increase in the “occurrence of climate-related food-borne and water-borne diseases.”
- The impacts of climate change manifest themselves with virulence when coupled with high vulnerability, a factor that often exacerbates existing humanitarian crises and conflicts and the migratory phenomena and displacements that are such a dramatic phenomenon in the Mediterranean (and elsewhere) in this period in history.

The table, published in the latest report, highlights the confidence with which changes in specific indicators can be attributed to human influence, and the final row, “Synthesis,” leaves no actual room for any doubt.

Change in indicator	Observed change assessment	Human contribution assessment
Atmosphere and water cycle		
Warming of global mean surface air temperature since 1850-1900		likely range of human contribution (0.8-1.3°C) encompasses the very likely range of observed warming (0.9-1.2°C)
Warming of the troposphere since 1979		Main driver
Cooling of the lower stratosphere since the mid-20th century		Main driver 1979 - mid-1990s
Large-scale precipitation and upper troposphere humidity changes since 1979		
Expansion of the zonal mean Hadley Circulation since the 1980s		Southern Hemisphere
Ocean		
Ocean heat content increase since the 1970s		Main driver
Salinity changes since the mid-20th century		
Global mean sea level rise since 1970		Main driver
Cryosphere		
Arctic sea ice loss since 1979		Main driver
Reduction in Northern Hemisphere springtime snow cover since 1950		
Greenland ice sheet mass loss since 1990s		
Antarctic ice sheet mass loss since 1990s		Limited evidence & medium agreement
Retreat of glaciers		Main driver
Carbon cycle		
Increased amplitude of the seasonal cycle of atmospheric CO ₂ since the early 1960s		Main driver
Acidification of the global surface ocean		Main driver
Land climate		
Mean surface air temperature over land (about 40% larger than global mean warming)		Main driver
Synthesis		
Warming of the global climate system since preindustrial times		

Key

medium confidence	likely / high confidence	very likely	extremely likely	virtually certain	fact
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TABLE 2.1 IPCC REPORT (2023)

Emissions have grown in most regions but are distributed unevenly, both in the present day and cumulatively in 1850

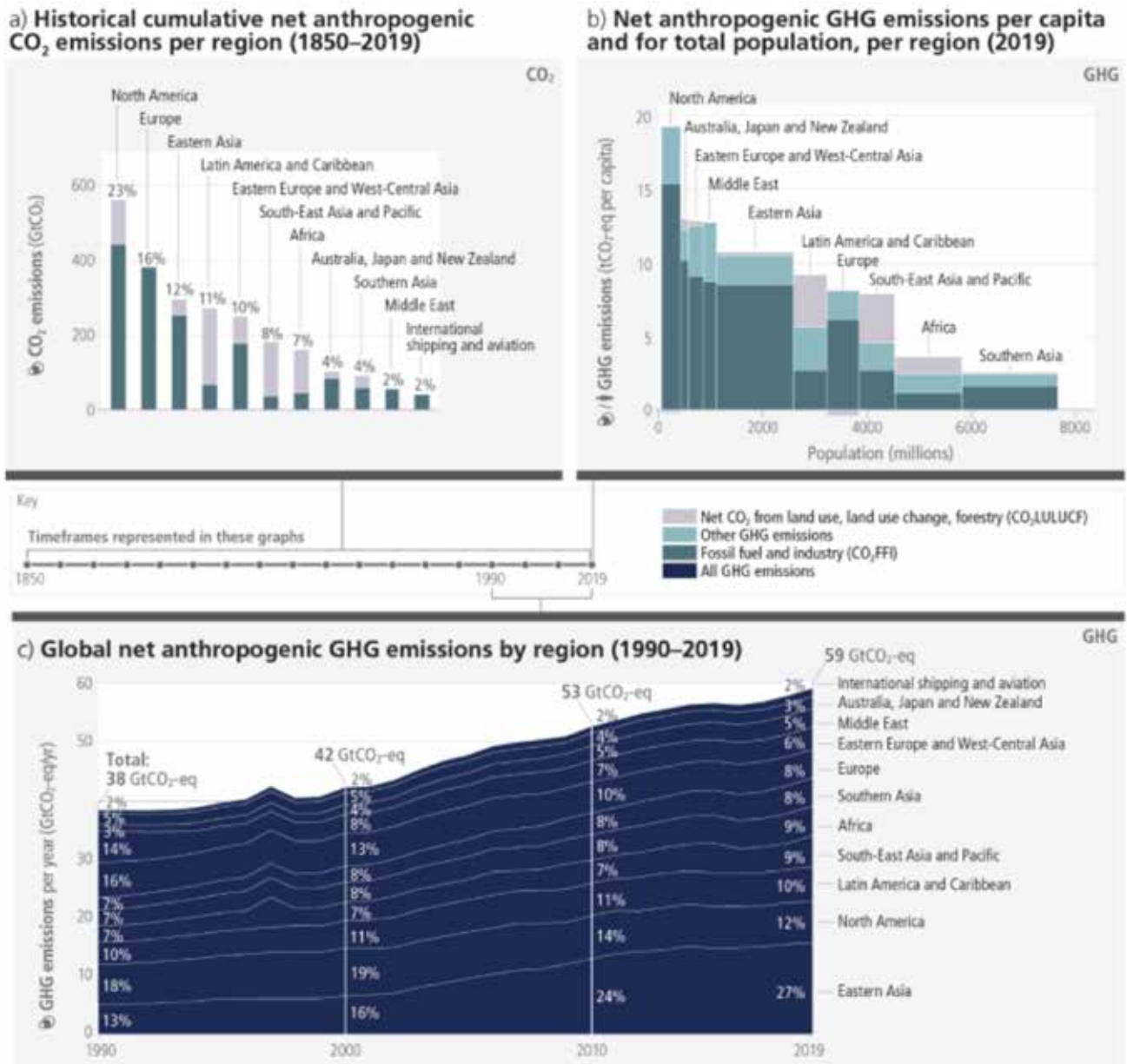


Figure 2.2 from the report breaks down the regional contributions to greenhouse gas emissions:

As stated before, societies that are less resilient and more vulnerable to the immediate effects of climate change are also denied the right to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the seventeen interlinked objectives that the United Nations General Assembly identified as the goals of Agenda 2030. These include food and water security as extreme events such as droughts, natural

disasters, wildfires, sea level increase (which could rise by 2-3 even in a low emissions pathway), hurricanes or floods (generally described as becoming more common with high confidence), threaten the livelihoods of entire communities as well as the ecosystems that support them (with the Sixth Extinction currently underway). However, these same societies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the

SIDS (Small Island Developing States), are the least responsible for the historical emissions yet the most affected by already existing loss and damage to nature and people, highlighting how climate justice is an issue of equity, inclusion and of common but differentiated responsibilities; over 3 billion people live in areas that "are highly vulnerable to climate change."



THE FUTURE THAT AWAITS US

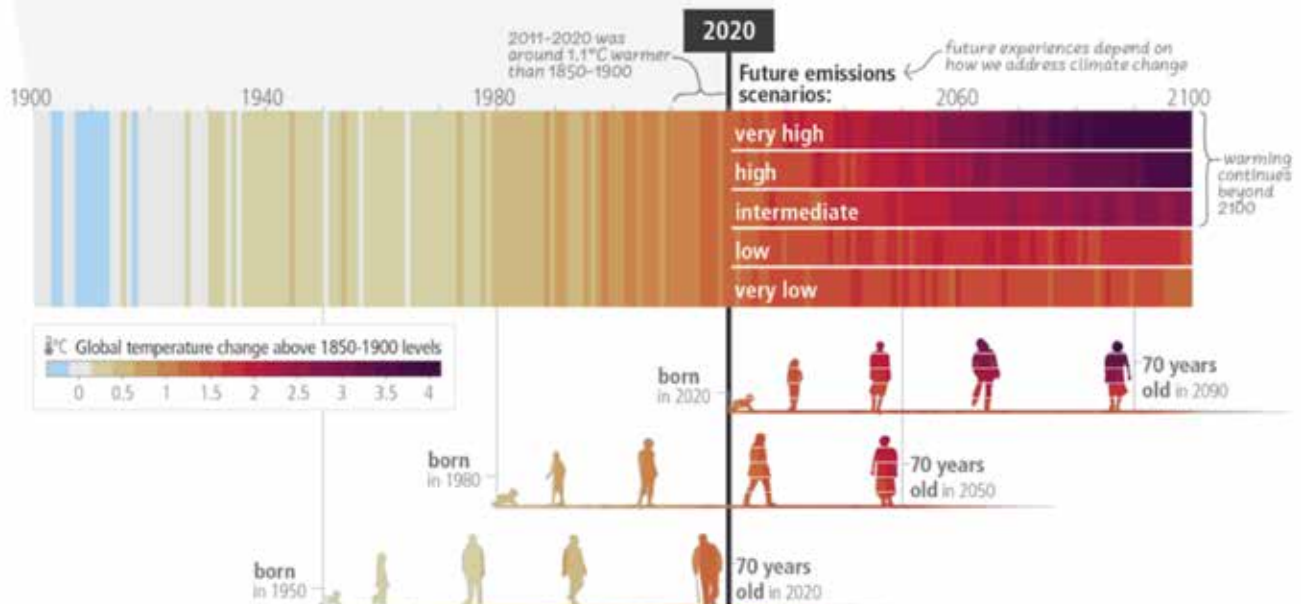
Several scenarios (the so-called shared socio-economic pathways) outline the future that awaits us and why it is crucial to act now. Overall, scientists agree that Net Zero emissions are fundamental (balancing any new emissions with the

removal of the equivalent emissions from the atmosphere, including Carbon and Capture Storage) and will need to be achieved in this century to stop global warming and the decarbonization of our societies. This will require, for example, scaling up financing and technology transfer for countries in the Global South and divesting from the fossil fuel

industries. The pathways range from a desirable sustainable pathway, in which significant reductions in emissions keep the temperature increase under 1.5° by 2100 (although it would still take several decades to see the effect of these reductions) or dramatic pathways (business as usual) that account for an increase of over 4° , an unthinkable scenario.

Figure SPM.1 from the report is pretty self-explanatory:

c) The extent to which current and future generations will experience a hotter and different world depends on choices now and in the near-term



THE FUTURE THAT AWAITS US

Schools can guide and shape our future through eco-literacy, which ought to become another language that graduates from institutions like ours should speak as fluently as any other language.

On this, the report states with high confidence:

“Climate literacy and information provided through climate services and community approaches, including those that are informed by Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge, can accelerate behavioural changes and planning.”

This will require changing our lifestyles (the two most significant changes are our modes of transportation and our diets: we need to fly and drive less and switch to plant-based protein) and holding governments and local institutions accountable for climate inaction. But, it is difficult to fight something you have limited knowledge about; parents, teachers, students, and alumni should all spend some time becoming acquainted with their bioregion, developing their biophilia, their geographic knowledge, and understanding of the socio-economic-environmental interlinkages in current events. Students would do well to pursue careers grounded in environmental, agrarian, and geographic sectors and become agents of change or hummingbirds (ecological super specialists), as one of my heroes, Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan social, environmental, and political activist who founded the Green Belt Movement recounts in a traditional environmental fable.

Italy is one of the countries that will be hit the hardest by climate change, given its geological fragility and central position in the Mediterranean. Students learned more about this from recent guest speaker Stefano Liberti, author of *Terra Bruciata*. Come la crisi ambientale sta cambiando l'Italia, and the Italian Climate Network. But ultimately, the IPCC report states that the cost of investing in measures to mitigate climate change is significantly lower than the costs of dealing with its consequences and will have multiple benefits beyond halting global warming alone.

The time of inaction is over. We have the knowledge we need. Let this report not be forgotten but especially not be remembered as yet another canary in the (carbon-emitting) coal mine.

The IPCC report: a stark warning with a silver lining (if we can reach for it!)



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CLIMATE LITERACY AND INFORMATION PROVIDED THROUGH CLIMATE SERVICES AND COMMUNITY APPROACHES, INCLUDING THOSE THAT ARE INFORMED BY INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, CAN ACCELERATE BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES AND PLANNING.



PART III:

Our Society Today Student OP-ED Pages

Earlier this Spring, we asked several students across all grades to share their opinions about the state of our society today about gender, age, and race. Here's a sample of what they had to say.



The Impact of Ageism

BY ELIJAH MEYERHANS '24

Ageism is the discrimination or prejudice of people based on their age. It is most prevalent against older adults but can affect people of all ages. Ageism is a form of discrimination that is not spoken about often. When discrimination is mentioned, in general, the thought of racism or sexism is more common than the thought of ageism. Ageism, however, is important to address, as many suffer from it on a daily basis.

As mentioned above, ageism is perpetrated chiefly against older adults. This is primarily due to the belief that older adults are forgetful, slow, and unproductive. Although it is true that as humans get older, their cognitive abilities decrease, this does not mean that they are not intelligent or less valuable than anyone else in society. Because of this belief, older adults' voices are often disregarded by ageists. Ageism based on these factors can significantly impact the lives of these older adults. For instance, they may be overlooked for job opportunities, despite their experience and qualifications. This makes their lives much more difficult. Older adults often rely on their job to survive and do not have another option. This is a clear disadvantage for older adults. There is so much evidence to back up this claim. For example, according to a 2019 AARP study, nearly 2 in 3 workers aged 45 and older have seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace. The same study found that 3 in 5 older workers believe age discrimination is a barrier to getting a job. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported that

age discrimination claims accounted for 21.4% of all discrimination charges filed in 2020, making it the third most common type of discrimination complaint. Nobody talks about ageism, yet it is the third most common form of discrimination complaint.

Another area in which ageism occurs is in social media. Only youth is glorified, leading to the belief that age simply means unattractive. This is belittling towards the older generation. An example of this is in advertising, especially in the beauty and fashion industry. Oftentimes, brands in this industry only use young models to display their products. This is because younger models may have flawless skin, perfect teeth, and other physical features generally associated with the younger generation. This is clearly ageist and may be a problem for older models. Their opportunity is simply getting stripped from them. Older adults are also rarely or never positively represented in the media. They are usually portrayed as weak, useless, irrelevant, and unattractive when they are represented. This builds a negative image of older adults and reinforces the idea that age is synonymous with decline and unattractiveness. This is dangerous, as it may significantly impact future generations' biases. Portraying older adults in this way may have a genuine impact on the goodwill of young people. A 2020 report by the United Nations found that ageism is pervasive in media and advertising and that older people are often underrepresented, stereotyped, or portrayed in a negative light. Once again, this is worrying for the future.

Lastly, ageism may have a profound impact on the mental health of older adults. It may impact how older adults view themselves and their place in society. They may feel pressure to conceal their age and strive to look younger. This, too, is damaging. Society ought to be a welcoming place without discrimination and prejudice. It is immoral to discriminate against someone because of their identity. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), suicide rates are highest among older adults, often highest among men over 70. In addition, older adults who experience social isolation, financial stress, or health problems are at an increased risk for suicide. Ageism can exacerbate these risk factors by contributing to social isolation and feelings of worthlessness, particularly if older adults experience discrimination in healthcare, employment, or other areas of life.

In conclusion, ageism is an issue that needs to be talked about more. It negatively affects so many people every day. In fact, a 2017 survey by the American Psychological Association found that 82% of adults over age 60 report experiencing ageism in everyday life. Not just once or twice a year, but every day. Our responsibility is to challenge ageism wherever we encounter it and advocate for policies and practices that promote inclusivity and respect for all ages. Only by recognizing the value and potential of all individuals, regardless of age, can we build a truly equitable and just society.

The Phenomenon of Elder Talk

BY ADAM HUSAIN '26

Ageism is a form of discrimination revolving around a person's age. It is no secret that this is a problem, and it is a problem experienced on both sides of the age spectrum. Despite this, many still don't seem to understand the problems and issues that come with this sort of discrimination and, especially, why it happens.

Ageism can be seen in nearly every age group—even kids are predisposed to ageism. On the playground, for example, kids may be excluded from activities by other kids for being too young. Although this is a minor case, experiencing or perpetrating it at a young age can develop this exclusionary attitude toward others as children grow. It can manifest later in life in the workplace and other day-to-day situations. Some see youth as a privilege and may use it as an advantage in some instances.



To understand ageism, it is essential to realize that ageism falls into three categories; institutional, interpersonal, and internalized, according to Medical News Today. "Institutional ageism occurs when an institution perpetuates ageism through its actions and policies," states the World Health Organization. "Interpersonal ageism occurs in social interactions," and finally, "internalized ageism is when a person internalizes ageist beliefs and applies them to themselves." Ageism can also be classified based on whether it is hostile or benevolent and whether the person is consciously doing it. According to the 2020 national poll on healthy aging, more than 82% of older Americans have experienced some sort of ageism, the most common type being through the media (Medical News Today).

Many human rights organizations, such as the UNHCR, have begun to spread the word. Claudia Mahler, an independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, spoke to the UNHCR about the discrimination against this age group. "There cannot be dignity and equality of rights if older persons continue to be viewed primarily as beneficiaries of care and support that create pressure on budgets and resources," she said, implying that the equality and rights that we all stand for cannot function if older people are treated differently. Mahler also explained how ageism often plays a crucial role in life-or-death situations. She recounted that older patients are often subject to patronizing language and are sometimes seen as useless or disposable. Clearly, this isn't the right mentality when approaching equality as a whole.

According to a 2021 study by Oxford Academic, even how we speak to certain people can harm them. A phenomenon known as "elder talk," by oversimplifying language and sometimes using rhythmic tones for those with trouble hearing, has

proven to be patronizing and make the elders feel undermined and powerless. Additionally, elder talk is said to increase the struggles of people with dementia. Today's media doesn't seem to help this either. It now seems a norm to talk to both young children and older adults like this, which creates an unfair power balance with the respective elders. This can be seen throughout the culture in movies, shows, and books, undermining and diminishing the daily issues and struggles older adults may experience, further perpetuating ignorance.

Although the topic is still not mentioned enough, the World Health Organization has actually strategized three ways to fight ageism:



- education to dispel myths and stereotypes and raise awareness of the impact of ageism;
- intergenerational interventions, which create cooperation and empathy between age groups; and
- law and policy changes, which can reduce inequity and discrimination (Medical News Today).

In conclusion, ageism can be seen in every age group, though it is most prevalent when interacting with older generations. Ageism isn't just about respecting age; it's about rights and human rights—neither of which is discussed enough. It affects everyone in some way, whether a relative, neighbor, colleague, friend, or you. If we, as a population, want to achieve full equality, this means that no matter the age, we are all equal and should be treated as such.



Mass Incarceration - The New Racial Control

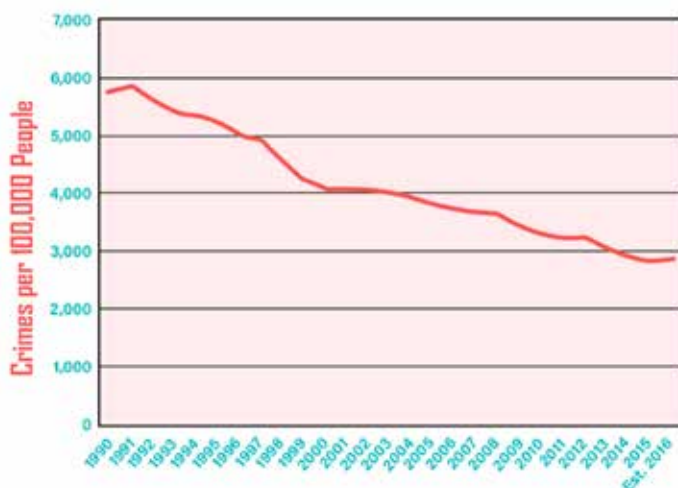
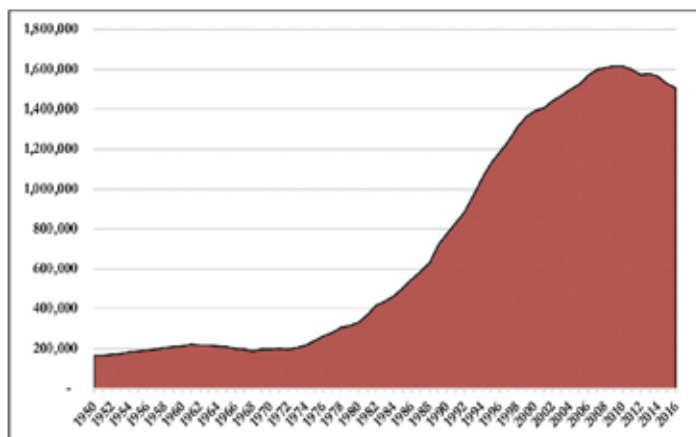
BY EMMA CARP '23

Throughout American history, there has been some form of racial control, from Slavery to Jim Crow and now mass incarceration. Mass incarceration, quite simply, is the disproportionate number of people being incarcerated, with the United States having the highest incarceration rates in the world, having increased by 500% since 1980. However, historically, there have been no significant changes in crime rates other than declining; there have been substantial changes in law and how it is enforced. To summarize, the form of punishment in America implements excessively harsh sentences and disproportionately incarcerates and affects minorities. This article will identify the four significant aspects of mass incarceration: its history, the roundup, behind court doors, and the invisible aftermath.

Mass incarceration started with the problem of drug abuse, called "the war on drugs," declared by Richard Nixon but enforced by Ronald Reagan, which was declared a national emergency. However, interestingly enough, drug rates were declining. These "getting tough on crime" movements, although not intentionally developed to control black people, led to policies that used fear to manipulate a delicately hidden racial rhetoric to enforce stricter laws. These laws resulted in a staggering increase in incarceration, disproportionately affecting minorities and increasing overly harsh sentences in terms of even minor drug violations.

Figures 1 & 2: Prison System Growth (1950-2016) and Crime Rates per 100 People (1990-2016) show a descent in crime rate but an increase in incarceration rate.

Prison System Growth (1950-2016)



Currently, immense numbers of people are being incarcerated, with 90% of those being minorities, for drug offenses; this is because police and law enforcement are given significant discretion as to whom they can stop, search, arrest, and charge; they direct drug searches in primarily minority communities, and are rewarded financially by drug forfeiture laws and federal grants. As there is no meaningful and effective monitoring, police discretion operates relatively unconstrainedly, allowing a free implication of racial biases and stereotypes as a factor of whom to stop and search. For example, an experiment conducted in Volusia County, Florida, reveals that only 5% of drivers on the road were minorities. However, more than 80% of people stopped and searched were minorities. This bias has led to a massive disparity in arrests, with black men incarcerated at a rate of 7 times higher than white men when committing the same crime. In addition, 80% of people selling/using drugs are white, with only 15% being black; however, 50% of drug arrests are of black people. These racially biased searches and arrests guarantee that most people swept into the judicial system are black people and people of minorities.

Once someone is convicted, but more specifically minorities, they are often denied meaningful representation and have to face prosecutors, who often have the most leverage in a trial:

- Prosecutors can send defendants to the federal system, where retribution is far more extreme.
- Prosecutors can choose whether to present a good plea deal to the defendant or pile up more charges as long as probable cause is present, regardless of whether it can be realistically proven. This leads to defendants admitting to crimes they are not guilty of to reduce their sentence.
- Despite evidence, prosecutors can dismiss a case for any or no reason.



A prosecutor can enforce and take advantage of any of these powers with no discretion, as prosecutors and court members cannot be challenged for racial bias unless going through highly complicated procedures and obstacles that come with it. A 2017 [report](#) by Carlos Berejo found that "white defendants in Wisconsin were 25 percent more likely than their black counterparts to have criminal charges dropped or reduced to less serious crimes." Revealing another disproportion, where minorities are more likely to be incarcerated.

Once a convict steps out of prison, they are subject to oppressive and discriminatory rules that ensure that they will seldom be able to integrate back into mainstream society and will be legally discriminated against for the remainder of their lives. These sanctions consist of denied employment, denied public housing, denied education, denied voting rights, and denied public benefits. These denied human rights put ex-convicts at an unprecedented disadvantage in which returning to what got them convicted in the first place is often one's only means of survival. This creates a large population of predominantly minorities that will remain at an inferior status for the rest of their lives and are legally subject to discrimination, all because of being an ex-convict, which in many cases are minor offenses.

In summary, the United States has had a history of legalized racial control, tailored to its present time and ideologies, from slavery to Jim Crow to mass incarceration. Starting with "The War on Drugs," which has and continues to round people up in a racially biased manner, prosecutes and charges defendants with extremely harsh sentences, and finally discriminates against convicts, relegating them to an inferior status. Reform in America's justice system is the only solution to this racial control system. One theorist, Iris Marion Young, explains, "If one thinks about racism by examining only one wire of the cage, or one form of disadvantage, it is difficult to understand how and why the bird is trapped. Only a large number of wires arranged in a specific way and connected to one another serve to enclose the bird and to ensure that I cannot escape." Finally, this reveals how America's justice system, although not explicitly developed to control black minorities, works and operates with individual laws, institutions, and practices that individually may not always seem to discriminate but, when placed together, form a cage to ensure that the bird can never indeed fly free.

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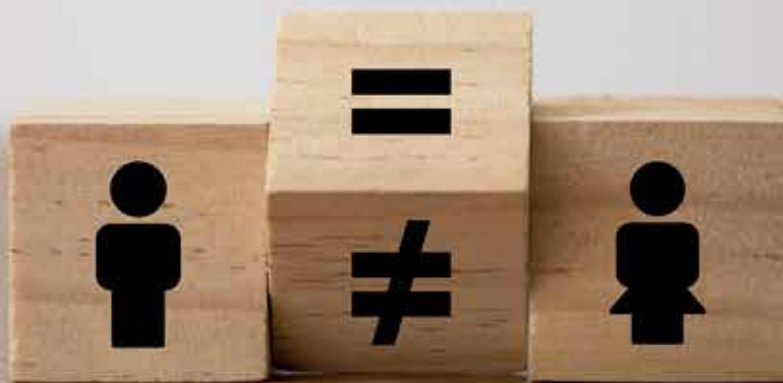
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Combating Sexism in All Its Manifestations

BY LUCA MEROLA '26

Sexism can affect anyone, regardless of their gender. Indeed, women and those who identify as female are overly affected by sexism, but men can also experience it in various ways. For example, men are often expected to conform to traditional masculine roles, including; not showing emotions and prioritizing work over family. Men may also face discrimination when they pursue jobs that have a majority of women in them, for example, being a nurse. Another example where men can experience lots of sexism is objectification. Males can be objectified and treated like objects for sexual purposes, which can result in harassment, violence, and other types of abuse. In particular, males who identify as gay or bisexual may experience some prejudice because of their sexual orientation.

