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Ash Wednesday: A sprinkle of something new in COVID-19 times

KELLEN STEPLER
editor-in-chief

Update: Bi-weekly COVID-19 testing starting soon

Although a dark, ashen cross on the forehead is the standard symbol of Ash Wednesday in the U.S., this year, the pandemic has led churches across the country to slightly alter the tradition. To avoid making physical contact, ministers have resorted to sprinkling the ashes on the recipient’s forehead.

Katia Faroun / Features Editor

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Celebrating Darwin Day: A closer look at biology in the age of the pandemic

The beginning of a life that would drastically change the way the scientific community and the world as a whole believed it functioned started on Feb. 12, 1809. This date is the birth of English naturalist Charles Darwin, who fostered the theory of evolution by natural selection, which since has become the foundation for everyday evolutionary studies and works.

Two hundred twelve years later, Duquesne University and many educational institutions across the globe paid tribute to this man whose work is still being put into practice today, and in relation to current events: the study of COVID-19.

Annually, Duquesne hosts an event called “Darwin Day” in which one facet of Darwin’s vast studies are expanded upon to a wider audience. “The Department of Biological Sciences, with support from the Bayer School of Natural & Environmental Sciences, has held a public talk to celebrate Darwin Day for nearly 20 years,” said Duquesne University professor Michael Seaman. “Although back in July and August, when we were making these decisions, we were afraid that by February 2021 people would be sick of talking about COVID, but clearly we aren’t,” Seaman said.

“This year, being virtual, also made some things easier. We didn’t have to fly the speaker in from far away, which I think made it more likely that our speaker, Dr. Michael Worobey, would agree to give our annual talk.”

This year’s discussion was held virtually due to the pandemic over to Worobey, Seaman dove into how genomic epidemiology is working to track and discover different strains of COVID-19, all while sticking to the basic Darwinian principles of evolutionary theory. While the first diagnosed case in the U.S. was at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on Jan. 15, 2020, the work done by Worobey and his colleagues, as well as those at the Seattle Flu Project, concluded that since multiple genomic sequences were being found in Washington state, COVID-19 had been in the area for quite some time prior to the first official U.S. case.

“This was probably the result of swift action to isolate the patient and prevent contact with other people. This was the first good evidence, way back in January of 2020, that aggressive public health measures could be essential in preventing the spread of COVID.”

The discussion explored different ways in which Darwinist theories played a role in determining disease origin. The speakers discussed the likelihood that the COVID-19 U.K. variant, known as B.117, was around for quite some time with an unknown origin as early as November, but was first recognized by the U.K. short time later. It is also likely that B.117 will become the variant most prevalent in the U.S. by this March, due to its potent transmission rate.

By the end of the discussion, questions that had been blindly submitted into the chat feature were answered by Worobey, who was optimistic in the efforts of mitigation as well as the vaccines coming to the forefront and noted that “the escape-hatch of vaccinations” would bring about a large change in transmission and furthering of the disease. Most questions had been answered before Worobey experienced technical difficulties and was disconnected from the talk, leaving the rest of the discussion to Seaman.

Seaman directed the discussion to apply the works of Darwin to science today, and believes that Darwin’s discoveries continue to be relevant today. “It is easy to mistakenly think that evolution is only relevant for understanding the distant past,” Seaman said. “But everything that we have learned over the last 150 years of evolutionary biology, including the nature of mutations and natural selection, is directly relevant for combating the ongoing pandemic.”

The program logo for “Trees and Disease,” presented for Darwin Day 2021 at Duquesne, seemingly fits the year’s theme: a discussion about viruses.

The Office of Student Conduct.

Also on February 18, 2021

As of Feb. 17, there were four positive tests at Duquesne, and 494 tests conducted.

As of Feb. 17, three students are in isolation.

Tips

We want your input! The Duke’s news section would love to hear from you about stories that you want to see in print. Know a talented professor or accomplished student? See something on campus that just doesn’t make sense? You can send your tips and story ideas to News Editor Colleen Hammond at hammondcc@duq.edu

POLICE BRIEFS

Here are the crimes reported from Feb. 8 to Feb. 15.

On Feb. 11, a Duquesne University employee reported a harassing phone call. A report was made and the case is active.

Also on Feb. 11, the resident director of Assumption Hall confiscated marijuana in the building. The student is being referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

COVID-19 NUMBERS

The new dashboard features campus COVID-19 data along with information from Allegheny County. The campus data dashboard breaks down COVID-19 cases, tests, isolation and quarantine spaces and vaccination information.

