

December
2025

ISSUE #8

Notre NEWS

Notre Dame Sixth Form Newspaper



I hope everyone had an amazing summer and a great first term back. We’ve started off on a high note with the arrival of new Year 12s and 13s, which has expanded our editorial team. Since September, everyone has put in immense hard work, meeting weekly, and we’re excited to share the results with you in this edition. We also look forward to welcoming even more members in the months ahead. This edition is a special one for me, as it will be my last as Lead Editor. I have truly enjoyed taking on this role, organising the team and watching the newspaper grow. I’m confident it will continue to flourish under the new editorial leadership. We hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we enjoyed creating it! - ALISHBA KHAN

In This Edition ...

Artificial Intelligence Codes Life
Tia Botros

Antimicrobial Resistance: A Deadly Threat
Joanne Paul

Bacteriophage: A Way Forward
Joanne Paul

Rooms of Our Own: The Cost and Power of Women’s Literary Repression
Helen Esler

Is the Justice system in the UK institutionally racist?
Yulima Sanchez-Diaz

The one-hour wonder – are Bees the key to curing cancer?
Abbie Simpson

Notre Dame Theatre through Time
Millie Flannery and Scarlett Horwood

Shop til’ the Planet Drops
Niamh Toulson

Chicago : Murder, Media and the Race for the Spotlight
Patrick Murena and Bella Reeder

Fashion Week 2025
Amy Foster

The Evolution of Human Rights Law Since WW2
Olivia Bell

Art Review
Amalie Dunn and Cheslea Jaba

Why to join the Newspaper? - Patrick Murena

When you join the Newspaper Club, you can choose to be either a writer or an editor. Writers have full creative freedom: you can work independently on topics you care about or team up with someone who shares your interests. Since we publish at the end of every half term, you will have plenty of time to develop thoughtful, in-depth articles.

Editors focus less on writing and more on shaping the paper. This role suits someone with strong critical thinking and leadership skills, as you will guide writers, give detailed feedback and help turn rough drafts into polished and impactful pieces.

Being part of the newspaper gives you real creative independence and the chance to share your passions with the school community. It also strengthens valuable skills - analysis, research, teamwork and commitment - which look great on future university or job applications!

Most importantly, you’ll join a supportive, growing community. We help each other improve, celebrate each edition and build genuine friendships. As a new member myself, I loved the freedom to write about what interested me most. And beyond the writing, it is a brilliant way to meet people across the school. So join now!

Want to join?

The newspaper club is open to all sixth form students interested in writing articles, or helping others in doing so! Meetings are every **Monday lunchtime in **S30**, starting at **1:15pm**.**

Lead Editor:

Alishba Khan

Editorial team:

Tia Botros

Amalie Dunn

Amy Foster

Chelsea Jaba

Helen Esler

Joanne Paul

Niamh Toulson

Patrick Murena

Bella Reeder

Yulima Sanchez-Diaz

Olivia Bell

Scarlett Horwood

Millie Flannery

Abbie Simpson

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

Artificial Intelligence Codes Life

Tia Botros



Through an innovative scientific advancement, researchers at Stanford University and the Arc Institute have successfully used artificial intelligence to write the complete genetic code for sixteen entirely new functional viruses.

Even more notably, some of these AI designed life forms proved to be better at their jobs than the natural viruses they were modelled after, offering a powerful new weapon in the global fight against antibiotic resistance. The findings suggest AI can optimize biological functions in ways that natural evolution has not yet explored. When tested in competitive growth experiments, the AI coded viruses displayed higher fitness and speed at which they can destroy a bacterial cell.

This groundbreaking achievement marks the first time an entire functional genome for a living organism has been generated by a machine model. The researchers demonstrated the real world use of their creation by assembling a 'cocktail' - a mixture of the AI designed viruses. The cocktail was shown to rapidly overcome resistance in three different E coli

strains that had previously developed immunity to the original virus.

What are the social / ethical considerations?

This is a remarkable success as AI could now be used to design tailored viruses destroying specific bacterial strains and diseases. However, the capabilities of AI being able to create such effective organisms raises some ethical dilemmas and questions. Science is moving fast, whilst laws and ethical guidelines may often lag behind. Can AI ration as humans do?

According to the Washington Post, "screening systems cannot flag a virus that has never existed before" and so being aware of the social and ethical stance of AI is also something to factor in with these discoveries. As a generation growing up alongside artificial intelligence, it is important that we stay informed about scientific breakthroughs and understand the powerful role AI are beginning to play in our world.

You might be considering a future career centred around artificial intelligence, and so keeping up with such advancements is important, especially since it is a rapidly evolving field. Moreover, even if some of us might never step foot in a lab, it is still significant to learn about the social and ethical impacts of AI, as it affects our current society and holds an increasingly significant role in our future.

Overall, the Stanford discovery is amazing. The fact that AI can design viruses that target bacteria shows just how far science has come, and how creative technology can be when used responsibly. AI allows for a whole new world of medical improvements such as patient care, expanding research capacity and enhancing diagnostic accuracy.

While there are ethical questions to consider, it is still exciting to imagine what this could mean for the future of medicine, from fighting antibiotic resistant infections to developing brand new treatments.



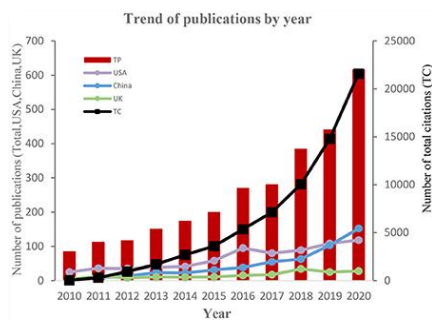
Dr Brian L Hie - a corresponding author on the study based at Stanford shared *"What we have shown here is that AI can be a co-creator of life not just an analytical tool."*



Antimicrobial Resistance: A Deadly Threat

JOANNE PAUL

By 2050, I will be 43 years old. Maybe you will be younger than me, maybe a bit older. But the world we shall both face is one of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a post-antibiotic age, where an estimated 10 million people will die each year because of deadly superbugs.



How do they develop?

Bacteria are an impressive group of species which capable of reproducing very rapidly. The fastest replicating bacteria known is "*Vibrio natriegens*", which replicates in under 10 minutes. If a random mutation occurred in a bacterium's DNA that aided its survival, that bacterium would reproduce quickly and build a large colony of bacteria carrying that mutation.

Now, consider antibiotics: if a sea of bacteria were suddenly under pressure to survive against an antibiotic, most of them would die as a result. But a couple of them, with helpful mutations, would make it. They would reproduce rapidly, forming a resistant colony and a serious infection.

Unfortunately, bacteria have another trick up their sleeve: horizontal gene transfer. Plasmids are small rings of DNA found in bacterial cytoplasm. Bacteria can exchange these plasmids between each other and even between

different species. Thus, a helpful plasmid that codes for resistance to an antibiotic can spread through multiple populations of bacteria by horizontal gene transfer, even if it only began in one species.

Combine rapid reproduction and the remarkable ability to exchange plasmids means antibiotic resistance is an evolutionary inevitability, not a mere possibility. Alexander Fleming himself, the inventor of the first antibiotic, recognised this. Eventually, bacteria will evolve against each and every antibiotic we make. It's just a matter of time!

It's what happened to Penicillin, the first antibiotic discovered. It's what happened to Cephalosporins, which are used to treat Pneumonia and Meningitis. Even Carbapenems (a powerful "last-resort" drug) are no longer as effective as they used to be. Multi-Drug resistant, Extensively Drug Resistant and Pan-Drug Resistant bacteria are on the rise, and this is a serious, global problem that is already claiming lives.

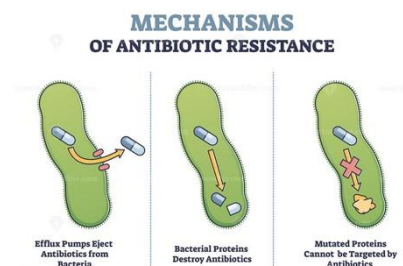
The pharmaceutical industry invests approximately US\$2 billion every year trying to develop new antibiotics. But since 2017, only two new classes of antibiotics have been made. Developing antibiotics is difficult, time consuming and hugely expensive, requiring extensive testing before it can be released into the market. Simply waiting for a new antibiotic to be developed is not a viable option.

So, what can we do?



While the picture looks bleak at present, change is already underway to combat AMR. There is significant pressure on doctors and pharmacists to not unduly prescribe antibiotics. Measures are being put in place to reduce excessive antibiotic use in agriculture, where antibiotics are used most. At an individual level, take your full course of antibiotics and don't pressure for them when your doctor believes you don't need it. Practice good hygiene, like washing your hands with soap and warm water for the full 30 seconds, to reduce your risk of contracting these harmful infections. Boost your general immunity by maintaining good physical health through sleeping well; eating fruits and vegetables, especially those high in Vitamin C and D; managing stress effectively and regular exercise.

