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THE COLLEGE VOICE

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER SINCE 1977

Title IX: Does It Take a Village, or Just Lack a Leader?

GRACE AMATO
CONTRIBUTOR

As Spring 2018 begins, it remains unknown when Conn will get a permanent, full-time Title IX coordinator. Senior Associate Dean of Student Life Sarah Cardwell broke the news in a bullet point of an email titled “Student Handbook Notice”: the temporary role was shifted from Dean of Institutional Equity and Inclusion John McKnight to Associate Dean of Institutional Equity and Inclusion B. Afeni McNeely Cobham. The style of the announcement left some students concerned, as Title IX is an essential legislative tool in combating sexual assault and misconduct. In the wake of the #MeToo movement, Title IX seems more important than ever, as sexual misconduct continues to be a prominent topic of discussion on college campuses, and yet Conn’s change in coordinator was presented with little warning or emphasis.

Though she was recently appointed to the most pivotal role in the enforcement of Title IX, McNeely Cobham responded to requests for comment on her new title by stating that she is “not prepared to engage in

this conversation at this time,” but appreciates the invitation to speak. As both Title IX coordinator and Associate Dean of Institutional Equity and Inclusion, McNeely Cobham will continue to work with complaints of discrimination on the basis of race, sexual orientation, ability, and other aspects of identity, as well as maintaining work in Unity House, the Womxn’s Center, and the LGBTQIA center. Additionally, McNeely Cobham will now oversee issues specifically related to Title IX, including sexual harassment and assault. According to McKnight, McNeely Cobham’s role as the Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion “was already dedicated to looking at our bias response on campus, and it just made sense to have them also think about Title IX complaints because the processes are very similar even if the nature of the complaints are different.”

Some students, however, have concerns about adding Title IX to McNeely Cobham’s existing responsibilities. For Emma Race ’18, this feels like a “way to avoid real structural change,” especially because students

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Photo courtesy of Max Amar-Olkus

The Mysterious Ways of the Walter Commons

MAIA HIBBETT
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Its look is bold yet minimalist; its name, the opposite. Although the Otto and Fran Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement may be a mouthful, the space’s ergonomic aesthetic

brings to mind the language of efficiency. The round orange couches make me think “streamline;” the glass-paneled collaboration rooms say “synergy.”

Student reactions to the Walter Commons have been mixed, with some calling the space beautiful and in-

novative, others comparing it to a “Bond villain’s living room” or a “nineties disco.” The transformation of the first floor of Blaustein, which began with little warning on Oct. 2, 2017 and was completed before the start of the spring semester, raised

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New Medicaid Work Requirements and Lockouts Threaten Lives of Thousands

JENNIFER SKOGLUND
OPINIONS EDITOR

In July of 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Social Security Amendments, establishing Medicare and Medicaid, health

insurance programs for the elderly and the poor. Johnson envisioned that the sweeping reforms of his presidency would make possible a “Great Society” in America, a future free of economic and racial injustice.

Johnson’s vision of public

programs and services as the backbone of a socially just nation finds its antithesis today in the social vision of the Trump administration, which seeks to eliminate virtually every public-funded social service and destroy

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Jillian Noyes considers Aster Gilbert’s interventions in “microporn” research on page 7.

ARTS

Max Amar-Olkus reflects on the distasteful evolution of once-beloved Dave Chappelle on page 11.

ARTS

Charlie King and Sam Weisenthal review albums debuting at home and abroad on page 14.

Conn on Fox: Is Viral News Really News?

For a college that's mainly on the left, but not by any means the most radical, we sure get picked up by the right wing a lot. There was the fame/infamy of the "Sean Sphincter" nickname. There was the dubbing of Conn " Hamas West" by conservative think tank *Frontpage Magazine*. And now, there's a syllabus disclaimer gone viral.

When I heard that the College was featured on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, my first instinct was to seize the opportunity of Conn in the spotlight. The news reached me via screenshot from Max, the *Voice's* Creative Director, who also sent along the Instagram post from @oldrowofficial that helped a note from one Conn syllabus spread all over the Internet. Most readers have probably already seen the note, but for anyone who hasn't, it reads:

Trigger alert: I will try to present the various competing economic theories as well and fairly as I can. However, I must admit that I find conservative classical theories to be pretty inadequate in explaining the economic events of the past decade. Moreover, I think our current President is mentally ill, a pathological liar, and a very dangerous aspiring dictator; a pathetic racist too. Some teachers think it is best to hide how they really think about these sorts of issues. I do not; I think it is best to let students know where I am coming from. Students who are upset with my views may want to consider taking Introductory Macroeconomics from another professor.

To anyone familiar with Carlson and his politics, it's clear why he'd take issue with this statement, written by Professor of Economics Spencer Pack. (To anyone who isn't familiar with Carlson: he's on Fox News.) And regarding what Pack expresses in the note, I'm generally in agreement: I don't like Trump either; I'm not crazy about conservative classical economic theories, based on the vague understanding I have of them; and I believe that professors can and should be honest about their opinions, as long as they present them in a productive way. The only reason I was and am reluctant to write about the note is due to the nature of the attention it received, which leads me to question whether it's responsible or worthwhile to spend our time on it.

Like I mentioned earlier, Pack's syllabus went viral because of an Instagram post by "Old Row Official," an account supposedly dedicated to comedy and leisure but mostly consisting of misogyny, racism, and other unpleasant aspects of frat culture. As my friend and *Voice* cruciverbalist Eleanor succinctly put it, the content on Old Row's Instagram page is "primarily butts."

After Old Row publicized Pack's syllabus, Conn's Instagram suffered. Most of the recent posts by @conncollege are now riddled with comments that start with "MAGA" and get worse from there. In terms of public image, this isn't great for the College. Social media accounts serve as all-but essential PR, and if a video of Katherine Bergeron and her comically large scissors gets taken over by bigoted comments, it kind of detracts from the point.

While usually I'm one of the people trying to dig up information the College doesn't want exposed, in this case, the controversy seems like a cheap shot. I would definitely be interested in hearing Professor Pack's thoughts on the matter, as well as the reactions from some of his students—I would even run an article about it. But to focus only on Old Row and its "jokes, hot takes, [and] babes" or Tucker Carlson's always-yelling style of coverage would give credence to a side that, in my opinion, deserves none. I'll acknowledge it here because it *is* interesting, but it sure isn't intellectual debate.

More to come, maybe,

Maia

THE COLLEGE VOICE

The views and opinions expressed in *The College Voice* are strictly those of student authors, and not of Connecticut College. All content and editorial decisions remain in the hands of the students; neither the College's administration nor its faculty exercise control over the content.

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Community Bulletin

Conn Joins the University Consortium for Scholars in Exile

The College identifies itself as a founding member of the University Consortium for Scholars in Exile, a largely unknown group seemingly related to the Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund. The union coincides with the arrival of Indian human rights activist Binalakshmi Nepram for a residency on campus.

New London Aims to Develop New Housing for Electric Boat Workers

Groton-based submarine manufacturer Electric Boat is in the midst of “its greatest upswing since the Cold War,” *The Day* reports. New London Mayor Michael Passero hopes to meet EB’s increased productivity with the establishment of more than 400 new apartments, intended mainly to house EB employees, near downtown New London.

In Twin Cities, Organizers Resist Super Bowl

Local unions and social justice organizations in Minneapolis-St. Paul are calling attention to the prioritization of corporate over civilian interests that often comes with major sporting events. The Super Bowl brought increased policing and ICE presence to the Twin Cities, despite Minneapolis and St. Paul being designated “sanctuary cities.”

Sports Corner

Women’s Ice Hockey (14-3-3)

@ Williams T, 1-1 OT
@ UMass Boston W, 4-2
@ Colby W, 5-2
@ Colby, 2-0

Women’s Basketball (13-6)

Wesleyan L, 64-69
@ Tufts L, 54-75
@ Bates W, 71-54
Eastern Conn. St. W, 72-56

Women’s Squash (7-11)

Mount Holyoke W, 6-3
Wesleyan L, 0-9
Northeastern W, 7-2
Bard W, 9-0
@ Vassar W, 5-4
Wesleyan L, 0-9
Colby L, 2-7
Bowdoin L, 2-7

Men’s Ice Hockey (9-9-2)

Trinity L, 2-5
@ Middlebury T, 2-2 OT
@ Williams W, 3-2
@ Tufts T, 0-0 OT
Tufts, W, 4-3 OT

Men’s Basketball (6-14)

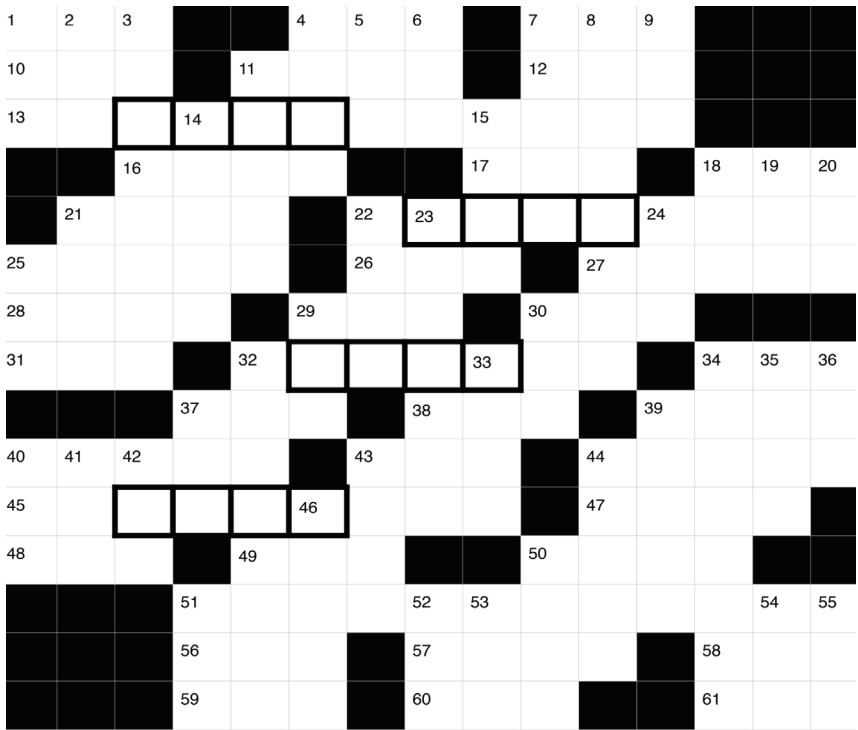
@ Wesleyan L, 51-89
Tufts L, 54-86
Bates L, 56-69
@ Western Conn. St. L, 78-86