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As of Feb. 17, three students are in isolation.

SCAN HERE FOR COVID-19 DATA

JOIN THE DUKE!

If you’re interested, email theduc-eduq@gmail.com or stop by our newsroom located in the basement of College Hall (Room 113).

EMAIL TIPS

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February 18, 2021 NEWS
A traditional, Catholic take on a new pandemic problem

**COLLEEN HAMMOND**
news editor

Just like every other momentous occasion and celebration for the past 11 months, Ash Wednesday is looking a little different this year.

Ash Wednesday, the annual Christian holy day of prayer and fasting, marks the beginning of the Lenten season. This day, preceded by a usual slew of Mardi Gras and Fat Tuesday celebrations, has been transformed by dioceses across the globe to accommodate the new COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

"This year, our Ash Wednesday has to be different," said Rev. Bill Christy, chaplain of Duquesne in a video addressed to all students. "I don’t think I have ever anticipated an Ash Wednesday like I am anticipating it this year," Christy said.

While the holiday may look different to practicing Christians, Christy remains hopeful in its symbolism and the necessary time of Lent preparation.

"[Ash Wednesday] tells us that spring’s coming, Easter’s coming. New life is coming, Resurrection is coming," Christy said. "And I don’t think that I’ve thirsted for that so much as I do this year."

"It’s how we’re going to celebrate Ash Wednesday this year. We’re going to bow our heads. We’re going to accept the ash. And we are going to know that this year is different," Christy said.

While this may seem strange and out of sorts to American Christians, Christy noted that this is customary in other regions and sections of the church.

"This is common in other parts of the world and actually has a lot of biblical connotations in it," Christy said. "We’re just not used to doing this here in the United States."

Although it has not been standard practice in the U.S. in previous years, congregations across the city — and nation — are quickly adopting it to protect their parishioners from COVID-19.

While uncommon in the U.S., the tradition of sprinkling ashes on the forehead is not unusual across different parts of the world. The ashes are made from the burnt reamins of the blessed palms from Palm Sunday of the previous year. In the Catholic tradition, blessed and holy objects can only be discarded by burning or burial. To dispose of the palms properly, they are burned to make the following year’s ashes.

Duquesne’s Lenten Activities List

**Weekly Mass Times:**
- Weekdays 7:45 a.m. and noon
- Saturday 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday 11 a.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m.

"A fish fry was offered in the Student Union by the brothers of Phi Kapp on Ash Wednesday. Similar events are yet to be scheduled for the Lenten season.

"We’re going to sprinkle just a bit of the ash," Christy said. "Look for us. Come. Receive the ash."

The distribution of ashes was offered in 11 different locations during the day with full masses offered at 7:45 a.m., noon and 9 p.m.

"I don’t think I have ever anticipated an Ash Wednesday like I am anticipating it this year," Christy said.

In addition to the sprinkling of ashes, Duquesne’s Chapel is currently operating at a fraction of its in-person capacity. While virtual services are available to the public, those who wish to attend in person must sign up in advance on the Spiritan Campus Ministry webpage. Services are limited to 25 people for the time being.

"As is our custom, we will be all over campus," Christy said.

Students had the opportunity to receive ashes at 11 different services throughout the day, and at three separate masses.
What value does social media actually have?

C

lose to 18 years ago, the world was introduced to a phenomenon that has drastically changed society. Social media has revolutionized the way society communicates, but at what cost? This question has been asked by many individuals, and it is one that should be carefully considered.

Social media has opened up a platform for people to express themselves in ways that were previously not possible. It has allowed individuals to connect with others from all over the world, regardless of geographical barriers. However, this has also led to a decrease in face-to-face interactions, with people often preferring virtual communication over in-person conversations. This can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection, as people may feel more connected to their online communities than they do to their physical ones.

Furthermore, social media has been proven to impact mental health. Research has shown that excessive use of social media can lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Social media is often marketed as a tool for self-expression and creativity, but it has also been found to contribute to the development of eating disorders and body image issues.

In conclusion, social media has undoubtedly brought about many positive changes in our society, but it is important to be aware of its potential drawbacks as well. It is up to each individual to use social media responsibly, to ensure that it is used as a tool for positive change, rather than as a contributor to negative outcomes.

Noah Wilbur
opinions editor

Donald Trump's acquittal breeds disappointment among Americans

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ver the weekend, former President Donald Trump was acquitted on impeachment charges by a single vote in the Senate. This was a surprising turn of events, especially when considering his involvement in the deadly insurrection at the Capitol Building on Jan. 6.