Science has progressed to lengths previously unimaginable. While antibiotic resistance is an inevitability, mortality does not have to be. Follow medical advice and take care of your physical health. Then, a bright and healthy future may be possible!



Bacteriophage: A Way Forward

JOANNE PAUL



Steffanie Strathdee and her husband, Tom Patterson, (see above) had visited some of the most remote, exotic and dangerous places around the world. The couple would joke that while away, Tom would collect unusual infections like Pokémon cards. But in 2015, while on holiday in Egypt, things changed. Tom picked up an infection like nothing he had ever had before.

Within hours of entering a said-to-be cursed tomb in the Red Pyramid, Tom was looking ill and things quickly worsened. Following the couple's dinner on the deck of a cruise, Tom began vomiting violently, continuing throughout the night and into the next day. Steffanie had initially assumed this was food poisoning, but his symptoms were not reducing with the antibiotics she had given him.

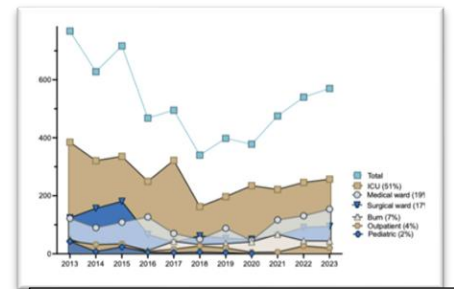
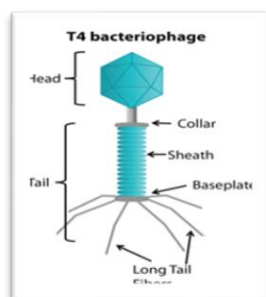
More potent antibiotics were administered, but her husband continued to spiral, nurses now removing bags of murky, green liquids from his stomach. He became psychotic, screaming in hysteria, thinking that the doctors were trying to kill him, while Steffanie managed to organise a specialist team to come and take Tom to better facilities at a military air strip in Frankfurt. That's where she learnt which card Tom had been dealt this time.

Acinetobacter baumannii: the most concerning, drug-resistant bacteria on the planet, according to the World Health Organisation. Nicknamed the 'Iraqibacter', it killed thousands of soldiers in the Middle East. And the particular strain Tom had acquired was pretty much as bad as it can get; following Tom's transfer to a Thornton Hospital in California, she learnt that the *A. baumannii* Tom had was resistant to every antibiotic humanity has ever produced!

Her husband alternated between semi-comatose (partial consciousness) and delirious states for weeks, that turned into months. The doctors put him in a medically-induced coma after he started to slip into septic shock. If things didn't change quickly, Tom was going to die.

But there's something I haven't told you. At the time, Steffanie Strathdee was the director of the Global Health Institute of the University of California. If anyone was going to save him, it would be her.

No antibiotics would work. It was too late for vaccination. Ion chelation therapy, nitric-oxide therapy and photodynamic therapy were still only being tested in labs, not humans. The one hope she could find had an alarmingly low amount of research on it and seemed to only be used in the quiet country of Georgia. But bacteriophages, it seemed, was Tom's one shot at life.



Prevalence of *Acinetobacter baumannii* in a Saudi Arabian hospital from 2013 to 2023

The bacteriophage is a remarkable thing. Firstly, these ancient viruses are miniscule, described as nature's own nanoparticles, and depicted as the microbial version of a lunar lander. Secondly, they only infect specific bacteria, keeping human cells safe from harm. Lastly, they are the single largest biological entity on this planet. They outnumber bacteria, with 10 to 100 species of phage to each bacteria. There are trillions of phages in and on your body right now. However, despite being discovered over a century ago, a turbulent history and penicillin taking the limelight meant they had been largely overlooked and forgotten.

Let's get back to Steffanie. She would harness these bacteriophages and get them to kill the *A. baumannii* rampant in Tom's body. In doing so, she would have to hope that the tiny, self-replicating and largely unknown, enemy of an enemy was her friend.

It was tenuous and difficult to do so. Pulling in scores of researchers from across the globe, she was able to get a collection of a few different phages that would work against the *A. baumannii*, in a solution at a high concentration. With permission from the Food and Drug Administration (as no bacteriophages have been approved for medical use within the United States, unless in trial or compassionate care) the team were able to administer the phages to Tom. They did not know, however, what dosage to use or

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

how to use it. Most importantly, they did not know whether it would work.

Miraculously, after nine months of struggle, Tom gained sufficient consciousness in three days and he was able to kiss his daughter's hand. His recovery was turbulent, but slowly and surely, Tom made a full and complete recovery.

What I have recounted to you is a grossly simplified version of perhaps the most high-profile case of bacteriophage therapy, but many, many more are open to you. From treating burns and abscesses, to saving limbs from amputation, to saving lives, phage therapy has been a last-resort option for countless people who have made an arduous journey to the Eliava Institute in Georgia and beyond.

Treatment using bacteriophages is not without its consequences, but the sheer potential of these little viruses has rocked the scientific world. Research into them has exploded due to the desperation for antimicrobial resistance and the hope of a new medical superstar to drive research at an extraordinary pace. Scores of companies are being developed across the globe to see how we can use phage therapy as a medical treatment and build a new industry. Belgium is actively analysing and implementing the use of phages in last resort cases nationally. Australia is also conducting large scale trials with its STAMP protocol. The UK is building up a huge biobank of phages, the biggest one at the University of Leicester. Scientists are even working on building synthetic phages, patentable and precise. This could mark the revolution of modern healthcare – a privilege which we are able to witness within our lifetime!

If you want to learn more, I recommend reading “The Good

Virus” by Tom Ireland, a detailed book on the winding history and exciting present of the bacteriophage. Steffanie Strathdee champions the use of bacteriophage and has now written her own book on her experience called “The Perfect Predator”. And there is a whole host of knowledge for you to peruse on the internet - enjoy!

Rooms of Our Own: The Cost and Power of Women's Literary Repression

HELEN ESLER

Imagine a small room, full of people, with nothing but a chair in the corner for a 'space of your own'; the only space that would provide you with any form of privacy to create – write stories, poems or plays. This was the reality for the vast majority of early 19th century female writers and unlike the creative women in today's society, that dominate the literary world, these women were often suppressed by the limits to female financial independence and personal space, imposed by the patriarchal society of the 1920s. This idea was brought to attention in Virginia Woolf's revolutionary 1929 essay, 'A Room of One's Own'. While Woolf argues that there have been material and social limitations on women as a result of this historic repression, she also brings into light the unique perspectives and advantages that came after it, for female writers.

The landscape of female literary autonomy looked largely different even less than a hundred years ago. In today's society, 60% of self-publishing authors are women, however the state of female independence looked greatly different in the 1920s. With women being prevented from fully participating in literature and intellectual life, there was an undeniable gender disparity in creative writing; one driven by expectations for women to stay in domestic or controlled public spaces such as open living rooms. Women's writing was often seen as frivolous or inappropriate within the society which valued female creative silence, directly and greatly limited opportunity for female writers. Woolf illustrates the strain that these conditions put on

women as far back as the early 19th Century. She writes of the 'Crazy Duchess' – an upper-class woman who wrote in such creative fearlessness that she became a caricature of disobedience and madness instead of an inspiring figure of female creativity. Sadly, her radical approach left her as, in Woolf's words, a "bogy to frighten clever girls with".

Unradical women faced no less of a creative strain – hiding manuscripts, writing in secret or having to publish under pseudonyms were commonplace at this time – even Anne, Charlotte and Emily Brontë had to write under male titles. This suppression undoubtedly reveals and emphasizes the systematic nature of women's historic, creative existence – one of coldness and limitation. The suppression was not just personal but also cultural – whether combative and radical or submissive and compliant, they were often subjected to deliberate efforts to silence their creativity – many of which proved tragically effective.

Virginia Woolf's classic writing style is a balanced one and she makes it clear that the historic repression faced by female creatives created a dimensional reality for women – leaving them with both disadvantages and advantages in relation to the creativity of men. She writes that the consequences of the seemingly brutal repression were often, if unexpectedly, positive. Women such as Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen, for example, had a heightened perception and sensitivity in her view, for example. Brontë, who "dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways" as a result of her frustratingly repressed creative talent, go to show that women had complex emotions which, although at the time lacked a creative medium, were present despite the

suppression - arguably heightened by the years where women were forced to observe human interactions from the margins of public and domestic life, developing complex characterizations as a result. This gave them advantage over men in many ways.

Men often did not have such first-hand insight into everyday social nuances, with much of their time being spent away from domestic spaces, travelling and working. Where men had the benefit of the deep, historical establishment of male literary practise, there for them to carry forward rather than create, women had a less entrenched but contemporary innovative style and narrative. Where others could not, women could in a sense weave the mundane with a psychological depth, which many gained from the manifested frustration of the repression.

Woolf argues that women have an undeniable need for "a room of one's own" and economic freedom, for literary achievement. She explains that having personal space is essential for creative freedom, in matching that of men, who, at the time of her writing, faced minimal restraints on their freedom, at least in the upper classes, and as a result had a superior scope of creative space. She also writes of the complexities of the importance of female economic independence – insights which reveal much about how different our society is in these terms today.