One example of a very controversial and important sexist inequality still seen today is the unequal pay between men and women. Women and marginalized gender groups are often paid less than their male counterparts for the same work. This gender pay gap exists across many industries and can have long-lasting effects on individuals and their families. This occurs for various reasons, such as the perception that women work more as a hobby or way to fill their leisure time than as a means of providing for their families. This is entirely incorrect since it implies that only men are capable of taking care of themselves or their families and that women have no control over this.



Gender stereotypes have complex psychological roots shaped by social, cognitive, and cultural factors. Children learn gender roles and stereotypes through socialization, which includes observation, imitation, and reinforcement. As they grow, children notice everything that happens and subsequently imitate it. For instance, kids could learn gender-specific behaviors from watching their parents and other adults do them. According to research, people analyze information about others based on their gender using cognitive shortcuts. These schemas can result in prejudices and stereotypes that influence how individuals view and relate to others. People might believe, for instance, that men are more assertive or aggressive than women or that women are more sentimental or nurturing than men. Lastly, as can be seen by looking at the different parts of the world, gender stereotypes are reinforced by cultural norms and expectations. These expectations can be transmitted through education, media, and other social institutions. For example, movies and TV shows often portray women and men in very stereotypical roles and ways, such as the strong hero for the male character and the caring, supportive mother for the women.

In conclusion, regardless of one's gender identification, sexism is a type of discrimination and prejudice that is based on a person's gender and can harm anyone. Sexism can take many

forms, including gender stereotypes, objectification, unfair treatment, and double standards. It can be destructive to both people and society as a whole. Men can encounter sexism in a variety of ways, even though it disproportionately affects women and marginalized gender groups. A multifaceted strategy is needed to address and combat sexism, including changing institutional, social, and cultural norms that uphold gender inequity. We can build a more just and equitable society for all people by advancing gender equality and combating sexism in all of its manifestations.



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The Psychological Underpinnings of Gender Stereotypes

BY MATTIA BENTSON '26

Sexism relates to prejudice and discrimination against people based on their gender, typically directed at women. Sexism is shaped in several ways, including unequal compensation, finite career opportunities, objectification, harassment, and violence. Sexism encompasses attitudes and beliefs that support gender stereotypes and gender inequality, a detrimental and ubiquitous issue that impacts individuals and society. To connect to what I stated earlier, although sexism most frequently affects women, it can also negatively impact persons of other genders.

For instance, men may experience harassment or discrimination if they don't fit into stereotypical gender roles or exhibit behaviors that are seen as feminine. Moreover, because of their gender identity, those who identify as non-binary or not in the two broad gender spectrums may experience prejudice or marginalization. We must

work for equality and respect for all people, regardless of their gender identification, as we must acknowledge that sexism may affect people of all types.

The methods through which we acquire and interpret information about gender can be used to identify the psychological underpinnings of gender stereotypes. In order to explain how gender stereotypes emerge and persist, the following psychological hypotheses have been proposed; According to the social learning hypothesis, gender stereotypes are picked up through imitation, reinforcement, and observation. Children pick up on gendered attitudes and actions from their parents, peers, and the media, imitate them, and then receive reinforcement or punishment for conforming to gender standards. According to cognitive development theory, children's understanding of

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gender evolves in stages, with younger children relying on straightforward, binary choices (such as boys vs. girls) and older children developing a more complex understanding of gender that takes stereotypes and gender roles into account.

The #MeToo movement gained traction in 2017. Since then, our culture has undergone significant changes, such as a breakthrough in the shame and silence around sexual harassment, assault, and misconduct. It also heightened attention to these concerns. One of the main achievements was a "change in policies" to prevent and handle sexual harassment and misbehavior; many companies and institutions have implemented new rules and procedures, including training programs, reporting systems, and disciplinary actions. Secondly, accountability has also been introduced, and the movement has resulted in the exposure and falls from grace of numerous prominent personalities due to sexual harassment and assault offenders, sending a signal that their behavior will not be accepted.

The #MeToo movement has prompted a broader discussion about gender equality and the need to combat toxic masculinity. However, to fully overcome the difficulties that sexism brings, there is still considerable work to be done. Although there has been general progress, many victims of sexual harassment and assault still encounter obstacles to justice and healing. Many businesses and institutions have been hesitant to make significant reforms.

The movement has also come under fire for lacking intersectionality and concentrating on high-profile instances that can obscure the realities of underrepresented communities. Overall, it is evident that much more work is required to create a culture free from sexual harassment and assault, even though the #MeToo movement has resulted in significant reforms and raised awareness.

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A Collective Effort Is Needed to Achieve Gender Equality

BY MATEO LARIO '24

Nowadays, with the rise of social media, gender stereotypes are omnipresent. Influencers and models are given more importance, and that greatly impacts our way of thinking and perceiving our world. Men are encouraged to be tough and independent and are portrayed as dominant, aggressive, and unemotional. The portrayal of women has often remained limited to traditional gender roles that are nurturing and submissive such as homemakers, caretakers, or the object of sexual desire.

Our awareness of gender stereotypes and their manifestation as sexism remains a significant issue society needs to continue to address. Sexism is a form of discrimination against a person due to their gender or sex. And though great strides have been made throughout the generations toward discrimination and combatting limited views, sexism plays out in a myriad of areas, such as unequal pay, exclusion from opportunities and positions, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. While women are disproportionately affected by sexism, men can also experience sexism in different ways, such as being pressured to conform to rigid gender norms or being dismissed for expressing emotions or vulnerability. Such perceptions amplify and create rigid gender norms, limiting a person's belief of what they can achieve or what their goals can be in life.

Sexism most likely originated through patriarchal structures and power imbalances that have historically favored men over women, leading to the marginalization and oppression of women. In many societies, women have been denied basic rights and opportunities, such as education, property ownership, and political participation, perpetuating gender inequality. Nowadays, women are getting more and more basic rights, yet there still are countries in which it still doesn't happen, and even in more "developed" countries, there are still many issues, one of them being unequal pay.

However, the future isn't looking so bad. The #MeToo movement brought a big change in how sexual harassment and assault are addressed and handled. It has encouraged various organizations in the United States to address this problem, such as &Rise and Callisto. The #MeToo

movement is a perfect example of how social media can also help address sexism. Although it was created in 2006, people only truly knew about it, and it only actually became viral in 2017 through the hashtag #metoo. The goal of the movement was to break the silence around sexual harassment (mostly done by men) and to make survivors feel safe and supported. Although the #MeToo movement did not really change anything at the federal level, it produced a major piece of legislation: the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021.

In conclusion, sexism is a complex issue that affects both men and women in various ways. It involves unequal treatment, gender stereotypes, and power imbalances that limit individual potential and opportunities for growth. Addressing sexism requires a collective effort to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors, promote gender equality, and create inclusive and safe environments for everyone. Social media can be beneficial and negative for sexism around the world. Although it may create specific standards and some influencers may encourage people to be sexist, it is also a quick, cheap, and easy way to spread information to battle sexism. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to achieve true gender equality. By working together, we can create a society that values and celebrates diversity, respect, and equality.

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IN MANY SOCIETIES, WOMEN HAVE BEEN DENIED BASIC RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES, SUCH AS EDUCATION, PROPERTY OWNERSHIP, AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, PERPETUATING GENDER INEQUALITY.



Spring 2023 Creative Writing Portfolio: The Look of Things

I'm proud to present the following poems, prose poems, and short fiction by my spring semester creative writing students. They reflect not only my students' talent but their curiosity and nerve. The creative writing workshop is, after all, a place to experiment, to explore a variety of literary styles, to test one word against another. As a group, we settled on a theme for the portfolio that felt capacious enough to contain that variety: the look of things. Yes, here you'll find works full of concrete images, visually resonant metaphors, and responses to paintings and sculptures. But you'll also find works that think deeply about the transformative process of observation. Images haunt, says the poet Robert Hass, and I think you'll agree that these works linger in the mind long after a first reading. Look closely. You'll see.



eye

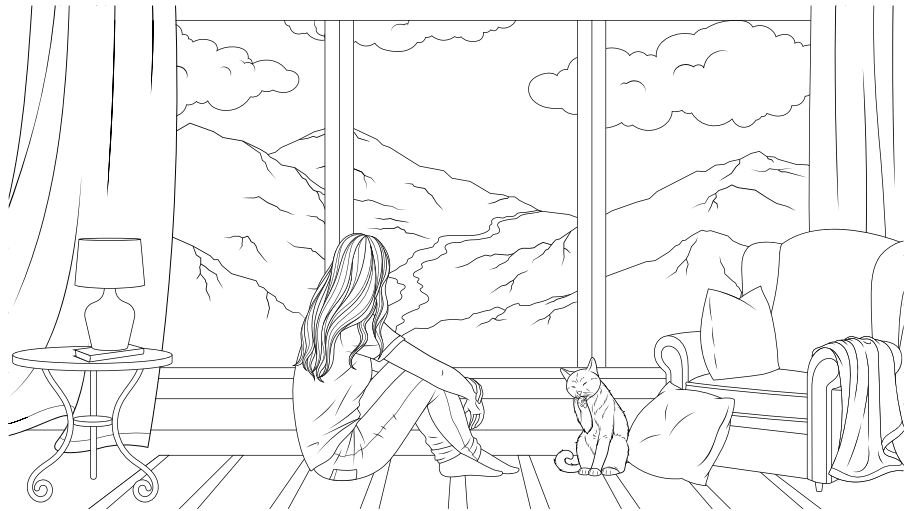
BY ELSA RECCHIONI BAIOCCHI '26



E for eternity.

e's how it starts
e's how it ends
*e*s are like eyes
 as *eye* looks at me
 calling to that final *e*

while lonely *y*,
 in the middle of my *I*,
 line of symmetry,
 like the surface of a lake,
 reflects my *I* in the eye.

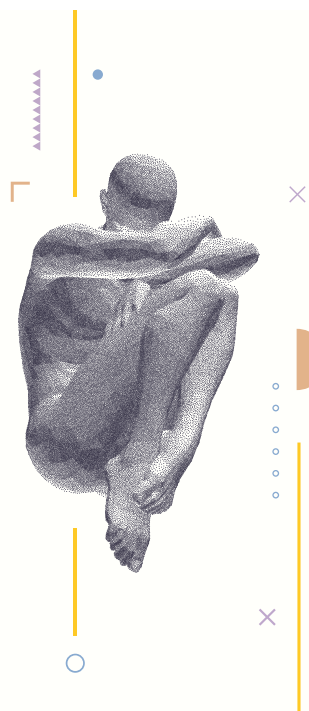


Presence

BY LENA DIDENOT '25

Whenever I think of that character I think of their presence. Not in mind nor in body but in being. I think of how something as simple as entering a room silences one's thoughts. How no less than their "being here" changes the atmosphere of a closed space.

How their presence never ceases to make you uncomfortable or how, without even getting out a single word or look, they are there, once again not in mind nor in body, but in being. I think of them as a constant shape with no face that never fails to spread this unbothered, clean, sophisticated, and intimidating presence. When I ask myself who that character or person might be, I somehow never find an answer.



Solitude

BY MARIE LOPEZ '25

Solitude is like
 a single candle in a dark cave
 illuminating every corner of the room

but it needs to be lit
 to continue shining throughout the night

The Eyes of the Crippled House on Everton Street

BY VITTORIA GIAMPIERI '26

I didn't want to remember Geraldine. I didn't want to remember her snow hair or ocean eyes. Those dense blue irises that discerned the dissimilar configurations of our evolving blue and green sphere. When Geraldine was happy her eyes were like millions of tiny little fish swimming between colorful algae in the sea. When she was angry her irises became darker, smaller, and the sea turned into a hostile, menacing tempest of opaque blues gushing and thrusting themselves into one another, like colossal waves. Her cornea expanded, thin red lines stretched across it, surrounding the blue tempest in her irises. When she was sad, the ocean was tranquil, but there were no fish, there were no colors, just minute droplets of water descending from her irises; the ocean fell from her eyes. Sometimes only teeny portions of the ocean fell like droplets, other times an entire river poured down. And when she was scared, her eyes shut completely and the blue ocean was nowhere to be seen.

I thought those memories had burnt down with the house, but apparently they still stirred around deep inside me. I brushed a lock of my snow hair from my face and glimpsed a coat of blue paint covering the walls of a petite bakery; fresh flowers hung from the windows, fluorescent and flourishing. Five round tables were placed neatly on the street and an old couple sat idly on two chairs, reading the daily news. A brood of pigeons squabbled. I inhaled the fresh air in my lungs; it had just rained.

I took the old set of keys from my bag



and opened the front door of the building. I pushed the door. The familiar scent of tobacco, vanilla and ashes hit my face like a bullet. The entrance was dimly lit by a single open window. I walked down the entrance hall, my feet tapping lightly on what was left of the crimson velvet carpet, and reached the living room. Old objects lay scattered on the flowery carpets and part of a still standing wooden table, with tall skinny figures for legs. We used to play cards on that table with grandma, usually with a piece of bread and raspberry jam, because it was Geraldine's favorite. Now there was no grandma, no bread and jam, no table and cards, and Geraldine? I walked out of the room and shut the door, bang. Now there wasn't even a room.

I ambled into my favorite part of the house, the room of the toy cupboard. It was a room of freedom, the room where Geraldine and I became fairies, princesses, pirates, thieves, tightrope walkers, rich women or lost girls in a jungle. Now what was left of the room were dirty curtains, a beautiful shade of red: crimson. The last of the cloth was covered by a veil of petite blue lilies.

My fingers navigated through the engravings on the cupboard, as if my hand was a boat gliding down a sea. I could feel the cold on my skin, penetrating through my layered clothes, the type of cold I felt on that rainy day three decades ago, when

the cupboard was still a tall oak tree, and I was a little blond girl with my grandpa. My grandpa was a carpenter of great fame. He created the most enchanting toys out of wood: horses, doll houses, Christmas decorations and dolls with funny faces. He was tall and had inordinately large hands. When he laughed, which was usually the case, his eyes lit up and small tears of joy would run down his old face.

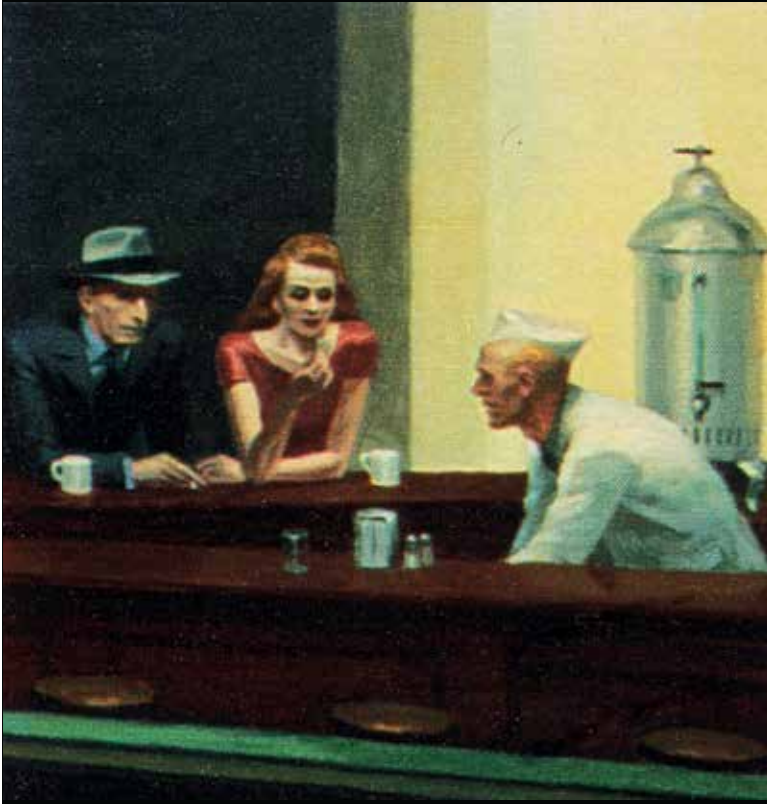
I knew that when the angels of death would take me, the cupboard would still be here, guarding the house with its magic. I took a firm grip of the handle and slowly opened the doors, those doors, the doors that had been opened three thousand times by those two little girls with snow hair.

Inside were old boxes of board games. They were all still there exactly the way I remembered them. On the last shelf on the right, my favorite board game: chess. The old box with the crooked edges and the torn pieces of cardboard. On the left several others: 7 Wonders, Chinese Checkers, Guess Who?, Dungeons, Scotland Yard, Backgammon, The Game of Life, Trivia, Dixit, some sort of German game, Cluedo, Scrabble. And on the bottom shelf sat several dolls. Some new, some not. Some harmless, others less. My grandpa had made them for Geraldine and me on Christmas in 1992; the date remained at the bottom of the doll's feet. Then there was the stuffed toy we called "the farmer," because he looked like one, with his green dungarees and checkered shirt. He owned a farm, the one on the middle shelf, and an elephant called Jim, and a fast tractor, not a slow one. Next to the tractor, a little forgotten, was Fred the firefighter and his fire truck with a water pump neatly tucked into the boot. I always thought Fred had saved the other toys and me from the fire. Now Fred just sat there in the Toy Cupboard. I decided I wanted to take him with me. I clutched him and brushed off the dust and ash, revealing his smiley face and mischievous eyes. His uniform was still intact: red with a black sash, a small hat with a black ribbon, two miniature military boots covering his wooden feet. I closed the wooden panels of the cupboard.

The cupboard was closed, and that's how it was going to remain for a long time. Outside, the sunlight and fresh air hit my face. Fred was with me, and I was happy to be alive.

Nighthawks

BY ROSA MELE '25



—after Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* (1942)

I was washing cups and making a mess
when a young couple walked into my bar.
The lady wore a fitted summer dress,
color of maraschino cherries—the best by far.
The gentleman wore a suit to impress
and smelled of a Robusto cigar.

They sat in front of me
and ordered two coffees.
The lady asked for a *schiumato*.
I made sure to make it extra frothy.

Another man entered
with his head held down.
The way he dressed was quite sheltered.
Maybe he's new in town.
He looked quite sweltered
and ordered coffee with a frown.

This man also ordered a plate of toast, “No butter.”
I made the order briskly.
As I placed it in front of him, I heard him mutter.
When I asked what he said, he just said, “Whiskey.”

A New Day

BY TIZIANO PEPE '24

Glass drops;
fragments quake the earth
ex-picture frames sharded
shattered
left
you were right

Woke up
woke up on the wrong side of the bed,
woke up on your side of the bed,
petting our dog,
a buzz
the phone
Not you

There's always someone better—
what if I started with the best?
My orange amongst lemons
doing anything
anything,
anything for the last talk.
Nothing.

I invoke you,
Melpomene,
akin to Orpheus and Eurydice,
serpentine treason,
I play my songs of sorrow,
searching for you.

As my flood-eyes stare into the black mirror
I stop typing.
Flood-eyes stare back,
but of a monster,
a double-crossing creature
an aggressor of the kind-hearted.

Regret awaits the weak.



The Dance of the Capri Girl

BY SILVIA SOLIMA '25

—after John Singer Sargent's *Capri Girl on a Rooftop* (1878)

The crisp evening breeze
carries the brilliant jingling
of bitter salt memories away.

With the whispering breeze
coating the pale sky
in a Mediterranean mist,

one young hand
is lifted weightlessly upward
in a gesture of freedom,

of carefree joy,
daringly caressing the air.
The other is turned

towards a youthful face,
the color of coffee contrasting
with the milky horizon-

a testament
to the weakened sun's midday scorch.
In a careless sweep,

it follows the drowsy
but enthusiastic beat
of the aged tambourine.

Faithful, there comes forth
a rhythmic music, as the musician
observes the dancer
and her graceful movement
lovingly.

The arid hills behind
begin to vanish
in muted verdant hues.

The ivory moon
curiously peers
over the crest of the hill,

as perhaps more than one
bear witness to the dance
of the Capri girl.



The Walking Man

BY MAYA CHIOLA '25

—after Alberto Giacometti

The man wanders, pregnant with thoughts,
slowly dragging his tired limbs,
weighed down by his armor.

His gaze falls
on his trapezoidal feet shining like horse hooves,
travels to his slender legs joined together, a volcanic cone,
to his arms arched over his body revealing rigid rhombuses,
and rests mesmerized while the shapes free themselves from the body
fluttering around him, creating a bizarre swirl.

His past thoughts, sharp as razors,
become vivid fireflies, joining the geometric band.
The space that once was so infinite and empty
now embraces him,
a quilt of sweet marzipan hills
and emerald lakes.

The man stops walking,
stretches over the soft hills,
and reclaims idleness.

Inspiration

BY ALBAN LAURENS '26

It is a cloud passing through an infinite blue sky,
creating an unanalyzable figure.
This figure is your admiration and what you seek to be.
Or it can be an intriguing object you have never related to.
Or it can depict a passion, an idea, a mood.
It can be anything you want but it must come from the clouds.

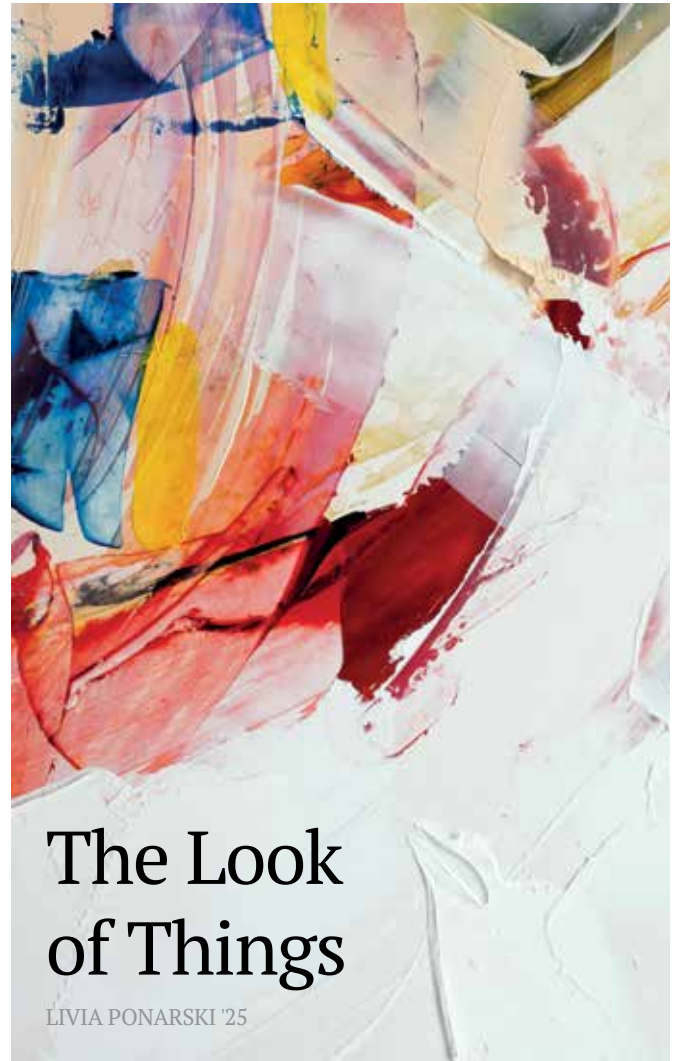
Whatever it is,
there will always be sunlight illuminating it
and creating the shades on the clouds representing small details.
And the small details are what make the cloud distinct from ordinary
notions
as they link the big ideas to the small and
create an identity you could have never dreamt of.



In Defense of “Stain”

BY FLAVIA TIRABASSI '25

When you drop food on your lap - when you squirt a ketchup bottle and the excess lands on your perfectly white t-shirt - that irreversible coffee-mug stain on your wooden coffee table - the blotch of extra ink on your exam paper - “Oops, I accidentally spilt some red wine on the carpet!” - that hard t sound you make after the s - the blood that seeps into one’s shirt after they’re shot in the movie - the watercolor that makes its way onto the paper with the final version, leaving an egregious mark of territory - that dried up splat of jam on the countertop from the PB&J you made earlier - the water stains on your favorite pair of suede boots - your most searched phrase on Google - “How to get rid of...” - the most repeated mistake a person can make - the expense of stain removing tools - do they even work? Maybe - your child using their colorful marker set to create masterpieces on your walls - not properly securing the lid on the blender - makeup on your sheets after not having washed it off thoroughly the night before - feeling like one - looking at someone as one - if you don’t remove it, it’s bound to stay -



The Look of Things

LIVIA PONARSKI '25

The world is a canvas, a tapestry of hues.
A symphony of shapes, a dance of muses—
every stroke of color, every line and curve—
a masterpiece in motion, a visual nerve.
The look of things, oh, how they inspire—
evoke emotions, ignite a fire.
From the tranquil blues of a summer sky
to the fiery reds of a desert high.

Nature's palette is a sight to behold—
mountains, rivers, forests so bold.
The sun's golden light painting the sky
a spectacle to witness before it dies.

Artists capture the essence of life.
Through their eyes, the world comes alive.
A brush, a pen, a camera lens—
creating magic, a timeless blend.

Perception is key, what we choose to see.
Colors, shapes, and lines, all in harmony.
The look of things—
a window to our soul.



The Box: A Monologue

BY DEREK MONTES-BAFFIER '25

I've been staring at this box for weeks. It's been on my shelf for as long as I can remember.

It's been on my mind nonstop.

Its bronze-like finish and the glimmering stones on its corners, its crescent top.

Perched on my shelf. You can practically see every detail: the dust, the knicks... scratches.

It's eye-catching... No, it's... it's... gravitating. It wants me to look at it.

Come to think of it: I've never opened it.

I don't know how it even got on my shelf.