This came as no surprise to me. When I logged on to Twitter to read the reactions of those who believe in an acquittal, my feed was filled with users expressing disappointment. It was clear that Trump's acquittal was not going to be received.

Of course this news is disheartening, but it does not really change anything other than confirming what we already know to be true: that Republicans once again chose their party over their country.

I will be crystal clear in saying that Donald Trump was 100% guilty in helping to cause the breach of the Capit

Alvye Kaminski
staff columnist

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Correction

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ailly supporting our worst fear that so-

Social media is adversely impacting younger generations. In a 2018 study by Pew Research, 59% of American teenagers between the ages of 13 to 17 stated they are online most-comfortable during the same time period that social media usage has increased among teenagers.

Not to mention, bullying is also widely prevalent across social media. As cyberbullying continues to grow increasingly mainstream, young adults, teenagers and adolescents are more than ever at risk of online harassment. According to the American Psychological Association, a recent survey found that almost two-thirds of teens indicated that they have witnessed, been involved in or been the target of cyberbullying.

The truth of the matter is that social media is undeniably reshaping the world the way thinks about politics, commerce, education, culture, and other aspects of life by influencing relationships as well as individual behavior. With this change accelerating every passing day, and only further expedited by the arrival of COVID-19, the future of social order hangs in the balance.

With awareness growing and humanity becoming more informed, I am of the opinion that we research will soon emerge that further validates social media’s negative influence on our globalized and modern society. That being said, I also believe there is hope and even an opportunity to change our habits and use these platforms in a way that is valuable and useful.

Last week, I urged people to pull away from their phones and disconnect and throw on a vinyl. To be clear, I do not believe that is the answer. However, I do believe that there is a need for a shift in our collective consciousness. It is time to think critically about how we engage with social media and consider the impact it has on our mental health and well-being.

In conclusion, while Donald Trump’s acquittal may be seen as a victory by some, it should not be celebrated. Instead, we should use this as a wake-up call to be more mindful of our actions and the impact they have on our society and ourselves.

Don't miss our other articles on DONALD TRUMP’S ACRUITY — page 11

Making a Point — page 11

All letters must be verified before being submitted. Tuesday. The editors reserve the right to publish or edit any and all submitted copies. All letters must be verified before being published.

Letters policy

Letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced and include the writer’s name, school/department and phone number for verification. Letters should be no longer than 300 words and should be delivered to The Duke office at 113 College Hall or e-mailed to theduqduke@gmail.com by 5 p.m. Monday. The editors reserve the right to edit any and all submitted copies. All letters must be verified before being published.

Opinions clarifications

Letters should report any story or editorial published in The Duke that contains factual errors. All legitimate errors will be corrected in print in the following edition.

- Guitarist

- Orchestra

- Choir

- Dance

- Student government

- The shop of Duquesne University

- The student newspaper of Duquesne University.
To the Editor: Student Government disagrees with DU decision

Kallie Crawford, President

Duesque University will be fulfilled.

The time is always right to do right.

TROY SMADJA
staff columnist

Who are some men you look to as role models?

Since I’m limited to my immediate family due to the pandemic, I couldn’t just go out and ask some of the young men and women around campus this question, so I asked my immediate family.

I asked my little brother what men he looks up to and I was annoyed when he answered that my dad and myself were two. I asked my dad, and he answered his father and his best friend (oddly he didn’t mention me). I asked my mother, and she also mentioned her father.

So the answer I kept getting to my question was either fathers or immediate family friends. But then I followed up my initial question with this one: What about outside of the world? Are there any men in society you look up to?

And the answer I got from everyone in my family was no. There aren’t.

The reason for this could be that everyone in my family is a misanthropic weirdo (hurtfully that’s the case and you don’t have to read any further), but I suggest you ponder my second question and try to come up with a man that’s not close family or friends that you truly look up to as a role model. If you have more success than me and my family... great, but I’ll assume for argument’s sake you really struggled with the question.

And I believe that’s because there simply aren’t many positive male role models in today’s society, and the ones that exist aren’t highlighted enough. In the past they seemed to be more obvious: Presidents like JFK or FDR or Lincoln come to mind. But being one I personally hold in highest esteem and Barack Obama was one that influenced much of my young life. But lately I’ve been trying to look for some in today’s society, and honestly I’m finding much.