Where Woolf writes of the injustice around the dependence of women upon their fathers or husbands for economic security, we now know that women do not have such a restriction in the 21st century western world. This detail reveals something integral to the discussion about the root of disparity of female creative

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

freedom and literary dominance over the past century: now that we in fact have financial independence and the power to own our own property, our own 'rooms', does this explain why women have become so much more successful in the creative world? When looking at women in 21st century Afghanistan, who have been denied an education, the answer to this question becomes even clearer – creative scope is limited for women when their educations are inhibited. Were Woolf's ideas accurate depictions of the conditions needed for women to succeed? Arguably so. We now understand, through Woolf's words and proceeding societal changes, that space is a pathway to autonomy and growth of imagination. Where Bronte's writing was passionate, yet lacking in precise literary expertise, we now see contemporary female writers going on to achieve balance in both areas, which before now was a skill reserved mainly for well-educated men.

Women's repression had both empowering and limiting effects on literature. Woolf's insights are still widely relevant, as women and marginalised voices have evidently thrived in the contemporary world, where a physical, financial and mental space to create fully has become much more in reach. In a sense, what we can learn from Woolf is that the act of claiming a room – literally or metaphorically – is the first step toward literary equality. It is a step which has already been taken in many areas of modern society from the removal of all-male Oxbridge restrictions to the introduction of graduate bursaries for UK female graduates. Although many women still face great barriers to opportunities today, when reflecting on how far society has progressed since Woolf's time, it is clear that for western society, women are no

longer subject to the repressive conditions which were present less one hundred years ago. Reality has shifted in the creative industry, where high rise publishing buildings that were once less than 10% women, are now dominated by female writers.

Is the Justice system in the UK institutionally racist?

YULIMA SANCHEZ-DIAZ

In the UK, there were 1.12 million convictions in 2023. The government has not yet released prosecution-by-ethnicity data for 2024 to 2025, but the most recent available figures indicate persistent and significant racial disparities. These disparities raise important questions about the extent to which institutional racism is present within the justice system. While socio-economic factors undoubtedly shape patterns of offending and criminalization, many of the differences cannot be fully explained by these variables alone. The impact of racial discrimination cannot be overlooked.

The Institute of Race Relations, an independent think tank based in London, has found that Black and Minority Ethnic groups are disproportionately represented at almost every stage of the criminal justice process. This means they are more likely to be targeted by the police, more likely to be arrested and imprisoned, and more likely to receive harsher outcomes. Unsurprisingly, this has contributed to significantly lower levels of trust in the police among minority ethnic groups compared to white populations, as highlighted by research from the Crest Advisory think tank.

One of the most visible examples of disproportionality is the continued misuse of stop and search powers. Despite years of scrutiny, little progress has been made. A 2023 government report shows that per 1,000 people, those categorized as “Black Other” were stopped 92 times, while white individuals were stopped only 5.9 times. Such stark differences strongly suggest structural issues rather than

isolated incidents. An investigation by BBC Panorama into the Metropolitan Police further revealed racist attitudes and cultures within the force, demonstrating how institutional bias can persist even when not openly visible to the public.

Racial disparities also arise in prosecution. In England and Wales, individuals can be convicted under the legal doctrine of joint enterprise, which allows multiple people to be held liable for an offence even if only one person committed the physical act. While intended to target those who assist or encourage criminal behavior, evidence shows that the doctrine disproportionately affects Black defendants. CPS data from 2024 to 2025 indicates that 36.6 per cent of joint enterprise prosecutions involved white individuals, who make up 81.7 per cent of the population according to the 2021 Census. In contrast, Black people accounted for 25.2 per cent of such prosecutions despite representing only about 4 per cent of the population. Although some may argue that this reflects patterns of offending, the Institute of Race Relations found that the term “gang” was frequently used in these prosecutions even when there was no evidence of gang involvement. As “gang” has become a racialized label associated with Black criminality, this framing can lead to more minority ethnic individuals being prosecuted under joint enterprise than their white counterparts. This contradicts the Rule of Law’s principle that laws should be applied equally.

Sentencing disparities provide another area of concern. To address this, the Sentencing Council recently introduced new principles requiring courts to consider pre-sentence reports for

minority ethnic defendants before imposing custodial sentences. Some critics, such as Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenkins, argued in Parliament that these measures would create what he called “two-tier justice”. However, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood rejected this claim, noting that the justice system has historically been more punitive towards minority ethnic groups and that corrective measures are necessary to ensure fairness. These reforms acknowledge the systemic barriers faced by BME individuals and represent a step towards a more equitable system.

Recent research by the University of Leeds in 2025 found no substantial differences in the length of custodial sentences when comparing ethnic groups overall. However, the researchers did identify disparities in specific offence categories, particularly drug offences, that could not be accounted for by legally relevant factors or statistical bias. Notably, the study found that white male offenders needed over 50 per cent longer criminal records to cross the custody threshold than Black male offenders. This suggests that a Black man with fewer or less serious prior convictions is more likely to be imprisoned than a white man with a more extensive record. Even if the sentence's lengths are similar, the decision to impose custody is harsher for minority ethnic groups, indicating discriminatory patterns within sentencing practices.

Representation within the judiciary is also a significant factor. Ethnic minorities remain underrepresented across judicial positions. In 2025, only 12 per cent of judges came from minority ethnic backgrounds, an increase from 7.4 per cent in 2019. Only 1 per cent identified as Black. A judiciary

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

that does not reflect the population serves risks perpetuating unexamined biases and undermines public confidence, particularly among communities most affected by disparities. Increasing judicial diversity is therefore essential not only to address institutional racism but also to strengthen trust and fairness across the justice system.

The one-hour wonder – are Bees the key to curing cancer?

ABBIE SIMPSON

Cancer, is a hereditary illness that occurs when cells in a person's body mutate while growing, causing them to replicate at an incredibly fast rate. It is one of the most prevalent diseases globally and as of 2022, 1 in 5 people will eventually develop cancer, and 4 in 10 of these cases will have been preventable. This isn't new knowledge to most, as the NHS and global news sources like the BBC strive to make us aware of the effects that cancer has on the population as a whole, the importance of genetic testing and regular cancer screenings and ways in which our choices can negatively impact our health – particularly how they can contribute to the risk of developing cancer.

First it was the hole in the ozone layer that increased the risk of skin cancer; then the link between smoking and lung cancer; followed by the discovery that a low fibre diet increases the risk of bowel cancer – the list goes on. But as these discoveries were being made, the methods of treatment remained widely the same - until two years ago. In 2023, a twenty-five-year-old PhD student from Australia, Dr Ciara Duffy, began a research project that used bee venom to kill breast cancer cells and the results have potentially revolutionised the way that hospitals around the world are able to treat cancer.

Chemotherapy is currently the most common treatment for cancer, and works by using chemicals to target and kill fast-growing cells, as cancer is a group of cells in a person's body that replicate and grow too fast, and are able to spread and 'invade' other tissues, which makes this the most effective way to treat the disease. However, one of the main disadvantages of chemotherapy is that the chemicals used do not only attack the cancer cells, instead they attack all fast-growing cells in the body, including the hair, the nails and even the inside of the intestines. This can cause some rather unpleasant side effects like tiredness and extreme nausea for the patient and is one of the main issues in the use of chemotherapy, as it leaves patients bedridden and unable to partake in normal activities that are essential to daily life – such as walking the dog or shopping for food.

Dr Duffy conducted her study using samples of the venom of the European Honeybee, and found that the venom works off a similar principal, as it contains what Dr Duffy called an "extremely potent" chemical called melittin that can kill all cancer cells in just one hour, and in only twenty minutes can drastically reduce the chemical signals released by the cancer cells - which essentially "shuts down" the growth of the cancer cells. Dr Duffy furthered her research and experimented by combining melittin with other existing chemotherapy drugs and the resulting medication was found to be effective in slowing down the growth rate

of tumours – particularly in aggressive types of breast cancer, which accounts for 10-15% of all breast cancers and has been found notoriously hard to treat.

Currently, doctors use small sample of cancer cells called biopsies taken from each patient to determine a treatment plan, as well as identifying the specific type of cancer. This means that doctors are able to test different types of chemotherapy as well as alternative methods of treatments like radiotherapy and potentially surgical options to see which would get the best results.

One of the major benefits of melittin is its effects when combined with other chemotherapeutic drugs like docetaxel. The melittin works by poking holes in the outside of the cancer cells, which can allow other treatments to enter the cells and speed up their effects – this would maximise the effectiveness of each dose of chemo, while potentially allowing a smaller dosage to be used and minimising the side-effects experienced by the patient. While Dr Duffy's discovery shows extreme promise, there is still much testing to be done before it can be used on patients – they need to calculate dosages to maximise the effectiveness while minimising any side-effects – and some important ethical considerations must be made.