Not sure if I could even open it. I mean, there's nothing stopping me from opening it.

But I'm still not sure if I could.

I want to see inside.

I feel whatever's inside is important.

I'm being rational.

That box is just—something about it is horrifically wrong.

It's radiating something evil. The air around me is getting dense. It's doing it on purpose.

It's even begun whispering.

I won't allow myself within 20 feet of the box. I know I must save whatever's inside.

I don't know... I don't know how long I can allow this box to exist.

I'm practically sleeping with one eye open, making sure the box is in its place.

The box must go. I don't want to touch it.

I don't know what to do. It sits there, menacingly, on the shelf.

Staring at me. The stones look more like eyes.

Malevolent by nature; otherworldly.

I must destroy the box. The contents can't be saved.

Smashing it won't do justice. It has an aura. Everything it touches must be destroyed.

I will burn the box. I will burn the apartment. I will burn the building—
only then will I be safe.





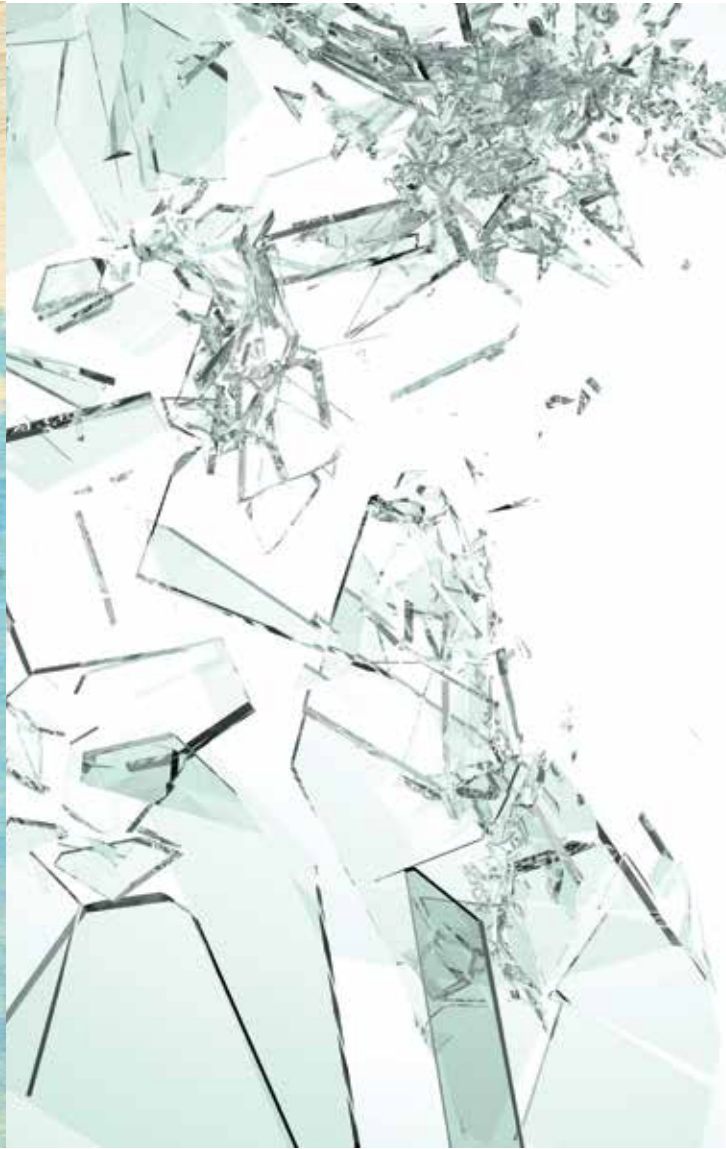
Why The Sky Is Blue: A Short Story

BY JONAH ARIEL GIULIANI '26

Sometimes I wonder why the sky is blue. Could it be that when birds cry it gets all bunched up and then spreads far and wide, for everyone's eyes to see? Could it be the sea water which floats up in the air and makes itself known by taking forms of color for us all to view at our leisurely pleasure? Or could it be people's happy thoughts that collect in the sky during the day and at night float back down for our little heads to drift away with? Maybe, though, it's just a nice painting, one that is all blue, all colored, no space is left untouched and unnoticed, and whoever the painter is must be quite good

at his job. Sometimes, once in a blue moon, he covers it with different colors to give it a new look. Then one could ask himself what he paints with, or even what music blesses his ears as the paintbrush travels through the canvas at the same speed of clouds passing in a gust of wind. Maybe that's because clouds move so slowly, they are paint brush marks of a distant painter which shows us art every day as life passes by. When clouds move slowly, he is listening to jazz and soft melodies as light violins breeze over piano keys. The darker colors in the sky might represent deep drums being

banged as the painter runs his brush over the gray clouds. Sometimes this painter might even whistle the song that plays, and that might explain the wind that comes from the clouds. As he keeps painting, we keep watching, observing, commenting, and enjoying the sky which surrounds us. Or maybe the sky is just blue because it is. For the same reason some people just like certain things. Maybe that's why the sky is blue. The painter might just like the color, or the brush which he uses, or the music which lets him use his mind to express life with colors from the sky.



What They Don't Tell You

BY VITTORIA MENTANA '26

A sudden collision of metal and flesh,
feeble reflections in the shattered glass,
brush strokes of burning rubber and gore on the hard cement;
a helplessness so sublime.

This is the most gruesome depiction of human impact;
of moving too fast, of losing control, of
crashing and burning and eventually
abandoning.

We are fragments of bonnets and paint scrapes,
of mangled guardrails and headlights;
of scars and landscapes, tainted with a fatal innocence,
reminders of an everlasting anguish.

The cacophony of metal beasts,
the screeching of tires, the deafening sound.
Life is but a fleeting moment, a fragile thing,
and its uncertain schemes leave us with shattered dreams.

Remembrance

BY ELISA HE '26

I remember that place. I remember that old jukebox with the '80s songs we used to listen to. I remember the birch wood doors with those worn golden knobs. I remember the wobbly tables, the broken pay phone, the horrid food and those dusty shelves. I remember the customers: in and out they went, some satisfied, others complaining on their way off. I remember that worn out amber couch and those goofy cat paintings on the wall. I remember the emerald wallpaper they used, the scent that place emitted, the smell of burnt steaks, and the words the chef yelled from across the kitchen. I remember the cries of that baby that was somehow always there and the mother's attempts to silence him. I remember the broken mirror behind the counter, the jazz trio on the street, the filthy windows, the trash cans on the sidewalk, the flies everywhere, the dimmed lights, the homeless man by the entrance, the waiters with their oversized uniforms, the cashier guilting us into tipping more and the sticky dinner menus. I don't remember why we went there in the first place, but I remember that place. I remember us.



PART V:

Celebrating Our Students



College Bound

College-bound senior Alex Delve is one of seventy-one students who completed IB exams and graduated this past May. As he prepares to leave for the College of William and Mary in Virginia, he shares his personal statement with The Cortile magazine. His essay, along with a winning personality, amazing talent in soccer, hard work, and four dedicated years at St Stephen's, impressed several university admissions committees. Thanks to the work of the College Counseling Office (Ms.

Deborah Dostert, Ms. Loredana Addari, and Ms. Nicole MacNeil) and Director of Teaching and Learning, Ms. Nadia El-Taha, St. Stephen's students are guided into making smart choices for their courses of study in the International Baccalaureate Program and selecting universities that will reflect and enhance their skills and talents. Congratulations, Alex, and the Class of 2023, as you set new goals and priorities and move forward toward achieving excellence in the next chapter of your life's journey.

I Am 'The One Who Loves'

BY ALEX MWENDA KAARIA DELVE '23

When I reflect on my upbringing and the formative experiences that shaped my sense of self, I am struck by the importance of my cultural background and its role in forming my identity. As a child, I was aware of my middle name, but only as I reached adulthood did I realize its significance to my identity.

For years, I shunned the name "Mwenda," believing it wouldn't allow me to fit in. Now, I use this word, my middle name, to describe myself. I embrace it with pride, recognizing it as an integral part of who I am and the unique blend of cultures that have shaped me into who I am today.

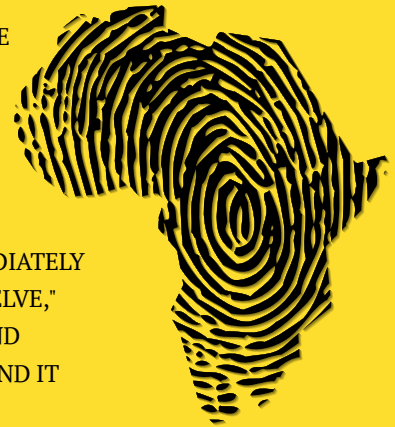
Born to Kenyan and British parents, I was privileged to grow up in Uganda and Kenya, immersing myself in their fascinating cultures and customs. In Kenya, I attended an International School where most people had African names. Here, I accepted my middle name and the cultural traditions it signified without fear of being marginalized or excluded.

Moving from Kenya to Italy at the age of eight was a huge adjustment, with multiple language, names, and culture differences. At my new school, I was one of only two culturally diverse students in my grade, and I felt pressure to fit in and conform to the standards of my new environment. So I immediately identified myself as "Alex Delve," ignoring my middle name and the rich cultural background it signified. As my schooling advanced, I recognized that this decision was a mistake. In trying to fit in and conform to dominant cultural norms, I had denied a fundamental aspect of my identity and suppressed a crucial part of who I am.

A pivotal point that developed my understanding of myself came from a new

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classmate, Alioune Badara Sarr, who arrived in Sixth Grade from Senegal. From the moment he arrived, I was impressed by his confidence in his name, which was quite unusual and difficult to pronounce. I was intrigued by how he embraced his cultural distinctions and expressed them to the world with such unwavering confidence. Over time, Alioune and I became close friends, and I asked him about his perspectives on cultural heritage. He used a quote by Dr. Seuss that has stuck with me to date: "Be yourself and tell your truth, for those whose mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind".

Alioune explained the origin and significance of his name, saying it was from the Arabic name 'Ali ibn Abi Talib,' a famous figure in Islam known for his "wisdom" and "elevation." The conversation with my friend underlined the significance of names in identity and cultural traditions and the value of embracing and celebrating all elements of one's own identity.

As I approached the threshold of adolescence, I still struggled with the

choice of either continuing to hide and suppress a fundamental aspect of myself or embracing and cherishing my name. This decision was finally brought into focus during a trip to Kenya when a family member called me "Mwenda", which irritated me as it was not a name I wanted used. Observing my agitation, my grandfather inquired: "You don't like your name?" He explained that he had chosen it for me because it means 'the one who loves' and that having an African middle name it "would always remind me of my African Heritage". This helped me realize my name's vital meaning and recognize that I was neglecting an essential piece of myself by concealing and suppressing my middle name and consequently losing touch with my cultural identity. From then on, I promised to embrace the numerous cultural influences that have shaped me into the multifaceted individual I am today.

My name is Alex Mwenda Kaaria Delve, and it is a pleasure to share my story with you.

Basketball Is Life

BY CHRISTOPHER MOI '24

Basketball is a sport loved by millions of people worldwide and brings people together from all walks of life. It is a game that requires skill, teamwork, and determination. The thrill of dribbling the ball, making shots, and playing alongside a group of people with the same goals as you draw many individuals to the sport. A sport that encourages personal growth and development while additionally requiring things such as discipline, determination, and hard work, makes it appealing to many individuals to play the sport competitively or just recreationally.

Basketball to me started just as an activity for me to have fun as a child, but over the years, my love for basketball has grown substantially. It has become a staple in my life, and at times, basketball can become my entire personality. The idea of improving myself and others at the sport while taking away valuable lessons that can benefit me and others has been something I can never take for granted.

My entire childhood was taken up with sports. My parents were very adamant about me playing sports and wanted me to be in the best position to succeed mentally and physically. I still remember when I was first introduced to the game of basketball by both my parents. They both loved watching the sport, and I loved the rivalry they had while watching it. My mom was a Lakers fan and my dad supported the Celtics; my house as a child was very intense when basketball was on the TV. I started playing basketball just to do something. My mom would take me outside after school and teach me the fundamentals of dribbling, shooting, and passing. At the time, I didn't see it as anything, but after practicing for a while and watching great players on TV, such as LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, Russell Westbrook, and Kevin Durant, I realized that this was something that could stick with me forever.

My parents simply showed me the fundamentals of basketball, but using the extreme amount of passion I had for basketball, I learned so much just on my own. Coming back from school and immediately going to the backyard to shoot some hoops was what I did every day my whole life. I was always playing basketball no matter what.

Helping people out is something that has been taught and expected of me from a young age by my parents. Both preach that if you can help someone, you better do it. In basketball, especially, I love teaching anyone as much as I can. As someone who has been playing basketball for most of my life, I have a great amount of knowledge about that sport that if I gate keep that from others, the people around me trying to get better at basketball won't. I love seeing progress with players. Coaching and giving players tips is the least I can do; encouraging people to keep trying and seeing the progress that comes from hard work and determination is beautiful to see. Here at St. Stephens, I strive to do my best to coach the other players on the team and help them in any way I can. The joy of seeing people learn and the happiness they feel when they succeed will never be matched in any way.

Basketball is a sport we are all meant to have fun playing, but one of the great things about basketball is the life lessons we learn from it. As a kid, I was coached by two great U.S. Army drill sergeants who instilled



discipline, respect, perseverance, and above all, success. As a 10-year-old, I never really saw this as anything, but my coaches were trying to show that basketball isn't about dribbling a ball on the court. It's also about being a good person off the court. My coaches had a thing that if any of us got bad grades or were disrespectful to our parents, we would run the whole practice.

This made most of my teammates become better people and better players. Additionally, we would sit down and talk about valuable things we can take from basketball and use in our everyday lives. Things such as teamwork and how we take what we know on the court and use it in the classroom. Leadership, we always practice being loud and communicating in practice, and that can be used in any situation such as school, work, etc. The life lesson I found the most important was discipline. Discipline and respect go hand in hand. If you work hard on the court and train, it will translate to your school life and casual everyday life. The life lessons you establish from basketball stay with you throughout your life, and I assure you that they come in handy.



Student Council

This is a remarkable achievement that deserves recognition. Your dedication, leadership, and passion for making a positive difference in your school community have led you to this role. As members of the student council, you have the opportunity to represent your fellow students, voice their concerns, and work towards creating an inclusive and thriving environment.

Your commitment to serving your peers and improving the school experience is commendable. By taking on this responsibility, you have shown your willingness to go above and beyond. Remember that being part of the student council comes with challenges but also countless rewards.

We encourage you to embrace collaboration, communicate effectively, and listen attentively to the needs of your classmates. As student leaders, you have the power to initiate positive change, organize engaging events, and address

important issues that affect the student body. Your fresh ideas and enthusiasm will undoubtedly contribute to a vibrant and supportive school community.

Always remember that being on the student council means representing the voices and interests of your peers. Strive to be inclusive, approachable, and open-minded, allowing all students to feel heard and valued. Lead by example, inspire others, and foster a sense of unity among your fellow students.

Congratulations once again on your election to the student council. Your dedication and commitment to making a difference are admirable, and we have no doubt that you will accomplish great things during your term. Best of luck with your future endeavors, and may your time on the student council be rewarding and fulfilling.

Auguri!

Viktorija Podagelyte, Dean of Students



Congratulations to the newly elected Student Council for 2023-2024!

President
Luca O '24

Vice President
Thomas T '25

Treasurer
Giorgio C '24

Inclusion Secretary
Jonah G '26

Social Coordinator
Ludovico S '24

Secretary
Ameli V T R '24



PART VI:

Departments

Boarding Life Snapshots

THE BOARDING PROGRAM AT ST. STEPHEN'S HAS WELCOMED STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD FOR NEARLY SIXTY YEARS.

Nestled within our day school, boarding offers tailored, individualized attention for sixty students provided by boarding faculty who live in separate apartments on campus on the same floors as our student dorms. The student-boarding faculty supports students as they come into their own, both academically and personally. The sum of these essential elements makes the boarding experience not only fun but transformative.



“

“I think that I’ve met a lot of really cool students and just people who I would never have met in any other place. And it’s just really nice because I get kind of submerged in just all these other cultures, and I just get to make friends with people from all over the world. And the teachers are definitely ... just so amazing. I look forward to going to class, and they’re such cool people, and they know so much.”



“

“One thing I like about boarding is that it prepares me for life. It prepares me for life outside of high school, for college, and for life outside of college. I’m prepared. I’m well-prepped for any challenges that may come my way. So, this is kind of like a stepping stone...”

Boardering offers a close-knit, family environment where students find a home away from home.

“

“I think the St. Stephen’s community is very, very tight-knit, especially in boarding. I find that I’m living with all of my best friends, and if I don’t know someone, it only takes me a very short amount of time to get to know them. I think that being in this situation where you’re living so close to everybody else, it’s very easy to make these friends and these connections. I feel like, in a way, they’re kind of my family because I live with them, I see them every year, and I go through everything with them.”

Here’s a snapshot of daily life in boarding over the course of the last several months and what some of our boarders have to say about their experience.

School Trips



Dateline: May – Underclassmen Spring Trips

During last week's community night, the prefects delivered a community message centered around the 9th and 10th-grade spring trips. The prefects wanted to stress how important these trips are to get to know their peers, especially those they usually do not socialize with within the same grade. Spring trips are also instrumental in allowing students to see their teachers in another, more laid-back setting and really get to know them on a more familiar level. The prefects also advised the underclassmen to admire and appreciate the environments they will be in, whether in cities or in nature, to learn about a new culture and perhaps also a set of skills that may prove to be useful in life. Destinations for the 9th and 10th graders include a sailing trip on the island of Ventotene, a cultural immersion trip to the sunny region of Puglia, and various trips abroad, such as Slovenia, Malta, and Croatia. After the community message, serious awards, and thank yous, it was time for gelato, always appreciated on Thursday evenings.

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“I actually like seeing the beautiful places, you know, experiencing, you know, the different communities, the different cultures, while also being led by people who've been here like for 10, 20 years.”



Public Speaking



Dateline: April – Prefect Workshop on Public Speaking

Faculty member and English teacher Ms. Harold led a junior prefect training on public speaking over the weekend to help with community announcements. She also stressed the importance of charisma and self-confidence when engaging the boarding community and promoting activities and events. Ms. Harold is also a drama teacher and has a lot of experience being on stage and performing in front of a large audience. The workshop and exercises took place on the terrace and proved to be very effective for the students.

“

“I think one of my biggest weak points is public speaking, and debating is really something that I would like to improve.”

Having Fun!



Dateline: Spring—Cheesecake-making

The weather took a turn for the worse last weekend, which put a dent in the activity plans. Nevertheless, cheesecake making was still offered over at number 20 with the help of faculty member Ms. Harold and junior prefect Lily. The original plan was to bring the cakes onto a picnic along the Appian Way, but instead, they were happily consumed by the community on campus.

“

“I chose St. Stephen's just because I really liked the energy of the school. It seemed like it was a fun place to be. It seemed very independent, especially boarding, and it was academics focused, but it didn't seem like it was losing any of, like, the fun parts of being a high school.”



Celebrating the Life and Career of a Treasured Faculty Member

Dateline: May—The Richard Trythall Memorial

A very important memorial service was held in the chapel on Saturday to honor Richard Trythall, a beloved maestro who we lost in December. Mr. Trythall had been a St. Stephen's faculty member since 1966 and contributed immeasurably to the life of the School and its legacy. Faculty members, trustees, and alumni gathered at the School to celebrate Richard's life, music, and legacy. It was a beautiful and very moving event, coordinated by faculty members, Residential Assistant Edo Pariente, and the Arts Department. The school choir also performed numerous renditions in honor of their late music teacher, including boarders Viola, India, and Daniela. Videos of Mr. Trythall showcasing his immeasurable talent as a composer and piano player were also projected, accompanied by quotes from alumni all over the world who wanted to express their gratitude for having had Mr. Trythall as a teacher, mentor, and friend.

“

“What I think St. Stephen's does best is building a community centered around both academics and caring for your community.”



Exploring Rome

Dateline: Spring—Roaming Rome: “Vita Dulcis” Exhibition

On Sunday, faculty member Esme took some students on an outing to see the much-anticipated exhibition entitled “Vita Dulcis: Fear and Desire in the Roman Empire” at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni. The exhibition was created by Francesco Vezzoli, an important contemporary artist who has developed his practice by building a bridge between the contemporary imagination and art history to explore a variety of different artistic styles in an interplay of references and combinations involving solemn, eternal classical, and pop culture. The project presents a combination of iconic classical works, unseen finds from the National Roman Museum, masterpieces of world cinema, and contemporary artworks by Francesco Vezzoli. Students were really amazed by the exhibition since they could see Vezzoli’s references to pop culture with iconic Roman sculptures as well as clips from iconic movies, including Cabiria, Satyricon, and the Gladiator.

“

“I think what makes the school unique is the fact that it’s a boarding school in Rome, and you are literally in the heart of the city, and you have so much access to everything that the city and the school have to offer. I mean, in the middle of classes, we’ll go on field trips to the Capitoline Hill, and it’s just amazing that you’re just so immersed in the history and the art and everything. And that’s my favorite part about it because I love history and art, and I’m literally living in a city that is just, like, saturated with it, which is just really cool.”



Community Night

Dateline: April – Dies Natalis Romae: Special Community Night for Rome's Birthday!

Rome celebrated its birthday on Friday, the 21st of April, but celebrations already began earlier in the week, boarding included! The activities group and prefects had been busy preparing for a very special community night which took place last Thursday. Volunteers decorated the dining hall with elegant golden garlands, and laurel leaves to recreate an ancient Roman triclinium setting. An aperitivo with supplì and pizza al taglio was set up in the cortile to welcome students before venturing into the dining hall for an exceptional, traditional Roman meal prepared by HummusTown. Soundtracks to well-known “Sword and Sandals” films were played in the background while students enjoyed a delicious meal of famous Roman dishes like amatriciana and saltimbocca alla Romana. The community message delivered by the prefects was all about what we love about this beautiful city and the different ways in which we cherish it. After the usual announcements and thank yous, it was time for the ancient Roman-themed pub quiz (or taberna quiz) delivered by orator and quiz master Dr. Esme Lundius. The quiz comprised three rounds: pictures, the fundamentals of Rome, and general ancient Roman trivia. The faculty team won with a staggering 20 points but only won our admiration. The official winning team was Napoli Caput Mundi, with a respectable 15 points. Bravi! After the taberna quiz, boarders gathered around for a taste of a beautifully decorated Roman-themed cake. It was a beautiful evening to honor our beloved eternal city!

“

“So, community night is a night that we have every Thursday at 6:20 during dinner. And around 6:30, we make announcements for the week, any acknowledgments, awards that should be given out, and any other important and relevant announcements to the community. And then around 7:00, we all break and go to gelato outside.”





Weekend Activities

Dateline. Spring – Roaming Rome Saturdays: Visit to the BioParco at Villa Borghese

The Roaming Rome Series continued with a visit to the BioParco at the beautiful park of Villa Borghese on Sunday afternoon. The Bioparco is a facility with objectives in the Conservation of endangered species, the education of biodiversity, and scientific research. All this is in line with the World Zoo Conservation Strategy, drawn up by the WAZA (World Organization of Zoos and Aquariums) together with the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and adopted by the WWF International, which defines the guidelines for a so-called “modern” zoo. Students saw numerous lovely animals, including lemurs, social primates, camels, and a beautiful lion. After the outing, the students were free to explore the gardens of Villa Borghese in the sun.



“

“St. Stephen's differs from my old school because it's a lot more free, and they put a lot more emphasis on you being independent while still providing a lot of care around that independence. So we're trusted with going out on our own, but there's still a lot of safety, and the school lets you know that, like, “Hey, we're here for you.” And I think that was really important because at my old school, there wasn't that level of independence where you could take care of yourself, and it was very controlled, and so it's nice to be in a place where people actually respect you and know that you're capable of being your own person.”

“

St. Stephen's is a beautiful place, a beautiful community. Everyone here is so nice and welcoming. The academics here are top-notch, you know, nothing short of the best. Everyone here has to be the nicest people I've ever met. You know, this will be an experience that you'll never, ever forget. It'll stay with you forever.

Why Giving Matters

BY ALLISON KEMMIS-PRICE
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Education is the most powerful weapon that can change the world.

This ethos is reflected in everything we do at St. Stephen's, from teaching, to trips, to service projects.

During my tenure as Director of Development, donors have shared with me that they support the School because of what St. Stephen's gave to them and their children: an excellent foundation for their university studies, lifelong friendships, trips to exotic destinations, near and far, and a stellar education.

Donations bring big ideas to life. Expendable gifts enabled the School to establish the *Gage Molecular Biology program* and the *Aventinus Minor Project*, two path-breaking Signature Programs that are totally unique to St. Stephen's.

Giving ensures quality education. Generous gifts to the *Ely Fund for Jr. Faculty* help us recruit, retain and nurture the most passionate and talented teachers.

Philanthropy supports students beyond the classroom. Donations to the *Pope-Ullman Trips Fund* enhance the connections inherent between the classroom and the world and are the St. Stephen's experiences most often recalled by alumni and parents.

Giving has a multiplier effect. Your donation inspires others to give because it is a vote of confidence in St. Stephen's. New donors know they're investing in an institution that has the support of the community.

These are just some of the examples of how philanthropy enables St. Stephen's to remain at the forefront of IB education. Thank you.



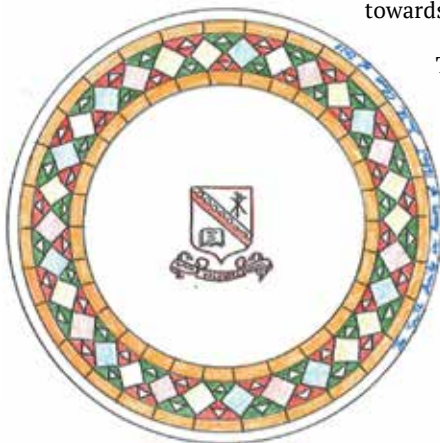
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES - RENOVATION OF THE DINING HALL & CORTILE

A St. Stephen's education is not limited to the classroom. A core part of our mission is to foster a community that supports learning and growth in all areas of student life. **The Dining Hall and Cortile** are the souls of that community: a place where everyone comes together to share a meal and a coffee and where mentoring relationships thrive, and students form memories that define their St. Stephen's experience.