Obviously, I’m being histrionic and there are plenty of amazing men doing meaningful things: Terrence DeGrasse Tyson, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Harry Styles, Stephen King, Bill Gates, Neil Patrick Harris, Elton John, George Takei, Kevin Love, George Clooney, Michael Jordan, LeBron James, every athlete that is fighting for social justice, Drake, Bo Burnham, you get the point (and that list is not at all exhaustive). And hopefully you thought of some of those men when I originally asked the question and think maybe I’m being redundant now.

But let me then ask this: When’s the last time you absorbed something from these men that wasn’t simply for entertainment or pleasure? Exactly. These powerful role models are subjugated to entertainment while trivial role models like Joe Rogan, or Barstool, or sports (or sports betting, or video games, or social media, or far-too-often pornography) are where most men receive their real influences. And sure, that’s a generalization, and those things I guess are acceptable nowadays, but I would argue that ultimately they are harmless.

Maybe I sound like some weird, contrarian hippie dude, but all I’m really trying to say is that we could all benefit from a serious realignment of what men are continually viewing/absorbing/focusing on. And again, hopefully you do read, listen, and watch actually important content featuring men doing impactful and meaningful things, but I’m going to assume again that this is not always the case.

I will close this lengthy, testoteneradate with a personal anecdote.

I love playing basketball.

Months before the pandemic I was playing with my best friends, and we got into the perennia Michael Jordan/LeBron debate (as most overly competitive men do). And I made the point that as a basketball player, I’d much rather have LeBron on my team simply because he seems like a good teammate, and after watching The Last Dance Michael Jordan seemed the op.

And for a second I could tell that they thought the point I was making was, inadvertently, stupid and nonsensical (much like you might be reading this article) and of course they’re my friends so I know if it isn’t personal, but their reaction was disheartening to me. I realized then that men have a slightly flawed version of what it means to be the “best.” Sure MJ has six rings, but LeBron is an amazing person, teammate, activist, Philanthropist, and leader, and is probably one of the most important men of the last 20 years.

My point is this: Men should focus more on positive role models like LeBron and all those other great men I listed above. Their focus should not be on other men’s achievements, but on the content of their character. That way, instead of constantly being focused on winning and “being a man,” me and all other men can focus more on being good teammates to everyone around us.

Smajda encourages men to find role models, like LeBron James.
Just about everyone has that one thing they are passionate about and instantly makes them feel better. For some, it might be sports or meditation. For others, maybe it’s painting or playing an instrument. For Melissa “Mel” Montalvo of Mel’s Magnolia Boutique Bakery, it’s baking.

Montalvo bakes anything and everything one could come up with — she loves trying new things. She is always hoping customers will randomly ask her to make something she’s never done before so she can try it out. Whether it be cakes, cookies, brownies, macarons or muffins, Montalvo does not stop on anything a person wants because she knows she can do it.

“I’m the type of person that doesn’t give up until I master it,” Montalvo said.

Montalvo began baking when she was just 8 years old as a way to not only get out her emotions, but to also pass the time when she couldn’t sleep. Her insomnia kept her up when she was young, so she would go into the kitchen at 1 or 2 a.m. and find new recipes to make for her mom and dad.

Now 29, Montalvo has turned her passion into a small, Black-owned business with her online and social media-run store based in Pittsburgh that officially began on Instagram last year. Just as baking was a way for her to get her out of her down state.

“Whenever I say baking saved me, baking has literally been my savior. I bake whenever I’m down, I bake whenever I’m happy,” Montalvo said. “And I don’t do it because I want to make money; I genuinely like to do it and I like to make people happy with the things that I bake.”

It’s her journey as a changed person that inspired the perfect name for her business.

Google offers various different meanings for the magnolia flower, but for Montalvo it signifies what she’s gone through to get to who she is now.

“I am all about love, and I am actually a very changed person. If you knew me in my past, I was always really rowdy, I was angry and I couldn’t figure out why,” Montalvo said. “Now that I know more about myself, I am all about peace and love, and the reason why I chose ‘Mel’s Magnolia’ is because of the meaning of the ‘magnolia’ flower. From my understanding, it’s about strength, rebirth, and renewal — and that’s what I’m about. I’m such a changed person and I wanted to include that into my bakery.”

However, her business’ unique name isn’t the only reason it stands out from other bakeries.

Montalvo rarely ever makes the same thing twice — and when she does, she makes sure to tweak it and make it more interesting. Not only is she always looking to make her items better and unique, but she also asks her customers about themselves first so she can tailor goods specifically for them.

And since Montalvo does everything herself — the shopping, baking, decorating and packaging — every cake, pastry and cookie contains a personal touch from Montalvo herself.