During her research, Dr Duffy extracted the venom from the bees by putting them to sleep using carbon dioxide, and then

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

carefully removing the venomous barb from the bee's abdomen. You have no doubt been told that a bee dies after it stings, and while this is true of honeybees, it does not apply to all species of bees. In honeybees the stinger is barbed and connected internally to the stomach, so when the bee stings, the barbs get stuck under the skin – so when the bee flies off, the stinger gets left behind and it dies. This does mean, that the bees used during this study did unfortunately die in order to have their venom extracted, though steps were taken to ensure that they didn't feel any pain.

This method of venom extraction is unethical and unsustainable, as the amount of melittin that each bee produces is too small a dosage to be effective in treating an actual patient – meaning that a massive number of bees would be dying to provide a sufficient amount of melittin. Fortunately, melittin can be reproduced synthetically and this alternative method of production provides a drug that mirrors most of the anti-cancer effects of the bee venom and will likely be used in any other clinical trials as an alternative to the bee venom.

While Dr Duffy's research has proven that melittin can be used as an effective treatment for several different types of cancer, there is still a long way to go before it can be used in hospitals. So far, melittin has only been used to treat cancer in a process called In Vitro testing – which uses live cells cultures to test the effect of certain medicines on the cells

that they target as well as healthy cells to determine any possible side-effects.

Before any new drug can be used commercially, the law requires that a series of criteria must be met to ensure that they are safe for wider use in treatment of illness. First, the drug must go through in vitro testing – then they may progress to pre-clinical trials; in which the drug must then go through in vivo testing (testing on a live animal or plant). After this point, the drug may then enter into clinical trials on both healthy volunteers and patients who are undergoing treatment. If a drug proves safe to use during testing, the government must then compare the necessity of the new drug with the cost to mass produce it for use. Only then, if the government considers it a worthy investment, may a drug be used in hospitals.

Even though there is still much work to be done, This marks massive progress in the field of cancer research, as it gives us hope that one day soon we may have access to a treatment that not only cures cancer, but does so without any side effects, and allows patients to live a life outside of their diagnosis.

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

Notre Dame Theatre through Time

MILLIE FLANNERY

‘Everybody’s Talking About Jamie’ - was performed by Notre Dame in 2021 at the Deli Theatre. The show is fun, exciting and over all fabulous - the show is set in Sheffield and centres around the titular character Jamie New. Jamie New is a 16-year-old who has big dreams of becoming a star, more specifically a Drag Queen. Jamie struggles with navigating discrimination, his drag career and relationship with his dad but with support from his mother, best friend Priti he overcomes his hardships and turns up to prom in full drag - in the spotlight. This show uses its characters in order to represent important themes within the show. For example, the character of Jamie embodies the importance of self-discovery and having the courage to be yourself, no matter what people say. The character of Priti represents the importance of true friendship and supporting those around you. Finally, the character of Loco Chanel represents the importance of unapologetic self-expression and having somebody to mentor you.

Stand out songs such as ‘Don’t Even Know It’, ‘Work Of Art’ and ‘He’s my Boy’ shows the comedic and uplifting nature of the show nestled amongst the truly heartbreaking and tender moments of the show. For example, the song ‘Don’t Even Know It’ is set at the beginning of Jamie’s story, at first he is shown to be being teased but

breaks of to show us Jamie’s huge aspirations and is his ‘I want’ song. This song sets the stage for his journey of self-discovery and immense gain of confidence and pride within himself. Jamie breaking away from the classroom and into a dream like sequence shows his individuality within the show.

Additionally, the inspiration of the show Jamie Campbell, the director and musical director of the original musical all came and watched the performance proving just how . Most notably about Notre Dame’s production of ‘Everybody’s Talking About Jamie’ is that we were the first ever school production of this show. Mr O’Farrell even stated when interviewed “We were delighted to be asked to do it,” he said. “It does feel like a very nice finishing off of a story that starts and now comes back to Sheffield.” For a show that was created in Sheffield and first performed in Sheffield it is such an honour that our school had the opportunity to bring the joy and incredibly poignant message of this show to the schools for the very first time.

Furthermore, this show was the perfect presentation of the incredible community we have here at Notre Dame and the support we get from those around us. For example, within school, we had plenty of students assisting backstage - this show truly couldn’t have been possible without the incredible stage crew. On top of this, musicians from our school came together to create a band alongside outside of school musicians and Tom the Music Director. The incredible Mr

Quinn also created many of the set pieces!

‘Six’ - was performed by Notre Dame in 2023 in the Chapel. The show is empowering, funny and unique - the show is about the six wives of Henry VIII battling it out to decide who was the better wife, eventually reclaiming their stories and finally understanding it is not about fighting over a man but instead standing up for yourself and your truth. With a small cast of just Six queens (Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Katherine Howard and Catherine Parr) the show is performed in a concert-like style: divorced, beheaded, Live. The musical shows the queens to, at first, argue about who’s story is more compelling but eventually finding an understanding that there is no ‘winner’ and that they should all come together to uplift each other.

Stand out songs such as ‘Don’t Lose Your Head’, ‘Heart Of Stone’ and ‘Haus of Holbein’, are only a handful of the extremely catchy, upbeat and occasionally emotional and touching songs. The writers of these songs - Lucy Moss and Toby Marlow - integrated historical facts into the songs, for example the song ‘No Way’ is inspired by the actual speech Catherine gave at the Legatine Court at Blackfriars in 1529, where she knelt before Henry and defended the legitimacy of her marriage and her daughter Mary's rights.

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

When performed here at Notre Dame, there was an extremely small cast of very talented actors - with only 2 casts of 6 Queens along with 7 dancers. Furthermore, the exceptional level of skill and commitment extends off of the stage with 3 student band members a fantastic stage manager and one of our students even assisting with painting and ticketing displaying the incredible amount of talent here at our school. On top of this, Even on nights the queens were not performing on stage, each queen would sing backstage! A testament to everyone's level of talent involved in this show was that they only had from September-December to rehearse, with the time limit, and with such an intimate cast, everyone had to work so closely and developed such a tight-knitted group. Everyone had such a deep understanding of their cast mates style of performing which is truly what made it all come together to create such fantastic performances.

'Sweeney Todd': The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street' was performed by Notre Dame in 2025 at the University Drama Studio. The show is a dark, thrilling and hauntingly funny - the show is set in London in the Victorian era and centres around the titular character Sweeney Todd. Sweeney Todd is a deeply troubled character with huge secrets and a tragic yearning for his dead wife Lucy and daughter Johanna. Todd meets Mrs Lovett - a baker with secrets of her own who soon develops a love for him. Eventually her love for him and

his longing for justice for his wife, an evil plan soon reveals itself. It is revealed that through Todd's career of a barber and Lovetts's career of being a baker, the pair would kill and cook their victims leaving no trace. Throughout the show, the recurring character of the beggar woman is originally portrayed as an insane, unruly woman who roams the streets. It is later revealed that the once dismissed and seemingly evil woman is Sweeney Todd's wife, who he assumed was dead. Her character adds an intense level of complexity to the storyline.

Stand out songs such as 'My Friends' , 'Worst Pies Of London' and 'Johanna' shows the captivating, complex and tense nature of the musical through the dissonant and haunting melodies created by Sondheim. The music creates a sombre atmosphere and reflects the emotions depicted on stage by the characters. The song 'My friends' shows the deep and unsettling connection the Todd has with his razors. This song is positioned at the beginning of the musical and sets the stage for the importance of these razors and Todd's confused mental state in the storyline. The song 'Kiss me' contrasts many of the other songs in the show and is a sweet reminder than amidst all the chaos there is still some goodness and love within the story. However, the rash nature of Johanna and Anthony's decisions reflects the underlying theme of obsession and desperation.

In Notre Dame's production of the show, there was an

extremely large cast of 52 actors ranging from year 8-14. Alongside the actors an almost fully student band showcased their incredible talents. Not only this, almost the entire cast assisted with creating the shows set and props, for example they made a huge amount of pies for the musical numbers 'Worst Pies of London', 'A little Priest' and 'God, That's Good!'. In addition to this, the sign in Mrs Lovetts's pie shop was student created! This shows that everybody involved in the productions is insanely dedicated in ensuring that each show is the best it can possibly be - dedicating so much of their time to not only learn the songs, lines and the show as a whole but take a creative lead and spend time making things by hand for the show.

One former head of a school in Sheffield even reached out to say that she has seen and been involved with School productions for over 35 years, but Sweeney Todd was the best she had ever seen. This is a testament to the hard work and talent needed to pull off such a challenging musical.

Shop 'til the planet drops

NIAMH TOULSON

Overconsumption. A huge problem for bank accounts and the planet alike. But, what is it? By dictionary definition, overconsumption is “the action or fact of consuming something to excess”. In simpler terms, it is essentially buying things you don’t really need just for the sake of it. This can be clothing, makeup, even food. From the trend of blind bags to designer handbags, we are forced to question: is it truly worth it?