With your help, we can improve the existing space to better support the needs of our students, faculty, and staff. We can create an area that is not only functional but also inspiring and welcoming for all who use it, and it will benefit generations of students to come.

We invite parents, alums, and friends to help us purchase new tables, chairs, and beautiful fruit trees as part of this plan. In recognition of your generosity, your name will appear on the corresponding tables and chairs you have donated towards.

Thank you in advance for your support and for being a vital community member. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our renovation project, please do not hesitate to contact us.



The Smith family in honor of Robert Smith Class of 2023



Sponsorship Naming Opportunities

Sponsorship of a table with your name and the name of your family or favorite teacher painted onto the tabletop requires a minimum donation of 2,000 euros.

The donation must be made before 19 June 2023 to meet the deadline for the dedication.

Sponsorship of a table and four chairs with your name and the name of your family or favorite teacher painted onto the tabletop, and a name plaque on the chairs requires a minimum donation of 2,500 euros.

The donation must be made before 19 June 2023 to meet the deadline for the dedication and plaque.

Sponsoring an individual chair with a name plaque requires a minimum gift of 150 euros.

The donation must be made before 19 June 2023 to meet the deadline for the plaque.

To make a general donation to the renovation or for the purchase of the fruit trees, any amount may be contributed and is sincerely appreciated. Your name(s) will be listed in a prominent place and in the Annual Report of Volunteers and Donors.



Dedication Examples:

"The Smith family in honor of Robert Smith Class of 2023"

"The Class of 2023 honors Claire Robison, a great teacher, mentor, and advisor";

"The Rossi family honors the memory of"

DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES



CeramicArte Deruta creates exclusive ceramic glazed lava stone worktops, masterpieces of Italian craftsmanship for everyday use.

We start our production on the Etna, in Sicily, with the careful hand-selection of the best lava stone in the world. Forged from the three elements of earth, fire, and water, our eternal lava stone is harder than granite and far more durable. In Deruta, the over 800 years in the tradition of ceramics have transformed the lava stone into a real work of art that will last for generations. Craft tradition and traditional techniques come together to give life to works of art that Deruta exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and at the British Museum in London.

The colors and brightness of our surfaces have a 100-year guarantee in any external condition and anywhere in the world.

Our craftsmen and artists transform our ceramic canvases into works of art. Your designs and your imagination guide our passion for a final result that translates into pure emotions with eternal colors. We like to see ourselves as the craftsmen of your imagination.

To learn more about Deruta, please watch this [video](#) or their [website](#).

THE 1964 SOCIETY

Many thanks to the dedicated volunteer work and generosity of the members of *The 1964 Society* Committee, Nin Glaister, Brad Irby, Shalom Joseph, and Valentina Puca, we have raised **\$80,407** toward our goal of raising \$125,000 in discretionary leadership gifts to The 1964 Society.

Thank you for your generosity!

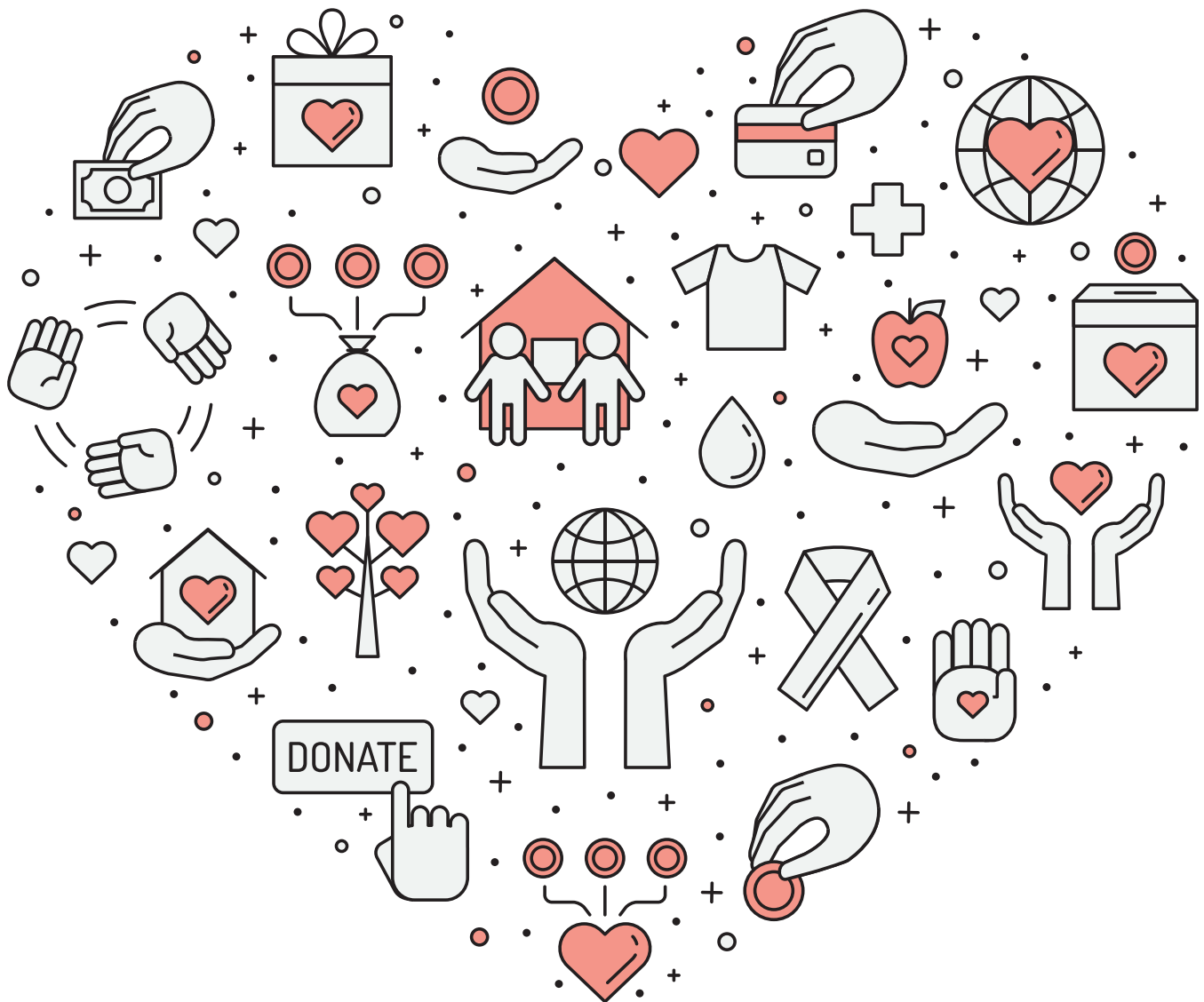
Named for the year in which the School was founded, *The 1964 Society* gratefully acknowledges benefactors whose leadership level annual donations of \$1,964 or more to the St. Stephen's Fund show that St. Stephen's is close to their hearts. Donors are members during the academic year following their donation, and membership is renewed each year with an annual contribution of \$1,964.

Make your Gift Today! Join 1964



THE 1964 SOCIETY COMMITTEE

- **Sandra Craig**, Former Parent, and Trustee
- **Nicola (Nin) Glaister Dell Isola**, Current Parent
- **Libby Morris II**, Former Parent, and Chair of the Board of Trustees
- **Jill Muti**, Head of School
- **Valentina Puca**, Former Parent, and Trustee
- **Shalom Joseph**, Class of 2002
- **Brad Irby**, Current Parent



ST. STEPHEN'S FUND

The St. Stephen's Fund is the School's annual giving program that provides the financial resources to enable us to sustain the hallmarks of a St Stephen's education, including small class sizes, superb teachers, and signature programs, such as the Lyceum and iLab, that allow students to achieve at their highest level.

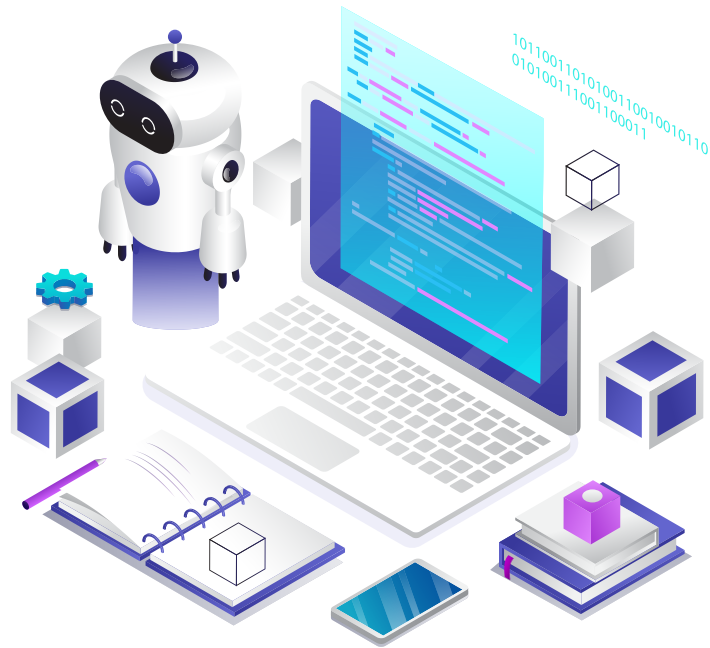
HOW ARE ST. STEPHEN'S FUND GIFTS USED?

You see the impact of St. Stephen's Fund gifts everywhere at St. Stephen's. It's in every student's experience—every academic department, laboratory, and classroom—because unrestricted gifts to the St. Stephen's Fund go directly into the School's operating budget. These flexible funds represent the "margin of excellence" that support unparalleled teaching and allow the School to seize new opportunities and respond to unexpected challenges for the benefit of the entire community, current, and future.

WHY SUPPORT ST. STEPHEN'S?

Like all non-profit, service-based organizations, the School's operating budget is increasingly dependent upon donations to remain competitive, as tuition levels do not always cover all the expenses of operating the School.

Your membership in *The1964 Society* helps us become a financially stronger institution and shows that you believe in the School's vision and want to be a part of ensuring St. Stephen's bright future.



Robotics and Physical Computing in the St. Stephens iLab

BY ELIZABETH DI CATALDO,
LIBRARIAN AND DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Robots today are exploring the ocean depths, transmitting exploratory data to us from Mars, helping to care for the elderly and lonely, educating and entertaining the young, detecting illness in the human body, assisting in surgeries, operating heavy and dangerous machinery, performing treacherous tasks in areas such as firefighting, mining, and warfare, and building other robots. In combination with artificial intelligence, through which robots may soon be programming their own robots, there is no question that we are in our third industrial revolution, a seismic shift in the future of work, marking the beginning of a new way of living, working, learning, and understanding the world around us and rapidly advancing

developments in every area involving technology today.

In the iLab (or Innovation Lab) at St. Stephen's School, students have opportunities to explore the world of robotics and drones and other areas of physical computing around 3D design and printing, augmented and virtual realities, artificial intelligence, and the interface between the analog and digital worlds. Programmers, designers, engineers, artists, and other creators can learn about the future of work and try their hands on a myriad of tools, platforms, and programs to further their curiosity and passion for fields in which they are interested but may not have had much training or experience outside a summer camp activity or an after-school club.

For several years, robotics and 3D design and printing and virtual reality have been offered to grades 9 and 10 as art electives. For older students, following the long-standing St. Stephen's tradition of listening to student voice, students can propose individual and group projects in areas with which they are interested in developing or experimenting. Students have worked on designing, building and programming a drone, pursued certification in Arduino and Javascript, and several are now working on the Can Satellite challenge of the European Space Agency, creating a haptic glove for Virtual Reality, and designing a small plane.

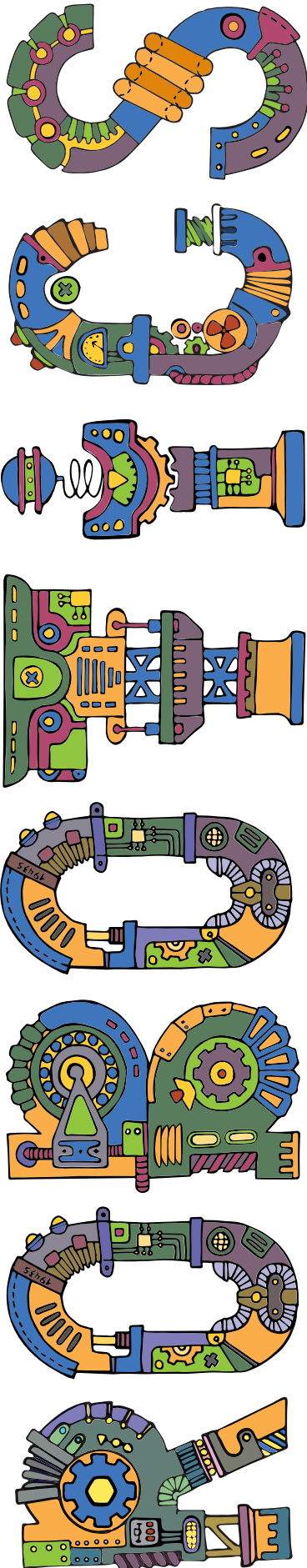
For two hours a week, 9th graders have leaned about robotics and designed and programmed our Lego Mindstorms EV3 educational robot kits. 9th-grade teams have competed and won medals and prizes in First Lego League in Italy and in the MAIS RoboMed challenge in Morocco, Spain, Italy, and this March competed alongside 120 other students in Lisbon, Portugal, winning the Tug of War challenge. All of these challenges are programmed so that the robots are driving autonomously in reaction to input they learn from various sensors, so students also learn the intricacies and limitations of a small robot correctly gauging opacity or tone in different settings, among other things. Students work on the essentials of design and construction: how do you build a robot less than a kilo that fits on an A4 sheet of paper that can pull a competitor fully over the line while maintaining enough friction and torque to not be pulled or flipped over itself in Tug of War, or create another robot that can go faster than others for a variable between 9 and 15 meters, using gears made from plastic for Speed Racing? How do you program a robot's sensors so that it backs away from a black line delineating the 36" wide circular platform in Sugo Bot and ensure that its sensors can detect your opponents' movement so that you can push their robot off instead? The combination of both engineering and programming is essential to these challenges as students learn the nuances of if-then statements and conditional looping central to all programming languages.



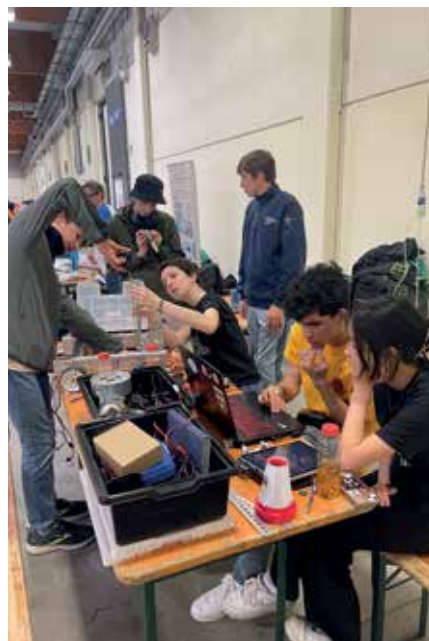
With Covid, we introduced another robot that could go home with students as the curriculum shifted four times due to our changing status in the years 2020-2022. Our little Maqueen Plus robots provide few engineering challenges but in combination with a HuskyLens visual sensor driven by artificial intelligence, students can program their robot to recognise a unique family member, or the cat, or a chair, etc., and program it to respond or interact differently to each. It's built-in, onboard sensors allow for programming without the complications of add-on equipment so that more complex actions can be done. Our second semester 9th graders are using the Maqueen now, learning more intricate programming and about to step into Machine Learning and AI with the visual sensor. We also have Anki Cozmo robots that can also be driven autonomously and for which students can 3D design and print accessories and obstacles.

This fall we accepted all the 9th-grade students who asked to take robotics and it was an incredible 31, half the entering grade! This spring's class has 19 who moved to the Maqueen and AI once we finished with the EV3s. We've had to move into the library and Martina Anfuso joined me in teaching.





This year, Italy has finally introduced the FTC or First Tech Challenge and since we had an older kit we were invited to participate in the inaugural event held in Piacenza alongside the nationals of the First Lego League. A group of brave and resilient students had just a few weeks to figure out how to design a much larger metal robot that could perform more advanced challenges involving maneuvering around and placing 3D printed cones on poles of various heights that bent on springs in a large field, working in alliance with different teams joined at the last moment. Using the Tetrix robot kit driven with out of date REX Computers electronics which we had acquired in 2018 (and still on back order as a victim of the continuing chip manufacturing issues) our 9-11th-grade students tackled the challenge with ingenuity and creativity and won the prestigious Control Award, sponsored by Arm Inc., a British semiconductor company, for their innovative design and programming. In FTC, teams go before a panel of judges to explain and defend their choices and discuss how they might have done them differently and are also judged on their collegial professionalism within their team and with others. Students are expected to keep an engineering notebook showing the evolution of their design and present a summation of it at the competition.



Beyond the essentials of robotics and programming, students learn to take on a variety of roles according to their strengths and team needs, and to truly listen to and collaborate with each other to produce their best team work. This is one of my favourite aspects of robotics competitions. Student teams arrive at competitions with what they think are the best possible designs and just a look around the room, filled with as many as 20 teams and the actual competition field, realise they need to make some fast, essential tweaks and sometimes total redesigns and new programming. In a well-run competition the coaches keep their hands off the robots and walk away from the table as the team quickly assesses and redesigns and reprograms. They learn so much more in two days of competition than they can be taught in the classroom, and they learn by doing. I follow the American tradition of “ask 3 before me” which both frustrates and makes the students proud when they come up with their own solution. Robotics, along with other types of physical computing, is an excellent problem-solving exercise in learning and challenging yourself to push to your best abilities, and to learn some humility in that your idea may actually not be the best or only one to be considered by a team trying to win an event.

“

St. Stephen's has just been asked to present FTC at MakerFaire EU in October 2023. This is the largest European MakerFaire event, attended by 50,000+ fans of innovation and technology. The new challenge, centered on the inclusion of Arts in the world of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) will be released in September and we are looking forward to helping establish this exciting challenge to high schools in Italy.

This spring, after working on 3D design and printing and augmented and virtual reality, our 10th-grade students chose to pursue further engineering challenges using the EV3 robots, or to learn to fly and eventually program our Tello EDU drones, made specifically to fly indoors safely. Using the DroneBlocks curriculum, they have moved from carefully manually flying drones using phone apps as controllers to creating complex programmes for drones to follow. We have looked at search and rescue operations using drones, Amazon delivery services, drone transport of blood and medical supplies in Rwanda, and other current and planned uses of drones. They are now using loop statements to have a drone inspect and photograph parts of an object, similar to how the quadcopter belonging to the Mars Rover could inspect and report on found objects. Next we move to variables and programming the drones in Python.⁷



Next year will be busy.

Besides our regular curriculum, ongoing ESA projects, and the new FTC robotics, a group of girls will join the Technovation Girls Challenge. This is a global technology and entrepreneurial project begun in 2010, now including more than 39,000 girls in over 100 countries, seeking to solve a local problem based on the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. Last year over 1700 apps were developed by teams to confront issues of accessibility, climate change, bullying, and more. The girls will work from October to April, when they submit their final project.

Around the School



Boarding trip to
Pantheon & Brunch (1)

Alumni Career Fair (2)

Carnevale (3)

Arabic Calligraphy
& Coffee Making (4 & 5)

Science (6)

The Millionaire Night (7)

Parents' Committee
Doria Pamphili Tour (8 & 9)



Venice (images 1 & 2)

Paestrum (3)

Agrigento (4)

Cittareale (5)

Piceni (6)

Ventotene (7)

Monte Amiato (8)

Valnerna (9)

Orbetello (10)

Fall Trips

Boarding





Class of 2023

Your graduation is just the beginning of the exceedingly joyful journey into adulthood. Congratulations to the Class of 2023, and remember to savor the moment!



NEWS  & LIFE

PART VII:

Spotlight Interview



Sylvia Poggioli

FORMER SENIOR EUROPEAN
CORRESPONDENT, NATIONAL PUBLIC
RADIO

BY NATALIE EDWARDS '14

Sylvia Poggioli retired from National Public Radio (NPR) in April 2023. Our interview with Ms. Poggioli was conducted in 2022, which provides context for our discussion of the war in Ukraine.

Where are you from, and what brought you to Rome?

I grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I went to school and college there, and after graduating from college in 1968, I got a Fulbright scholarship that brought me here to Rome. I was supposed to take courses at La Sapienza, but it was 1968, the year of political turmoil and student protests. All universities were occupied, and courses were suspended for the entire year. And so I went from demonstrations and sit-ins in the U.S. against the war in Vietnam to Italian student demonstrations, and I may not have taken many courses in Italian literature, any at all, actually during my Fulbright. Still, I got a very intense political education in my first year here.

And then you went into journalism. You worked as an editor on the English language desk for ANSA in Rome between 1971 and 1986. Was it challenging for you to work for an Italian news agency right out of college as a young American woman?

Well, it was; it was not a typical Italian workplace. It was, in some ways, very cosmopolitan. The English language news desk was there, and American and British expats worked there. Then there was the South American desk, which was staffed by many Argentines who had fled the dictatorship in their country. And at the French desk, there were some French reporters and others from French-speaking Arab countries. But, of course, our bosses and superiors were all Italian, and several were heavy on the macho side. This was long ago, long before women's lib in Italy. I can't frankly say that I had particular problems as an American. I already had a lot of experience in Italian society since I often came with my parents during summer vacation. So I had become pretty good at dealing with Italian machismo.

Did you know from a young age that you wanted to be a journalist?

No, not at all. It was a fluke that I got involved in journalism. My interest had been in art history, literature, theater, and movies. During my summers during college, I worked at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto for several summers. I thought that would be the world I would end up in, but after a series of odd jobs here in Rome after my Fulbright, I needed something more solid, and the English desk at ANSA needed substitutes. So that's how I got started. And I was fascinated immediately with international affairs, and there was a lot of political ferment in Italy at the time; there were the mafia wars, the attempted murder of Pope John Paul II, and there was, of course, what's called here "the years of lead," the years of the domestic right-wing and left-wing terrorism. We were sort of at the center of it all because, during the kidnapping of former prime minister Aldo Moro, the Red Brigades would send their communique directly to ANSA first. So we were very much at the center of the events that were



shaking the country at the time. It was very disturbing it was difficult, but it was an exciting period to be working there.

I can't imagine being in Rome during that time. You have covered political, economic, and cultural news in Italy, Western Europe, and the Balkans. One of the areas you've focused on has been immigration, especially the experience of immigrants in Europe. With the current war in Ukraine, are there lessons we can take from past crises, and, in your experience, has Europe and, specifically, Italy, become better at accommodating migrants over time, or do we still have a long way to go?

I'm the daughter of Italian immigrants – political immigrants to the U.S., So I was always fascinated by immigration and the creation of European nation-states. They were mono-ethnic societies, the opposite of the United States. And so, I was particularly interested in how Europeans dealt with large numbers of non-Christians, Muslims in particular. I focused on France, Germany, and Britain, as well as Sweden and Austria. In Italy, immigration started later than in northern European countries. When I first arrived here in the late sixties, many Italians would say, "Oh, you Americans, you're so racist, look at how you treat black people, and I would reply, yes, you're right. Racism is alive and well in the U.S., but I'd like to see how Italy will deal with non-European migrants when it too becomes a destination for migrants." Over the last 20 years or so, hundreds of thousands have arrived here from Africa, Asia, and also Eastern Europe, and we've all seen numerous examples of racism, racist attacks, violence against migrants, and rejection of migrants in this country, and the result has been the rise of anti-immigrant parties like the League. What I found, at least up until about 10, 15 years ago, I don't



know if this is still true, was much less racism among Italians in the South compared to Northern Italy. And I've often wondered whether that has to do with the fact that most Italians who immigrated abroad in the 19th and 20th centuries were from Southern Italy. More than a century later, I wonder if there's a closer link in the South with the phenomenon of the need to migrate. You ask if Europe and Italy are better at accommodating migrants; I think the jury is still out for Italy and the rest of Europe. And as far as welcoming Ukrainian refugees up to now, Europeans and Italians have been very welcoming. Let's hope that the other repercussions of the war on the economy, inflation, etc., do not cause a backlash. I think it's too early to say.

Thank you. In your role working at NPR as their Rome correspondent, you cover the Vatican, and you have even traveled with Pope Francis several times around the world. I have to ask, what is it like to travel with him? Have you had any memorable moments with Pope Francis?

Pope Francis is the only Pope I've traveled with. So I can't make any comparisons with his predecessors. It's often pretty grueling in terms of schedules because he likes to pack in as many events as possible in the shortest time. Reporters have to move several steps ahead of him for security and logistical reasons. On average, we get up every morning at 3:00 AM during the trips, which is pretty exhausting. Other than that, his trips have been fascinating, mainly because he holds a lengthy press conference at the end of the trip on the flight home, and he often makes news on that occasion. As for a memorable moment, I had one with him on my first trip. We were flying to Cuba from the United States, and shortly after takeoff, he came around and was introduced to each one of the reporters when it was my turn; I don't know, it somehow just popped out, I hadn't planned to say this, but I told him, "we have a lot in common. Both our parents were Italian anti-fascists who had to leave Mussolini's Italy." Mine went to the U.S., and his to Argentina. He listened very

attentively, and then he told me that his family almost didn't make it. They had bought tickets for a ship crossing and then had to cancel for some reason, and shortly later, that vessel was shipwrecked off the Brazilian coast, and many passengers died. So in our little exchange, he revealed something that he had not talked about before; he had not spoken publicly about his family before. So that was interesting. I liked that exchange very much.

He strikes me as very personable.

He listens deeply. He's a very careful listener. I've noticed with myself and others how he really listens to people, and I think that's quite extraordinary.