Men’s Squash (10-8)

Stanford W, 6-3
MIT L, 1-8
Wesleyan W, 5-4
Bard W, 9-0
@ Vassar W, 9-0
Lehigh W, 9-0
Hamilton L, 2-7
Tufts W, 5-4
Wesleyan W, 5-4

The College Crossword

BY ELEANOR KNAUSS



ACROSS

- 1. Like a tabby or jaguar
- 4. Look
- 7. Performer’s aid
- 10. Fruit of a mine
- 11. Place for pies?
- 12. one of 60 in an hr.
- 13. Simmering

- 16. ____ out a living
- 17. Less than two
- 18. NASA affiliate
- 21. Shrek, e.g.
- 22. Personal space
- 25. Tie
- 26. Fib
- 27. Premature

- 28. Times on a board at ORD
- 29. Lass
- 30. Torso appendage
- 31. Male cat
- 32. Parks and Recreation actor
- 34. Dog’s hand
- 37. Lump
- 38. Weapon of ISIS
- 39. Mouse relative
- 40. Brace
- 43. Cul de ____
- 44. Full of ennui
- 45. 1972 Black Sabbath hit
- 47. Performs
- 48. Pierre’s refusal
- 49. Casual agreement
- 50. Iran’s pre-revolution leader
- 51. Annual game, hinted at by the outlined answers
- 56. Wild ox
- 57. Elving and Howard
- 58. DiCaprio, familiarly
- 59. Like Grays
- 60. Parking ____
- 61. Skinny swimmer

DOWN:

- 1. Corn vessel
- 2. Who ____ you?
- 3. 19th century fax
- 4. Brothers and sisters, abbr.
- 5. 1970s British rock band
- 6. Manning brother
- 7. Acid type
- 8. “____ the streets of Nazareth”
- 9. JPEG alternative
- 11. Clean the floors
- 14. Ladies’ fingers
- 15. Ear part

- 18. In favor
- 19. IM site
- 20. Actress Adams
- 21. 1965 NFL Hall of Famer, Graham
- 22. Make long, for short?
- 23. Jimmy Carter’s mother
- 24. Symbol of Aries
- 25. Place for plays
- 29. Arrested Development son
- 30. Alternative to four wheel drive, abbr.
- 32. Caps worn by the Newcastle Falcons
- 33. Financial coalition of 35 countries
- 34. Exterior ship window
- 35. Brews
- 36. Married
- 37. NYC to Oneota dir.
- 39. Arsenal of words, casually.
- 40. 9-digit ID
- 41. Military communicator, abbr.
- 42. Charged particle
- 43. Drinks slowly
- 44. Bodies of water
- 46. Long, leafy onion
- 50. Delivered
- 51. ____ dye
- 52. Web address, abbr.
- 53. Feces
- 54. Little
- 55. Texter’s giggle

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Title IX

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

had no input in the decision. Race feels that this change and legislation as a whole is “a really big deal.” The College’s decision not to collect student input, when there are students who feel passionately about the issue, gives the impression that “it is being treated like it’s not a big deal, which is hurtful,” she said.

“Title IX itself is so fundamental to the safety and emotional wellbeing [of students], to physical wellbeing, and to legal implications that [can last] a lifetime,” Race added. Title IX’s importance makes the coordinator position highly demanding, and it was found to be too much for a part-time appointment when Melissa Pierce, the College’s previous Title IX coordinator, left the College after being assigned too heavy a workload for completion on a part-time schedule. The College might then have hired a full-time coordinator, but instead has done the opposite: it appointed several people to share the work. In addition to McNeely Cobham, the team of advocates on campus has expanded to include three additional staff members: C.C. Curtis, Director of Student Wellness and Alcohol/Other Drug Education; Erin Duran, Director of Gender and Sexuality Programs; and Truth Hunter, Director of Race and Ethnicity Programs. These changes were made with the intent of fixing problems of the past.

As the Title IX responsibilities get shifted around, students and administrators continue to disagree on the efficacy of Conn’s Title IX enforcement. McKnight believes that “Connecticut College was [already] doing a really good job with this policy” before the wave of media attention on sexual misconduct and violence began. He gives credit to the Green Dot program as a successful way to educate students, faculty and staff at Conn about sexual misconduct and prevention. He also believes that the response protocol to sexual misconduct on campus takes these allegations very seriously.

Race, by contrast, argues that by neglecting to establish a full-time Title IX coordinator position, “the school is basically showing that they are not treating these claims or the situation with the urgency and critical nature that it deserves.” At Conn and beyond, it remains difficult for victims of sexual assault to come forward with their allegations because historically, they have not been taken seriously. While McKnight feels the appointment of McNeely Cobham is an appropriate solution, showing that the school does in fact take these situations very seriously, Race argues that “conflating [these two positions] is not productive and kind of seems like the goal is about efficiency as opposed to quality.” •

Before Time Was Up: Contextualizing #MeToo

JOZETTE MOSES
STAFF WRITER

The phrase “Weinstein effect” connotes the recent wave of exposure from people who have come forward accusing famous and powerful men with claims of sexual harassment and assault. Undoubtedly, the term’s establishment was motivated by the uncovering of 40 victims of sexual assault who accused the American film producer and co-founder of the entertainment company Miramax, Harvey Weinstein. Although conceived under the name of the accused predator, the successes of exposure produced by the “Weinstein effect” cannot be fully attributed to his impressive status within Hollywood culture. Rather, the victims who endured his attacks redirected the conversation from the predator to the survivors through the #MeToo social media campaign.

Amidst the publicity of Harvey Weinstein’s sexual assault accusations, a friend of the actress Alyssa Milano suggested that women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted write “me too” as a Twitter status in hopes of “giv(ing) magnitude to the problem.” Later that night Milano publicly suggested victims of abuse reply to her initial Twitter post with the “me too” hashtag. The next morning she would awake to find 12 million comments, posts, and reactions within 24 hours on Facebook.

The origins of the #MeToo

movement, however, did not begin with Milano’s posting. As a project, the movement has been in the works for more than 12 years. The founder and creator, Tarana Burke, is a Black-American Civil Rights activist. Burke began the #MeToo movement with the intentions of raising awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual abuse in society and helping

tions of power and used them to carry out injustices. For the final three months of 2017, it seemed as though the careers of multimedia men were dropping like flies. Public faces such as Matt Lauer, Louis C.K., Kevin Spacey, and James Franco were all among those accused of sexual harassment and assault by multiple women. In some cases, the men were asked to step down from their previous positions. This was the reality for Matt Lauer, who was dismissed from *The Today Show*, and renowned actor Kevin Spacey, who has been removed from the Netflix series *House of Cards*.

One lingering question among those skeptical of the accusations is simply: why weren’t they raised before? To answer this, one must ask: what systems are enabling sexual harassment in Hollywood culture? For 30 years, Weinstein remained untouched

by authorities because he maintained the inner workings of what writers at the *New York Times* have called the “complicity machine.” Weinstein’s system of complicity relied on the trust and relations of other ambitious men and women who acted knowingly and unknowingly to suppress the voices of victims of sexual abuse. An example of this appears in the fraught history of actress Rose McGowan’s memoir. McGowan’s book documents how she was sexually assaulted by Weinstein, but shortly after her



Photo courtesy of For All Womankind

young women of color from low-income communities who had experienced abuse to find healing through “power” and “empathy.” She wanted to negate the notions of isolation imposed on the victims of abuse, and challenge the power dynamics between predator and victim by making the face of the movement the survivors of abuse.

The effects of exposing the actions of Harvey Weinstein, and the increasing strength and solidarity of women, have triggered the uncovering of many other successful men who have taken advantage of their posi-

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Student Handbook Gets a Mid-Year Update

SHAE ALBERTSTON
STAFF WRITER

Although the Connecticut College Student Handbook is updated frequently, Jan. 22 saw a “rare reissue” in College policy, as Senior Associate Dean of Student Life Sarah Cardwell put it. The changes included an emphasis on Title IX and social host policies, providing contact information and a clearer outline of Title IX reporting structure, the transferral of Dean John McKnight’s temporary role as Title IX Coordinator to Dean B. Afeni McNeely Cobham, and the expansion of approved spaces for hosting social events.

Regarding changes to Title IX, Cardwell expressed that progress came about naturally. For the past few years, Cardwell has spent time working with Darcie Folsom, former Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, on two challenges that the Office of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy faced: coordinating with only one on-call staff member and ensuring student comfort. It is tough for one person to always be on call, especially given the difficulties of traveling for school business and life, and students have been vocal about their discomfort with talking to one person, especially when they have been involved in relationships on campus and have felt awkward discussing trauma.

According to Cardwell, these comments raised the question: “Were there ways to expand confidential ad-

vocacy roles on campus?”

After two years of collaboration, Cardwell explained, she and Folsom realized the need to establish a team to address these student concerns. Structural changes were already underway, and the timing was right, Cardwell relayed. Searches for a Director of Race and Ethnicity Programs and a Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy were occurring at the time that a new advocacy team was being created. Heidi Freeland-Trail, the new Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, trained Truth Hunter, new Director of Race and Ethnicity Programs, and Erin Duran, Director of Gender and Sexuality Programs, to be a part of the advocacy team. The College announced the team along with the release of the new Student Handbook, and students may now report issues or have confidential discussions with any of the advocacy team members.

Before the creation of the advocacy team, Freeland-Trail explained, “I was the only designated advocate.” Now, she says, “we have other confidential resources on campus” that work to address issues of sexual violence and dating violence, stalking, and sexual assault. Freeland-Trail further noted that giving students options was of the utmost importance for confidentiality. She explained that advocacy and comfort for students is important as they question: “Who do I want support from?”