Overconsumption causes huge problems for people and the environment. For example, many people are influenced by social media to buy certain products, even if they realistically don’t need them or can’t afford them. This can lead to financial strain and emotional stresses as people lean into debt to support an unrealistic and unhealthy lifestyle. Studies have also shown links between overconsumption and obesity, leading to increased risk of cardiovascular problems and type 2 diabetes. One example of an interesting study that addresses this is one conducted by “Global Food Security” that informs the public that “over 1/3 of the population are now obese.” A contributing factor to this is the content of adverts, which display an unhealthy lifestyle, and the overconsumption of food products. As a result, further strain is applied to the NHS leading to longer wait times for treatment and an increase in

mental health struggles in hospital staff.

In 2021, approximately 50% of the UK’s total carbon footprint came from overseas to produce and import goods. This in turn produces greenhouse gas emissions therefore contributing to global warming. How can we let this happen? Overconsumption also creates unmanageable amounts of waste, including electronic waste, which is difficult to dispose of safely. This leads to damage to habitats and therefore affects species, potentially causing them to become endangered. Gathering the resources for these products further damages the environment and leads to resource depletion. So, before you buy a product, as yourself, would the planet thank me for it?

A huge problem, that has become particularly predominant in recent years, is fast fashion. Companies such as Teemu, Shien, Primark and Ali-Express sell their goods at rock-bottom prices to entice shoppers to buy things they do not need solely due to the cheap pricing. These companies contribute hugely to waste as the poor-quality products that they manufacture and sell often head straight to the landfill. One particularly concerning statistic states “the fashion industry creates 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually” - equivalent to 460 huge cruise ships and over 13 million elephants! Moreover, overconsumption leads to exploitation as workers in disadvantaged countries are often dependent on

manufacturing jobs. The demand of consumers for cheap goods applies pressure on these factories and can lead to exploitative labour practices in the production process.

So, how can you help? One way you can reduce your consumption is by reusing. For example, you can invest in a reuseable water bottle instead of a plastic one. You can also collect the soft plastics you use, such as crisp packets and wrappers, to recycle as many shops now offer soft plastic recycling bins.

It is also important to question if you really need the thing you want before you buy it. Do you have things already that can be used as alternatives? Have you explored the second-hand market? Will you still want it in a week? If your answers are yes, maybe you should get the thing you want, but it is crucial to really think it over first.

In conclusion, remember to not impulsively buy products but instead deliberate if it is really important to have. Perhaps, you should sleep on the thought and decide later. The problems caused by overconsumption are astounding, and a huge damage to people and the environment. I ask you to think before you buy and to only buy what you need. The environment will thank you.

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

CHICAGO: Murder, Media and the Race for the Spotlight

PATRICK MURENA AND
BELLA REEDER



Time magazine described the 1996 revival of Chicago on Broadway as "a triumph! It does not just give us the old razzle-dazzle; it glows" and the Notre Dame Drama Department is promising to deliver a production that will do just that, bringing a new kind of glow to the classic musical. From performing *Les Misérables* (2019), *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* (2022), *Anastasia* (2024), and *Sweeney Todd* (2025), the Drama Department now turns its considerable talent to Chicago. These gifted teenagers that dedicate months to perfecting this performance continue to uphold a tradition of excellence and passion for the arts. Featuring popular hits such as *All That Jazz*, *We Both Reached for the Gun*, *Roxie*, *Cell Block Tango* and *When You're Good to Mama*, this cast of spectacular individuals is set to leave the audience breathless, begging for an encore, and deliver an unforgettable night.

Tickets for the show and information on times, dates and location can be found at [Notre Dame High event tickets from](#)

[TicketSource.](#)



Cast list:

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Velma Kelly | Grace English/Millie Flannery |
| Roxie Hart | Eilis Jackson |
| Amos Hart | Scarlett Horwood/Patrick Murena |
| Mama Morton | Nickeisha Madourie |
| Billy Flynn | Patrick Murena/Scarlett Horwood |
| MC | Michael Davis |
| Liz | Madison Bland |
| Annie | Emily Bruce |
| June | Hollie Waller |
| Hunyak | Bethany Rowson |
| Mona | Ava Green |
| Mary Sunshine | Elouise Anderson |
| Fogarty | Ethan Dale |

Roxie Hart is an undiscovered talent who dreams of being a star everybody knows, though her life has, until now, been full of disappointments. Not only is she not famous, but she is also not even getting much satisfaction from her chump of a husband, Amos. After being deceived by her secret partner Fred Casely, she kills him, getting herself locked in the Cook County jail. There she meets Velma Kelly, a glamorous and egocentric vaudeville performer. Velma's fame is initially derived from her successful stage career, but it explodes after she is imprisoned in the Cook County Jail. Throughout the story, Velma battles the newcomer, Roxie Hart, for the

spotlight and the services of the celebrity Defence lawyer, Billy Flynn, a self-serving, master puppeteer pulling the strings of both the law and the press. These murdering mistresses understand that a sensational murder in Chicago is less a date with a judge and more an audition for the front page after all the state of Illinois has

not executed a woman for murder in five decades. The only question left is, who will be the one to end the streak?

Beyond the Lines: The beauty of acting

Acting is beautiful. To become a storyteller who can live countless lives on stage is a profound responsibility, not solely to recite lines, but to breathe life into a dream. The joy in acting comes from allowing yourself to become emotionally vulnerable and not just letting the audience experience all parts of your character, but to embody your character and accept their story as your own. It is encouraged for everyone to experience a form of theatre at least once, as you can develop many skills, such as empathy, that are applicable to the workplace and life. It also allows you to have creative freedom, unlike most extracurriculars, to choose a direction for your character that resonates best with you. I implore those reading this to give acting a try: to audition for next year's musical because it's a decision that would lead to growth, fun, and newfound loves within you. Forget what others might think; just ask yourself, "Would I enjoy it?" If the answer is yes, then do it. The joy of a school production is not just in the final applause, but within the months of collaborative and chaotic rehearsals, where

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

strangers become a team united by a shared creative goal.

Inside the production: Director insights

To begin our behind-the-scenes investigation into the inner workings of this year's production, we first set our eyes on the show's foundation: the directors. They are the essential teachers who not only chose the show's vision but also form the creative blueprint that the show follows. They cover everything from selecting the perfect cast to guiding every aspect of the performance. We interviewed them to understand the planning and thought process that was behind the launch of the production. The first question asked to the directors was "why did you choose Chicago as this year's production?" Miss Corbett, a leading director, expressed that this year would be a good opportunity to do a more dance-based show due to an influx of dancers throughout Notre Dame and she has been wanted to do Chicago "personally for years." Another leading director, Miss Carrigan explained a key factor to it was due to increase of "strong female singers" who would be capable of managing a demanding female leading roll" which we have not had in a while." A student director, Erin Sayan, stated "it's an enjoyable musical as at its core it is about a woman chasing fame, which adds comedy to the otherwise contrasting dark themes including murder, cheating and prison,



The next question for the directors was "what was the thought process behind the casting?". Miss Corbett had a criterion: lots of dancers were needed so dance skills were necessary, a strong male leads with both confidence in acting and singing, younger students were required to take on such huge roles with less academic workload. This directly impacted the casting of Grace English in y9 to play Velma Kelly alongside Millie Flannery, whose talent and potential blew the directors away! Erin Sayin believed the casting was influenced due to the focus of different characters having different strengths that needed to be met by the actors for example, The role of Velma requires "strong skills in singing and dancing". This demanding combination led to the casting of Millie and Grace to co-play the role, capitalizing on their respective experience and talent in these areas. The role of Roxie requires a Mezzo-Soprano with a very demanding vocal range, specifically needing a strong mixed voice to handle the high notes. Eilish's ability to successfully sing this range is highly beneficial and important. They wanted someone who was committed to the role and responsive to feedback for example, get given a suggestion for movement or voice and "take on the feedback and action it". Miss Carrigan considered these qualities to be extremely important.

Next, we wanted to understand what their individual contributions to the show were. The success of our show relies heavily on the distinct, focused efforts of the directors. Miss Carrigan said "Miss Corbett, me and Mr O'Farrell", focus on the core directing and take an overview of all the dances and the scenes from scratch. This requires detailed technical preparation, from compiling detailed prop lists to setting up exact lighting cue sheets for the upcoming weekly scenes. As a musical is more complicated than a play, they all approach each scene as team. Meanwhile, Erin is our acting specialist. She uses her expertise to coach performers, helping them "dig deep" into the acting side of specific scenes. As she explains, "As I do A-Level Drama, I can help guide the actors," ensuring every moment of emotional depth is captured to truly transform the performance.

Any advice for anyone considering getting into theatre/musical theatre?

Miss Corbett: "Go see as many different shows as you can and don't let anyone conform you to be a specific type of actor/dancer and take every opportunity you are given"

Erin Sayin: "a great extracurricular as it shows you are a quick learner, work well in a team and reliable. But it is also just fun and is nice as for me coming into a new school where I did not know anyone was scary but doing this let me connect with a wide range of people so you will make a lot of new friends"

Miss Carrigan - "Don't give up. Resilience is so key. We are

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

always learning, we are never at our peak, even if your winning Oscars you still have room to grow. Getting into the industry is hard and having that strength to keep going is vital.”