“It really shouldn’t be that way but unfortunately, it is,” Montalvo said. “I have to present myself a certain way so they don’t think that I’m a different type of way … I don’t want anyone to think that I’m ghetto, I don’t want anyone to think that Black businesses are ghetto, or that they’re using the cheapest means possible to make their products, because it’s just not the case.”

As a Black business owner, Montalvo feels she has to step up more than other businesses to escape stereotypes and prejudices.

“After becoming a business owner, Montalvo realized the importance of giving support in any way possible to local and community businesses,” Montalvo said.

“I noticed that I should have been supporting more friends and more family, because a lot of the time Black-owned businesses get put to the side because a lot of people think that they’re maybe not as professional or that their standards aren’t as high,” Montalvo said. “But more often than not, their standards are much, much higher because they have a lot to prove — we all do. We have so much more to prove.”

Black-owned businesses often have to step up 10 times more because of the judgment that people have, according to Montalvo. And when living or being in a predominantly white area, that biased view causes false and ignorant perceptions for businesses and their owners who have to work harder to prove themselves, their products or services.

“It really shouldn’t be that way but unfortunately, it is,” Montalvo said. “I have to present myself a certain way so they don’t think that I’m a different type of way … I don’t want anyone to think that I’m ghetto, I don’t want anyone to think that Black businesses are ghetto, or that they’re using the cheapest means possible to make their products, because it’s just not the case.”

As a new baker and a small business owner, she’s experienced the challenges of first starting out, especially managing everything herself during a pandemic. But she prides herself on the customer service she provides, having worked in that area her whole life. Montalvo has learned from the bad experiences she’s had with other businesses to know what she doesn’t want to have in her own.

It’s things like the detail she puts into her cakes, owning up to infrequent mistakes and being willing to fix them that allows her to show customers the kind of person she is.

“I want people to know that when they buy from me, that is what you’re getting. I’m someone that was raised in the south, very nice, respectful of culture and believes … and that is what they’re gonna get,” Montalvo said.

“They’re gonna receive something that is tailored towards them and that is tasty, and if I ever mess anything up you can call to let me know and I will fix it as soon as I can.”

Montalvo’s individual style and the twists she puts on all of her sweets reflects the hard work and detail she puts into her business. Although she is only in the first year of Mel’s Magnolia Boutique Bakery, the Pittsburgh community will be seeing many more of Montalvo’s signature cakes and hearing her trademark salutation — “peace, love, and magnolias” — online and soon in her own storefront.
Duquesne volleyball squad drops first game to VCU, 3-0

BRENTARO YAMANE
staff writer

The VCU women’s volleyball team got its brooms out and swept off Duquesne’s new court Friday, beating Duquesne 3-0 in the Dukes’ first-ever game at the newly-reno-vated UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse. Duquesne Head Coach Steve Opperman knew how excited his team was to play in the new arena, and the team had been looking forward to it for a long time. It had been a full 494 days since the Dukes last played a game on their Bluff campus.

“It was awesome for our team to play in the new arena. The kids were excited to play,” Opperman said. “Our freshmen and sophomores have never played in this facility. The juniors and seniors have. It was a great experience for the younger kids to get in here and enjoy the atmosphere and basically get back to the court to compete.”

Things looked good for the Dukes in the early stages, scoring the first two points of the first match. Duquesne outside hitter Morgan Kelly recorded a kill, then an attack error was made by VCU. At one point in the first set, Duquesne was leading 18-14, but the Rams were able to come back to win the set 25-19.

The Rams took over after the first set.

Across the court, the fact that VCU was able to come back in the first set after trailing by four points seemingly gave the team all the confidence it needed against Duquesne. VCU would win the second set 25-15 and the third set by a count of 25-14.

Duquesne scoring less in each match as the afternoon went on might appear concerning to the naked eye. Opperman, however, liked what he saw from his team after the first match.

“We showed some really good signs of what we can do. Overall, it wasn’t a great performance by any means, but it was a nice start to see things that our players have the potential of doing,” Opperman said. “The tough thing that we went through is that it was our first match of the season while it was VCU’s seventh match. However, I thought we fought hard even though the score didn’t show it.”

One of the most viscous plays of the game was in the third set when VCU’s Jasmine Knight recorded a kill, spiking the ball so hard on Duquesne’s side of the court that the ball ricocheted off the ground, onto the basketball backboard on the baseline and circled around the rim. The explosiveness of that play was one of the reasons why VCU looked like more of the dominant team in the game.