Cardwell stated that the advocacy team is “fundamentally about creating advocacy” because “students want to talk to different people.” She added that the new policy changes had been in the works since the beginning of the school year. Cardwell revealed that Student Life had discussed the creation of an expanded advocacy group throughout the first semester and that faculty and staff continued this conversation over winter break. In an attempt to foster conversations about social life, the College is now conducting focus groups where students are encouraged to speak honestly about what they like and wish would change regarding the social host policy and activities on campus. Students have likely seen these focus groups advertised in emails circulated by Associate Dean of Student Life Geoff Norbert and the Student Government Association.

The changes addressed in the focus groups, Cardwell pointed out, can lead to policy change. The social host policy “might look different in the fall,” she said, and current conversations will determine the nature of its changes. The most recent updates to social host policy are the inclusion of Freeman, Harkness, and Lamdin as additional places for hosting events, as the handbook now describes. Student Life intended to expand spaces and spent time looking at policy to see what they could expand. •

SAC Lays Plans for Spring 2018

CC LYNCH
CONTRIBUTOR

The Student Activities Council, commonly referred to as SAC, has a number of events coming up for this spring. In February alone, SAC is sponsoring an electronic music concert in Cro, a masquerade ball, and multiple movie showings on campus and in theaters. The *Voice* sat down with SAC president Sarah Nappo ’18 to chat about SAC’s spring calendar.

“Of course,” Nappo said, “we are all thinking about Floralia. But in the meantime, there are so many things happening on and off campus.”

Musical artist Louis Futon will be performing in concert just for Conn students on Feb. 10 from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. Louis Futon has come onto the electronic music scene in the past two years in a very big way. Having toured with ODESZA, Louis the Child, and Troyboi, Futon has “captivated fans with a brand new live show that features the multi-instrumentalist playing out originals and remixes alike,” his website reports.

“This should be a super fun event. Humphrey’s will be open for 21+ students as well. This is the first time that we have kept the campus bar open, so I hope that they can make their money’s worth so we can do this again in the future,” Nappo said. To find out more about Futon before the concert, students can visit his Twitter or Facebook page, or hear his latest songs on Spotify and SoundCloud.

The next big SAC event will be the Masquerade Ball. This

year, the event will be held on Febr. 24 and will be “Starry Night” themed. Interested students should keep an eye on ConnQuest or the SAC Facebook and Instagram pages for more details. “Last year this event was a great success,” Nappo said, “Again, there will be lots of food and dancing, as well as a cash bar for of age students.” When she heard about the upcoming event, Alexa Bassler ’19 said, “For those that missed it last year, the Masquerade Ball is an absolute blast,” and this year is sure to be the same.

Students looking to make some extra cash and play a fun game are invited to join SAC for a Free Money Game Show. The game show, which features real cash prizes for correct answers to trivia questions, will take place on Thursday, Feb. 22 from 9:00 to 11:00 pm in Cro’s Nest. “I am really excited for this event and it’s bound to be better than HQ so I’ll take it!” said Mads Lefton ’19.

The next couple of months, will also feature a variety of movie screenings held in either Evan’s Hall or Cro’s Nest, all at 9 p.m. These include showings of *It* (Feb. 9), *Thor: Ragnarok* (Feb. 16), *Lady Bird* (March 2), *Phantom Thread* (March 30), *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (April 6), and Disney’s *Coco* (April 13). If the movie line-up isn’t enough to bring a crowd, SAC will also provide viewers with free food, drinks, and great company.

“Not enough people know about these events. They are fun a way to spend Friday nights and there is free food!”

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Lending Library Expands Services, Goes Digital

KATEY VESTA
SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

College students are well-versed in the woes of being strapped for cash. The cost of enrollment alone is enough to empty one's wallet, but the myriad of extra expenses that come along with college throw more salt in the wound. Among the worst of these costs is something essential: books. Very little tops the feeling of dread in a student's stomach as they check the textbook requirements for their next semester classes and see nothing but dollar signs stacking up. Even renting can add up to a shockingly expensive total. Conn, however, has a solution to help students manage their textbook expenses, and it comes in the form of the Lending Library.

Tucked away into closets in Katharine Blunt and Burdick are the Lending Library's collection of books, built up since 2013 via student donations. All of these books are specific to various classes that have been taught at Conn, and students can check them out at absolutely zero cost at the beginning of each new

semester. One of the more notable aspects of this program, however, is that it is almost entirely a student-driven initiative.

"It's basically all student run," confirmed Margaret Bounds, Assistant Director of Sustainability at Conn. She cited the Office of Sustainability Fellows Emma Brooks, Grace Berman, Lera Shynkarova, and Rebecca Brill Weitz as being integral to the program's success in recent times. "I only really help when I need to fill in shifts here and there...but basically students run [the Lending Library]," said Bounds. Berman confirmed that this is mostly a for-students, by-students organization, saying "It's been a hands-on project... the main push is definitely from the students. The sustainability heads have been really supportive."

Clearly, these students have been running the program well. According to a presentation recently delivered by the Office of Sustainability at the 2017 Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Conference, the Lending Library has amassed a truly impressive following on campus that has only grown in recent

years. In 2016, there were 50 students who utilized the books offered by the Lending Library. By fall semester of 2017, this number had almost tripled to 140 students, and, according to the calculations of the Lending Library staff, those students saved a combined total of \$21,014 on their textbooks for that semester. This undoubtedly impressive statistic is all a result of the hard work that students such as Brooks, Berman, Shynkarova, and Brill Weitz have dedicated towards its development.

Even though the Lending Library program has achieved much, it doesn't seem likely that it'll simply rest on its laurels for too long. Just earlier this semester, the Library staff succeeded in filing all of the books into an online catalogue to make it easier for students to search for the textbooks they need. Beyond this, the staff at the Library and the Office of Sustainability have no shortage of plans for expanding the program in the future.

"We're actually putting barcodes on all of the books right now," said Bounds, "so far we've done 'A' through 'E.'" In doing this, the staff hopes to better be able to handle and

organize multiple copies of the same book, much like a traditional library.

With improvements like this in the near future, Berman expressed her hope that student use of the Lending Library will surpass the numbers it achieved this past semester. "So many people will come to us like, 'I never knew this existed,'" she said, adding that she hopes the new accessibility tools such as the online catalogue and an app that lets students check books out from their phones will spread the awareness of all the Lending Library has to offer.

Both Berman and Bounds stressed that the Lending Library only exists as a result of the generosity of Conn students—and not just the ones who volunteer their time there. "Mainly, the books are donations," said Bounds, "I know obviously you want to sell [a book] back if you can, but if you don't need the money and can donate it, that's great." This project has already saved students an impressive sum over its short existence, and with the support of the community, it appears that the Lending Library will continue that trend for semesters to come. •

#MeToo and Times's Up

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

decision to publish, her manager received a \$50,000 payoff to dissuade her from publishing.

But McGowan's *Brave* is out now, and this system of deception and concealment of the truth is being dismantled with the rise of a new movement in Hollywood. On Jan. 1, the #MeToo movement evolved into Time's Up in response to the actions of Harvey Weinstein. After seeing the aftermath of Weinstein's accusations, the Alianza Nacional de Campesinas (National Farmworker's Women's alliance), contacted the women of Hollywood to describe their experiences of assault among agricultural careers. Their letter, which was published in the *Times*, declared their desire to support those who do not have the money nor access to advocate against sexual harassment

and assault. Recently, Time's Up announced its \$13 million legal defense fund set up to support for lower-income parties.

The current discourse occurring within multimedia spheres brings into question the efficiency of our own systems of complicity and support at Conn. Recent restructuring has left the administration's dedication to Title IX unclear, but the campus does now boast a Sexual Assault Prevention and Advocacy network as well as the existing mandated reporters. People who have experienced sexual harassment or violence, or those who wish to become more involved in spaces and movements that combat the same standards and systems targeted by the #MeToo and Time's Up campaigns, can get involved with the Women's Empowerment Initiative, Green Dot, the LGBTQIA Center, and the Womxn's Center. •

SAC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

said Lucy Richards '19.

For students who want to be among the first to see a major blockbuster film, or just need to get off campus, SAC offers 25 tickets to Marvel Studios' upcoming movie premiere of *Black Panther* at Waterford Regal Cinemas. Tickets are available in Cro 212, and for just \$5, students will be provided with an entry to the movie and transportation to the theater. This event will take place on Thursday, Feb. 15 at 8:00 p.m., one day before the film premiers to the public. For more information on SAC's upcoming events, visit ConnQuest for the full detailed calendar.

"Utilize ConnQuest," Nappo said, "it is underrated and super informative." Be sure to RSVP to events that require a response. "If you want to see an event happen, or have an event to happen again, show up! That's how we measure our success," Nappo said. •

Unequal Suffering: The Trial of Lawrence Nassar

JACEE COX
STAFF WRITER

"You do realize now that we, this group of women you so heartlessly abused over such a long period of time, are now a force, and you are nothing," Aly Raisman, six-time Olympic medalist in gymnastics, told Dr. Lawrence Nassar, a former doctor for the women's Olympic gymnastics team. Nassar is now accused by over 250 women of sexual abuse, Raisman included. A monster who practiced sexual abuse for years without consequence, Nassar has finally been charged with 10 counts of criminal sexual conduct and sentenced to 40-175 years in prison.

Instances of sexual harassment and abuse are frequently settled with quiet compensatory settlements and minimal vocal presence of victims. In April 2017, the *New York Times* reported that—since 2002—Bill O'Reilly and his former employer, Fox News, made at least five settlements to various female coworkers of O'Reilly. These coworkers complained about a range of inappropriate behavior and harassment on the part of O'Reilly which, included verbal abuse, lewd comments, unwanted advances and phone calls in which it sounded as if O'Reilly was mastur-

bating, according to several documents and interviews. Fox continued to both renew O'Reilly's contract and increase his salary as The O'Reilly Factor generated hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising revenue for the network—



Photo courtesy of Paul Sancya/Associated Press

more than \$446 million just between 2014 and 2016, according to Kantar Media. It wasn't until O'Reilly's dismissal after the exposure of his conduct became a front-page story that the words of his victims were finally heard. In these types of

settlement cases, often in the workplace, abusers and companies seek to buy the silence of the victim in an attempt to preserve self-image.