Inside the production: Actor insights



Having explored the essential building blocks of the production with the directors and understanding their structural vision, we knew the next vital perspective had to come from the heart of the show: the actors themselves. We sat down with the principal cast to hear about their personal challenges, the triumphs of bringing a character to life, and the sheer joy they find in the craft of storytelling. Their experiences offer a firsthand look at what it truly takes to embody a role. The first question we wanted to ask them is why they wanted to be in Chicago.

Millie Flannery expressed this was due to her passion in theatre and her love of being on stage and watching a show come into fruition, but most importantly to her, “the people you meet and the experiences you gain”. Nickeisha Madourie told us she was new to performing arts as she had always loved it but was scared to do it due to stage fright but had “loved the whole experience” of doing last year's show (Sweeney Todd) and decided she wanted to do it again for Chicago.

Next, we wanted to find out when they all had begun acting as we knew the length differs for everyone. Despite being one of the principal cast, Patrick Murena had only begun acting towards the end of year 8 where it began with “me auditioning to be a main character in Six (an all-girls show).” But it allowed him to be recommended for the showcase and since then he's been in every play since. Next, we spoke to Scarlett Horwood who started when she was 7, after she joined a theatre company called Ecco. For Bethany this was “Sister Mary Roberts in sister act”. Madison said, “the first role I ever did was the genie in Aladdin” which she thoroughly enjoyed as she got to play such a “charismatic and fun character”. She loved how she could play with the way he acted and how he said his lines and this freedom is what drew her to acting. In Nickeisha's Primary school, they would perform a different Shakespeare play every 6 months which her entire year would participate in. Her first role was playing lady Macbeth which she found “exhilarating”.



To get a feel for their passion, we put the question directly to them: “What do you love about your character?” which prompted some enthusiastic replies. Millie loved how “confident, glamorous and

beautifully ruthless” her character was. How she takes no nonsense from anyone and follows her own egotism. Patrick and Scarlett, who share two roles, highlighted different traits: for Billy, they loved his charisma and his ability to compel an audience with his words. Conversely, they connected with their second character, Amos, because he is “the only morally good character” and appreciated how soft-hearted and sincere he is. Eilis felt connected to Roxie's passion and how she's “full of dreams” and her resolve to achieve her ambitions.

Despite their clear passion for their characters and the joy they take in performing, the actors acknowledged that every role presents its own unique difficulties. For example, Millie found the hardest thing to do when rehearsing is channelling her confidence when dancing as she would not consider herself a dancer. Velma dances have such confidence and precision to them, and this can “often feel quite intimidating to me.” With Roxie, Eilis found Roxie's trait of being very confrontational to convey as “I've never played a confrontational character before” which she believes could be quite challenging for her as she has only played nice, one-dimensional characters before. As she plays 2 different characters, Scarlet is worried about the difficulty of having to switch between the 2 as “billy Flynn is a lot more confident while Amos isn't”. Nickeisha considers the hardest aspect of Matron mama Morton is how she is such a commanding role with strong vocals “she speaks quite stern so it's hard to get her voice to sound perfect.”

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

Any advice for those considering acting or doing future productions?

Scarlett: "appreciate every role you are given, use them as lessons"

Millie: "just try it no matter how good or bad you think you are"

Patrick: "If it makes you smile, never give up on it"

Nickeisha: "If you love it but are too scared just try it because you never know"

Inside the production: Dancer insights

Once we had the directorial vision and the actors' interpretations, it was time to speak with the artists who truly set the show's rhythm and vibrant energy: the dancers. The exceptional performers who convey crucial emotion without a single word. Bob Fosse's dance style is characterized by its sultry, angular movements, unique use of props, and a blend of jazz, vaudeville, and burlesque influences, making it iconic in the world of musical theatre. Performing this technique requires sharp precision, excellent control, and the ability to embody the style's sleek, confident attitude. We interviewed the dance team not only to learn about the process of mastering this choreography, but also to explore what first drew them to dance and which of their incredible pieces they are most excited to share with the audience.

First, we wanted to know why they wanted to be part of the Chicago team. A lot of the replies we received explained it was due to a love of dance and

that Chicago is one of the greatest shows to do as a dancer because, its sleek, stylish, fun. It allows u to become a triple threat as u must embody a dancer an actor and a singer all at once. But what we heard most is that it's due to the music. That the music makes you want to move, giving the dancers a chance to show off their best rhythm and musicality with every hip, sway, and snap

We next asked them how long they've been studying the craft. Just like the actors, we found a wide range of starting ages, proving that it doesn't matter how long you've danced, but how hard you are willing to work to perfect the craft. For instance: Hollie (playing June) has been dancing for 11 years since she was three. Bethany (playing Hunyak) is tackling her very first dance role for this production. Despite their vastly various levels of experience, both dancers are exceptionally skilled and stand out in the show. Their dedication shows that passion and hard work truly pay off and place dedication over duration.



Chicago is filled with multiple electrifying songs so we wanted to know from the dancer's perspective as those who will be conveying the songs meaning through their movement. Madison (playing Liz) told us the dance she was most excited to do was razzle dazzle as she feels the song "captures the essence of Chicago in a few minutes." She stated that "listenin

g to it for the first time enraptured me" as she thought of all the incredible dance possibilities for it due to the flashiness of the song. Another core dancer, Emily (playing Annie) expressed she was excited to do cell block tango as she feels the song has "great musicality" and is a favourite for musical theatre dancers. The dancers were unanimous in their feelings that all the musical numbers were incredible to perform. Their enthusiasm stems from knowing the kind of impact this style has on an audience; as Hollie (June) shared, "All dances taking on the Bob Fosse style have a good reaction.



There are many aspects to dance and there are many reasons why someone will love it as these are different and personal for any dancer, so we asked a few of the dancers to gain an insight into what some of these were. Madison explained how she loved that anything could be expressed through movement, stating that "even the most complicated and complex of ideas or situations" can be conveyed without words." For Emily it was how dance acts as a stress reliever, especially in the height of y13 but dance allows you to express your creative side and forget about everything and just dance.

Dancing and performing can be a daunting experience; expressing yourself in front of large audiences is precisely why some people love theatre but are too

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

Backstage Briefing: Your Guide to the Cast & Show

nervous to pursue it. To help those dealing with this fear, we gained some practical advice from those at the heart of the production on how to handle stage fright. Emily recommends focusing on confidence, not catastrophe. She advised against overthinking, stressing that a negative mindset is often what leads to failure. Instead, you need to learn to tell yourself: "I have done so much practicing, I know what I'm doing. Just don't overthink." Madison's technique for dealing with nerves involves a physical and mental approach: "Slowing my breathing, distancing my mind, and telling myself, 'If I couldn't do it, I wouldn't be here.'" Their shared message is clear: Trust your training and believe in your place on that stage.

Any advice for future dancers?

Emily: "Don't be afraid to push yourself out of your comfort zone"

Hollie: "You need to be passionate about it to enjoy it. Make sure your confident in yourself and always give it your all. I wish every future dancer the best of luck with everything."

Madison: "Never lose sight of your own abilities. Everyone has different strong suits so be aware of your own abilities"

Bethany: "never stop trying even if it goes wrong"

Rehearsals for the show run after school on most Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays until 5:30. When visiting the sessions, we found the atmosphere constantly electrifying, with the cast intensely focused on harmonizing songs and bringing the show together. This demanding work, however, was always met with genuine joy, often facilitated by Mr Morley, who made learning lyrics a fun experience. The cast's dedication was evident in their rapid adaptability: notes and new parts were integrated effectively by the very next session, demonstrating a level of commitment that suggests the final production in January will be utterly seamless and incredible.



Notre Dame through Time:

SCARLETT HORWOOD

Les Misérables:

Les Misérables was performed in the Chapel here at Notre Dame in 2020. It was one of the final performances in the Chapel, before it got redone. Based on Victor Hugo's original novel (1862), the live musical and movie adaptation both highlight issues of class inequality, justice, and moral redemption, making the story timeless. Its enduring popularity comes from how it captures the human cost of oppression while expressing hope, compassion, and the fight for freedom, themes that still resonate today. Although Les Misérables is often mistakenly said to be set during the French Revolution (1789), the musical takes place decades later during the June Rebellion of 1832, a small but significant Parisian uprising led largely by radical students. Les Misérables is written in a style often called a mega-musical or pop-opera which means it is fully sung-through, very little spoken dialogue, and has a large orchestra and sweeping, emotional melodies. This style creates a heightened dramatic atmosphere. Because the characters sing instead of speaking, every emotion feels intensified with grief, hope, desperation, and idealism.