VCU led the game in many notable categories, including kills (51), assists (45), hitting percentage (.360), block assists (16) and digs (four). VCU’s Qinor Bentley led the game with kills (12) and points (13). Her 12 kills in the game is a new career-high.

VCU’s Dani Jo David and Duquesne’s Hailey Poling led the game in assists with 22 each.

Duquesne beat the Sharks, 21-14. Duquesne is set to host LIU for a home game on March 21.

Dukes’ first-ever game at the newly-renovated UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse. The team’s next home game is set for March 5 against Atlantic 10 foe Saint Louis.
Duquesne Basketball Crossword Challenge

Down:
1. DU WBB HC Dan Burt played college basketball at this D-II school in West Virginia (two words)
2. Name of Duquesne alum and the first Black man to be drafted into the NBA (two words)
4. Former Duquesne guard Aaron Jackson played for this NBA franchise during the 2018 playoffs
5. Last name of DU MBB’s coach the last time it made the NCAA Tournament (in 1977)
6. This MLB team drafted DU men’s hoops and baseball star Willie Somerset in 1966
7. Sport MBB HC Keith Dambrot played in college at Akron
11. Last name of DU WBB guard named to 2020-21 Preseason Atlantic 10 First Team

Across:
3. The DU women’s hoops team has beaten this intra-city rival nine times in its last 11 meetings
8. West Coast-based school that former Duquesne standout forward Eric Williams Jr. transferred to in 2019
9. First Atlantic 10 opponent the DU MBB team defeated during Keith Dambrot’s tenure
10. Last name of DU WBB all-time leading scorer... This player went on to enjoy a WNBA career
12. Duquesne left this athletic outfitter for Nike in 2017
13. Last name of former standout DU MBB player who eventually transferred to Arizona and now plays for the NBA’s Indiana Pacers
College life often keeps you from your creative pursuits, but it's never too late to put your name out there.

Matthew Ussia, a teaching associate professor at Duquesne University since 2013, has since shifted gears from his UCCOR, creative writing and literature courses to publishing his own book of poetry, titled The Red Glass Cat.

Ussia described the book as "juxtaposing beauty and ugliness without either apologizing to the other."

At age 16, Ussia and his friends were in the process of getting a band together, where he would soon find his love for lyricism and then poetry. Getting to college and graduate school, however, Ussia said he did not make the time for his writing – taking a 20-year gap.

Now, however, Ussia has been named Allegheny County's Poet of the Week in City of Asylum's Sampsonia Way magazine as of Feb. 3 – his grand return to the world of creative writing.

"This poem I wrote when I was 36 finally came out right," Ussia said.

"There were two stanzas. The first person I showed [the poem] to was my Duquesne office-mate, who told me to cut the second stanza. I spent about five years trying to make that second stanza work. So when I was submitting it to City of Asylum's 'All Pittsburghers are Poets,' that was the moment when I realized that was right, and now it's the poem of the week."

Ussia said it felt like a "level-up" when his work started to get published; this sparked Ussia to go back and refine his past works, adding a new level of maturity and professionalism to them.

Though getting back into a rhythm of writing was challenging, Ussia said that submitting his poems became "part of the process of getting the ball rolling again."

"I took this long, meticulous route to doing it. I started sending some poems out here and there to different websites, and it became the next step," Ussia said. "And honestly when I started taking creative writing classes at Duquesne, I found that this counts as research toward professional development, so I thought 'oh wait a minute, this is a part of the job? I can justify spending more time on this.'"

Ussia has a binder of over 100 poems that he, at a time, has only shown a few people close to him. When he found that there was an open call for poetry, Ussia chose 70 of those poems to bring with him.

"I did it, and I did it without thinking too much about it," Ussia said. "After red-shirting myself for long enough and putting this on the backburner, I thought, let's just send it in and see what happens, and no matter what, I will have what I consider to be a proper manuscript. And they liked it – I got it on the first try."

According to Ussia, Allen Bradford Press has a reputation for fast publishing. Lo and behold, his poetry book was published a week and a half after introducing his manuscript – an unheard of feat in the creative writing profession.

"I think, because I've ruminated over this collection for so long, the need for line-editing, revision or any of that was very little," Ussia said. "I didn't necessarily even need to call someone in to review the work because I've done all of that over the years, and I think it's still abnormal and awesome that we've moved as quickly as we did."

Putting it into perspective, Ussia said that he submitted a short story that took five weeks to publish, along with an antology sent to Penn State on Jan. 15 that won't come out until 2025.

Ussia, with his recent success, was furthermore recommended to a poetry group that he considers to be a “meeting of minds,” giving opportunity for collaborative editing and workshop models for future works, giving him added exposure to the publishing world with Facebook.