But 2017 was a watershed year for standing up to criminal mistreatment. Women, en masse, began to speak. Disturbing and persistent horrors of Hollywood and the media were exposed, sparked by the seemingly never-ending stories about mogul producer Harvey Weinstein. Now the athletic world is having its moment, and Nassar's case is astonishing in volume. Consistent with patterns of powerful figures in the media, as a result of the years of abuse, the entire USA Gymnastics board of directors resigned. Nassar also worked at Michigan State University and is now facing testimonies from victims at MSU.

The regiment and strict instruction that is so ingrained in sports, especially gymnastics, is a large factor as to why Nassar's abuse was able to persist for so long and hurt so many innocent young women. Gymnasts, like all athletes, are conditioned to be obedient and undefiant. They are team players who follow instructions without question under the guided trust that their participation will aid the success of the collective group. Nassar told his victims that his predatory

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Aster Gilbert Challenges Conventional Notions about Porn

JILLIAN NOYES
STAFF WRITER

Though social taboos about sexuality make us loathe to admit it, a majority of people consume pornography in one way or another. But as Aster Gilbert explained to a captive audience of Conn students on Feb. 1, pornography serves as an important arena where anxieties about race & queerness are (literally) laid bare in ways that encourage resistance.

Gilbert, a doctoral candidate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Kansas, was invited to Conn by Film Studies professor Liz Reich after they met at the 2017

American Studies Association Conference. Erin Duran, Director of Gender and Sexuality Programs and Director of the LGBTQIA Center, was equally enthusiastic about bringing Gilbert to campus and used the event to kick off "Frisky February," a series of LGBTQIA Center-sponsored events intended to promote healthy, open, and informative conversations about sex and sexuality on campus.

The crux of Gilbert's research is centered around "microporn," defined as pornographic content reappropriated from existing sources and circulated online via GIFs and WEBM files, and the active fandom

engaging with it. Congregating on sites like PornHub and 4chan, these online communities craft discursive fanworks like remixes and porn music videos (PMVs) that, as Gilbert argued, tend to feature undercurrents of anti-semitism, transphobia, and racism. It's these pockets of prejudice that Gilbert savors examining from a theoretical standpoint, as she noted that various subgenres of microporn, despite ostensibly being produced for cisgendered heterosexual white men, rely on the viewer identifying as an othered body in one way or another.

It is from this observation that Gilbert traced a complex path from anxiety over

"taboo" desires emphasized in microporn—sex changes, gender swapping, miscegenation—to white supremacy. A key feature of microporn is text overlays and voice-overs which attempt to justify the viewer's anxieties with complex rhetoric that has roots in alt-right conspiracy theories. To prove her point, Gilbert showed off a series of WEBMs from 4chan which set an audio interview clip about "the Jewish conspiracy" to footage where a white man watches his lover walk away with two black men to have sex. The WEBMs elicited gasps from the audience due to how it politicized sexual desires and recalled Third Reich-era be-

liefs we'd like to forget still exist. "These conspiracies [and their inclusion in the porn people consume] have real physical effects on the world," Gilbert explained. "They're not just GIFs and WEBMs on the internet, it's white supremacist mobilizations, brainwashing, [and] propaganda."

The challenge with engaging in these politically charged spaces is the fact that many are actively embracing and exploring the identity politics microporn brings to light. Citing Ariane Cruz's work on "the politics of perversion," Gilbert explained how many queer women of color use race

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Medicaid Work Requirement

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the segments of the population which rely upon these services. The latest installment in the administration's chronic assault on human rights came as the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued a state directive guidance for proposals to require employment for Medicaid eligibility.

Since the issuance of this directive, two states - Kentucky and Indiana - have had their Medicaid waivers approved by CMS. In practice, the waivers will bar anyone who cannot provide proof of employment and of having worked at least 20 hours per week from accessing Medicaid coverage. They also permit the state to bar coverage from Medicaid enrollees who are late to file annual paperwork establishing eligibility. This means that those who are late to file the paperwork for Medicaid eligibility "redetermination"—which requires official documentation of proof of income and family size—are locked out of the system entirely, for 3 months in Indiana and 6 in Kentucky.

Secretary for Health and Human Services Alex Azar announced Indiana's approval days after being sworn into office. "Today's announcement is just one step in a long legacy of innovation," Azar said, standing in a public hospital in Indianapolis, where, the *Washington Post* notes, "nearly half the patients rely on Medicaid and almost one in five is uninsured." If jeopardizing the access to healthcare coverage of 130,000 people is innovation, Indiana is on the right track, for this is the number of residents currently covered by Medicaid who do not meet the new work requirements and whose coverage will be compromised if they are not able to meet them.

That any person can be denied access to healthcare because they can not pay for it is a travesty. Imagine every visit to the hospital, general physician, dentist, psychiatrist—or another medical practitioner—you have ever had. Now imagine they were all impossible. The emergency gallbladder surgery that saved your life? It could cost upwards of \$20,000 out of pocket. Your trip to the ER for injuries from a car accident? Simply riding in the ambulance could cost hundreds, if not thousands of dollars. Without health coverage, the medical services and procedures people need to survive are impossible to access, and every medical malady becomes a life or death situation. In fact, a 2009 study published in the *American Journal for Public Health* found that 45,000 Americans die annually as a direct result of not having access to healthcare. Many of these deaths, caused by common chronic ailments like hypertension, diabetes, or heart disease, could be easily prevented with access to the proper medical treatment. The number of deaths caused by lack of health coverage, the study reported, now exceeded those caused by other common killers like kidney disease.

Yet the rhetoric around uninsured Americans emphasizes choice and blame, rather than needs or rights. As House Oversight Committee Chair Jason Chaffetz famously said in reference to the ACA in 2017, "Americans have choices. They've got to make a choice. So rather than getting that new iPhone that they just love and want to go spend hundreds of dollars on that, may-

be they should invest in their own healthcare."

Chaffetz, who has consistently opposed the Affordable Care Act, same-sex marriage, net neutrality, mandatory vaccinations, and the scientific consensus on climate change, glibly dresses his hatred for the poor in the language of agency and moral blame. Why don't the poor just spend thousands of dollars on healthcare they can't afford, Chaffetz asks, instead of spending hundreds of dollars on the cell phone they use regularly and can afford? Why, I must ask, does Jason Chaffetz resemble so closely the product of performing extensive plastic surgery on a rodent? Questions abound.

In all seriousness, advocates for cutting Medicaid funding and making access virtually impossible employ patronizing rhetoric concerning the need for the poor to "make [smart] choices," and for those who have been successful in society to "empower" the poor to get jobs — as if it's impossible to simultaneously work hard, make smart decisions, and be poor. In fact, it is the "working poor" that makes up the majority of poor people in America. Accordingly, independent study af-

Why don't the poor just spend thousands of dollars on healthcare they can't afford, instead of spending hundreds of dollars on the cell phone they use regularly? Why does Jason Chaffetz resemble so closely the product of performing extensive plastic surgery on a rodent? Questions abound.

ter independent study has shown that the majority of those enrolled in Medicaid who are eligible and able to work are already doing so. It is those who are poor and cannot work due to an illness or disability—a group already at extraordinary risk for the myriad types of violence which make access to healthcare so critical—who are made especially vulnerable by restrictions on access.

The imposition of external requirements and harsh, prohibitive penalties for late paperwork are clearly intended not to "empower" the poor, but rather to bar them en masse from accessing the care they need. Since the implementation of the six-month lock-out policy for late paperwork in Indiana in 2015, 91,000 people have been kicked off of Medicaid. State officials estimate that about half of those people are still eligible for Medicaid today and are not receiving it.

The moral turpitude of the Trump Administration and its actions cannot be understated. We all, as Chaffetz wisely noted, "have choices." The choice to deny coverage to thousands of people and allow thousands more to die from ailments otherwise easily treated by medical professionals is not something of little consequence - it is vile and evil. The move to cut funding and restrict the poor's access to healthcare is motivated by anything but a desire to help people in need; rather, this line of thought and action is motivated by a deeply unjustified hatred for the poor and a malicious desire to see them destroyed. I can think of no other explanation for a movement which seeks to deny fundamen-

tal human rights and cause the unnecessary deaths of thousands of people.

In no other developed nation on Earth could this absurd and inhumane scenario take place. Yet the United States, the richest country in the world, is also the only developed nation which does not guarantee basic access to healthcare for its citizens. While other countries provide their citizens universal healthcare, in which the government funds healthcare for all, or use a single-payer healthcare system, in which the state singularly organizes funding while care stays in private hands, the United States employs neither, instead relying upon a convolutedly unregulated market system of health insurance coverage.

Many critics of the American healthcare system saw promise in the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, as a light of hope for healthcare reform. By expanding Medicare and Medicaid coverage to millions of people previously uninsured, the ACA helped to secure healthcare for many who would have lived in peril without. It also required people to purchase private insurance policies while partially subsidizing those policies with government payments to private insurers.

Yet the fact is that millions of people today remain uninsured under the Affordable Care Act, opting to pay the \$700 penalty fee—commonly known as the Obamacare tax—to waive insurance because they cannot pay for the insurance itself. And while the percentage of uninsured Americans reached an all-time low in 2016 due to the ACA, the underreported reality remains that growing segments of "insured" populations are underinsured, and cannot pay their medical bills. As Physicians for a National Health Program, a single-payer advocacy group, writes, the ACA provides neither legal reform for "our fragmented financing system" nor the "unfair financing of healthcare, whereby costs are disproportionately borne by middle- and lower-income Americans and those families facing acute or chronic illness...Insurers will continue to strip down policies, maintain restrictive networks, limit and deny care, and increase patients' co-pays, deductibles and other out-of-pocket costs." By 2023, PNHP predicts, "about 30 million people will still be uninsured, and tens of millions will remain underinsured."

In each state that implements work requirements or lock-out penalties for late paperwork submission, thousands of people are at risk for being denied health coverage. Thousands will die deaths that could have been prevented; thousands of families, friends, and lovers will grieve for lives that could have been saved. This is the cost of human life, a cost that will only increase as the Trump administration implements progressively severe restrictions to accessing healthcare, amongst other social services like public education, subsidized food, and housing. In Trump's Great Neoliberal America, there is no room for the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, the indigent—the most vulnerable, and therefore most undesirable and most expendable segments of the population. Trump's America is one in which there is no care for human life beyond value in dollars, in which the wealthy and powerful eliminate lifelines to food, shelter, and healthcare, and then watch from afar as the poor die sick in the streets. •

Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

questions for many. What makes this necessary? Why does it look like that? And how is the College, with its limited budget, paying for it?