Les Misérables tells the story of Jean Valjean, a former convict seeking redemption

after years in prison. Pursued by the relentless inspector Javert, Valjean builds a new life while caring for Cosette, the orphaned daughter of Fantine. Years later, Cosette falls in love with Marius, a young revolutionary involved in a doomed Paris uprising. As the rebellion collapses, Valjean saves Marius's life, and Javert, unable to reconcile mercy with duty, takes his own. In the end, Valjean dies peacefully, having finally found forgiveness and peace.

Some popular songs are "Look Down." and "on my own". Look down is a moving and emotional ensemble number, which tells the story of the criminal justice system, and this sets the atmosphere for the rest of the play as we first see Jean Valjean singing. "On my Own." Is another moving song that captures the essence of the musical through bold lyric about love and the injustice of rich versus the poor in this era. The cast consisted of a large ensemble. This made it a fun and unique play to take part in as each individual cast member had a crucial part to play in capturing the large scale of suffering and rebellion that stirred between the ordinary townspeople.

The Great Gatsby:

The Great Gatsby was performed in the Drama Studio, Sheffield in January 2024. This

exciting and thrilling musical consisted of mainly ensemble, with big and powerful numbers encapsulating the feel of America in the 1920s. To truly show this, we used costumes like flapper dresses and pink suits, feathered headbands and long sets of pearls. The set was made mostly made by our tech department, with vintage signs, gas station pumps, old fashioned jazz microphones for singers to use and even a yellow rolls Royce all to show the feel of 1920s America. alongside an incredible cast, a talented student band brought the production to life - their music, driven largely by woodwind instruments, added a rich jazz flair that transported the audience straight back to the vibrant energy of the 1920s.

Set in the 1920s Jazz Age, The Great Gatsby follows Nick Carraway - a young man who moves to Long Island and becomes neighbours with the mysterious millionaire Jay Gatsby. Gatsby is famous for his lavish parties but is secretly obsessed with Daisy Buchanan, Nick's cousin, whom he loved years before. Daisy is now married to the wealthy but unfaithful Tom Buchanan. Gatsby's dream of rekindling his romance with Daisy unravels as old secrets and class divisions surface. A confrontation between Tom and Gatsby leads to tragedy, ending with Gatsby's death and Daisy retreating to her privileged world. Nick, disillusioned by the emptiness

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

of the wealthy elite, leaves New York reflecting on the corruption of the American Dream.

In the great Gatsby I played the character of Nick Carraway, alongside Eilis Jackson. Being able to play such a charismatic role was an incredible experience, and one that both me and Eilis look back on. My personal favourite moments in the show was when Tom Buchanan, played by Ethan Phillips, clicked his finger and switched off the green light at the end of the play. The switching off the green light signifies the end of Gatsby's dream, the collapse of illusion into reality, and the broader failure of the American Dream, a moment when hope dims and the darker truth of the world begins to take over. This powerful moment is one of my favourites as it truly finished the play perfectly and it was fun to see if Ethan would click his fingers on time. Another favourite moment of mine was the dancers sequence with the t-shirts. This encapsulating moment was made mesmerizing both for the audience and cast because of the dancers graceful movements, and I remember it being one of the best parts to watch from the sidelines.

Eilis Jackson, a student at Notre Dame, played Nick Carraway with me. When interviewed, she stated that it was one of the "best roles she'd played", with the "a real sense

of community within the cast". This really shows how much these shows contribute to people's lives, and not just the audiences.

Romeo and Juliet:

Romeo and Juliet was performed in the Drama Studio Sheffield in the summer of 2023. It is one of Shakespeare's most renowned plays, with the romance and devastation making it one of the greatest. Romeo and Juliet is a tragic play about two young lovers from rival families in Verona. Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet fall deeply in love and secretly marry, hoping to end the feud between their families. But after Romeo kills Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, he is banished. Subsequently, a series of misunderstandings follow leading to disaster. Believing Juliet is dead, Romeo takes his own life; when Juliet awakens and finds him dead, she kills herself too. Their deaths finally move their families to end their long-standing feud.

In our adaption of Romeo and Juliet we used physical theatre in the performance to add depth and help portray the contrasting families. For example, Romeo and Juliet had a chair duet in the opening scene, which set the plays atmosphere and immediately drew the audience's attention. Further on, we used the ensemble and the characters of Tybalt and Mercutio to create a dynamic fight scene with moving ladders. It was a fun

and entertaining way to involve all the cast with some of the heavier scenes.

This play had a cast of about 30 people, with many of younger ages. To make the two different families clear to the audience, we split the ensemble, and our costumes were either blue or red. However, the characters between the families wore purple, creating a clear split between all different groups. It was a difficult play to do, with the archaic English lines that were difficult to decipher, making it a challenge compared to previous musicals performed. Millie Flannery, who played the character of Prince, said that this made the experience "educating" and "skill developing" for her as an actor.

FASHION WEEK 2025

AMY FOSTER

MY 'TOP' MODELS OF FASHION WEEK:

Throughout the media, art is continuously being politicised and used for representation. In my opinion, the politicisation of fashion and art is beneficial to society for a multitude of reasons such as it serving as a powerful and accessible tool for communication and social change. Rather than it being frivolous, fashion and clothing has historically been a potent way for individuals to express their political ideologies and challenge the status quo.

ALEX CONSANI:

Alex is a transgender model, who is very transparent on her transition. Having this representation in the media, especially in the modelling industry, allows young people to see others like them throughout social media being appreciated for their genuine work-whether this is their incredible walks, style or aura. Moreover, this helps the younger, LGBTQ+ community to feel confident and comfortable in their transition as they are seeing other people in their position killing it!

Upbringing:

Born in Petaluma, California, her career jump started after she began modelling with 'Slay Model Management' when she was 12, making her the youngest transgender model of the time in 2015. Later in 2019, she signed with IMG models and gained widespread popularity on TikTok for her comedic content, which would not be typically shown by a model as model's reputation is usually encouraged to present them as perfect and decorous. This makes her someone people can relate to, usually models form this unreachable type of beauty one can aspire to be but she is still able to connect with gen z audiences.

Education and activism:

She graduated from Petaluma High school in 2021 and began attending Pace University, however, she later dropped to focus on her modelling career. As a transgender model, it is only right that she uses her large platform to advocate for the transgender community and promote visibility, in which she does very often on social media.



ANOK YAI:

Anok Yai is a model who is a trailblazer for diversity in the fashion industry-a vital step toward better representation in a field where beauty standards often dictate success. She is a vocal advocate for self-acceptance and mental health, making her a great inspiration for young women of all ethnicities, especially black women and minority communities.

Background:

She was born in Cairo, Egypt to South Sudanese refugee parents, who escaped the violence of the Second Sudanese Civil War. This is significant as this provides a wider range of diversity in the media and shows that models do not have to be a typical privileged white middle class person; beauty is in everyone. However, they later moved to Manchester when she was three years old. She attended Manchester High school west and then went on to attend Plymouth state university. She studied biochemistry with the goal of becoming a doctor, showing her intellect and high aspirations.

Discovery:

While attending Howard University's homecoming, a photographer took a photo of her in which went viral on Instagram. This

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

CLOTHING: MY OPINION

led to her being signed by a New York modelling agency, 'Next Models' and eventually, in 2018, she became the second black model ever to open a Prada runway show (after Naomi Campbell in 1997). This made her the first South Sudanese model to do so. This inspires many, specifically women of colour, as it shows that beauty standards are not restricted to the stereotypical white blonde with blue eyes that has been shown throughout the media for years and therefore beauty can be found in everybody, no matter the race.

Activism:

Anok has used her platform to speak out about the importance of representation for dark skinned women in media, which may have stemmed from her own insecurities as a child. She will hopefully continue to represent young women and help promote self-love and confidence, which goes to show the positive impact that can come from making the right person famous.



Two prominent clothing items that were shown continuously during fashion week were oversized blazers and midi skirts.

Oversized blazers:

This is part of the ongoing 'power dressing', a style of clothing designed to convey confidence, and professionalism. Oversized blazers, sometimes padded, were seen across several collections such as: Saint Laurent, Stella McCartney and Bally. These pieces offer a structured, yet relaxed silhouette and is often paired with contrasting items such as lace skirts. This not only presents appropriate wear for the current autumnal weather but also shows how you can be stylish whilst comfortable.

Midi skirts:

Frequently appearing with elegant details such as pleats, asymmetry and lace trims. This year the clothing has appeared in collections such as Prada, Tory Burch and Michael Kors, showing versatile calf length garments. Midi skirts can transition easily from professional settings to evening wear, revealing its versatility and appropriate length, which makes it suitable for all climates.

MY REVIEW: MY TOP FAVOURITE BRANDS

CHANEL:

Chanel is celebrated for its enduring style and consistent connection with consumers.

Some key attributes I personally love include:

- its timeless elegance, synonymous with the classic Parisian chic.
- Strong brand value, consistently high in brand value assessments
- Enduring appeal, maintains a powerful connection with consumers globally, ensuring its long-term relevance.