Staying on the topic of Rome, Rome is, of course, a beautiful city, but it's also notoriously chaotic. I wonder if you have ever considered leaving Rome to go somewhere else, and if you have considered leaving, what made you stay?

Well, I did leave. There were several periods that I wasn't here. My late husband was a journalist, and we were based in Prague, Czechoslovakia, for a couple of years after the fall of communism, and then we both had fellowships in different periods in the U.S., so we spent some time there. So I wasn't continuously here, but I get your question, and I understand what you're getting at very well. I find Rome increasingly difficult. It's difficult to walk, there are broken cobblestones, and it's very dirty. Now that I have a dog, I notice filth much more than before. But the fact is that this is where I work, where I've been based, and where my husband was also based. And so, I never really thought about living somewhere else. I am fortunate that my mother bought a house in Tuscany many years ago, so I get to go there as often as I can, precisely to get away from Roman chaos and the messiness and traffic.

I had to ask because many of my colleagues and I have adopted a love-hate relationship with this chaotic, extraordinary city. So, considering your career as a journalist, is there a particular achievement that you would consider your greatest accomplishment?



It's one I share with female colleagues of mine; in covering the breakup of Yugoslavia— which I covered from the beginning: through the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo for more than ten years. I'm very proud that thanks to the reporting of women journalists, rape was recognized officially as a war crime at the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague, where many of the political and military leaders who had waged the wars were tried and convicted of crimes against humanity, of genocide, specifically, and rape was among one of those crimes. I'm very proud of that., It was a complicated story to cover. The majority of the victims were Bosnian women raped by Serb or Croat paramilitaries who committed this crime specifically to humiliate Muslim women and their families. Getting to the victims was extremely difficult because there was so much shame and family shame, and it was very difficult to talk to the women and interview them. It was not easy for any of us. And most of my male colleague reporters didn't feel up to it. So it was mostly women reporters who tackled this story. Reading everything that's been happening in Ukraine for almost three months now, it's shocking to me how it resonates; the language and events are so utterly similar. The way civilians specifically are the target similar to the wars in the Balkans. The aim is not destroying a militarily strategic post. The aim is ethnic cleansing, terrifying the population, and eliminating part of the population is the goal of the war. That's precisely the way it was in the Balkans. The language and the crimes that are being committed are extremely similar.

That is unnerving. It's as if we are going backward in time. Looking back at your career so far in journalism, is there anything you wish you had known before you entered the field or advice you would give to young people who hope to become journalists?

Well, that's a tough question because the world of journalism has changed tremendously in the half-century I've been working as a reporter. I started as a freelancer for NPR and other outlets while working at ANSA, which is hard now because a city like Rome is too expensive to live in as a freelancer without a steady income. Right now, many young aspiring journalists have gone to Ukraine and are offering stories in the hopes of later landing a full-time job, but they're often not covered by insurance. They're taking huge risks. It's a very dangerous way of trying to break into the business. And then there are a lot of new online publications. Some of them are quite prestigious, but they don't pay much. They're quite exploitative of young, aspiring journalists. So I think it's a much tougher profession to break into. You asked if there is something I regret. When covering the Balkans, none of us were prepared for what was a completely new development. We were used to a bipolar war; the world of the Cold War and the Balkan wars were a throwback to early 20th-century issues. End of empire issues. And so I think what I would recommend to anybody who wants to be a foreign correspondent now is to study history and study foreign languages and, of course, economics. Languages and history are essential, and you can see now how important it is in the coverage of [the war in] Ukraine. If you don't know the area's history--which is very complicated--you really can't figure out what's going on there.

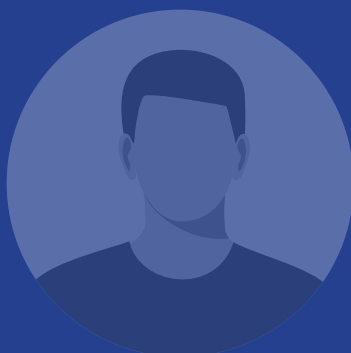
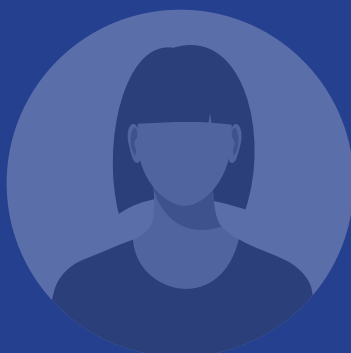


That is valuable advice. Can you share any advice with our graduating seniors as they head out into the world?

That is a pretty hard question to answer because when my generation graduated, we had the luxury that we could take a year or two off even before deciding what we wanted to do. I think that's no longer the case. Sadly, I see young people today being forced to choose their path far too early before having experienced firsthand everything the post-college world has to offer. So all I can suggest is if you can, wander around, explore, and breathe in everything possible before settling on a specific path.

Natalie Edwards '14 lives in Rome and works for the Lapine Group as a strategic consultant; she specializes in digital strategy for cultural institutions. She has been conducting interviews for St. Stephen's' Alumni Spotlight Series since 2019 and is always looking to hear from alumni with unique stories!

If you're interested in sharing your story with the St. Stephen's community, contact: alumni@sssrome.it.



PART VIII:

Alumni Spotlight



Marina Roeloffs von Hademstorf '08

CEO & CO-FOUNDER META MONACO

Where are you from, and what brought you to Rome?

I was raised between Europe and the US. Though having spent a significant part of my youth in California, Malibu holds a special place in my heart. I guess one could see it this way; I came from the city of angels, Los Angeles, and when my family moved to Rome, I traveled to the Eternal City (la Città Eterna) for the first time in my life. And it was magical. All roads lead to Rome.

Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's? What are some of your fondest memories of that time?

One of my absolute favorite memories at St. Stephen's was yoga on the rooftop of the school and in the chapel. The chapel had a beautiful light with a serene silence, and I loved that sense of calm. Then occasionally, we would go on the rooftop and get to enjoy the view overlooking Rome; it was spectacular and quite the setting for yoga.

I also adored that you could have; a caffè, cappuccino, latte, or however you like your coffee, served 'al banco' style. The school had an art de vivre filled with charm and that Italian flair of dolce vita.

Some of the best times I remember were during the Fall and Spring

trips. It was great to bond with the teachers and the students in a relaxed atmosphere. Those trips created unforgettable memories and allowed me to connect with those on the trip in an environment filled with adventure and fun. For my senior trip, the group traveled to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. And it was simply surreal. The trip was so well planned and filled with cultural happenings and visits to fascinating archeological sites. To name a few highlights, we went to the top of Petra and crossed a part of the Wadi Rum desert on camels. We'd even done some horseback riding. The experience was exceptional. Like a mirage when I think back on it now.

After Rome, what came next?

After Rome, I went on to study in Scotland at the University of St. Andrews. Next, I furthered my studies with a post-graduate degree in London and then Manhattan. And now I'm living my fairytale in Monte-Carlo.

Several years ago, you founded META with your siblings, Kira and Roy. META is Monaco's first concept gallery, and in addition to showcasing artworks from around the world, you also create and sell high-end jewelry, apparel, and leather pieces, including home goods. Where did the idea for META come from, and how has META evolved since you started?

The story of META is all about love. An ode to the elements with a nod to elegance. A love of nature, the cosmos, and all that makes life on Earth so magical. Hence, our motto, "love is the way." We fell in love with it, and it's been beautifully representative of META, which in ancient Greek means "beyond." Kira, Roy, and I were living in different cities when we decided to create META. Our shared passions brought us together and sparked a poetic vision. A universe where finesse meets wild. A fusion that evokes harmony through timeless beauty. Seamlessly passing on an air of casual elegance and nonchalance charm to our audience.

In addition to what we create, we have curated art exhibitions with talent from around the world. We've collaborated with the South Korean Government and international organizations such as UNESCO or the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. Our creations are authenticity at its best. The high-end home goods, high jewelry, and luxury leather collections are handmade with love and brilliant clarity. Each creation has an aura that captures the fiery energy of META Monaco



Marina wearing the META Monte Leather Tote Bag and the META Passion Flame Serpent Cuff (18k gold)

and the dreamy enchanting vibes of the Mediterranean Sea, Sun, and Air.

META demonstrates a quintessential expression of chic casualness. There is a unique play of luxurious materials in our designs. Awakening effortless vitality with an immediate sense of timelessness. The zenith of glamour. To paint a picture, our logo on some of the leather creations is made of pure 24-karat gold. Without a shadow of a doubt, it had to be gold, the symbol of the Sun. The gold adds a sweet note of warmth, as though the sun's warmth is caressing the META leather.

In jewelry, our mark is the sun, a powerful way to reflect our love for light and what's true and real. So it's wonderful how gold in our creations has become a signature emblem of the house of META. All in all, META takes a step back from the fast fashion trends and leaps forward with our elevated luxury. We prioritize quality over quantity. Our craftsmanship is directed by artisanal excellence embracing the magic of the Mediterranean, the force of classic and contemporary aesthetics, and the spirit of Monte-Carlo.

I recently learned that the fashion industry is the second most polluting industry after oil and gas. How can fashion companies become more sustainable, and how do you approach sustainable, ethical fashion at META?

Sustainability is in META's DNA. I have always taken that subject at heart, and so have Kira and Roy. It's a serious matter, and it's important to take action. For instance, education can pull the switch. With that in mind, we have fused education and art at META through countless art exhibitions we curated around the theme of sustainability.

Not only is sustainability deeply rooted in the brand and the house's ethics, but it has also inspired alternative solutions to satisfy the demands of our audience. When we create, we do so in an ethical manner. Our jewels are handmade using natural precious gems and precious metals. In our creative sphere, we do indeed also design apparel collections. Those are accomplished responsibly for the good of our planet.

The leather collections we design are too sourced appropriately. And like with all our creations, the leather pieces are patiently made by hand. We use a remarkable quality of responsibly sourced alpine leather. So, staying true to our house rules, all that META creates is sourced with respect towards the environment. A custom we make sure to apply to all our creations. From start to finish, the process is as much a part of the finished product as the outcome.

Our luxury creations and carefully curated art exhibitions are a reflection of META's love of nature. And through our efforts to produce mindfully, we hope to link arms with the rest of the world in preserving our beautiful planet.

What's it like to be in business with your siblings? That must come with its challenges and benefits!

Do you know the saying family comes first? And business never sleeps? Well, that's that.

As a family, we have our code of conduct, and as a brand, we hope to share our spark of META magic. If the way we function were to be compared to the weather, it would be continental, with the occasional rainbows in the sky. A healthy balance. In the beginning, we had difficulty finding that balance between private life and business. But we eventually found our harmony. Didn't we dream team? Shoutout to Kira and Roy! What can I say? I love my family and META.



Outside of META, what do you enjoy doing in your free time?

There is infinite beauty in nature. I love to begin the day with a swim in the sea, see the sun rise and set, go on walks, and explore. But my soft spot these days seems to be a great pleasure and interest I take in gardening. It's such a blissful feeling to see a garden grow, bloom with the seasons, and succeed at keeping the plants happy and healthy. I also enjoy painting very much, and it's been exciting to have my first show at the gallery. Then as the head of jewelry at META, it's a delight to study our collections and work on new creations that go with the spirit of our house.

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Starting a business is never easy. Have there been moments where you questioned your decision or considered giving up? How were you able to move past those challenges?

META has become my North Star. Much like in gardening, you have to water the seed before it grows into a plant, and in due time, it turns into a tree. But that transformation takes patience and commitment. The journey is the reward. And the story is the fruit of the journey. I love to hear and see our creations become a part of someone's story. That's the best part. When META makes one smile.

If you could speak directly to the current St. Stephen's students, is there any advice you would give them?

Enjoy every moment of your time at St. Stephen's. It's precious, and nothing in your life will ever be like it.



Lorenzo Fornari '95

Where are you from, and what brought you to St. Stephen's?

I'm a bona fide third-culture kid (aka TCK). To give things a dramatic flare, I was born in the desert and grew up on a relatively small island in the Atlantic called Manhattan. I lived short periods abroad, following my parents to Iran, the Philippines, Brussels, Luxembourg, and Paris for a large part of my life, and now for the past two years, I've been in London. Of course, I lived in Rome after following my parents, who are both Italian, to that city. After a disastrous attempt at attending an Italian high school--because I had always attended international schools--I came to St. Stephen's and graduated from St. Stephen's. Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's? What are some of your fondest memories of that time?

Could you describe your time at St. Stephens?

They're some of my best memories from my time in Rome. To give a better answer, looking back, the mid 90s were an absolutely pivotal moment in history where we transitioned into a clumsy digital age. My time at St. Stephens was firmly analog. It was a time when 'meeting up' meant spending half the day trying to get a hold of one another by phone, settle on a place to meet that you could both find how to get to with the ubiquitous "tutto città" map, and embark on an adventure where you'd give one another approximately 30 minutes of waiting time before eventually giving up on your pal or date.

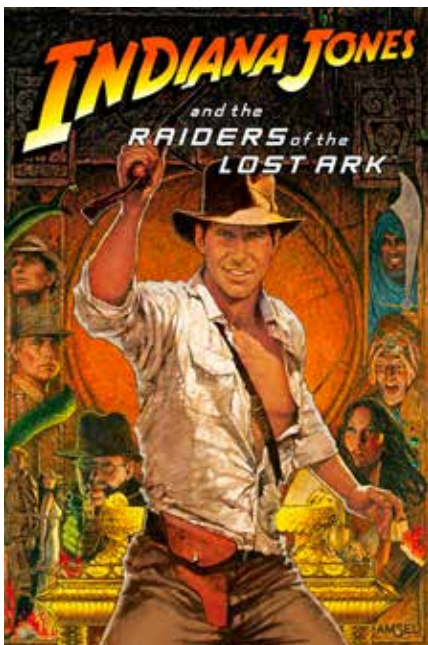
Looking back, and comparing to current generations, we were also a lot stupider (or daring if you will) because there was less chance of being caught and less consequences for our actions. You could call it "carefree" if you will. It was a time where you didn't have license plates on your motorino and helmets were still optional.

As for St. Stephens itself, I experienced it both as a day student and a boarder. In the latter time there, we used to sneak out and go to the Palatine or the Colosseum--when you still could--in the middle of the night, and we would have, obviously, non-alcoholic drinks and think about how those were the places where Caesar or a Roman emperor once walked. It was unique and magical, really; these monuments were our backyards.

We played a lot of pranks as well. We once rewired the main gate buzzer to ring the apartment of a faculty member who lived on premises. The amount of cursing starting from 7am was legendary. It was a real growing experience, and there was a lot of tough love, unlike what I see today, where things are stricter and more permanent,

which on the one side brings more order and safety, but also stifles spontaneity because everything's recorded and tracked forever. An no, I'm not a conspiracy theorist. I've worked in telecom for the last twenty years and know how things are. Literally every single bit and byte is being tracked and stored, whether it's encrypted or not. Many may think what we see about China and their 'point system' is unthinkable and alien, but I assure you we're slowly sliding into such a society just like a boiling frog.

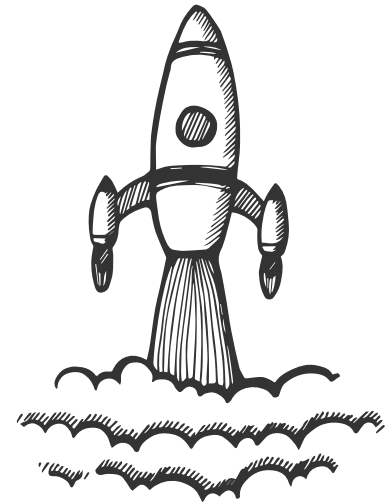
Talking about frogs, one of my most vivid memories was the various dissections we'd do in biology class with Mr. Locilento. Do kids nowadays still do them or is not PC anymore? Also, I'd have to say that my absolute favorite time were the classes and trips with Mr. Ullman who I still believe to this day was the inspiration for *Indiana Jones*. What a legend.



Today's teenagers are growing up in a world that's so different, even from the world I grew up ten years ago. You mentioned you stayed in Rome after you graduated from St. Stephen's; what did you do following graduation?

What came next was the total unknown. I had no idea what I wanted to do. The only thing I knew was that I had to leave Rome, not because I didn't love Rome, au contraire. When I more recently saw "*La Grande Bellezza*" I felt like Sorrentino hit the nail on the head with managing to create a visual representation of how I always felt about "*La città eterna*". That last scene when they're doing "*il trenino*" during the party just hit it home for me. As Romans we have this terrible thing, which is that the people of Rome still think it's the capital of an empire that has been gone for thousands of years and it gets to you, even to me; you're like, "oh, I live in Rome, "*Roma capoccia*, *Roma caput-mundi*..." and you're fed this dream, this romantic lie that Rome is the center of the world. It was, once. It's not now. It's far from it. It's beautiful, it's fantastic, but it's a village. It's a big village with a delusion of grandeur where if you stay there, you will probably remain there for the rest of your life. Again, nothing against that, but I knew that I had to leave or I would've had massive regrets from not going abroad and seeing the world.

I did some university tours in New York, Paris, and London. I ended up going to Brussels because I found this fantastic university that was small but dynamic. Brussels was much more international city; the European Union was in total ferment, the wall had 'just' come down, and it felt like it was really the center of the world. I ended up staying there for almost 7 years. I went to Vesalius, a liberal arts college that was a love child between Boston College and the VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel). It gave me the time to understand what direction I wanted to go in. I eventually outgrew Brussels too and moved to Paris where I lived for almost 20 years and now recently moved to London.



When you moved to Paris, is that when you joined your current company, Eutelsat, where you are currently Head of Internal Innovation? I read that you collaborate with global teams across France, Italy, and even Mexico. You also work with start-ups, VCs and universities as well. I wondered, what sorts of projects does a "Head of Internal Innovation" work on?

I'm actually leaving Eutelsat this month. Because of my recent transfer from Paris to London, it has become more complicated. Working in internal innovation involves working with people, and remote innovation is, I'd say, impossible. To answer your question, at the end of the day, my role was accompanying colleagues with dreams and ideas. I would listen to them and determine if it had Value with a capital "v." Did it bring something to the bottom line? That was fantastic. I loved doing that and seeing the ideas that came from all different areas, from our engineers and directors to the stewards at the building entrance who would observe and say, "well, what if we did things like this? What if we did that?" I created guidelines; it was as if we had a suggestion box, and I gave the box structure. I helped accompany people from idea to design and execution and to do so you'd also need help finding internal and external sponsors or clients. I loved that because I love creating.

And what kinds of projects did you support? What were some of the things you helped come into being during your time there?

The good thing about working in something like that is that you have internal budgets, which are usually very meager, so you go and talk to the European Union, you speak to local ministries of telecommunication, to venture capitalists, to investors, and that's the unique part: you learn to cut through the bullshit in a way and see what makes the world tick. There are a lot of politics and behind-the-scenes dynamics that, from the outside, are hard to see. One of the most incredible projects involved some people who took a technology that was twenty years old and repurposed it. They took long-abandoned frequencies that no one else knew what to do with, and they came up with unique ideas. Unfortunately, it's an ongoing project, so I can't go into details.

That's perfectly fine. Finding a new use for something everyone else had abandoned must be rewarding. So, since you're in technology and part of the tech start-up world, I have to ask you what you think about the Metaverse.

I applaud Facebook for going all-in on a dream because you need that; you have commit. I don't know if you've ever seen the movie *Existenz*? It was from the nineties. It came out just before the *Matrix*, and to this day, it's a very geek culture reference to what I think is the dream of the Metaverse or all this stuff. Web3 could be interesting, but we're still not there yet. There are opportunities in everything, but it requires consistency and big companies to take risks. And unfortunately, many big companies, like Google or Microsoft, have tons of money, and they have shareholders they

must respond to. Everyone's talking about getting on the Metaverse bandwagon, but a year or two later, these projects get abandoned. These companies will invest vast fortunes into these things and then let them die because no one behind them believes in the technology; they just did it to follow the bandwagon. Anyway, there's going to be a *Matrix*-style Metaverse--or whatever you want to call it--I'm just not sure it will happen in the next decade or so.

If you watch *Existenz*, I think the biotechnological model they propose is a better way forward, a better way into the Metaverse. *Existenz* envisions a biotechnological interface into the Metaverse, and there's a chemical that you could call a "hallucinogenic" component. I'm in London now and seeing vast investments into medically controlled hallucinogenic and what they call "microdosing." And I'm thinking out loud here; we could see a combination of biological and technological ways to control one's imagination and inhabit virtual worlds. So, I think, for now, Web3 and the Metaverse are gimmicks. They're the foundations of something that will probably not look like what is being proposed now. The Metaverse, alternative reality, and VR have been around for thirty, forty, and fifty years. 3D TV came out in the '50s, and people hyped it up to hell a few years ago, and it just flopped. It's a cycle. Everything is cyclical. What is hyped now will go away and come back in ten years when it's more mature. Second life, the website, has been around for decades. Virtual worlds aren't new. But, again, I applaud Zuckerberg for what he's doing, and despite all his shortcomings, he has the guts to do something like change the name of his company. I don't think it gets more serious than that.



Absolutely. That's a good point. It's rare to hear anyone positively talk about Facebook, but we must respect them for taking a risk. So, to completely change topics, I wanted to ask you about your latest project, Solaro Gin, which comes from Capri. According to the Solaro website, it is the only award-winning gin made in Capri and its surrounding region. I was surprised to learn that gin was born on the Amalfi Coast in Salerno. What's the story behind Solaro, and what sets it apart from other gins?

What makes it unique is it's not only the most beautiful but also most exquisite gin in the world. A combination of factors led me to create Solaro gin. I had been a Co-Founder many times, but I was always joining other people, and at a certain point, I wanted to do my own thing and use the experience I had accumulated over my lifetime to create something unique. This is my passion project and is now being found in the highest-end establishments and locations around the world. We've recently gotten a few medals (including a double gold) and glowing reviews keep pouring in (pun intended).

In a strange way, Solaro was born of my frustration for Italy. I hate that it's one of the wealthiest countries in the world, with so much going for it, and yet we seem to squander our riches, cultural diversity, ingenuity, and the fantastic things we have going for us. I hate squandered potential. Italy has this constant problem of internal strife, of politics, of people going at each other's throats, a mentality of "mors tua vita mea", so I wanted to prove myself wrong, in that sense, and create something in Italy. I wanted to create something with the best people I could find and ensure those people would get recognition. While living in France and working as a photographer, doing fashion shoots and other projects, I realized there was so

much going on behind the scenes that no one saw. When people are recognized, you can create a great ecosystem. I wanted to be radically transparent with my company; I didn't want anything we did to be a secret. And our artisans at Solaro have gone above and beyond what was required of them and created something beautiful, from the distillers who gather the raw ingredients to the artisans who create the ceramic packaging.

To make a long thing short, part of my family is Neapolitan and Capri, and I've been visiting most of my life. While making limoncello in my uncle's garden, I had all these ideas going on in my head, the "shower thoughts" effect, and I thought, "why don't I make something from Capri?" I thought about making limoncello, and I thought about all the artisans here who make leather sandals, ceramists, painters, poets, etc. There is so much happening on such a small piece of land! So, this idea came to me four or five years ago and I let it brew. I have a Notes application on my phone where I have one note called "Strangeries and Ideas." Every time I have an idea, I dump it there, and this one stuck. I keep the ideas together because it allows me to read through them monthly and realize what's stupid and good.



So, I started to talk to people. I'm not a big drinker, and I don't come from the food and beverage industry, so this was a completely new, different life from my career in technology and satellites, but I found it fascinating.

For example, I don't know if you know the story of gin: it was first made in Italy in the 900s, with the creation of the Scuola Medica Salernitana, which is recognized as the foundation of modern medicine (basically the transition from alchemy to scientific-method). There were three big cultures of the time, the Byzantine, Western and Arab empires. The story goes that three scholars of these Cultures met and decided to combine knowledge. The Arab scholar

brought something unknown at the time in the West, a little metal still, an alembic, that enabled one to distill things which was crucial (as it is still today) for medicine. This was a game changer because up until then you could only achieve about 15% alcohol through fermentation (mead, wine, beer...). These scholars took the wine and distilled it. Even back then, one thousand years ago, you could achieve 98% alcohol by distilling wine. These men took everything around them, plants, animals, and objects, and tried to distill them, and because juniper had been used since the beginning of time for medical purposes, they distilled that and made what we call today "gin." And today, at Solaro, our gin is produced in Salerno, the birthplace of gin.

That is very cool. I had no idea gin was born in Salerno. Now that I have heard the story behind Solaro, it seems that this project of making gin was born more or less naturally, not only from your heritage but also from your love of nature and the outdoors. You're an explorer, a nature photographer, and a scuba diver. You co-founded The Outdoor Journal, an international active lifestyle and explorer magazine. Could you share more about this passion and what led you to turn your love for nature and photography into a business?

I think photography and exploration came naturally because I come from a family of diplomats, so moving around and exploring is in my DNA. My mom was a photographer. I have a lot of family members who are artists, architects, painters, mosaicists, anything really, and it's one of these things where you say, "do what you love." And I love traveling, I love discovering new cultures. Anthony Bourdain was a hero of mine. I loved how he presented himself and his philosophy of getting to know cultures through food. The Outdoor Journal was a natural fit because a friend of mine started it, and I was involved from the beginning. It's a fantastic medium that allows me to meet the most exciting people from Cousteau to Mike Horn and visit insanely beautiful locations, up in the mountains or under the sea. And, traveling, you see these unique places, and being able to extract and distill those experiences is fun [laughs]. It seems distilling is a constant theme in my life!

You have started and been involved in some fascinating, unique projects, from the Outdoor Journal to Solaro. I can imagine it's not easy to start ventures on your own or even alongside a partner. What do you love about entrepreneurship, and what has enabled you to persevere when things are difficult?



I love building things and helping others succeed. I think that's my main drive in entrepreneurship. Being constantly surrounded by ideas and dreams, and once you get into the groove, also find those who will back you financially and emotionally. Those two elements are the most important because trust me, being an entrepreneur sounds sexy but you realize very quickly what your limitations are and you better have the fortitude and persona to be able to be both humble and resilient. You will get your ass handed to you constantly. Look up "startup curve" and that gives you an idea of what you're going to go through. Personally, the thing that allows me to persevere, more than anything, is enough resources (i.e. money) until we get repeat sales and a steady flow of money. You'll find out quickly enough if you're cut out to be an entrepreneur. What really matters is having enough cash to get your company up and running and fumbling along the way.