To this last question, the space's long name provides a piece of the answer. The Commons was funded in part by the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, an organization established by a pair of philanthropists: Dr. Otto Walter, a Bavarian-born lawyer who fled Nazi Germany, and his wife, Frances Doonan Walter, a watercolor painter from New York. In life, the Walters operated their foundation to provide grants to humanitarian, artistic, and educative causes, and the organization now continues to fund projects in the couple's memory.

The Walter Foundation was the first sponsor of Blaustein's new look, but its offer was far from enough. At the ribbon-cutting event for the Walter Commons, Dean of Students Victor Arcelus and Dean of the College Jefferson Singer remarked that funding had been a collaborative effort between multiple foundations and private donors, all of which chipped in to the overall budget.

"We did not spend College money," commented Amy Dooling, Associate Dean of Global Initiatives, Director of the Walter Commons, and Professor of Chinese. She broke the nearly \$1.7 million down into specifics, explaining that the College first secured a \$375 thousand grant from the Mellon Foundation, which was followed by grants from the Alden Trust, the Hearst Foundation, the Raymond Debbane Family Foundation, and Susan Lynch '62.

While it may seem to students that the futuristic space materialized overnight, the idea for the Walter Commons has been around Conn longer than any of us. Dooling noted that for "over a decade," members of the faculty and administrative staff had been engaged in "a conversation about having a space on campus that brought together all the resources that Conn already has," citing the Language Lab (now called the Global Learning Lab), the Office of Study Away, and the Toor Cummings Center for International Studies in the Liberal Arts (CISLA) as examples.

The Walter Foundation supported the idea from the beginning, and showed it by providing an "anchor gift"—a monetary incentive that promised more funding with sufficient progress—about ten

years ago, but progress took a while.

"For a long time, we had no traction on the physical space issue," Dooling said. "Our sights were originally set on Knowlton." But once Blaustein was chosen and the remaining funding secured, construction moved quickly. The College hired Centerbrook Architects, a local firm with experience in designing educational spaces, and Babbitt Construction to complete the project.

"We wanted to work with a [construction] firm that had done academic projects during the academic year," Dooling explained, "it was actually the first time we'd done that." According to Dooling, the College had never before pursued construction on a building while classes were in session inside, and though classes in Blaustein were sometimes disrupted by noise, Babbitt Construction took extra precautions to be as quiet and unobtrusive as possible.

The degree to which construction managed to avoid disruption remains up for debate, but I agree with Dooling's observation that while sometimes the sound was annoying, as construction goes, it could have been much worse. As for the allocation of resources to build the Walter Commons, while grant funding may have made the project essentially free, the hours of work that staff dedicated to seeking and applying for grants reflect a prioritization of the Commons and its mission over other potential initiatives.

"The rationale is really strong," Dooling commented, referring to the Commons' emphasis on social justice and civic engagement. Commendably, the establishment of the Commons brings the Center for the Critical Study of Race and Ethnicity into the middle of campus, moving it from its seclusion in the Pink House across Williams Street. The other occupants of the Walter Commons are CISLA, the Office of Study Away, and the Global Learning Lab, none of which experienced as significant of moves. Both CISLA and the Office of Study Away left seemingly desirable locations in Fanning, and the Global Learning Lab is more visible, but essentially in the same place as before. The four groups have been brought together, Dooling said, to foster collaboration between them.

"Space really shapes how people interact or don't interact," she said. Speaking to the specific ways in which she imagined groups would interact, Dooling noted that the Commons serves as



Photo courtesy of Max Amar-Olkus

the site of a new advising program for "off-campus learning." The advising sessions are intended to help students navigate educational opportunities outside of Conn, including study abroad and local initiatives in New London. The question naturally arises, then, as to why Community Partnerships isn't there.

"You could make an argument for any entity on campus to be here," Dooling said, naming Community Partnerships, the Holleran Center, and the Office of Sustainability as potentially appropriate occupants. "Community Partnerships is going to be very engaged here," she added. "They have standing office hours in the small conference room, which offers a more private space." If the Commons accomplishes its mission, students will utilize these hours instead of going to the regular Community Partnerships Office, which remains in Cro.

The Commons will also serve as a meeting space for the International Students' Association (ISA). According to ISA President Lera Shynkarova, Dooling, the ISA, and Commons Assistant Director Melissa Ryan "agreed that [the Commons] should be actively used by international students not only for meetings, but also to showcase the amazing work that international students and alumni are doing."

A last source of debate, Dooling recognized, was the Commons' wordy name. The first name adopted, years earlier in the planning process, was the "international cultural commons," but Dooling said that name "didn't seem to be as encompassing as we needed."

"As [the project] was happening we just called it the global commons," Dooling admitted, but she noted that

the idea wasn't afforded the same merit by everyone on campus. The concept of a "global commons," or a globally-owned cache of the Earth's resources, carries different weight depending on a person's academic field. Some consider the term ignorant of global inequality, as it neglects to recognize the systems of power that prohibit people and nations from accessing a shared "commons," while other fields accept the term as an ideal for global harmony.

"On other campuses it would just be called a center," Dooling noted, "but center did not work for us." Because at Conn, the word "center" is affiliated with a set of specific and exclusive programs, the term seemed inadequate for naming the Walter Commons. Instead, they chose to stick with the language of the commons to imply, as Dooling put it, "resources that belong to everybody."

"It's not an uncontested idea," Dooling admitted, "but we like that."

To me, the Walter Commons seems like a common trope in projects within academia: a good idea, with decent priorities, whose actual efficacy is yet to be determined. The problem with the language of efficiency, collaboration, or innovation is its generality: sometimes, shiny new projects like this suffer from a vagueness in purpose that makes it difficult to justify their consumption of resources. I hope that the Walter Commons sees high attendance in its advising sessions and actually makes off-campus learning clearer and more accessible, because if it does, it will have served a useful purpose. As for the look, I think it's a little too futuristic to match with the rest of Blaustein, but overall, nice. •

Lawrence Nassar

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acts were part of a medical healing process which, of course, they were not. They were sickly, selfish actions. Nassar's deranged sexual pleasure came at the harm of innocent victims. But these young women, whom society constantly reminds to be compliant and agreeable, were silenced out of fear of questioning the actions of a grown, adult man with a professional title traditionally representative of a trustworthy figure.

A despicable factor in these cases is the consistent pattern of neglect demonstrated by the boards and officials at both MSU and the Olym-

pic Games who had the power to act, yet never did. In 2014, Amanda Thomashow was abused by Nassar when seeking medical help for injuries sustained during her cheerleading years. She spoke with officials at the school, who opened an investigation into Nassar's conduct. Thomashow remembers these officials seemed disturbed by her descriptions of Nassar's behavior and determined to ensure such incidents would not continue. After interviewing both Thomashow and Nassar, however, three of Nassar's physician colleagues concluded that Nassar's actions were "medically appropriate," and the school decided that the case was not in violation of

existing sexual harassment policies. Nassar's treatment was not medical, and MSU enabled the mistreatment of dozens of young women.

But the significance of Nassar's sentencing is undermined by the fact that, as of July 2017, Nassar, 54, is already serving 60 years in prison for federal child pornography charges. Nassar's life wasn't destroyed by the raw and emotional statements of survivors, nor his sentence; he was already going to die in a cell. Previous wrongdoings had ensured he would live his final years as a humiliated and hated criminal of society. How must this feel for his victims, not being able to harm someone who inflicted so much

pain upon them? For many survivors, having their stories heard and seeing Nassar behind bars is reassuring. But the hatred must burn so much deeper in these young women and their families, who each day have to grapple with the memories of abuse.

Thank goodness survivors bravely and assertively came forward to tell their stories, and testified to the treatment—both Nassar's and the officials' of the institutions—they endured. But perhaps this came too late. These young women are on the long, arguably never-ending road to healing from unspeakable traumas. As for Nassar, he will never truly be hurt for this. •

Microporn

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play to "openly explore the racial [and sexual] identities of the players in ways that may be seen as transgressive." While dominant commercial pornography reflecting societal attitudes about race and sexuality may fail to acknowledge LGBTQIA people and people of color, microporn offers a space to radically rewrite those works and question what society sees as acceptable. Thus, Gilbert argued, condemning micropornography as problematic would mean erasing important voices that are silenced far too often.

Indeed, tension defined every aspect of Gilbert's discussion—be it between racial studies theorists and queer studies theorists who are reticent to acknowledge intersections linking the two, feminists who argue if porn is degrading or should be taken seriously, and the ever-present specter of how to read context. Regardless of what one thought of the specific points Gilbert raised, it was impossible to walk away from it without gaining a newfound appreciation for the political nuances

in pornographic content. Porn's rapid turnaround allows for instantaneous reflection of values and ideologies in regards to current events, further solidifying the link between sex and anxieties fundamental to our culture. As Reich opined while moderating a post-presentation Q&A, "porn is the place where the veil is lifted, the ugliest things appear, the resistance appears, and our anxiety about miscegenation [and sexual otherness] fully comes to life." •

CROSSWORD KEY

C	A	T		S	E	E		A	M	P		
O	R	E		S	I	L	L		M	I	N	
B	E	L	O	W	B	O	I	L	I	N	G	
			E	K	E	S			O	N	E	F
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S	T	R	A	P		L	I	E		E	A	R
E	T	A	S		G	A	L		A	R	M	
T	O	M			R	O	B	L	O	W	E	P
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S	L	I	N	G		S	A	C		B	O	R
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A Disappointing Revelation from Dave Chappelle

MAX AMAR-OLKUS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

PG-13 and R ratings weren't really strict rules, but more so loose suggestions in my household. I grew up watching the things my parents or babysitters watched, which, for better or worse, exposed me to new ideas and new ways of seeing the world. I eschewed the more age-appropriate movies or TV shows like *Harry Potter*, or literally anything on the Disney channel, and instead I watched sketch comedies, stand-up routines, and satires obsessively. Although I was occasionally given "earmuffs" (a child's worst enemy) to protect from crass language, the comedians who narrated my childhood were Will Ferrell, Chris Rock, Sarah Silverman, Jerry Seinfeld, and, of course, Dave Chappelle.