LOUIS VUITTON:

Louis Vuitton is a global symbol of luxury and is consistently ranked as one of the most valuable and recognised brands and it was in 1837 that a 16-year-old Louis Vuitton arrived in Paris by foot and started apprenticing for Monsieur Maréchal.

“At the time, horse-drawn carriages, boats and trains were the main modes of transportation, and baggage was handled roughly. Travellers called upon

craftsmen to pack and protect their individual objects.

Louis Vuitton quickly became a valued craftsman at the Parisian atelier of Monsieur Maréchal. These were the roots of his highly specialised trade; the beginnings of his career in an artisanal industry that called upon skills to custom design boxes and, later, trunks according to clients' wishes. Louis Vuitton stayed for 17 years before opening his own workshop at 4 Rue Neuve-des-Capucines near the Place Vendôme.' - Louis Vuitton website.

The brand is renowned for its monogram canvas and timeless leather goods, synonymous with iconic craftsmanship as well as appealing to those with prestigious and exclusive taste. Therefore, they aim to reach to target consumers such as middle-aged wealthy individuals through a marketing strategy that emphasises heritage, exclusivity and quality craftsmanship, while appealing to their motivations of sophistication and status.

Additionally, its popularity in fashion scenes helps maintain such an iconic image. With its broad appeal, the brand has successfully expanded its luxury offerings and handbags in a variety of fashion categories such as the following:

- *ready-to-wear (like coats, jackets, tops, dresses, and jeans)*
 - *handbags (crossbody, shoulder, totes, mini)*
 - *shoes (heels, trainers)*
 - *accessories (such as watches)*
 - *jewellery (bracelets, earrings, necklaces)*
 - *cosmetics (lipsticks, lip balms, eyeshadows)*
-

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

The Evolution of Human Rights Law Since World War II

OLIVIA BELL

The Holocaust and the Rise of Global Conscience:

The Holocaust remains one of history's greatest atrocities. Under the Nazi regime, six million European Jews, alongside millions of others - including 3.3 million Soviet prisoners of war, 1.8 million non-Jewish Poles, between 250,000 and 500,000 Roma and Sinti, around 250,000 people with mental or physical disabilities, as well as thousands of homosexual men, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political dissidents. This exposed the catastrophic consequences of unchecked state power, racial ideology, and legalized discrimination. UNESCO notes that the Holocaust forced the world to develop both a new vocabulary for mass atrocity and a new vision of universal human rights. It marked a turning point in global awareness and helped shape institutions such as the United Nations, founded in 1945 to prevent a repeat of such failures.

Foundational Legal Frameworks:

The Nuremberg Trials (1945–46) had already set a precedent by holding individuals accountable for crimes against humanity, breaking from the previously state-centric legal order. Post-war efforts then turned moral outrage into legal commitments. The UN Charter (1945) set out a shared dedication to human dignity, followed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which outlined basic rights such as life, equality, and education. The Genocide

Convention (1948) provided the first legal definition of genocide and a duty to prevent it. Regional and international systems grew from this movement. Over the decades, treaties expanded protections further: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the International Criminal Court, 1998. These instruments signalled a profound shift, from a world once dominated by state power to one that formally recognizes human dignity and individual rights as central principles.

Yet the growth of human-rights law raises a persistent question: 'how effective are these protections when faced with political pressure, national interests, or weak enforcement mechanisms?' Legal commitments alone do not guarantee compliance.



Holocaust Memorial- Hall of Names, Vashem in Jerusalem

Activism and Movements:

Legal frameworks alone did not guarantee rights in practice. The second major strand in the evolution of human rights law is persistent activism and social

movements that pushed those laws into action and expanded their scope. Treaties against racial discrimination or gender inequality only gained real impact when grassroots activism and pressure demanded implementation. Activists demonstrated that rights are not self-executing, while policies matter, public activism drives human rights change.

Contemporary Challenges:

Human-rights law has broadened since 1945, expanding to include economic and social rights, environmental protection, and even corporate responsibilities. Courts increasingly tackle climate related harms, as seen in *Schweiz v. Switzerland* (2024), where inadequate climate action breached the right to private life, and *Cannavacciuolo v. Italy* (2025), which found violations linked to toxic pollution in the "Land of Fires."

Yet limitations remain. Some courts defer to states on climate policy, such as Germany's *Lliuya* ruling (2025), which rejected claims against RWE, or the ECHR's dismissal of the youth climate case against Norway. Political resistance is also recurring, as seen in Switzerland's partial rejection of the *KlimaSeniorinnen* judgment. These examples show that while the legal landscape is evolving and that enforcement is inconsistent. This results in a system that struggles to keep up with emerging challenges such as climate change, digital governance and refugee protection.

Call to Awareness and Action:



We have come far from 1945, but the journey continues. The Holocaust is not only a historical atrocity but a stark reminder of the fragility of human dignity and the necessity of protecting rights in every era. Rights must be actively defended: legal frameworks are essential but never sufficient on their own as they require public vigilance, civic engagement, transparent media, and robust institutions capable of holding leaders accountable. Greater transparency in journalism and access to reliable information strengthen democratic oversight, empowering citizens to challenge abuses and ensure that governments protect everyone's rights, regardless of identity, nationality, or belief.

Yet the world still witnesses atrocities and genocidal violence, from Sudan to Gaza and beyond, underscoring how fragile human rights protections remain in practice. Emerging frontiers—climate justice, digital rights, refugee protection, and corporate accountability—are not peripheral debates but central to the future of global rights.

Awareness leads to agency: individuals and communities can shape meaningful change through education, advocacy, voting, and monitoring those in power. Bridging the gap between promise and practice requires

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

ART REVIEW

AMALIE DUNN & CHELSEA JABA

We did this article as we are both passionate A- level art students, and we personally think these two pieces of significant artwork to still present topics that are still relevant today. We hope you enjoy!

Summary:

Eliran Kantor's "Dear Desolation", originally created as the cover art for Thy Art is Murder's 2017 album-presents a haunting and symbolic scene: a mother wolf gently nursing a lamb she intends to later consume. This unsettling blend of tenderness and impending violence encapsulates the album's themes of despair, moral decay, and the exploitation of the vulnerable. Kantor often uses classical, almost Renaissance-like painterly techniques to elevate metal imagery into allegory, and here he contrasts innocence with predation to comment on power structures, corrupted trust, and the false comforts offered by those who ultimately cause harm.

The artwork invites the viewer to reflect...what is real kindness, what is exploitation disguised as kindness? It challenges binary notions of good vs evil by blurring them: the caregiver is also the predator.

**"Dear Desolation"
by Eliran Kantor**



The wolf feeding a lamb creates a visceral moral paradox. The lamb, a traditional symbol of innocence/ vulnerability, contrasts sharply with the wolf, a predator. The fact that the wolf appear scaring, yet is really preparing to kill .. this betrays trust, and evokes betrayal, deception, exploitation.

This painting shows a clear message to the viewers- never judge a book by its cover.

The "Lamb of God" (Agnus Dei) is a direct symbol of Christ, chosen because a lamb is gentle, harmless, and unable to defend itself, making its slaughter both tragic and spiritually potent.

The nurturing gesture (wolf licking, lamb suckling) paint veneer of gentleness, but knowing the wolf's intent adds tension, horror, and a feeling of corrupt kindness. It suggests that cruelty can be disguised as compassion.

Notre NEWS: Issue #8

Summary:

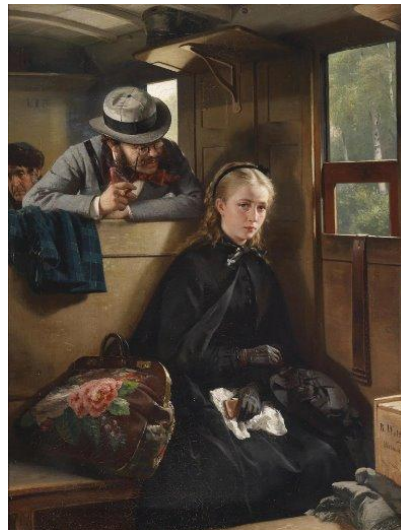
Berthold Woltze (24 August 1829 – 29 November 1896) was a male German genre painter, portrait painter, and illustrator. The fact he's a man shows how this serious topic is seen by all genders, and is still significant in present day. action, not sentiment. The motto "Never again" must translate into informed citizenship, honest media scrutiny, rights-based policymaking, and unwavering commitment to both remembrance and implementation.

"The Irritating Gentleman" by Berthold Woltze

The Girl appears tense when the man tries to engage with her, leaning away and seemingly reaching for a hat pin. This was a common defence mechanism used by women at the time, as it was the only sharp item they were allowed to carry.

Girl breaks the forth wall, almost pleading for help from viewer.

Her tears show not only her fear, but suppressed anger towards the gentleman



Long black dress signifies loss and mourning, perhaps implying the girl has only recently experienced a loss

The summer flowers on the girl's bag symbolizes youth and innocence. However, the man carelessly dropping ash on it represents him making advances towards a minor.