With regards to the Outdoor Journal & Voyage, for example, we created a business model where we only work with the most sustainable, safe, and exciting travel operators (we vet each and every one of them) and we only take a small, fixed commission and give the lion's share of money back to the local trip leaders, which is the right thing to do (which most travel agencies don't do that). So, we created this beautiful thing; we had more than two million in funding, and then COVID came and shut things down, so now we are resurrecting the project with new funding. That was a bit of a "force majeure", but you'll have to eventually deal with things like employees quitting point blank, stealing, insurance scams, customers being upset (ever notice the only feedback you get is complaints, hardly any praise?), or things like staying up at night not knowing how you're going to pay staff at the end of the month, taxes



due, legal fees accruing, and that's just the beginning. It's hell and the thought of going back to a cushy corporate job isn't a bad thing, it's sanity and stability.

COVID has indeed changed everything. I hope you will be able to come back even stronger now that borders are opening up again. On the topic of change and overcoming challenge, I wonder if you could share a message with the current St. Stephen's students. Is there anything you know now that you wish you had known in high school?

A great poet once said "you can't always get what you want, you get what you need". I think that's truer than I ever thought it would be and a good thing to keep in mind. I'd also love to go back and remind myself of the adage 'this too shall pass'. Not only for the bad, but also for the good. Savour and enjoy the wonderful moments and remember that just as the bad ones, they'll go by.

On a deeper level, I heard a saying recently that goes something like this: "the worst day of your life is meeting the person you could've been". It took a minute, but it made me think of when I was on an expedition (for *The Outdoor Journal*) with one of the most incredible people I've ever met, "super-explorer" Mike Horn. He's a very "carpe diem" kind of person and has this parable that goes like this: you have around 30,000 good days to live (that's around 82 years for those keeping count). By the time you're 18 almost 7,000 have already gone by.

This is all to say that the most precious thing we squander so easily is time. Make the most of every moment you have because you will never, ever, get them back. Spend your time with the people who make you happy and try and make those around you happy as well. Forget the rest, or at least try to.

On a lighter note: When traveling anywhere learn to say "hello" and "thank you" in the local language. You'll be surprised how just these two things will make a local happy and also make your experience that much better.

If you're still reading this, thank you for attending my TED talk.

If you're interested in knowing more about Solaro Gin, visit solarogin.com and visit <https://instagram.com/solarogin>

Feel free to get in touch with Lorenzo via the contact details you can find on either site.

For info regarding *The Outdoor Journal* outdoorjournal.com and *Voyage* outdoorvoyage.com



Eva Perez de Vega '93
& Ian Gordon '91

Where are you both from, and what brought each of you to St. Stephen's?

Eva: I'm from Rome, I was born there, since my parents met in Rome while working for F.A.O. Because of our international situation, St. Stephen's seemed like the perfect fit, and a natural transition from the international middle school I came from. I also loved the central location. Once I visited it felt like the most exciting high school for international students living in Rome, who wanted to be embedded within the city.

Ian: My dad was working for U.S.A.I.D. and our family moved frequently. I had been in boarding school since seventh grade and for high school my parents gave me a choice of various international high schools I could attend. I remember looking at St. Stephen's and finding it to be such a magical place, both because of the size of the school and of course the city in which it was located, compared to the other boarding schools. I became a boarder at St. Stephen's in 1987 and it turned out to be the absolute best choice!

Could you share a little more about your experience at St. Stephen's? What memories do you have of your time at the school?

Ian: I think those were the richest four years of my life. The international quality at St. Stephen's is unmatched; everybody is unique and there is so much diversity. The arts programs really stood out because of the school's faculty and its location in Rome. Both Eva and I spent a lot of time drawing and painting, she was also very involved in theater. At night, I got permission to attend evening classes at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma which allowed me to further pursue those interests, so I was very appreciative of that



flexibility that the school afforded me. The school trips were deeply memorable. There is something so adventurous and special about traveling and exploring different countries and locations with peers and teachers beyond the classroom, having dinners together and visiting sites.

Eva: There were so many memorable things; drama with Sandra is particularly memorable, but also art with Anita Guerra, Mr Uillman's classes were extraordinary and the treasure hunts he organized were so memorable! And of course dance, with Roberta and Alice, who I know still teaches there. It's great how the drama program was as rigorous as calculus, which I also have fond memories of actually. Lots of drama in calculus sometimes. But in drama there was an expectation that if we were going to be part of that space, you gave your all. It also allowed me to sneak in more time with Ian, who was a boarder, because we would rehearse on weekends and late into evenings - sometimes as late as midnight.

Many of my teachers at St. Stephens have influenced the way I teach now, even anecdotally I still tell my students some stories related to my time at St. Stephens. My first oil painting was with Anita, I remember being so afraid to start and mess up that after staring at the canvas for a while Anita came over, took the paintbrush and painted a random squiggle on it to get it started. I was so shocked and upset at first, but then realized there is no "correct" way to start something new - you just have to give it a go. I still use this now as a professor of architecture to tell my students that there is no ideal way to start a project. You have to go for it.

Ian: I think every teacher was unique and had a lasting influence on me. The dormitory life was also really special, especially because my family lived abroad. I learned a lot from other boarders as well, how to make food in my room, do laundry, all the practical things.

Eva: And also, we started our life partnership at St. Stephen's, it's where we developed these

little rituals. It was pre-phones and pre-internet, so we devised different ways to communicate. I would get to school really early in the morning with my father who worked at F.A.O., next door, and the only way to reach Ian, as I couldn't call, was through this system we developed using a string that Ian hung from his third-floor window.

Ian: We created a DIY doorbell system so I would know when she arrived. It was a weighted string that I would lower out of my window, and when Eva arrived she could pull it, and it would tap on my window so I would know when she was there, and I could go down to meet her.

That's very cool. I've never heard of that!

Eva: Yes, he would put it down the night before, and I would "ring" at 7:30 in the morning, so we would have some time together before class.

You have a supportive community around you in boarding, but you also have this great independence. I love that. I remember from my year in boarding that it was a time of great freedom and industriousness for all of us. I also remember experimenting with hanging different things from the windows; the boys above me hung a paper clip chain down to our window to get our attention.

Ian: Yeah. I learned so much as well; I spent a lot of time on my guitar playing and learning from other boarders whose passion was music. Everyone on my floor was into a different thing. We had all kinds of talents. I also spent a fair amount of time skateboarding and exploring the city.



You both mentioned your interests in the arts; did your interests in architecture and design begin at St. Stephen's, or were those interests developed later?

Eva: For me, the passion existed early on. I went to St. Stephen's with a passion for drawing and a passion for math and science. However, I thought I wanted to go into theater and dance because I loved these performing arts as well. St. Stephen's allowed me to keep exploring my passions at a rigorous level since the drama and dance programs are very robust. I developed my passions by combining the arts, drawing, thinking through making, and the rigor of physics and calculus, which I love. Still, to this day, I look at my notes and realize I also had a lot of fun. I enjoyed school. Already in my freshman year, I realized that I was always drawing architecture whenever I had a moment; while waiting for the bus or whenever I could I would be either in front or inside of a church or in a piazza, just drawing, sketching, and absorbing everything. My passion for architecture came from the marriage of my interests, which I think St. Stephen's supported quite well. And there was also the magic of being in Rome.

Ian: On my side, I started at a performing arts school in Massachusetts studying painting, violin, and ballet before attending St. Stephen's. Drawing and painting became my passion and St. Stephen's allowed me to continue that. Lucy Clink, my art teacher, provided a lot of inspiration and support; I would do fine arts in the evenings, too; Eva and I would often venture out to churches to sketch together. That was a nice way to deepen our appreciation of art and architecture. I went to art school after St. Stephen's, thanks to Lucy, who guided me to the Tyler School of Art at Temple University. I went to Philadelphia for a year, and it was there that I realized there was another dimension to my interest in art, so I switched to studying Architecture in North Carolina and found my way back to something I had known all along.



That does sound like a good experience. Eva, after you left St. Stephen's, did you study art or architecture as well?

Eva: I went to Madrid to study architecture. I didn't have a great understanding of the different architecture schools then, just that I wanted to study architecture. Originally I was considering the UK, but with some fatherly sway I decided on Madrid and stayed there for seven years for an undergrad and graduate combined program. In retrospect, it was an odd choice since it was the only country in the world that did not recognize the IB, which I had passed with top marks. But that accomplishment didn't do anything as I had to take a whole new set of state exams to be admitted in the Spanish system. It wasn't an easy move to go from the international atmosphere of St. Stephens to a single language, single nation system. I had to re-learn technical terms for physics and math in spanish. It was a bit like my military service!

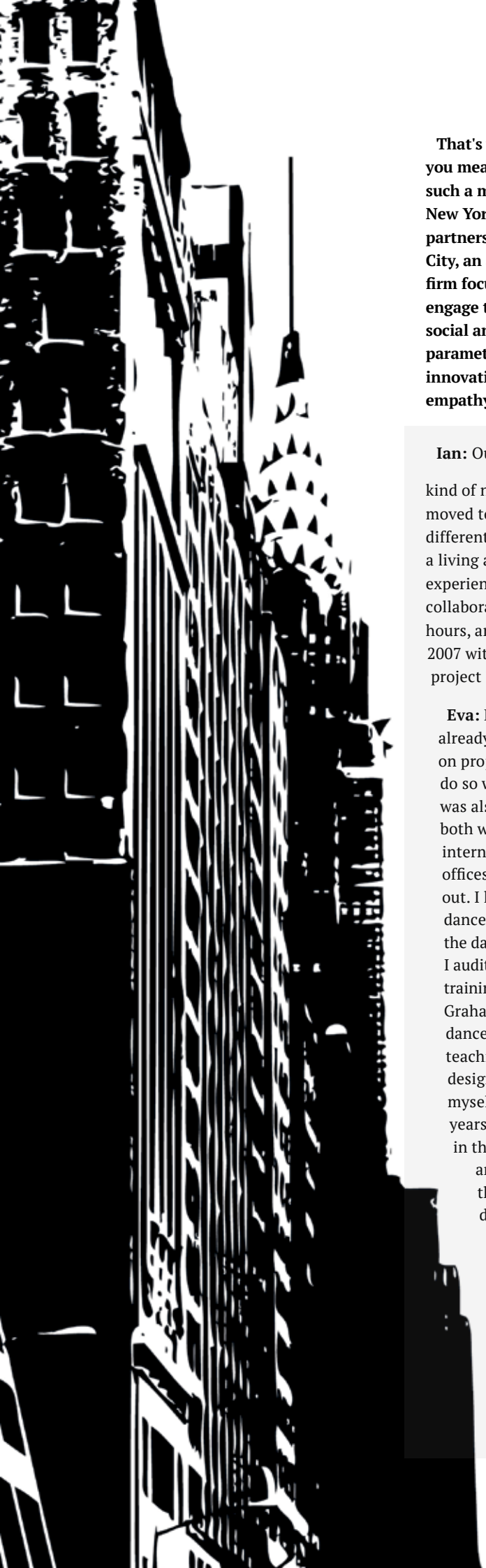
Ian and I were together but physically apart during that time. We would try to meet up at least twice a year and figure out where we could go in the world that could support us both and, somehow, our families. So we decided on New York, which was supposed to be a two-year adventure [laughs], and here we are, twenty-two years, and two kids later.

Ian: We spent many years apart, and that was before cell phones and the internet, so we used a lot of payphones and phone cards, and we sent many letters. We have so many boxes of letters and mixtapes [laughs].

That was an exciting moment after St. Stephens. I'd gone to Philadelphia for a year, and then I went to North Carolina, NC State because my dad had retired and our family settled down there. Eva and

I traveled to see each other every chance we had. After completing my undergraduate degree, I went to Madrid to join Eva again where she was still finishing school. Meanwhile I was freelancing for different architecture firms in Spain. After Eva completed her studies we moved to New York. It was a meeting point between Europe and the U.S. New York which was closer, logistically, for our families. It was also supposed to be a short period where we would stay a few years and then possibly move to Europe. Although, once we were in New York and we experienced the rich multiculturalism, which simulated a lot of St. Stephen's diversity, it seemed a natural place for us to settle and over time our roots deepened and we've been here since.

Eva: Now we have two children, an architecture practice and teaching positions in universities here so while we try to get to Rome whenever we can, New York feels like home. I think the strangeness of New York felt right for us. Curiously, I have never felt foreign in New York. I remember going to Madrid, and even though I'm half Spanish, it felt utterly foreign to me, and I was treated that way. Of course, Madrid at that moment was less diverse than it is now. In New York, because most people come from different parts of the world, it has the international vibe that I had growing up in Rome.



That's wonderful. I can see what you mean about New York; it's such a melting pot. So, you met in New York. You are both founding partners of e+i studio in New York City, an architecture and design firm focusing on projects that engage the public by balancing social and environmental parameters with aesthetic innovation and ecological empathy. How was e+i born?

Ian: Our e+i office emerged

kind of naturally. When we first moved to New York, we worked for different architecture firms, making a living and gaining professional experience. We were simultaneously collaborating on projects after hours, and I think it all started in 2007 with our first design-build project "Choreographing Space."

Eva: Prior to 2007 we had already collaborated a little bit on projects and continued to do so whenever we could. It was also a time when we were both working for high-profile international architecture offices, and we were pretty burnt out. I had decided to go back to dance for a few years to explore the dance scene in New York, so I auditioned for the professional training program at the Martha Graham School of contemporary dance and got in. I also started teaching architecture and design at Parsons to support myself financially. For a few years I was in tights dancing in the morning, and an

architecture professor in the afternoons! Ian had decided to do graduate studies at Columbia which allowed him to explore architecture differently.

So, it was a moment where we were thinking about our voice in the profession, and started doing projects with dancers and artists in NYC.

Eva: So I was dancing and involved in the dance scene here in New York. Ian, you were still skateboarding. Ian was quite well-known as a skateboarder at St. Stephen's, and still skates today!

Our "Choreographing Space" project brought all those things together and in that sense was pivotal and seminal for the founding of our practice. So much so that we gave our first book publication that name "Choreographing Space."

We received a grant and a space from an organization that emerged after 9/11 with the mission to revitalize downtown, which became a ghost town. The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) matched artists with spaces downtown that were left abandoned after 9/11. It was a time when nobody wanted to be downtown. The project emerged from this idea of "how do we think about movement and built space?" How do you dance the city, skate the body and move through the environment? So, we design-built and curated public events for "Choreographing Space," with a team of artists and supported by the LMCC. We collaborated with dancers I had met in my years at Graham and people Ian had met through his different offices and school.

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ARCHITECTURE'S PRACTICE HAS SOMETHING PROBLEMATIC IN IT. IT UNDERSTANDS ITSELF AS BEING JUST FOR HUMANS; IT IS VERY HUMAN-CENTRIC PRACTICE.

Ian: It was a good collaboration, a real design-build project that allowed us to combine our various interests. It was from that project that our office, e+i studio, emerged. The name e+i has many meanings; it's obviously the initials of our first names, but it also refers to exteriority and interiority, architecture and interiors. Lots of different ideas flow through it and that has formed the rubric under which we continue to explore our various design agendas.

It was after winning an International design competition for Ceramics of Italy that we decided to establish our practice more officially as a registered legal entity e+i studio LLC. I left the office I was working at and joined Eva in the office full time.

It's evident from your work that you're always thinking about the relationship between architecture, the built environment, and the natural environment. Your work also focuses on "ecological empathy." Could you share more about that?

Eva: That's a term that needs unpacking. It's embedded in the way we think about materials and the way we think about our position, as humans, in the larger environment. So, it's always there, latent, but through certain projects, being invited to the Biennale, through books, and reflecting on our practice, we realized that a lot of the themes that were emerging were related to an understanding of the fluidity between architecture as human-built and the environment that is not human built but still has our imprint. And we understand ourselves as part of that, a part of nature- as nature. Architecture's practice has something problematic in it. It understands itself as being just for humans; it is very

human-centric practice. In a way, this idea of empathy is not just, we're feeling sorry for what we have done in the world, or we want to extend human meaning to non-human life but rather to question the way we do things both as architects and to question the ecologies that our buildings change and make possible. So, it's a mode of reflection, but it also has clear specific repercussions; we can't keep sourcing material from the environment without any awareness of where those materials might go afterward or without looking at the cyclical nature of both materials but also the practice of having people or goods traveling far distances. Everything is quite interconnected. And the same sort of empathy that you can have for someone of your kind, so to speak, should extend beyond people to the larger planet.

Ian: We can't be human-centric; other actors are affected by what we design. We are also facing an environmental crisis, which is upon everybody.

Eva: We also started thinking about putting ourselves in strange situations like, what if we had not designed to keep animals out? Animals are now under extinction because of us. What if they are part of our architecture? What does that do? How does that radically change the way we think about architecture? And even something very practical is architecture's repercussions on avian life. In New York City, for example, many birds collide with buildings because we haven't considered migratory paths. The built environment is one of the root causes of extinction. So, we shifted our gaze to something beyond just human concerns to provide opportunities for the development of the practice as something that could be even more innovative, exciting, and considerate of all forms of life.

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IN NEW YORK CITY, FOR EXAMPLE, MANY BIRDS COLLIDE WITH BUILDINGS BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T CONSIDERED MIGRATORY PATHS. THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IS ONE OF THE ROOT CAUSES OF EXTINCTION.

Is it possible for manmade structures to respect nature and biodiversity? I mean, isn't that inherently a contradiction?

Eva: I think that's the question. We are trying to open up that possibility, and it came about as a kind of self-reflection on our practice, in the way we had been practicing together for ten years and practicing separately almost for twenty; we started thinking that architecture as a practice is inherently human-made, inherently just for human concern and that feels wrong. It cannot be right. And there are different ways of thinking about it, but it does require some degree of radicality, a kind of questioning of everything. And so, we started with that question. We are one of many species here. We took our projects and did what I call "speciation." We tried to categorize them based on specific interests, also understanding the philosophical underpinnings of these sorts of groupings. So, we call these: flow, engage, gather, and perform, which we thought our projects were doing, but they also have a particular resonance with the other creatures in our environment. And so, it's both a reflection, a self-critique, situating ourselves within



the discourse to move forward as educators, because we are professors. We are responsible for addressing these questions very seriously in our work before we can do that with the students or at the same time as we do that with students.

The Biennale helped us, as it gave us a space to reflect on that. It was interesting to see that there were a lot of projects asking similar questions as well. We're in a moment of reckoning as humans and as people who make things in the world. This footprint isn't necessarily all negative, but, either way, we need to be aware of what it is.

Ian: There is a self-reflective aspect to it where we look back at themes in past projects and energize new projects as the themes are reinterpreted and evolved. We think not just about animals but also the wider environment; ecologies, water, land, and weather are all part of the

environment we're designing in. We also reimagine projects through a lens of speculative fictions in which we imagine alternative futures for the projects and in so doing, these scenarios can have real effects later in how we envision new projects. These exercises sit in the back of your mind, and they affect the new projects.

Eva: We worked on a project here in Chinatown where we explored what Chinatown was like pre-colonialization and what other creatures were here. The fact that it was a canal. There was water. And we also reflected on those species that are now extinct. What if they were to come and be part of our architecture? That's an example of one of our speculative fictions. It is that strangeness that allows us to see new worlds and hopefully think about how we can address these issues in future projects.

Wonderful. You mentioned the philosophical underpinnings of this practice, and I noticed that you are pursuing a Ph.D. in philosophy. How have your doctoral studies influenced how you approach your work as an architect?

Eva: The degree has helped me make connections between things that are interesting to me more theoretically, and the practice of architecture. At first, I had to delve into the world of philosophy to gain my footing. I'm now in the dissertation process, and it's an exciting moment to bring those multiple worlds together; they're mutually informing. Many of the writings that I have done, including in our recent publication, have opened up questions, from a philosophical point of view, of themes that interest us architecturally. Part of the

dissertation involves questioning and exploring the notion of human exceptionalism in architecture and its philosophical roots.

While both philosophy and architecture can be very patriarchal, Philosophy has allowed me to question and hear other voices - to open up to different points of view that might not be understood as part of the canon. Eco-feminism and animal ethics, for example, have been helpful tools to look at architecture through different lenses.

It's cool how your studies are reframing and informing your practice. That must be doubly satisfying. Speaking of architecture, I wonder if you have a favorite project you could share.

Ian: There are always a few key projects that stand out. The first project we collaborated on for lower Manhattan, Choreographing Space, was a favorite. We also won a competition to work with Ceramics of Italy, and that was a very natural, enjoyable collaboration with an Italian client and product industry.

Eva: Absolutely. Working with Italian clients has been one of the most satisfying collaborations for me.

Ian: Even though we were in New York, we could communicate in Italian, which created more direct engagement. We have other ongoing projects; we were shortlisted for a competition here in New York, in Chinatown, and that was a unique project. We were shortlisted, and while we didn't win it, it resonated on many levels.

Eva: The project touched on issues of identity, and it was meaningful because we spend so

much time here in Chinatown; this is where our office is, where our kids first went to school. We had to ask ourselves, "what is the identity of Chinatown? What does that mean architecturally?"

We like all our projects, but some are pivotal in guiding us towards the kind of work we would like to keep pursuing, and ways we can continue to interrogate the way we build as humans in a world that has so much of our built presence. As part of that research, we have a small plot of land upstate where we are considering how to source materials from the land without bringing things from outside and questioning how we can consider the other animal and plant and fungal life around us. So, we're doing experiments with enclosures where other animals can also thrive, rather than be displaced. We're investigating whether we can have human comfort while providing opportunities for life to continue thriving.

Ian: I guess that's our latest favorite project. It's an ongoing laboratory, and it's another design-build project, just as our very first one was. We'll have an idea, test it out, and build it. It's also a nice getaway from the city.

That sounds like the ideal laboratory. I wonder, thinking back to the beginning of our conversation when you shared that you were both already studying the arts during your time at St. Stephen's, if you were to draw a line from those years to today, would it be a relatively straight one or have there been some twists and turns along the way? If so, how were both of you able to move past the difficulties and persevere?

Ian: It's always a little complicated. Having our studio has been challenging, but it's also a hub that is somewhat adaptable, and we've managed to explore our different interests within this office, whether it's teaching digital workshops, working on residential projects, commercial projects, or collaborations with dancers, they all fall under this rubric. The studio is a functional, flexible entity. Our studio helps us surmount challenges. We don't have a strict type of project that we work on; we follow the agenda of the relationship between exterior and interior, which flows through everything. We're also still evolving.





Eva: I feel like we're on a path but it's almost like a python path, you know? It isn't necessarily predictable. Otherwise, we probably wouldn't still be doing this. A few years ago I would never have imagined building structures to support non-human life and humans to coexist or have their domain. But this is what I find most interesting and necessary now. We realized from working in these great architecture offices that there are many different ways of practicing architecture, some more interesting than others. Architecture can be like a research laboratory. We certainly do lots of regular architectural practice projects, such as renovations and residential work. These can also be exciting because the clients are always different. Still, we see our practice as a neural network with various tentacles that reach out to other areas of interest. We haven't followed a single path.

If you had the opportunity to speak with the current St. Stephen's students, is there anything you want to share with them?

Eva: In many ways, today's students are much more forward-thinking than we were. There are more opportunities for them to test out different careers. I don't think that was available to me, or I didn't know it existed. If you have the chance to do that, do it. Do the internships, the summer programs, and the workshops because they will give you footing and a chance to further explore your interests. Ian and I teach high school students over the summer, in an intensive program that gives them a taste of what it might be like to pursue architecture or interior design as a career path. These are the opportunities I wish I had, because the intensives allow students to see if this is a path that might

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interest them or not. We are actually planning a workshop at St. Stephen's next summer, and would love to have St. Stephen's students join one of our workshops!

Ian: I agree. I think early work experiences can be super valuable. High school is the formative time when you are figuring out what your identity and interests are, and St. Stephen's is a special place because you can be comfortable no matter who you are; there's a lot of diversity. It's essential to feel comfortable with who you are, your background, and whatever it is. High school is such an exciting, formative time! With regards to the future, the job descriptions you see now might change because of emerging technologies and changing situations. It's essential to be comfortable with and hear your instincts and follow that. The other thing we didn't have, social media, is another opportunity for students to stay connected and build community. It took a lot of work for us to maintain those bonds. I think this student body is more networked than we were when we graduated, and so hopefully, that provides a stronger glue moving forward.



Nathan ('Thann') Buck '87

Where are you from, and what brought you to St. Stephen's?

I am from the US, was born in Upstate NY, and spent about half of my childhood abroad in Europe, Africa, and Asia. My father was in the diplomatic corps, and where we were living in Nigeria at the time, the school there only went to 9th grade, and we needed to find a boarding school for me to finish off high school. We looked around Europe and visited a few schools, but St. Stephen's was the one that stood out to me, and there was something about it that seemed unconventional and interesting. I was not wrong!

Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's?

I was a boarder for three years, and this was the mid-eighties in Rome, so it was pretty freewheeling and a bit politically chaotic, but that was sort of in the background. Regarding life at St. Stephen's, there were only about 180 students and about fifty boarders in the school. It was like having fifty brothers and sisters with you; having breakfast, going to class, socializing in the afternoons, and going out on the weekends. It was such a revelation to arrive in Rome, be 4,000 miles away from my parents, and explore all of the charms that Rome had to offer both in and out of school. And we would go out at night, and there was always this race to get back into the school before the curfew, and you'd hop on somebody's motorino. I remember the gatherings in the parks underneath the stars, with bottles of wine, and it was just so much fun. Academically, what I always liked about St. Stephen's is that you had this anarchic, liberal, independent-minded student body, but it was fused with this rigorous academic discipline. I had inspiring teachers like Jack Ullman and Helen Pope. St. Stephen's is also where I started acting with Sandra Provost. It was exciting because she treated us like adults, like mature artists, even though we were kids. The material she chose for us was also very risqué and not entirely appropriate for 15-year-olds, but she didn't care. And we loved that about her. She was very inspiring to me. I also remember Richard Trythall, who was wonderful; he was the soul of the school. Michael Stannus, who taught me English, was the first person who inspired me to write. I still remember him saying, "indeed, it reads very well," and those words stick with you when you're trying to make your way early on in those days.