Chappelle's Show on Comedy Central was a mixture of absurd slapstick humor and razorsharp political satire, primarily focusing on race in America. Chappelle left the show abruptly in the middle of its third season, citing discomfort

with some white viewers' responses to his satire rooted in racial stereotypes. Walking away from the show (and the accompanying \$50 million contract) secured Chappelle a reputation for being a socially conscious comic willing to put principle over

money.

After about a decade in the shadows, Chappelle's name began to surface in news stories about his return to comedy. In 2014, when I first heard Dave Chappelle was back and doing a 10-day residency at Radio City Music Hall in New York, I was elated. As far as I was concerned, my hero had returned. Since he had such a long hiatus, he must be ready to pump out new material, I thought.

I immediately began rewatching all the *Chappelle's Show* clips I could find and, to my surprise, they didn't quite hold up as I had remembered. Of course, there were the iconic sketches that still held their own; Charlie Murphy's retelling of the time he spent with Rick James and met Prince (both played by Chap-



Photo courtesy of Mathieu Bitton via USA Today

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Star Wars: The Last Jedi Gets Unjust Treatment from Fans

EMIR KULLUK
BUSINESS MANAGER

A noticeable amount of time has passed since the release of the latest Star Wars movie, *The Last Jedi*, but it still continues to stir up controversy amongst its fans—so much, in fact, that some have decided to take action. About a month ago, one fan started a petition to “Have Disney strike Star Wars Episode VIII from the official canon,” meaning that the eighth entry within the Star Wars saga be scrapped and forgotten. Although the petition does not elaborate on whether the eighth movie is going to be replaced with another eighth movie reshoot or is just going to be skipped through the ninth movie, its existence shows the polarizing aspect of the movie itself.

Despite having a 91% on Rotten Tomatoes from critics, the movie only has a 49% rating from the viewers. With a divide this wide, one cannot help but ask why. According to fans, the answers range from “the spaceships don't obey the laws of physics within space” to “the Luke Skywalker in this film is not the Luke Skywalker from my childhood” to “the answer to Rey's parents did not satisfy me.” It may seem as if Rian Johnson and Lucasfilms did not know what the

fans wanted, but that cannot be it, since one of the major complaints of *The Force Awakens* was that it was a rehash of *A New Hope*. Then, what really happened? Where did the fans and the creators of *The Last Jedi* (as well as the critics) go on different paths?

Truth be told, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* is not a bad movie at all in my opinion, but it has its flaws. The film has great cinematography and directing and features great special effects, yet ultimately falters a bit when it comes to the pacing of the story and one of the subplots within the story. The film's narrative, while presenting similar plot points to previous Star Wars installments, possesses a uniquely darker tone than its predecessors.

I believe that this controversy arises from the choices of Lucasfilms, JJ Abrams, and the loyalty of the fans to the franchise as a whole. The first problem was the choice of Lucasfilms to provide too much freedom to the directors of the new trilogy. The directors—there were more than one for the trilogy—were given free reign over story arcs and allowed to write their own scripts. This caused a discrepancy between the directors to occur: whereas JJ Abrams wanted to create an ode to the original trilogy with a lighter and hopeful

tone, Rian Johnson wanted to craft a darker story, in which the flicker of hope created with the original theory dimmed with the passage of time. These clashing visions created inconsistency and incoherence within the story line, catching the fans off guard and resulting in negative backlash.

The second reason for the controversy is because of the choices JJ Abrams made whilst crafting *The Force Awakens*. JJ Abrams has his own concept for filmmaking—called a mystery box—in which the director withholds information critical to a complete understanding of the story from the viewers in order to create intrigue. This technique does generate suspense, but ultimately the mystery box cannot stay closed for too long, JJ Abrams states, or the viewer will get bored or angry. The problem with the mystery boxes in *The Force Awakens* is that the questions they raised were not answered in *The Last Jedi*, since JJ Abrams did not direct it. So during the two years in between, fans theorized in futility. When the film was finally released, their grand expectations were not met. The fans might have been satisfied if JJ Abrams directed *The Last Jedi* and provided the answers to the mystery boxes

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The Greatest Showman Proves Itself Great

BROOKE SPONZO
CONTRIBUTOR

Capturing audiences with sweeping melodies and catchy tunes, the P.T. Barnum musical *The Greatest Showman* has been filling moviegoers' hearts with song since its release in early December.

The film, which stars Hollywood icon Hugh Jackman as the title role and features Zac Efron and fashion icon Zendaya, centers around the story of a showman trying to make it big in a bleak and gray world. To do this, he gathers up a crew of society's misfits and outcasts, including Broadway's Keala Settle as a spirited bearded lady, and convinces them that they can prove to the world the beauty of their uniqueness.

The score for this movie musical was composed by the award winning, song-writing duo Justin Paul and Benj Pasek, who recently received a Golden Globe for best original song "This Is Me" one of the many inspirational anthems from *The Greatest Showman*.

Having already proved his vocal ability as the atoning convict Jean Valjean in the 2012 film adaptation of *Les Misérables*, Hugh Jackman shines in the role of P.T. Barnum, a man from little means who attempts to make his childhood dreams into a reality and provide a better life for his wife and children. In fact, according to Kristin Smith, a movie critic for *Plugged In*, "*The Greatest Showman* paints a portrait of the metaphorical tight-rope P.T. Barnum walked, and we're drawn into his mesmerizing world."

But one thing viewers of this movie might not know is how Jackman's star quality glowed even behind the scenes. In an interview for FOX Studios titled "The Story Behind the Making of the Movie," Jackman reveals how during the filming

and recording process, he had to have a skin cancer removed and, with eighty stitches in his nose, he was informed by his doctor that he should not sing for a set amount of time. However, a read-through of the script and songs, an event which had taken eight months to plan, was scheduled for the very next day. Jackman attended but refrained from singing for the entire event with the exception of the final song, a powerful, soul-lifting number titled "From Now On," to which he couldn't resist adding his voice. Broadway star Jeremy Jordan, who assisted Jackman with the vocal selections, later tweeted that: "if this movie is half as inspiring as this reading was, we are all in for a treat."

Zendaya's performance as an acrobat battling discrimination and fighting to be seen for her art is equally stunning. Her singing voice is powerful, but even more impressive is the fact that she did most of her own aerial stunts by herself. In an interview for *The Tonight Show*, she said that the movie required a lot of training and upper-body strength building, and included conquering a fear of heights. Zac Efron, who is still today well-known for his starring role in the 2006 iconic, or perhaps infamous, *High School Musical*, brilliantly captured the struggles of a society elite who joins Barnum's circus on a whim, hoping it will lead to his lasting happiness. Zendaya and Efron's duet "Rewrite the Stars" is as visually stunning as it is beautiful to the ears. Efron and Jackman also have a song together titled "The Other Side," which is a witty, fast-paced number that includes artful glass clinking and rhythmic stomping and is sure to put a smile on the face of even the harshest critic.

Other numbers of interest include "Never Enough," a haunting, bittersweet song sung by Loren Allred about the endless pursuits of an actress, and "A Million Dreams" sung by Hugh Jackman, Ziv Zaifman (young P.T. Barnum), and Michelle Williams (Charity Barnum), which has a lullaby-like quality and details the power of believing in one's dreams. The second song, actually, is the number that got Pasek and Paul the songwriting job. According to an article by *Playbill*, the flow of the song, which transitions "a boy of dreams to a grown man with a childlike imagination" convinced the films director, Michael Gracey, that they were just the right people for the task.

If one is unable to see the movie in theatres, checking out the songs on iTunes, or even on YouTube, might be a great way to gain a new favorite winter playlist. •

Star Wars

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he created himself, and then left them on Rian Johnson's shoulders.

Another reason for the retaliation against *The Last Jedi* has been so strong might be due to natural generational and age striations in the Star Wars fan base. Since its debut in 1977, dozens of generations have grown up watching Star Wars, and the kids who watched *A New Hope* in theaters are now adults in their forties and fifties. Truth be told, Star Wars is a family movie that is a space opera. They are for kids who watch Star Wars and fall in love with the spectacle, the force, and the lightsabers. It is awkward to see a fan in his adult years complain about how the laws of physics have been manipulated for the film, or how the Luke Skywalker they saw forty years ago has changed. The new trilogy of Star Wars films is for a new generation, and since Lucasfilms and Disney are crafting Star Wars for a new generation, they don't want to replicate the original trilogy or do the exact same thing, since those movies already exist.

The Last Jedi takes a lot of risks and reaps the rewards of most of them, while failing significantly with others. Ultimately, Rian Johnson brought his own ideas to the table, and made a technically complex, visually engaging film, which is what really matters. While Marvel may have failed to meet the conditions required to satisfy long-time fans in this film, Johnson should not be vilified for pursuing his own artistic vision.

People grow and change, but they always expect the things they loved as a child to not change, which is impossible. Just like people, the characters in films, and the studios which create these films change as well. Petitioning to change *The Last Jedi* in the name of nostalgic desires would be the same as asking an adult to act like a child again. •



Photo courtesy of Vanity Fair

A Reflection on Fall Arboretum Events and a Preview of Spring Programming

SOPHIA ANGELE-KUEHN
ARTS EDITOR

If one had walked into 33 Gallows Lane on the morning of Dec. 2, under a weakly shining winter sun, they would have been greeted by the invigorating aromas of Balsam and Dunkin' Donuts. They would have seen coats piled high on top of one another on hooks near the door and circular wire frames and floral wire neatly placed on tables. Meanwhile, a separate table had its entire surface filled with carefully classified evergreen clippings. Bags of various natural materials collected from the surrounding Arboretum were waiting outside the building. It was time to learn the art of wreath-making.

"The wreath-making class filled up two months ago," said Assistant Director of the Arboretum Maggie Redfern, pleased, in a private interview before the event. The wreath-making class is one of the Arboretum's most popular programs and pulls participants from all across Connecticut. Most participants have to pay a \$40 entrance fee, but all Arboretum events are free for Connecticut College students.

Indeed, the 87-year-old Arboretum appears to be the perfect place to merge nature with art and creativity. For example, besides wreaths, a Holiday Craft Ornament event was held last winter in the Olin lounge. Participants had to get creative with a diversity of plant materials in order to construct all-natural, biodegradable decorations. At first geared toward kids in the community, the event was recently refocused to attract more of the college community as a fun break before finals.