"It's an interesting little round-trip. A friend urged me in and honestly, I'm so honored to be surrounded by successful writers," Ussia said.

"You should always surround yourself with other creative people who want to do things and want to make things happen, because even when you're in a moment where you're un-inspired, or you don't know what to do, you can look over and somebody whose art you like is making something happen and you can learn from that," Ussia said. "It can drive you forward. Writing is not solitary. Ussia emphasized how to "reflect on the process," of poetry, saying that it takes time to adapt to writing anywhere, anywhere, whether alone in a noiseless room or writing in crowded diners.

Giving advice to aspiring writers, Ussia said to "make time for your art" and "realize you are only racing yourself."

"Have fun. It should be fun," Ussia said. "And if it's not fun, make it somehow rewarding."

"I would truly like more of those; they're silly that pop up every once in awhile, and I think it's the people who is honing in on her decision-making process."

Teen rom-coms have a tendency to fizzle out when they try too hard to have numerous installments that do not hit the mark. However, the story of Lara Jean and Peter has kept the audience invested since day one, and by sticking true to the roots of the original story, they show that teen rom-coms can be successful as long as the story is delivered correctly.

The bittersweet ending to the franchise says goodbye to the characters and audience in a way that does justice to both, serving as a final love letter from Lara Jean.
**10**

**Pittsburgh Ballet brings new, astonishing experience**

**THE DUNESSEDUK**

**GRIFFIN SENDEK multimedia editor**


Boléro, the title of the show and the music piece chosen, was first open to Pittsburgh Ballet Theater (PBT) subscribers with each live performance limited to 25 people. Included with the tickets were passes to the rest of the Carnegie Museum of Art and Natural History.

Within the Carnegie Museum of Art, the showcase took place in the Hall of Sculpture -- a stark, yet elegant white marble room bordered by large marble statues along the second floor below.

The audience, masked and socially-distanced, made for a safe performance. With Boléro being a Valentine’s Day special, the heavy emphasis on the duets made fit perfectly. The couples continuously glided across the marble floor intertwined like lovers. They performed with sensuality and power.

The show was romantically evocative of love without being cutesy.

The way PBT’s men lift their partners through the air as if they were as light as a feather is always a sight to behold and was on full display in Boléro.

The Hall of Sculpture not only had an impact on the viewing of the performance, but heavily influenced the choreography as well. The smooth marble floors were too slippery for the dancers to wear their traditional pointe shoes and ballet flats; instead, they were in tennis shoes.

The audience, confined to a seat; they had room to dance and sway her red and black checkered dress back and forth, blissfully daydreaming of being a ballerina just like the dancers below.

Eventually, the girl’s mother put a stop to her daughters dancing out of fear of the girl being a distraction. Slight distraction it may have been, but an endurance moment all the same that proves the magical moment’s art like Boléro can create.

Duet couple Lucius Kirsch and Hannah Carter take center-stage in the Hall of Sculpture in the Carnegie Museum of Art.

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**Duquesne alumnus entertains with historical podcast**

**RIO SCARCELLI staff writer**

For anyone familiar with Comedy Central’s “Drunk History,” there is excitement to be had for a similarly-styled podcast made by Duquesne alumnus Zachary DeBacco: “Drinks with Great Minds in History,” or DGMH.

The podcast made its debut online April 9, 2020 and has been producing bi-weekly uploads ever since.

The show, which is recorded, produced and scripted by DeBacco, takes its time to highlight individual members of history under a listener-friendly and witty scope. All the while, the show is christened with “a cocktail of history, sarcasm and... cocktails!” as listed on the podcast’s Instagram.

Pursuing a Master of Arts in History at Duquesne in 2014, DeBacco spent his college years simultaneously working late hours as a bartender in Pittsburgh. In growing a passion for history, he was also a master of his “craft” in finding a love for mixing drinks.

“My love for cocktail making, for that industry and for history go hand in hand. I would come home from grad school at 8:30 p.m. go to work at 10 till sometimes 4 a.m.,” DeBacco said. “They were simultaneously loves of my life at the time and I wanted to take that with me.”

In what Zachary called his “simple philosophy,” the aim of the podcast was clear and the ideas were in place ever since his time as a graduate student. He felt history should be fun for everyone, and so it took on the sobriety of a show that scholars and the average person alike could understand and enjoy.

As a history teacher in South Florida, the dream to educate people was possible, but the schedule to do so was not so lenient. This is why the podcast started around the first COVID-19 quarantine.