So what attracted you to the performing arts when you were in high school, and what led you to pursue a career in the arts?

I wanted to study theater. I took a year off from high school, and when I entered college, I went to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, near Chicago; they have a fantastic theater program there, and even though I started in the theater program, I felt I needed some kind of validation, I don't know if I was any good at it or not and I felt like I needed to go work in theater, so I went to what's called a "Cattle Call" audition in the winter to find work for the following summer. All the theaters come to one place, and hundreds of actors audition. I auditioned in February of my freshman year, and I ended up getting fifteen months of work. I was offered two contracts, one for the summer and one for the following year, as an actor. At the time, I was nineteen, but I looked like I was fourteen, so the parts I got were for teenagers; they were happy to have an adult who could play a teenager. I ended up getting work in Ohio, in Arkansas, and that's how I got an Equity card. When I returned to college, I was more focused and had a great acting teacher. I also started making forays into directing theater and enjoyed it. My acting teacher at the time made us show up an hour before class and do what we called "the workout," and part of the workout was called the "corporate mime," which was an obscure physical theater technique invented by Étienne Decroux in 1920s France. It was rigorous, like a mix of ballet and gymnastics, and I realized that I was physically uncoordinated and felt like I needed more of it. After college, I didn't relish the prospect of hitting the streets as an actor in Chicago, so I jumped at an opportunity to go to France. I ended up in Paris, and through busking as a musician, I met this entire community of street musicians and more established musicians. I fell in

with a group of Irish musicians. We played the Irish pub circuit in Paris for a couple of years, and then one day, I saw Marcel Marceau perform in Paris, and I remembered that I loved theater. I had been away from theater for a couple of years, and he had a school. So I thought that would be cool; I auditioned for the school and got in. I really liked him. He is kind of a legendary character, but he wasn't a fantastic teacher. There was another fantastic corporate mime teacher there; she taught this obscure technique and had a school in the suburbs of Paris. I started moonlighting at her school after Marcel Marceau's school. I loved it. When the school decided to move to London, I became a member of their company, and I consider studying mime my film school because it taught me how to think visually. I learned how to imagine a body in space and think through a story visually. It also taught me something about the editing process, which, as Kubrick said, is probably the most unique part of filmmaking, and it's what filmmaking owns more than acting, more than cinematography, more than sound. I started making little films with my friends, and it was around this time that digital video was just arriving, in the late nineties. It started to become possible to edit digitally on a computer so you could conceivably set up your own home studio, which I began to do while I was living in London, the heart of the British theater and cinema scene. I found a job working as an assistant for a feature film producer who was doing five to ten-million-dollar big, full movies, and that was incredibly valuable for me because although it wasn't at all artistic, I learned the whole backroom side of filmmaking and how you put a film together. And then, I began making my way, making a living shooting corporate videos and short films, and eventually, that led me along a more linear path to what I'm doing now, which is making feature films.

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...I FELT LIKE I NEEDED TO GO WORK IN THEATER, SO I WENT TO WHAT'S CALLED A "CATTLE CALL" AUDITION IN THE WINTER TO FIND WORK FOR THE FOLLOWING SUMMER. ALL THE THEATERS COME TO ONE PLACE, AND HUNDREDS OF ACTORS AUDITION. I AUDITIONED IN FEBRUARY OF MY FRESHMAN YEAR, AND I ENDED UP GETTING FIFTEEN MONTHS OF WORK.

Is there anything that you wish you had known back when you were just starting out about having a career in the arts that you discovered later on and would have been helpful to learn at an earlier point?

There are a couple of things. One of the things I've learned is you have to take a long view, especially for arts, because it's not just about playing your cards right and networking and meeting the people, but it's also just a long kind of slow drip process which is this interface of your soul and your experience with your talent and your technique, and all of those things take time to grow. And so it's useful to take a long, ten or twenty-year view of things. You may wonder, "How will I fill all that time?" But you do, and you'll have love affairs, you'll meet people, you'll have jobs, you'll be fired from jobs, have friendships, travel places, and you'll have heartbreak. All this stuff will come at you no matter what as a human being. But that's all grist for the mill. I was talking to Helen Pope the

other day, and I remembered how when I was nineteen, and even in my early twenties, I was obsessed with Ingmar Bergman, the film director. I watched all his films, studied his life, how he made each film, how he met the actors and knew everything about him. And then, when I hit thirty-one or thirty-two years old, I OD'ed on Bergman; I suddenly didn't want anything to do with this guy. I think part of it was me telling myself, "I'm never going to make this work. Come on; I'll never make a film like that." And the funny thing is when I made this most recent film, *Under Spanish Skies*, it's a very Bergmanesque film, the way I set it up with characters who have known each other for a long time. I had no intention of doing this, but I ended up making a Bergman film in my own way, and it's interesting how there is this whole circular process of how you absorb something; you have an apprenticeship to the masters, whether they're people you know or those you study from a distance and then you have to let go of them at one point. Ultimately, life comes back around, and where there was once the mystery of "how did they come up with that idea," that just comes out of you because of your life; it comes to you years later when you're writing without you being conscious of it. So, it's essential to take a long view. Another thing is: don't be too worshipful. This is the same advice you give to people who want to become parents. You're never going to be ready; you just have to have the baby and go through all the craziness. It's the same thing with art. Don't put it off if you have this inclination to do this thing, whatever the thing is, if you're a musician, a painter, or a writer, just start. You have to jump off the deep end and do the hard bit. Instead of making one small painting, do a painting that takes up a whole wall, draft a feature film, write a symphony and fail. You probably will fail. And that's important. Get comfortable with failure. It's okay because then you know you're in the arena, you have been bloodied, the bull has taken

his first chunk out of your body, and you know you're going to have to go back and face him again. A lot of people are just afraid. Many young artists think, "well, what if I go to graduate school and study a bit more?" Or, "I need to work a little longer with this master because he's really accomplished." You have to cut the cord and jump, especially in the arts. This isn't the case with being a doctor; of course, a doctor has to attend medical school, but there's no reason to stay in school for too long as an artist. You're just putting off the inevitable.

Your latest film, *Under Spanish Skies*, premiered this summer and is now available on most major streaming platforms. The Bearlift Films website explains, "After the sudden death of her husband, a reclusive artist invites lifelong friends to her farm in Spain and reveals a shocking plan. Before the weekend ends, the friends must reveal secrets from the past that will drive her toward a devastating choice." Could you share more about the film and what it was like to work on this project?



This film started because, while I had made a feature-length documentary before, I'd never made a feature-length narrative film. I was turning 49 in the fall of 2018. My wife, who is also a very accomplished artist, a dancer, and a filmmaker herself, knew that I had this thing that I'd wanted to do for a long time, which is make a narrative film, and she said, "this is your 49th birthday, why don't you make a film for your 50th birthday? That gives you one year to get this done." And it was a good push. When you have children and are married to somebody making a film, it's a huge sacrifice because it will take up their entire life and your life. I recognized that this was truly a gift. She gave me the green light and said, "I know it's going to be tough for all of us, but you've gotta go through it with it." So I had that first impulse but didn't have a story then. I also didn't have money to make the film, nor did I have a place to film. So, I started searching around. I did have a set of parameters that I knew would work well for a feature film. The first was that I wanted to shoot in one location, and I wanted it to be set in a limited period of time, either twenty-four or forty-eight hours. I also wanted the characters in the film to have known each other for a long time because, in this kind of film, you excavate the past. So, you use emotional pyrotechnics instead of expensive real life ones like car chases and explosions. There's also the practical advantage of taking the whole crew with you and shooting the film in one place. And this goes back to Aristotle, who discussed the unity of time, place, and action. It turns out he was also giving us a recipe for low-budget filmmaking. There is a certain subset of films that have followed this formula well, films that I love like Jean Renoir's "Rules of the Game," "The Big Chill," or "Festen," by Thomas Vinterberg. So, I had a structure,



but I still needed a theme. I ended up traveling to Venice to discuss a business idea with a St. Stephen's contact named Frank O'Halloran, who was, at one time, the Head of Boarding at St. Stephen's, and we've been lifelong friends ever since meeting each other. He's a little older than me, but over time, that difference seems to have shrunk between us. We were sitting in Venice, on a terrace overlooking the Giudecca Canal. He starts telling me a story of an elderly couple he used to know who had a very interesting arrangement. They had a suicide pact. They had agreed that if one of them were to die before the other, the other person would take their own life, not wanting to live without them. And they went through with

it. They were quite wealthy; they had an apartment in Marrakesh, Morocco, and in the apartment, they kept poison with the plan being that one of them would go to that apartment, drink the poison, and end their life. Importantly, they didn't have kids, nor did they have a close family. They really only had each other. The husband was always very athletic, running marathons at sixty, and the wife had a lot of health problems but, ironically, he developed a very fast-moving cancer, and from diagnosis to death, it was only three or four weeks. He was gone, leaving her alone. She spends six months traveling the world, getting rid of their property, and giving their money away to charity; she comes back to Venice,



says goodbye to everyone, and, of course, everyone already knows about the arrangement, and they try to talk her out of it. She tells them, "no, I'm going to go through with it." She flies to Marrakesh and ends her life. I was back in Berlin a couple of weeks later, riding my bike, and I realized, this is it; I can use this. So I took this story and put it together with the format I had planned. I imagined the main character who is living alone, she has just lost her husband, and she invites her two best friends, who have known her since high school, to visit. A lot of shared history between the four of them comes out over the course of the movie. I based a lot of things on my St. Stephen's friends, and I was thinking about St. Stephen's as

I wrote the film. I think those years, between fourteen and eighteen, disproportionately influence your life, at least they did for me. St. Stephen's certainly did. So, for these characters in their late forties and early fifties, there's a reckoning that happens. The script basically wrote itself. I wrote it very quickly, and I was able to raise money off of that script. I wrote for some actors I knew and then for others I met. I went to Venice in January, wrote the script in March or April, raised the money in May and June, did pre-production in July, and filmed in August. It was a three-week shoot. For a feature film, that almost never happens; a feature usually takes three to five years to progress from no script to a completed film. There

was almost something supernatural about it. So we did it. I shot the film before my fiftieth birthday. It took me a good two and a half years to edit it. Part of that was that the whole film industry just shut down. We shot in August of 2019, and then the whole world shut down in March because of the pandemic. It was probably a good thing for the film because it gave me a longer gestation period to go through the editing process. And the thing I always say about movies is that you really write them three times. You write them when you write them, write them again when you shoot, and write them a third time when you edit, and each time everything transforms a little bit. So that was a good process for me.

I noticed the *Under Spanish Skies* actors and crew members are incredibly diverse, hailing from a range of countries, including Egypt, Sweden, Germany, the U.S., France, and Canada. Was this intentional?

It definitely wasn't intentional, but I think there is a subconscious process we can't avoid as third-culture kids. We grew up with a sort of ease of transition from one culture to another or from one language to another. I wrote it in English, it's set in Spain, there's only one Spanish character in it and the guy who plays the Spanish character is actually Egyptian! I guess I was reaping my friendships with other professional film people that I have known for years and who live in the UK, Spain, the US, Germany, and France - and then we had the luck to be put in touch with Amr Waked, who is Egyptian but lives in Barcelona - who played Andrés and with Nahéma Ricci, who plays Alix who is of French/Tunisian descent but lives in Quebec. I wrote for them and Tullan, Swedish/Italian, Philippe, Dutch/British, and Tara, an American living in Berlin. I really didn't think of them from the standpoint of their nationality; I just admired each of them as an actor and shaped the script and the character around them.

I see what you mean by it being an almost "supernatural" experience! It's interesting how everything just fell into place. Looking back on your career thus far, could you identify something you would consider your greatest achievement up to this point?

I consider this film my greatest achievement in terms of my work. Of course, I also hope that the next one will become my new greatest achievement! In the bigger picture, my greatest achievement was convincing my wife, Megumi Eda, to marry me, which was not an easy thing to do.



Based on our conversation thus far, on one level, it seems like it was a relatively clear path for you from acting for Sandra Provost at St. Stephen's to moving abroad and studying theater before beginning your career in filmmaking. Did it feel that way at the time? Did you feel you were following a linear path, or did you experience periods of uncertainty?

Definitely not. I was always in the artistic realm, but I was pretty dead set on being an actor when I left St. Stephen's, and then I went into music for a while and thought maybe I'd just stay on that path. I meandered; there were so many dead-end paths and detours. For me, it's been anything but linear. I didn't even know I wanted to direct films, although I have a clear memory of one moment from my senior year in college when I was at a party, and the girl I was talking to asked me, "what do you want to do?" Without thinking, I blurted out, "I want to direct films." At the time, I didn't know where that came from, and I didn't do anything involved with making movies for a good ten years after that, but I had this vague notion that that's what I wanted to do. I did a lot of other things in the meantime, including having a family and all the joys and responsibilities that engenders. So, I followed a twisting, meandering, anything but a straight path.

Do you have a final piece of advice to share with the current St. Stephen's students?

If your experience is anything like mine, the friendships you will make these years, the impressions, and the things you learn in school and out will probably influence your life more profoundly than any that come after. If you have an inkling that there is something that you are good at and love doing, even if it is a very secret little notion right now - you have so much time to nurture that tiny impulse into something great and magnificent. Think in terms of 5 years or 10, or 20 years. Those spans seem infinite when you are 16, but to do anything well, you must get used to long-term thinking. Don't worry about not getting an audition in your first year of hitting the streets in New York or even in your first two years. If you haven't done it in five years, you can start to question things after going full out, but remember to think in terms of those time spans. Don't give up before then. It's also useful to think in terms of a body of work. Don't have a passion project that has to become your great masterpiece because, inevitably, your first idea isn't going to work; it won't be as good as an idea you have three or four projects down the road. So just get the work done and start building a body of work. Let people judge you on that, not on a specific project.



Richard Porath '14 & Davide Albeggiani '14

Where are you both from, and what brought you to St. Stephens?

Richard: I'm Italian, but my dad is half German, which is where I got my name, Richard. My parents both grew up in Rome. My grandparents live in Rome. I grew up between London and Frankfurt. When my parents decided to move back to Italy, they were looking for an international school in the center of Rome. We chose St. Stephen's and I spent all four years there.

Davide: I'm also Italian. I grew up in Rome. We lived in the U.S. For a few years. And when we came back, my parents also wanted an international school for me, so I went to Ambrit, attended Ambrit until I was thirteen, then I did two years in an Italian high school and eventually ended up at St. Stephen's.

How would you describe your experience at St. Stephen's?

Richard: They were very fun high school years. I think the biggest things to come out of it have been our friendships. Davide and I were also very close in high school. Many of my closest friends today are from St. Stephen's. School trips are also a great memory. Oh, and visiting the Palatine Hill at night.

Davide: There's something which I haven't done anymore since I left. I don't know if it's still feasible [laughs]. For me, it was the trips. I played football, so I also went on all the football trips. As Richard said, we're still very good friends, and what's pretty surprising is that many of my good friends are also not from my grade now. Many of them were a year below me at St. Stephen's. It's nice how the groups become mixed over time. We have formed a strong bond.

It is nice how those divisions can fade away over time. So, both of you graduated from St. Stephen's. What came next?

Richard: I went to Berlin for a year which I realized was a place I would want to live in long term. Then, I went to study in the UK, first at Sussex University, and then, after that, I did another gap year where I worked in Bosnia and Vienna. I moved back to the UK, did my master's in London, and then moved to Berlin, where I live today.

What did you study at university?

Richard: I studied international relations at Sussex, which was the reason for my gap year. I wanted to work in international policy, so I interned with the Australian Embassy in Vienna and then at UNDP in Bosnia, in Sarajevo, which informed my master's. I studied Security Studies, the study of war, and conflict resolution for my master's. After that, I moved to Berlin and pursued a different path.

Davide, what about you? Where did you go after St. Stephen's?

Davide: I've also been kind of all over. I went to [Università] Bocconi for a semester in Milan.

I didn't like it. I went to the UK and earned my bachelor's degree in PPE--Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. I took a gap year in which I worked at FAO in Rome for six months, and then I traveled, went to Australia and Indonesia, and then I did a master's in Paris in Public Policy at Sciences Po, worked in Paris in the public policy space for a year, at the OECD.

That's so interesting. You were both working in a similar space, in international policy, and then you joined the same company where you both work now. You are both working at OLLMOO, a new company founded in 2022, as the COO and Head of Partnerships and Business Development, respectively. OLLMOO's mission is to connect young women with leading employers. Could you share more about OLLMOO and what drew you to this company?

Richard: Beyond OLLMOO's social mission, which Davide and I, and everyone who works there, strongly believes in, the biggest motivation behind OLLMOO's founding was the honoring of Oliver.. He was a very close friend, and Katherine, the CEO and Founder, is his mother. Olly passed away in a ski accident five years ago, and that is why we all work together now. OLLMOO was launched in March 2022. We've been active for almost a year, and I've been working with OLLMOO for a year and a half. When I joined Katherine, we just had a logo and an idea. Katherine had wanted to do this for a long time; she has a background in talent search; she spent twenty-two years working at Spencer Stewart, one of the largest executive search firms in the world. Over the course of her career, she realized there were so many talented young women who didn't have the same opportunities

and access to the positions that feed into leadership positions in the future. Her mission is to help women early in their careers succeed and, in this way, contribute to forming the next generation of women leaders. Tied to this, after her son's death, she wanted to honor his legacy, and part of that was to have his closest friends on the founding team. So, I started in May of last year, I spoke to Davide a lot about it, and he was taken by the project.



Davide: I don't have much to add. I wanted to work on something I could feel was in some way mine and could contribute to and build from the ground up. Working With Olly's name in mind, in his honor, has also been a big motivator. With OLLMOO, we are trying to connect women with jobs and be a point of reference for the women in our community throughout their careers. I recently had a conversation with a young woman

who wants to go work in finance and has an amazing curriculum but was concerned about applying to M&A jobs because she thought, being a woman, that her profile would be given less consideration; she was excited about being part of the OLLMOO community and receiving support to apply for her dream job. And we know that working in banks, high-stress environments, and environments that are often pretty toxic for

women can lead to women being given fewer opportunities. So we try to be a partner for all the women in our community throughout their career journeys, supporting them, helping them negotiate wages, for example assisting with anything career-related beyond finding a job. We organize workshops, events, and so on.

Richard: We are, in essence, a recruiting firm, but we want to be a lot more – we are guided by our social mission, and our mission is to create a community, the OLLMOO community, a network of peers where women have mentorship opportunities as well. Everything we do will remain free for young women wishing to sign up and be part of the community. We recently started a free 12-week cybersecurity course. Cybersecurity is one of those industries and fields which is the most underrepresented; on average, 90% of professionals working in the industry are men. So we partnered with this awesome hacker in North Macedonia, Eva, and she's leading the course.

That's awesome. I can see how OLLMOO goes beyond your traditional search firm. You're creating this wider community, which is special. So, can alumni from St. Stephen's join too?

Davide: Absolutely. Our only requirement is that they identify as women. We're open to everyone.

Richard: You can register with OLLMOO on our website: ollmoo.com. Upon registering, you can join "OLLMOO Connect," where you can find tips on choosing a university or writing a CV. We have created a space where women can access resources and interact with their peers, all in one place.





Has it been challenging to work at a startup? Could you share more about what it has been like to work at such a young company?

Richard: It has been challenging. There are so many hats to wear. We have our job titles, but ultimately, we do everything together because it's a small team. Currently, we have Katherine and four other full-time people, ourselves included. I guess the biggest challenge for us was the tech side. We had to learn by doing and seeing what worked. Right now, we're building an internal tech team. It's good to have that in-house. We've learned.

Davide: We have new challenges every day. Another challenge has been that neither of us have backgrounds in human resources nor the private sector, but having an open mind and a desire to learn every day helps us get through and, hopefully, will help us grow in the coming months.

And what do you enjoy the most about your work at OLLMOO? What have been some of the most rewarding moments thus far?

Richard: It's never boring. Every week you do something different. On my side, [I have enjoyed] the business development calls; it's always interesting to talk to external people and partner with universities worldwide. Talking to universities from Nigeria, Malaysia, and Europe is interesting.

Davide: I think the best part is that whenever we're having these external discussions with people outside our network, it always resonates so well, and everyone is so excited about our work. There's so much support for what we're doing, which is, I think, the best part. As Richard said, our partners are also a highlight; we partner with NGOs and private companies. There's a lot of excitement around what we're doing.

That's wonderful. Outside of your time in the office, do both of you have hobbies or things you enjoy keeping up with outside of your professional lives?

Richard: For me, there are two things. Davide and I share a passion for cooking. I am also really into climbing, squash, and football. I'm very sporty.

Davide: I spend a lot of time surfing on the weekends and when I'm not working. So that's my biggest hobby.

Richard: That's why he lives in Lisbon!

Davide: Exactly [laughs]. Working remotely is amazing for that. As soon as the work day is over - when it's over - sometimes it doesn't finish before midnight, but [laughs], at least on the weekends, I spend a lot of time at the beach.

Working remotely allows you to create your work-life balance, doesn't it?

Richard: It is great. We have also noticed that it's nice to work in the same place; for example, we go on retreats together, and sometimes we find ourselves in Italy at the same time, or Davide will come to Berlin. Being able to travel and not be in a fixed place is a massive advantage.

So, I like to end these interviews by asking whoever I am speaking with if there is any advice you could share with our current St. Stephen's students. Anything you wish you had known in high school?

Richard: Get into computer science [laughs].

Davide: St. Stephen's allows you to do many things you don't get to do in other schools. So, do what you like as much as possible, and don't think you will figure out your life in the next five years [laughs]. At least for me, we never really figure out what we will "end up" doing; it's always a work in progress. I started following one track and changed universities, and



countries. You never know what's around the corner, so try not to worry too much.

Richard: Very well said [laughs]. What you study for your undergraduate [degree] will not necessarily be what you do in life, so try not to stress. So, choose early and remember there's always room to change career paths and do something different. Try to choose something you genuinely enjoy; then, things will materialize, and opportunities will come up later.

Davide: And feel free to get in touch with us, both current students and alumni who have their own companies and do their own recruiting. We would be happy to hear from you.

If you are interested in learning more about OLLMOO, you can reach Richard and David at:

richard@ollmoo.com

davide@ollmoo.com



Alumni & Friends Trip

The trip program at St. Stephen's is an integral part of St. Stephen's education and a cherished tradition of the School that spans its sixty-year history. The idea that travel inspires a more profound sense of cultural awareness, as well as deeper intellectual and personal growth, holds great value, and it is something we wish to continue to offer our alumni/ae, who are part of an ever-expanding global St. Stephen's family.

The alumni trip program offers a chance to rekindle fond memories while providing unique opportunities to travel and experience new cultures with former classmates accompanied by a member of St. Stephen's faculty.

This year our alumni, past parents, current parents, and friends of St. Stephen's had the opportunity to travel to Sicily and Tuscany with Dr. Paul Treherne, and two groups traveled to Turkey with Dr. Helen Pope.



Turkey



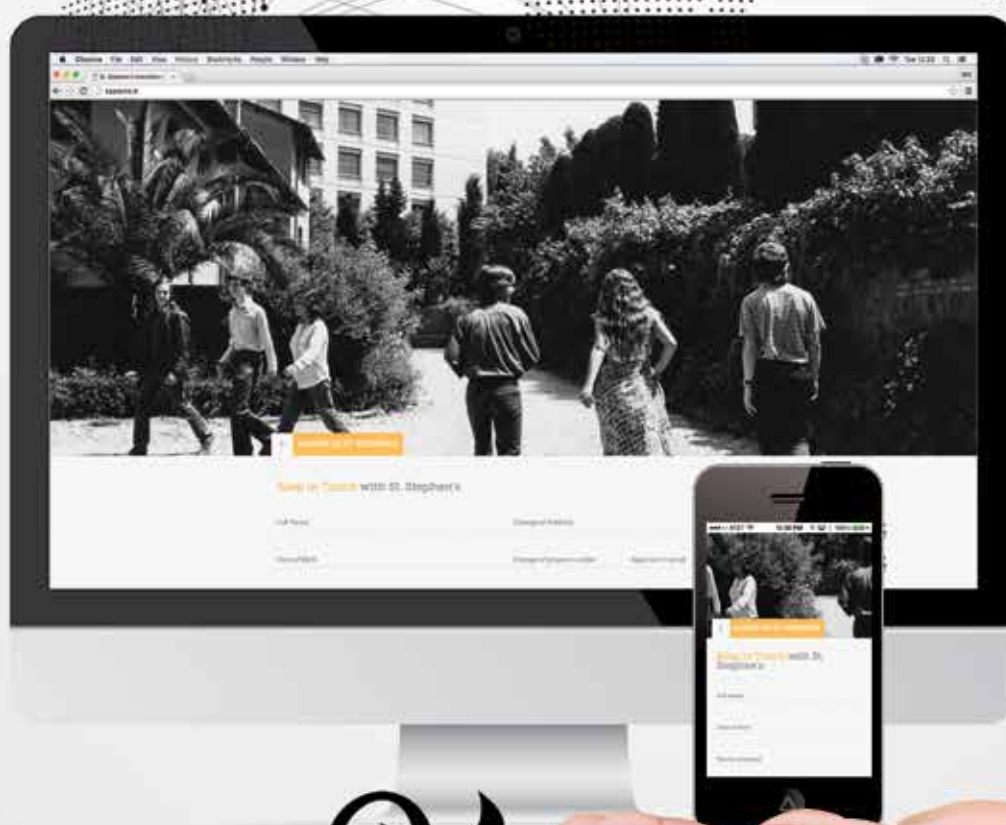


Sicily



Tuscany





Keep in Touch

It's never been easier to keep in touch with St. Stephen's alumni community. Simply update your details on our home page at www.sssrome.it

www.sssrome.it/keep-in-touch

PART IX:

Free From Chains

The project **#FreeFromChains** founded by past parent Zingonia Zingone, came to life from a poetry workshop that started in a Roman prison reserved for men. It is based on the concept of poetry as an instrument for introspection. The results obtained prove that the creative process is able to make a man go deeper into himself and that it can help us find the roots of our shortcomings and the key to liberating us from our prejudices about who we are and who the rest of the world is.