"Painting the Landscape" is also a popular Arbo event for both Conn students and members of the surrounding community. On one weekday in the fall, one in the spring, Julie Riggs of the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme comes to the Arboretum to teach the technique of "plein-air" painting, according to the American impressionists who used to board at the Florence Griswold mansion. After the demonstration, participants go off and attempt to capture the serenity of the Arboretum Pond with broad brushstrokes and shades of light.

"[Painting the Landscape] was a pro-

gram that I started soon after I got here, just wanting to make connections with other organizations. The Florence Griswold Museum has such neat programming, you can see I really like this class," laughed Redfern, gesturing to her small collection of impressionistic paintings propped in a corner of her office in Olin. "I like to plan programs that I enjoy doing... Hopefully classes are a way for people to get more involved and learn more about the Arboretum and the natural world."

Another event that the Arboretum

two-dimensional. The Arboretum hosts two conferences in Cummings a year: one in November for home gardeners, and another in January for professional landscape architects. About 150 people come to this particular two-day conference in Evans Hall.

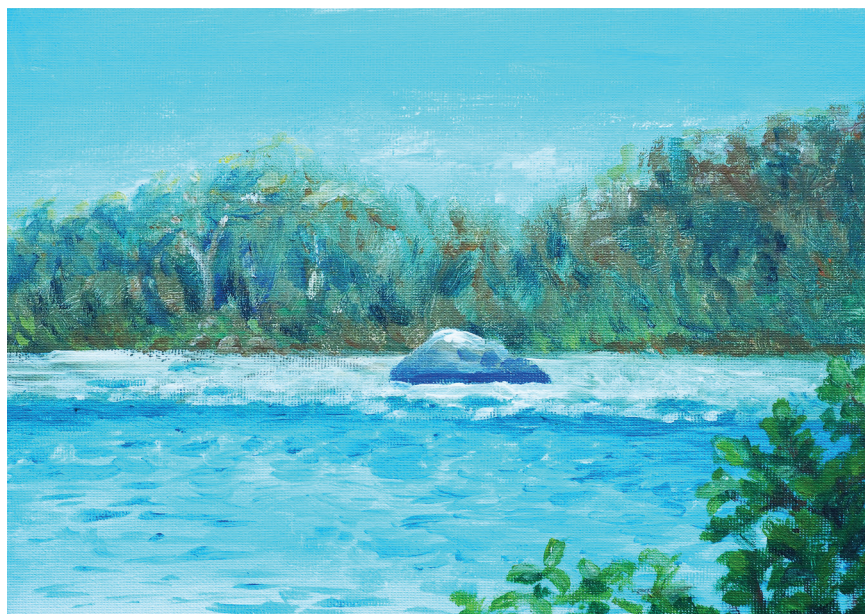
And there are, of course, multiple sculptures located across Conn's grounds, which are considered part of the Arboretum. "Barbara Zabel, who is a retired Art History professor, curated an exhibit at the Lyman Allyn, so I asked her if she'd be interested in doing

tricky things—people just assume the Arboretum, oh, you have to be a Botany major to be involved, but that's not true at all..." Redfern even mentioned that while at a rock-climbing class, she talked with a student from the theater department, and he told her he wished there were more plays in the Arboretum. "Well, you should talk to your professors about it, and let's try to make it happen!" If students want to see more events at the Arbo, or get more involved, it seems they need to think outside the box and speak their mind.

Unfortunately, one problem that the Arboretum faces is that students are too busy to come to their events. "What are college students interested in, and when are they available?" asked Redfern, exasperated. "There are so many opportunities on campus for activities, it's hard to compete with a lot of those programs and for us to get the word out." But when word does get out and goes around, people flock to the Arboretum for everything including gaining knowledge on the trees in downtown New London on a tour, sitting in a gazebo with friends and family, and getting their hands a little dirty with a hands-on art project.

"It seems like art classes are a good way to get people looking more closely at nature, and just being observant of their surroundings. Art and nature seem to be a nice, compatible, complementary thing. Just pictures of landscapes, paintings of landscapes, drawings, you know, it seems like something that almost anyone can do," commented Redfern. Art and nature seem to go hand-in-hand, and art isn't a field of study strictly reserved for a group of professionals. Everyone can get involved.

So whenever one returns from the Arboretum and crosses Williams Street toward the stone walls of Connecticut College, one may do so carrying a heavy yet unique holiday wreath, or a memory of a play or song, that will forever capture and preserve the magic that the Arboretum holds. And whenever one lays down a blanket and sits under one of the twin Japanese Larch trees in front of Blaustein on an early spring day, looking for a creative solution to their problems, they'll find it in front of them, next to them, and above them, in nature. •



Sophia's painting from "Painting the Landscape"
Photo courtesy of Sophia Angele-Kuehn

puts on proves just that: with over 60 photograph submissions from the college and local community, the Arboretum's annual photo contest has displayed just how influenced people are by nature for the last twenty years. Last April the contest's theme was "Capturing the Beauty of the Arboretum," and submissions included a snow-laden Buck lodge, an October sun peeking out from behind trees, and a frog sitting in the still waters of the Pond. The awards ceremony had been held in Unity House on Arbor Day, and in conjunction the College's Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives displayed old photographs and maps of the Arbo from times past.

However, art, like nature, isn't only

a tour on campus of the sculptures. So you know, it's just trying to find those types of partnerships where we can make connections within the community," said Redfern.

Music is also an art form as a means of creative expression. In the fall and spring, Arbofest lets Conn students relax in front of the Pond, throw a Frisbee around with friends, and listen to music from student bands.

"The Arboretum is always open to students doing projects in the landscape, whether it's like a theater—they want to do a play, or a performance—or some sort of art project or research project," explained Redfern. "Not just natural sciences, you know, it could really be anything. I think that's one of the

Students Review Debut Albums from Near and Far

Here in New London: Coagulate's "Bent"

CHARLIE KING
CONTRIBUTOR

Before I sat down to write about "Bent," the debut album by Connecticut College's very own Coagulate, I had the opportunity to attend a number of their performances here on campus at The Barn. On each occasion, I found that there wasn't a person in the room who wasn't dancing or at least bobbing along to the music. This in and of itself isn't unique to Coagulate's performance, and it is not surprising given that drummer Josh Hausman is undeniably groovy, especially when accompanied by Violet Better on bass. Yet, what struck me was that I was surrounded by people who, by and large, did not care for metal music. Had these kids been alone in their rooms that night, I doubt that any of them would have had Master of Reality playing on their stereo or would have been dancing around their room to "Into the Void." I certainly wouldn't have. Still, there we were having a fantastic time to the tune of "Caffeine."

My point in mentioning this is that there's something distinctly appealing about seeing Coagulate perform, and it's a challenging task to embody the visceral kineticism of a live act on a studio album. There are all too many mediocre bands with noisy, messily-produced albums, posing proudly in the shadow of Raw Power. "Bent" sidesteps this typical pitfall thanks in no small part to the work of producer Hans Olrik. Olrik's mix sounds strikingly different from Coagulate's live performances but is nonetheless informed by them. Netland's vocals are distorted, but not to the point where they're unrecognizable; Better's bass drives the songs forward, but never at the expense of overwhelming Ben Greene's deft guitar playing. It's loud, but balanced. It gives the listener some distance from Netland's



Painting by Aleister Crowley; Design by Jack Beal
Image courtesy of Coagulate

bare-chested antics, drawing more attention to the band's ability than their spectacle.

It's in this light that Coagulate's talents, as well as their shortcomings, are put on full display. Greene's guitar playing is a particular highlight; "Begin Again" opens the album with some bluesy improvisational guitar that builds an off-kilter rhythm before "Ahead by One" comes storming in with percussive fury. Greene's playing doesn't necessarily steal the show, but it certainly sets the tone for the rest of the album. The tracks where Greene's work shines, like his wailing solo over Better's trudging bass riff on "Depende," is Coagulate at their best.

While Greene's guitar might form much of the foundation for "Bent's" sound, it's Netland's vocal performance that establishes the album's mood. Sonically, his voice is perfectly fitting. There's enough roughness to the quality of the recording to give it an edge, but not at the cost of obscuring his lyrics. On "Bent," Netland's lyrics occupy a strange space—they display a swath of existential angst that's grounded almost entirely in his own experience. It's an experience that I relate to, and genuinely feel I

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From the Original London: "Everything is Recorded"

SAM WEISENTHAL
STAFF WRITER

Let's talk about the masters behind the sound. What happens when producers come out from behind the scenes to show us, the listeners, what it feels like to have an ear for music? British producer Richard Russell, owner and top executive of XL Recordings in London, recently came out with his first album, "Everything is Recorded." The work displays the expertise Russell has shown us through working with household names, yet it also allows listeners to peek into the magic of a musical mastermind. The ways in which Russell produced and shaped his new album through collaborative practices may be able to change the ways in which the music industry focuses on capital rather than art.

XL Recordings occupies a uniquely important place in the hierarchy of record labels. The powerhouse is an independent label with the punch of a major record company such as Warner and Universal. XL, unlike larger labels, supplies a uniquely artistic space which is welcoming to musical experimentation and vision. XL rejects the notion that record labels should be producing exclusively consumable songs, according to art critics in outlets such as *The New Yorker*. Instead, the label aims to connect with artists who have "uncompromising vision." In keeping with this vision of the company, XL operates by banking on musicians' long-term potential rather than on immediate returns. Major label executives are devoted to shareholders, whereas XL works for the listener and the artist. Because of this passion, XL Recordings has signed and produced world renowned artists such as Adele, Beck, FKA twigs, M.I.A., King Krule, Radiohead, Sampha, SBTRKT, Sigur Rós, Tyler,



Image courtesy of Pitchfork

The Creator, Vampire Weekend, The White Stripes, and The xx—among others. In 2008, Thom Yorke of Radiohead released his first solo album through XL, saying he chose the label because it's "very mellow" and has "no corporate ethic." Similarly, Frank Ocean chose XL to release the vinyl and CD versions of his artistic opus, "Blonde." Ocean claims in interviews that his previous label, Def Jam, had been perplexed by his music and thus they choose to focus on superstars like Justin Bieber.

