

Augustana Winter Traditions: Sankta Lucia

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The Girl With the Flaming Crown:

The Longevity of Sankta Lucia and Swedish Tradition at Augustana

Origins:

Sankta Lucia is a Swedish tradition dating back to, as the story goes, a time when Christians were facing persecution by the Roman Empire 304 AD, the year a girl named Lucia was born in Roman Sicily. The tale states that Lucia had been betrothed to a Roman pagan nobleman against her will, and she refused to accept, due to her vow of virginity. She was sentenced to death due to her revealing herself as a Christian, as well as for her disobedience. The details of her execution differ from account to account, but what is consistent is her ascension to sainthood post-mortem – a reward for her unwavering faith.



"I was Lucia in '84 and it...wasn't the next one, it was the one in '86. Lisa Eck was Lucia that year and on her way down the steps after the procession – or after the stage stuff was over and she was heading back out; the crown loosened! And slid down her head and around her neck. With candles falling out all over the place!"
- Jill Seaholm on potential mishaps of the crown.



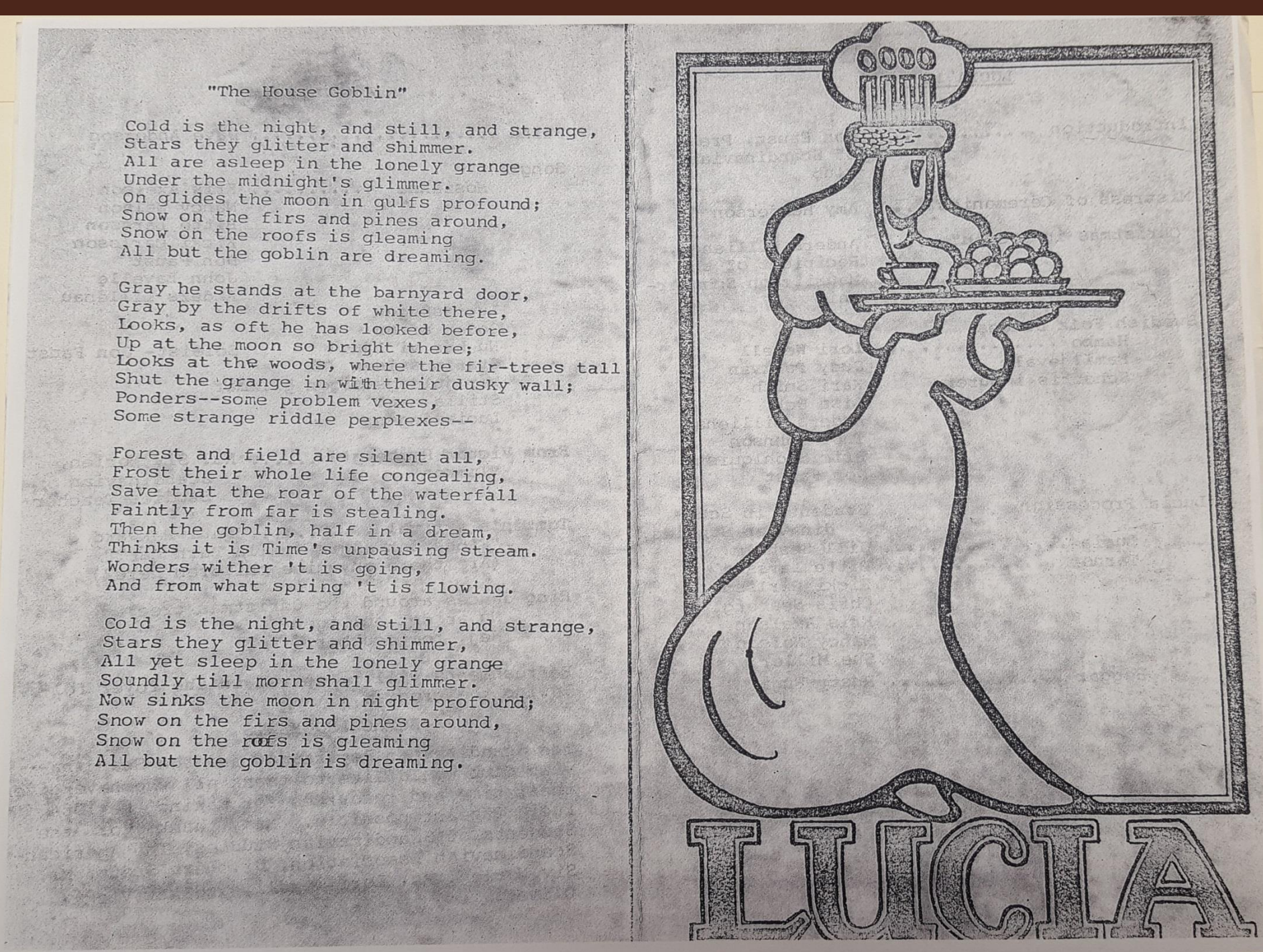
"In some ways, being Sankta Lucia is...an honor...I think, at Augustana."