Those men in jail may, for instance, be “freer” than those walking the streets with no apparent chains.

Poetry readings have become a tool for those participating in the workshops to find new and unexpected horizons. Each one of them discovered with awe that they are capable of creating beauty. That discovery was a stepping stone into a process of inner transformation. The group continues to produce texts charged with emotional intensity, which in turn have motivated a series of other types of social undertakings we chose to call **#FreefromChains**. Its main objective is to create a bridge between the imprisoned men and the “free,” as well as to allow both to contribute to the welfare of those who live in less fortunate conditions, both inside or outside the penitentiary system.

#FreeFromChains, prisoners have the opportunity to do social work, and the organizers are open to sharing the benefits of this idea with other associations in other countries.




Di Rebibbia so poco / Rebibbia

BY AUGUSTO FELICE

Di Rebibbia so poco: il metal detector che suona come una cicala nevrotica, ho in mano le chiavi del deposito in cui lascio gli effetti personali, l'accendino sbadato nella tasca interna del cappotto, la borraccia che porto con me. Attraverso il lungo corridoio per raggiungere il reparto, le guardie battono severe con il dito sul taschino della divisa per ammonirmi: il tesserino d'ingresso devo esporlo in bella vista, a pochi metri la stanza in cui terrò la lezione, sento il sole d'inverno che fende le grate, e sento che non mi appartiene, non so cosa chiedere di più dagli occhi chiusi dei detenuti, poggiati sui muri, con la sigaretta premuta sulle labbra, che amano con una disperazione che non conosco questo caldo effimero, è un fuoco che si dissolverà dopo le tre, prima però procurerà l'illusione di rapinare tutto il male. Di Christian, ad esempio, so che le sue iridi si fanno acquose quando parla di suo padre morto di cirrosi epatica: «stava sempre m'briaco, pace all'anima», al funerale fu l'unica volta in cui si mise la giacca, non gli pareva vero: «ero tutto acchittato», il suo sorriso è un piccolo paradiso in terra, ecco la carrellata di denti che veste l'infanzia. In un luogo del genere si riconosce il tragico limite di tutte le possibilità di felicità, alcuni tuttavia hanno l'involontarietà di dissepellirla con parole di spuma. Hartim è dentro per spaccio, è semi analfabeta e quando parla biascica, ha il tremore nelle mani di chi ha appena scoperto reliquie indicibili. Gli sottoposi un'immagine di un quadro di Francesco Netti, intitolato "La ragazza assopita", era raffigurata una giovane donna dormiente, coperta da un lenzuolo ornato di un merletto azzurro, le mani, le une sopra le altre, all'altezza dell'addome, con le due dita che disegnavano un compasso, la bocca un sospiro. Mi disse che assomigliava tanto a sua moglie, e che sembrava proprio lei dopo aver fatto l'amore, a riposo. Mi disse che l'avrebbe poi svegliata per rifare l'amore. Poggiai la mano sul foglio in cui era riprodotto il braccio dipinto, lo scuoteva come se dovesse avvertire della sua presenza. Hartim era lì per svegliarla.





I know little about Rebibbia: the metal detector that sounds like a neurotic cicada, I am holding the keys to the deposit where I leave my personal effects, the careless lighter in the inside pocket of my coat, the water bottle I carry with me. I cross the long corridor to reach the ward; the guards tap severely with their fingers on the pocket of my uniform to admonish me: I have to display my entry pass in plain sight; the room where I will hold the lesson is a few meters away, I feel the winter sun that splits the grates, and I feel that it doesn't belong to me, I don't know what more to ask for from the closed eyes of the inmates, leaning against the walls, with their cigarettes pressed to their lips, who love this ephemeral heat with unfamiliar desperation, it's a fire that will dissolve after three o'clock, but first it will give the illusion of robbing all evil. Of Christian, for example, I know that his irises become watery when he talks about his father who died of cirrhosis of the liver: "he was always drunk, rest his soul," at the funeral, it was the only time he put on his jacket, it didn't seem true to him: I was all dressed up», his smile is a little paradise on earth, here is the succession of teeth that dresses childhood. In such a place, we recognize the tragic limit of all the possibilities of happiness, some however have the involuntary will to dig it up with words of foam. Hartim is in prison for drug dealing. He is semi-illiterate and slurred when he spoke, he had the trembling of the hands of one who had just discovered unspeakable relics. I submitted to him an image of a painting by Francesco Netti, entitled "The sleeping girl," a young sleeping woman was depicted, covered by a sheet decorated with a blue lace, her hands, one above the other, at the height of the abdomen, with the two fingers drawing a compass, the mouth a sigh. He told me that he looked so much like his wife and that she looked just like her after making love at rest. He told me he would then wake her up to make love again. He placed his hand on the sheet in which the painted arm was reproduced, shaking it as if to warn of his presence. Hartim was there to wake her up.

Augusto Ficele, classe '92, nasce a Terlizzi, in provincia di Bari, ora vive a Roma. È iscritto all'ordine dei giornalisti pubblicisti, ha collaborato con Treccani Atlante, Pangea, 2night, scrive sul Quotidiano del Sud. Si occupa di arte, letteratura e critica gastronomica.

Augusto Ficele, class of 1992, was born in Terlizzi, in the province of Bari, and now lives in Rome. He is a member of the Order of Journalists, has collaborated with Treccani Atlante, Pangea, 2night, and writes for the Quotidiano del Sud. He writes about art, literature, and is a food critic. .

L'esperienza in carcere e il perdono / Prison and Forgiveness

BY ASIA VAUDO

Il corpo è relegato. Il cuore no. Ho incontrato tanti uomini dentro a questo esilio perpetuo, tante anime inquiete e corpi sgraziati con occhi grandi, occhi più grandi degli altri occhi di chi sta fuori, nel mondo. I detenuti hanno gli occhi dei bambini. E' stato proprio da lì che è iniziato il piccolo squarcio dentro il mio cuore – dagli occhi.

Dalla mia prima volta a Rebibbia notai che non nei modi, non nelle parole, né nei gesti i detenuti erano diversi dai “liberi”, ma negli occhi. Occhi grandi perché dentro è raccolta tutta la sofferenza del mondo. Occhi come crateri, occhi come guance spaccate da un pugno, occhi neri come la pece, come il male, come l'abisso. Eppure. Un barlume – un piccolo punto – di luce bianca – nel centro preciso – ronzava. Zzzz. Come un insetto acciaccato ma ancora vivo, dolorante eppure col suo piccolo cuore che batte, coi suoi organi e i suoi nervi. Quella luce ancora viva seppur fioca mi pungeva nel petto – come fa la prima luce del mattino.

Sono certa che quella luce sia cresciuta grazie alla loro voglia d'incontrare la poesia. Un viaggio interessante, profondo, lacerante, quello degli uomini reclusi a Rebibbia e a Regina Coeli verso la poesia intesa come maniera per ri-tornare nel mondo, per mettere a fuoco le cose della vita – per trasformare il loro dolore. Poesia come ri-generazione di sé, poesia come altra maniera di venire al mondo, poesia come medicina e non solo, poesia come modo per dialogare con chi non c'è più accanto a loro, con i figli, le mogli, la famiglia. La scorsa settimana, a Regina Coeli, un ragazzo m'ha detto: “Professore, io non scrivo, non posso”. Gli ho chiesto il perché. Lui ha detto: “Perché c'ho il cuore spezzato”. Gli ho detto che solo così si scrivono cose belle, col cuore spezzato.





The body is confined. The heart is not. I have met so many men inside this perpetual exile, so many restless souls and ungainly bodies with big eyes, eyes bigger than the other eyes of those outside in the world. Prisoners have the eyes of children. That's where the little tear inside my heart started - from the eyes.

From my first time in Rebibbia, I noticed that the prisoners, neither their manners or their words nor their gestures, were any different from those of "free" men, but I noticed the difference in their eyes. Their wide eyes collected all the suffering of the world. Eyes like craters, eyes like cheeks split by a punch, eyes black as pitch, like evil, like the abyss. Nevertheless, a gleam--a small dot of white light in the center--hummed. Zzzz. Like an insect bruised but still alive, in pain yet with its little beating heart, with its organs and nerves. That light, still alive albeit dim, pricked me in the chest - as does the first light of the morning.

I'm sure that light grew thanks to their desire to have an encounter with poetry. An interesting, profound, lacerating journey, that of the men imprisoned in Rebibbia and Regina Coeli, towards poetry, understood as a way to re-return to the world, to focus on the things of life - to transform their pain. Poetry as self-regeneration; poetry as another way of coming into the world, poetry as medicine and more, poetry as a way to dialogue with those who are no longer with them, with their children, wives, family. Last week, in Regina Coeli, a boy told me: "Professor, I don't write; I can't." I asked him why. He said: "Because my heart is broken." I told him that this is the only way to write beautiful things, with a broken heart.

In tanti mi hanno regalato versi interessanti. Quasi sempre si parla d'amore. Qualcuno piangeva.

"Il tempo può/ può invecchiare/ tante cose. / Può distogliere pensieri / ma mai dalla mia mente / il ricordo della tua /bellezza. E' come se Dio / avesse voluto / che io fossi /il mare, e tu/ la sabbia/ per accarezzarti / in eterno.", ha scritto la penna di Tommaso Anzaloni, un detenuto di Regina Coeli, allievo del mio laboratorio ma prima di tutto cantante neomelodico napoletano. E non solo l'amore verso una donna, o verso la madre o il figlio, ma anche rivolto ad altre cose... "Mi alzo / cercando

di non far rumore. / Mi avvio verso di te / ti prendo delicatamente /e ti stringo. Per un istante / rimaniamo in silenzio / poi un borbottio / lo rompe. /Mi avvicino, / inizio a guardarti / nero, caldo, ti porto / delicatamente accanto alle mie / labbra / sento il tuo profumo/ che inebria la mia mente / e mi porta in paesi / lontani - quelli dove / sei cresciuto. /Quante sere passate insieme / tra una sigaretta e l'altra / tenendomi sempre sveglio. / Ma io so che tu sei / la mia certezza, /che anche domani ci sarai.", recitano così i versi di Domenico Ledda (Regina Coeli) in questa poesia intitolata "Ode al caffè".



Many have given me interesting verses. We almost always talk about love. Someone was crying.

"Time can/ it can age/ many things. / It can divert thoughts / but never from my mind / the memory of your /beauty. It is as if God / wanted / that I were / the sea, and you / the sand / to caress you / forever.", wrote Tommaso Anzaloni, an inmate of Regina Coeli, a student of my laboratory but first of all, a Neapolitan, neo-melodic singer. And not only the love towards a woman, or towards the mother or the child, but also towards other things... "I get up / looking not to make noise. / I walk towards you / I take you gently / and I hug you. For a moment / we are silent / then a mumbling / breaks it. / I get closer, / I start looking at you / black, warm, I bring you / gently next to my / lips / I feel your perfume / which intoxicates my mind / and takes me to countries / far away - those where / you grew up. / How many evenings spent together / between one cigarette and another / always keeping me awake. / But I know that you are / my certainty, / that you will be there tomorrow as well." Those are the verses of Domenico Ledda (Regina Coeli) in this poem titled "Ode to Coffee."

Abbiamo scritto su tutto, sul caffè, sulle cipolle (come fece anche Neruda), sul muro della stanza dove ci ritroviamo per il corso, sulla tv, sul cuscino... ci siamo chiesti insieme il perché delle cose, in quanto a volte siamo pieni di tante risposte e ci dimentichiamo l'importanza di domandarci il perché. E abbiamo scritto poesie sul perché il mare è blu e perché i fiori si chiamano fiori, sul perché mi chiamo Asia e perché ho due braccia, e non ne ho tre. E perché Roma è così bella, e perché i pesci nuotano nel mare e non nel cielo. E ci siamo divertiti. Sempre Domenico scrive, a proposito dell'utilità della notte: "La notte serve / a coprire / le malefatte del giorno".

Una volta, parlando invece dell'inutilità dell'invidia, lui mi risponde scrivendo: "L'invidia è l'inconsapevolezza di ciò che già abbiamo". Non ci avevo mai pensato. Così come non pensavo che il ruolo della notte fosse "ricoprire" con il suo mantello nero i crimini realizzati dal giorno. E un altro ancora, di nome Rolando, scrive, la prima volta che ci siamo conosciuti, che "in tutti questi anni, ho capito che la miglior forma di vendetta è il perdono". E quasi non ci credo. Non perché io non creda nel perdono, anzi. Perdono è una parola bellissima, viene dal latino medievale *per-donare* e significa "donare completamente", cioè dare senza condizioni. E' stato difficile e assai commovente pensare a un detenuto dentro il carcere di Regina Coeli che arriva a questa consapevolezza. E' difficile per noi "liberi", perdonare; figuriamoci per chi è dentro a una condizione di cattività. Ma poi penso: che cos'è la libertà? Sta davvero nella nostra possibilità di muovere le nostre gambe fuori dalla nostra casa? Nella nostra possibilità di fare la spesa, o di andare a lavorare? O la libertà sta più nei pensieri, nelle nostre inconsapevolezze, nei nostri desideri? Nelle nostre preghiere, fatte tutte dentro a una stanza di venti metri quadrati? Quanta libertà c'è nel dire che la forma migliore di vendicarsi sta nel perdonare? Quanta bellezza?

We wrote about everything, about the coffee, about the onions (as Neruda did), on the wall of the room where we met for the course, on the TV, on the pillow... we asked ourselves together the why of things because sometimes we are full of so many answers and we forget the importance of asking ourselves why. And we wrote poems about why the sea is blue and why flowers are called flowers, why my name is Asia, and why I have two arms and I don't have three. And because Rome is so beautiful, and because fish swim in the sea and not in the sky. And we had fun. Dominic also writes regarding the usefulness of the night: "The night serves / to cover / the wrongdoings of the



day." Once, speaking instead of the uselessness of envy, he answered me by writing: "Envy is the unawareness of what we already have. " I had never thought about it. Just as I didn't think that the role of the night was to "cover" the crimes committed by day with its black cloak. And yet another, named Rolando, wrote, the first time we met, that "in all these years, I have understood that the best form of revenge is forgiveness." And I almost didn't believe it. Not because I don't believe in forgiveness, quite the contrary. Forgiveness is a beautiful word; it comes from the medieval Latin *per-donare* and means "to give completely," that is, to give without conditions. It was difficult and very moving to think of a prisoner in the Regina Coeli prison who comes to this awareness. It is difficult for those of us who are "free" to forgive, let alone those who are in a condition of captivity. But then I think: what is freedom? Is it really in our ability to move our legs outside our house? In our ability to go shopping or go to work? Or is freedom more in thoughts, in our awareness, in our desires, in our prayers, all done inside a room of twenty square meters? How much freedom is there in saying that the best way to take revenge is to forgive? How beautiful is that?

Quanta libertà sta in chi riesce, nel trambusto dell' "ora d'aria", tra i detenuti che gridano e a volte si menano, tra lo scarico della spesa e i fumi di mille sigarette che ballano nei corridoi, a concentrarsi su un foglio bianco per scrivere una poesia? Occorre coraggio, per sedersi e lasciar viaggiare la propria mente in mezzo al buio di quel loro piccolo, strano mondo.

In questo ultimo anno vissuto tra i loro occhi grandi di bambini, tra i loro cuori feriti, le loro carni tumefatte, i tatuaggi di lacrime sul viso, i denti cascati giù dalla droga, ho toccato con mano il fondo della sofferenza umana, ho guardato nell'abisso, e ho sofferto anch'io, con loro. Ma sono cresciuta perché ho guardato il lato oscuro della luna che quaggiù, sulla Terra, non abbiamo l' "onore" di vedere. E ho imparato che anche come animali in gabbia si può incontrare il gusto eterno e dolce della libertà.

"L'amore ci abbandona / nel vortice del vento / che non ci avvolge più / sperduti in quella sfera / di un mondo / che ci stringe giù. / Avrei voluto / per tutta la vita / stringerti ancora tanto. / Fumo con un forte / mal di testa ma tu mi manchi / e scompari / insieme ai cerchi di fumo. / Se amarti significa morire / allora sto morendo. / Vorrei vederti per strada / e dirti un ti amo volante / sei e sarai / un profumo più originale / del solito." Luigi, a Rebibbia, che non aveva mai scritto niente nella sua vita.



How much freedom is there in those who manage, in the hustle and bustle of the "hour of air," among the prisoners who shout and sometimes beat each other between the unloading of the shopping and the fumes of a thousand cigarettes dancing in the corridors, to concentrate on a blank sheet of paper to write a poem? It takes courage to sit down and let your mind travel in the middle of the darkness of their strange little world.

In this last year lived among their big childish eyes, among their wounded hearts, their swollen flesh, the tattoos of tears on their faces, and their teeth knocked down by drugs, I have touched the bottom of human suffering with my hands, I have looked into the abyss, and I too suffered, with them. But

I grew up because I looked at the dark side of the moon that we don't have the "honor" of seeing down here on Earth. And I've learned that even as caged animals, you can meet the eternal and sweet taste of freedom.

"Love abandons us / in the vortex of the wind / that no longer envelops us / lost in that sphere / of a world / that squeezes us down. / I wanted / all my life / to hold you so much again. / I smoke with a strong / headache but I miss you / and you disappear / along with the circles of smoke. / If loving you means dying / then I'm dying. / I would like to see you on the street / and tell you I love you / you are and will be / a more original perfume / than usual." Luigi, in Rebibbia, who had never written anything in his life.

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Laboratorio di Poesia / Poetry Workshop

BY OTTAVIA POJAGHI BETTONI

Si pensa a un laboratorio di poesia in carcere, solitamente, come qualcosa di terapeutico, meno come un apprendimento anche tecnico. Eppure lo è. Insegnare poesia non significa insegnare una materia qualsiasi, ma insegnare a fare esistere ciò che c'è. Mi spiego meglio: il mondo c'è. Sia che sia interiore, sia che sia esteriore, ha una propria realtà. La poesia parte da lì. La poesia non solo si nutre del mondo ma è il mondo. Si scrive di ciò che esiste già, non di ciò che non esiste. Che sia per raccontare ciò che abbiamo visto fuori di noi, o ciò che abbiamo visto dentro, si scrive sempre per raccontare di un'esperienza. Il tutto sta nel saperla restituire. In un laboratorio come questo, dal nostro punto di vista, non si può perciò parlare d'altro che di insegnamento di tecniche di affinamento di questa naturale e innata sensibilità, non della sensibilità stessa, che non può che partire da chi scrive e essere di chi scrive.

A poetry workshop in prison is usually thought of as something therapeutic, less so as technical learning. Yet it is. Teaching poetry doesn't mean teaching any subject but teaching how to make what is exist. Let me explain better: the world exists. Whether it is internal or external, it has its own reality. The poem starts there. Poetry not only feeds on the world but is the world. You write about what already exists, not about what doesn't exist. Whether it's to tell what we've seen outside of us or what we've seen inside, we always write to tell about an experience. It all lies in knowing how to give it back. In a laboratory like this, from our point of view, one cannot, therefore, speak of anything other than teaching techniques for refining this natural and innate sensitivity, not of sensitivity itself, which can only start from the writer and be of who is writing.

Il compito di noi volontari è quello, comunque non poco difficile, di essere dei “validi accompagnatori” di questi sguardi. Per fare questo proponiamo loro svariati temi su cui scrivere: dalla presentazione di un autore o di un tipo di poema – le odi, per esempio, di cui Neruda scrisse le celebri *Odi elementari* – a un tema specifico come la nostalgia, la madre o il padre. Infine, facciamo fare su quel tema degli esercizi. Gli esercizi spaziano dal più creativo al più pratico: disegnare su una lavagna uno “scarabocchio” e individuarne le forme, le figure, cancellare dei passaggi da un testo letterario e lasciarne solo ciò che serve a formare una poesia, pensare a tre parole evocate dal tema e scriverne un testo poetico... Da scrittori principianti si diventa, con il passare delle lezioni, attenti praticanti della parola. È un processo lungo e delicato e di certo, come non è solo terapeutico, non è solo puramente teorico: la poesia fa riemergere, di ciascuno, le ombre nascoste, li obbliga a fare “memoria” di ciò che fu e non solo ad avere coscienza di ciò che è. Convoca, cioè, chi scrive a presentarsi davanti al proprio tribunale interiore. Inoltre, obbliga ad assumersi la responsabilità di uno sguardo unico e irripetibile e, per questo, importante. E quest’ultimo è senza dubbio l’aspetto che, secondo me, è più significativo rilevare.

FreeFromChains, all’interno dei suoi laboratori, non propone solamente un *focus* sull’aspetto intimo ed emozionale della scrittura, bensì conduce gli aspiranti poeti a prendere atto di avere una responsabilità di gran lunga più importante e urgente: è la responsabilità di avere uno sguardo sul mondo, uno sguardo che non può sostituirsi a quello di nessun altro. Lo sguardo altro non è che la metafora, in scala minore, dell’esistenza stessa. Così, chi scrive poesia è chi sa e accetta l’onere di possedere uno sguardo unico.

Oltre ad avere una vera e propria funzione “riabilitativa” dell’io, lo scopo del progetto è inoltre quello, più tecnico, di insegnare cosa significa propriamente sapere scrivere poesia. Imparando le possibili strutture e declinazioni del testo poetico, i poeti iniziano a scoprire le loro abilità e inclinazioni – uno degli esercizi in tal senso fu chiedere loro di verificare quale parola nelle loro poesie ritornava più spesso e di cercare di capire come mai – e a misurarsi con autori importanti. Scoprono com’è fatto un verso, come si concepisce un titolo, come avviene lo “scarto” delle parole o dei versi meno rilevanti – quello che io chiamo “esercizio di asciugatura”. Da queste indicazioni, ottengono gli strumenti “del mestiere” e imparano ad applicarli alla loro “materia”. Infine, iniziano a rendersi conto di cosa è o non è buona poesia.

The task of us volunteers, no matter how difficult, is to be “valid companions” of these gazes. To do this, we offer them various topics to write about: from the presentation of an author or a type of poem – the odes, for example, of which Neruda wrote the famous *Elementary Odes* – to a specific theme such as nostalgia, the mother or the father. Finally, we do some exercises on that topic. The exercises range from the most creative to the most practical: draw a “scribble” on a blackboard and identify its shapes and figures, erase passages from a literary text and leave only what is needed to form a poem, think of three words evoked by theme and write a poetic text...

As beginner writers, with the passing of the lessons, we become attentive practitioners of the word. It is a long and delicate process, and certainly, just as it is not only therapeutic, it is not only purely theoretical: poetry makes everyone’s hidden shadows re-emerge; it forces them to make “memory” of what was and not only to have awareness of what is. In other words, it summons the writer to present himself before his own inner tribunal. Furthermore, it forces us to take responsibility for a unique and unrepeatable and, for this reason, important gaze. And the latter is undoubtedly the aspect that, in my opinion, is more significant.

FreeFromChains, within its laboratories, does not only offer a *focus* on the intimate and emotional aspect of writing but leads aspiring poets to acknowledge that they have a far more important and urgent responsibility: it is the responsibility to have a view of the world, a gaze that cannot replace that of anyone else. The gaze is nothing but the metaphor, on a smaller scale, of existence itself. Thus, those who write

poetry are those who know and accept the burden of possessing a unique point of view.

In addition to having a real “rehabilitative” function of the ego, the purpose of the project is also the more technical one of teaching what it means to know how to write poetry. By learning the possible structures and declinations of the poetic text, the poets begin to discover their abilities and inclinations. One of the exercises begins by asking them to verify which word in their poems returned more often and to try to understand why. In contrasting their work with important authors, they discover how a verse is made, how a title is conceived, how the “discarding” of less relevant words or verses takes place – what I call a “drying exercise”. From these indications, they obtain the “trade” tools and learn to apply them to their “subject.” Finally, they begin to realize what good poetry is and is not.





Perché... / Why...

BY PIETRO RUSSO

Quando il vento
si posa oltre la notte,
mi dirai perché...
Quando la pioggia
scende oltre la notte,
nel prato oltre le sbarre,
mi dirai perché...
Quando i tuoni
anticipano il giorno,
nasce la speranza di una vita ritrovata,
mi dirai perché...

When the wind
rests beyond the night,
will you tell me why...
When the rain
falls beyond the night,
in the meadow beyond the bars,
will you tell me why...
When thunder
anticipates the day,
the hope of a new life is born,
will you tell me why...

L'aria punge assordante le pupille / The Chill of Winter

BY MARCO SAGRATELLA




Il freddo di questo inverno si fa sentire,
i camini del paese fumano nel cielo
mandando odori di legna che brucia.
Di questi tempi, castagne che ardono nel fuoco,
il tepore di una famiglia riunita,
i miei ricordi... E questa aria punge
assordante
le pupille mie di commozione.

The cold of this winter is felt,
the country chimneys smoke in the sky
sending out smells of burning wood.
These days, chestnuts burning in the fire,
the warmth of a family reunited,
my memories... And this air stings
stunning
my pupils with emotion.

BY GIANLUCA DEL PRETE

Continuerò a cercarti
a pronunciare il tuo nome
fin quando arriverà quel giorno
in cui io stesso
sarò il tuo segnale.

I will continue to look for you
to say your name
until that day comes
in which I, myself,
will be your signal.



Anima senza frontiera (nello spazio) / A Soul Without Borders (in Space)

BY MARCO SAGRATELLA

Le sbarre di metallo per me non sono una gabbia
e anche i grandi muri di cemento non sono una galera.
Solo il mio corpo potete tenere rinchiuso,
ma l'anima, lei, non potrete mai rinchiuderla.

Metal bars are not a cage for me
and even big concrete walls are not a prison.
Only my body you can keep locked up,
but the soul, her, you will never be able to lock away.



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