Richard Russell took control of XL Recordings in 1994 and has shaped the trajectory of the label, turning it into the authority that it is today. Russell created the company in his early twenties, and has now decided to come out with a record of his own entitled "Everything is Recorded." Russell did not consider this a profound shift as he had always seen himself primarily as a creative person in an executive role. This tension has allowed Russell to nurture a company which privileges artistic autonomy, allowing the passion for music to drive corporate decisions. The album serves as Russell's proper debut as a musician.

Like with all of his work, Russell can be heard in the background of the album, serving more as the ring-leader than the frontman. Russell

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Dave Chappelle

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pelle); or the parody of the ABC show *Wife Swap* called “Trading Spouses.” Although the show still had wit and political relevance some 10 years later, I realized how much our society had changed for the better and all I could find myself thinking was: “There’s no way this show could be made today.”

In 2017 Chappelle released four Netflix specials, netting approximately \$20 million per performance. The first two, *Deep in the Heart of Texas* and *The Age of Spin*, were Chappelle’s first specials released in twelve years, and became instantly successful. Eight months later, in December, Netflix released the second two part stand-up special called *Equanimity* and *The Bird Revelation*. A month after the first release, Netflix announced that they were the streaming service’s most viewed comedy specials in its history.

But the specials weren’t greeted exclusively with praise, like most of Chappelle’s early work. In fact, Chappelle was widely criticised for his comments about Caitlyn Jenner and the trans community, OJ Simpson, and Chappelle’s childhood comedy idol, Bill Cosby.

In *The Bird Revelation*, Chappelle shares his thoughts on the #MeToo movement, and focuses on the accusations against Louis C.K., Kevin Spacey, and Harvey Weinstein. Generally, while discussing the sexual misconduct of famous men, Chappelle denounces their actions, only to minimize or mitigate them soon afterwards. His schtick of digging himself into a hole just to prove he can escape worked for him in the past, but doesn’t quite work today.

Chappelle reminds the audience at the beginning of *The Bird Revelation* that sometimes the funniest thing to say is mean. But that philosophy really only works a fraction of the time. While ruminating on the troves of sexual assault victims who have come out to make statements against their attackers, Chappelle suggests that some may just be experiencing “buyers’ remorse,” which is a particularly cruel choice of words, and surely not the funniest thing he could have thought of. It’s the type of humor that would have been perfectly acceptable in the peak of Chappelle’s career twelve years ago but no longer sits right in the modern audience’s stomach. Tastes can change a lot over time, and large portions of Chappelle’s new material seem more fit for a bygone era than for today.

Chappelle’s political and social awareness has always been rooted in his experience of race, rather than gender, so it’s hard to expect him to fully understand the nuance and implicit meanings of the jokes he makes about the #MeToo movement. That being said, he does call himself a feminist and offers up moments of sober political analysis, with a focus on tackling structural issues and inequities. At one point, he calls for the sexual equivalent of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (“the system itself must be tried”) to deal with the pervasive sexual harassment and assault problem in the US.

The new Dave Chappelle specials are culturally significant; they offer historical context and modern social criticisms that are all-too-needed in 2017. The modern Dave Chappelle smokes his juul on stage, doling out pieces of wisdom, and has some genuinely hilarious bits, but the most depressing part is that you have to sit through some pretty outdated and tasteless humor just to find the gems. •

“Everything Is Recorded”

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soon realized in his process that it is difficult for him to construct a public image after having been in the background of the music for so long. Perhaps because of this discomfort, Russell includes a plethora of guest artists on the work. Russell’s ability to prioritize the music over his ego has allowed him to create an album which paves the way for true artistic collaboration. This decision is a smart one because it allows listeners to connect with Russell’s true talent of artistic collaboration. In this vain, Russell has been in the process of working with Kahlil Joseph, the man who directed Beyoncé’s “Lemonade” video, for the visual component of his work.

Russell’s album is 16-minutes long and each of the tracks touch on a different genre, from Motown to hip-hop to Rap to Jazz. The song “Close But Not Quite” is in collaboration with Sampha, an artist who has been working with Solange, Drake, Kanye, and Frank, all the while making a distinct voice for himself through his acclaimed album “Process,” released in 2017. “Close But Not Quite” is built around a sample of Curtis Mayfield’s 1970 song “The Makings of You.” The song, which vibes like a jazzy Gabriel Garzón-Montano, has eerie intonations found in musicians like Frank Ocean and culminates in a modern motown expression of rejoice. The song “Mountains of Gold” features Sampha, Wiki, Kamasi Washington, and Ibeyi. Russell says, “‘Mountains of Gold’ is sound system inspired; you can hear a lot of strong and different personalities and voices in the one song, but the feeling is consistent.” By the time listeners reach the end of this short and sweet collection, they will be hard pressed to say one single thing about how they feel and what it means.

Through collaboration, Russell has allowed himself to transcend sound and meaning, which shows listeners how he will influence the current state of music. It has become clear that Russell can go in any direction with his work. The work leaves me feeling hopeful that Russell may be able to move the music industry into a space which privileges art over capital. The artist himself said, “I suppose from the outside it’s, like, ‘Well, what are they going to do—what do they do after Adele? Twelve-inch singles. Electronic music. Shit that’s banging. That’s what we do. And then? Then stuff happens.’” XL Recordings is changing the way music is made and shared. Russell, the passion behind the project, is teaching us all to recenter production on the artist rather than the individual who is making money for money’s sake. Richard Russell is teaching us how to listen again.

“Everything is Recorded” is available on Spotify, iTunes, YouTube, and Soundcloud. •

“Bent”

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can understand, which provides a sense of distance as well as connection. I don’t doubt for a second that they’re honest personal expressions of emotion that come from a place of sincere self-reflection. Personally, I know that if I sat down to write some lyrics, the best I could hope to come up with would read like a cheap imitation of “Citrus Skull.” However, it seems to me that the power of great songwriting is expressing a kind of indescribable emotion. So I’m left feeling torn when it comes to Netland’s writing. It’s engaging, and it’s refreshing in the sense that most of the music I’ve encountered that voices similar sentiments tends to sound more like Salvia Palth than it does Iron Maiden. All in all, “Bent” leaves me wanting something more, but I’m not sure if that’s because the album itself is lacking. I’ve seen Coagulate take a room of kids who just seconds ago had their arms up in time to Modest Mouse’s “Float On” and get them headbanging to a song that they had never heard before. I don’t believe a whole lot of bands are capable of doing something like that; and so I can’t help but feel that Coagulate is a great band, but “Bent” is just a good album. •

onStage Presents BalletX, an Imaginative Intervention in Modern Dance

ELIZABETH BERRY
STAFF WRITER

Seated in the notoriously scratchy blue seats of Palmer Auditorium, the audience of the Friday, Jan. 26 onStage show was treated to a graceful yet modern performance by BalletX, Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet company. BalletX combines distinguished choreographers and dancers who work together to challenge "the boundaries of classical ballet by encouraging formal experimentation while preserving rigorous technique," as stated on Connecticut College's website. Members of the company performed "Gran Partita," choreographed by Jorma Elo; "Malasangre," choreographed by Cayetano Soto; and "The Last Glass," choreographed by Matthew Neenan. Each of these pieces captured the audience and—through choreography, lighting effects, music, and costumes—effectively intertwined both ballet and contemporary into one dance form.

The show opened with fog sprawled across the stage as dancers slowly began to appear with spotlights directed on them. The female dancers wore simple tan leotards and the male dancers wore white pants; both apparel choices allowed the audience to focus on the dancers' magnificent abilities, rather than potentially being distracted by elaborate costumes.

"Gran Partita" was composed of several pas de deux—all of which demonstrated classical ballet form. However, these duets were intermixed with more contemporary choreography throughout the piece. Thus, when the audience felt like the performance was turning into solely a ballet piece, the choreography would slowly begin to morph into more modern movements. Although sometimes abrupt, the choreography worked to unite forms of dance not always thought to work

well together in the same piece. However, BalletX shows that these forms can in fact go hand in hand. The most striking performance in "Gran Partita" was by Francesca Forcella and Gary W. Jeter II. The complex choreography performed by both dancers are perhaps the reason why one of their more complicated lifts was the cover of the program for the show.

After the first performance, Malasangre transitioned the show from a primarily ballet piece to one with more variety. This piece opened with what appeared to be gray squares of paper on

female-male roles in dance: the performance by male dancers of BalletX evoked traditional notions of femininity, and female dancers later performed strong and bold movements. While this piece diverged from classical ballet and instead was composed of mostly contemporary and modern choreography, there were some moments when ballet movements and technique shone through.

The last performance returned the show to ballet in a less subtle way, but contemporary dance was not forgotten. Female dancers entered wearing pale-colored leotards and frilly tutus. In contrast, the male dancers wore pants and simple shirts, almost like street clothes. Two dancers were even on pointe, which means they wore pointe shoes that allow them to appear as though they are dancing on their toes. Skyler Lubin's performance on pointe was particularly impressive as she carried out difficult choreography ranging from leg lifts to turns with the grace of a prima ballerina. The only female dancer not in a classic tutu was Andrea Yorita. She was dressed in a pink shirt and bermuda shorts. While her costume set her apart from her peers, it was Yorita's beautiful technique and expressive performance that held my attention through-



Shot from a 2017 performance of "The Last Glass." Photo by Bill Hebert and courtesy of BalletX.

the stage—in fact, toward the end of the piece the dancers actually picked these up and threw them into the air. Both female and male dancers wore knee-high black socks, but the female dancers wore tan turtleneck long-sleeved shirts, and the male dancers wore crisp, tan kilts with pleats. While "Gran Partita" was performed to primarily classical music, "Malasangre" was performed to a variety of upbeat music, the majority of which was sung in Romance languages. The opening segment of this piece began with a sassy song that shocked the audience and was danced solely by male dancers. This was unorthodox, yet intriguing as it reversed the often stereotypical

out the show.

This year marks the one-hundredth anniversary of performing arts at Connecticut College. Moreover, BalletX was the perfect show to celebrate this incredible achievement. BalletX was a performance looked forward to by many—including myself—and it did not disappoint. From riveting choreography, to outstanding dancers, to music and costumes that highlighted the show's tone, it was onStage's best guest performance yet this year. I hope the company returns to Conn's campus in the future to once again capture the audience and transport them to a different world—one filled with grace and imagination. •