“It was born out of the pandemic because teachers have no time for podcasts. I was able to get started with it now, it’s the one where I can manage it on a weekly basis,” DeBacco said.

For an average script of one episode, DeBacco estimates that the paper would be 10-15 pages in length. Aside from writing the script, the amount of research and specificity that comes to recording and editing that goes along with podcasting makes for a large time commitment, considering the relatively bi-weekly uploading schedule.

Regardless, this is a project made out of passion. This podcast sees viewers from America, Canada, Britain, Australia and even Malaysia. By getting the word out and entertaining people through something he loves, DeBacco finds the most pride in his work to teach.

“It sparks joy and passion for history and people that never knew they could have it,” DeBacco said.

Within DGMH’s content, the show spans history’s greatest minds from Joseph Stalin to Alexander Hamilton. Episodes tend to take a more subjective and detailed analysis on the way that these people both existed and were portrayed.

“I teach people to not take history at face value. It is an intricate web and should be treated as such,” DeBacco said.

One of DeBacco’s loves is presenting stark opinions through his many show segments such as “The Piece of S**t Curve,” “A Twist of Psych” and “A Shot Heard ‘Round the World.” All of these episodes provide variation in the content and a different viewpoint on the way that history has portrayed such infamous people.

While DeBacco’s work is mostly done alone, he has done many collaborations with some of his own former teachers, historians and even best-selling authors: all in hopes to do more in the future. By getting a collaborative perspective, DeBacco felt it made for much more interesting conversation.

Bahner does not solely exist within the episodes for DeBacco, but also on his social media accounts.

“Social media is the best way to interact with viewers and I find it really important to help stimulate my growth,” DeBacco said.

DGMH can be found on Instagram @dgmh_historypodcast, Twitter @dgmhpodcast as well as the Facebook group Drinks with Great Minds in History. The podcast itself can be streamed on Apple, Spotify, Google and Podchaser. For more information go visit https://www.podpage.com/drinks-with-great-minds-in-history/.

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**February 18, 2021**

**ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT**

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Trump’s acquittal not surprising

from ACQUITTAL — page 4

at the hearing confirms that Trump was responsible — and it did not begin with the rally on Jan 6. To me, one of the most compelling pieces of evidence was the time that Trump applauded, via Twitter, the people who attempted to run a Biden campaign bus off an interstate.

Or what about the time Trump retweeted a video in which a man said, “The only good Democrat is a dead Democrat?” You can tell me all day long that that man’s words were taken out of context. I will not believe you. Whether he meant a dead person or a dead party, it is unacceptable, and the fact that Trump had the audacity to retweet it speaks volumes about his maturity and his capability to ever take office again.

Speaking of violence to Democrats, we all know that is why those insurrectionists broke into the Capitol. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to understand why the man who sat at House Speaker Pelosi’s desk had a stun gun on him. Or why a gallow was set up outside the building. Of course this was planned in advance. But it was planned in advance due to the culmination of Trump’s fear mongering, pushing of baseless conspiracy theories and violent remarks that caused his followers to do what they did.

He should have been held accountable, but once again he was not. And that is thanks to the Grand Old Party, which is composed of nothing but spineless politicians who are supposed to protect this country from exactly what happened on Jan. 6. They are too concerned about the fate of their dying party, and the rising feeling among young people in this country that they are on their way out.

I applaud the seven Republican senators who did what was obviously the right thing. It is brave to break apart from something so toxic when the majority is doing something else, but these seven exercised their civic duty by doing what they could so the corruption, ineptitude and evil that is Trump may never make his way back into the White House.

Instead of doing what is right for the people of this country and protecting us from another siege of what has been deemed ours for the past 245 years, the rest of the Senate Republicans chose to protect their party, and the leader who made this all happen. May it never happen again.

Ableism in the film industry

from STAFF ED -- page 4

You can’t make everyone happy. That’s known in the film world. But if the target audience is autistic teenagers, why not listen to what they have to say? There’s been backlash on this movie since film production started, which would’ve given Sia ample time to make modifications to her work, or reconsider her casting — maybe even consider that she put a young actress on a pedestal for backlash, knowing that this could hurt her career.

It must be difficult for neurodivergent performers to put themselves out there if they aren’t considered for neurotypical roles, whilst also not being cast in neurodivergent roles that they would be much more qualified for than the same go-to actors and actresses. Hopefully Hollywood continues to diversify the film industry; however, that should include those on the spectrum, too.

Oh, and Sia: Stick to “Elastic Hearts.”
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