"Being selected for it, among the students...in Scandinavian Studies...I think was a little bit like getting an award... they choose you because they feel like you've been dedicated to the program"
- Dr. Hilton-Morrow



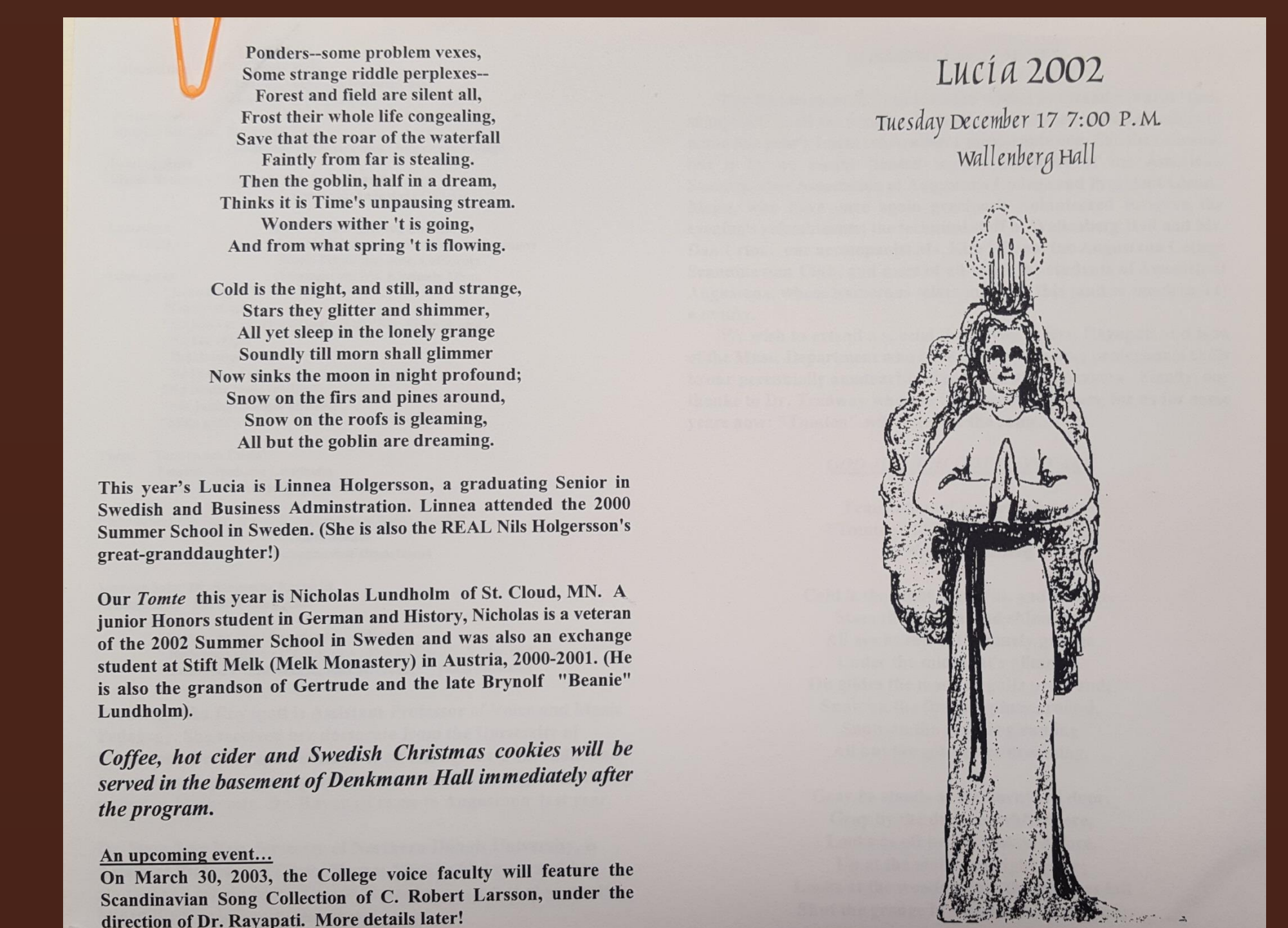
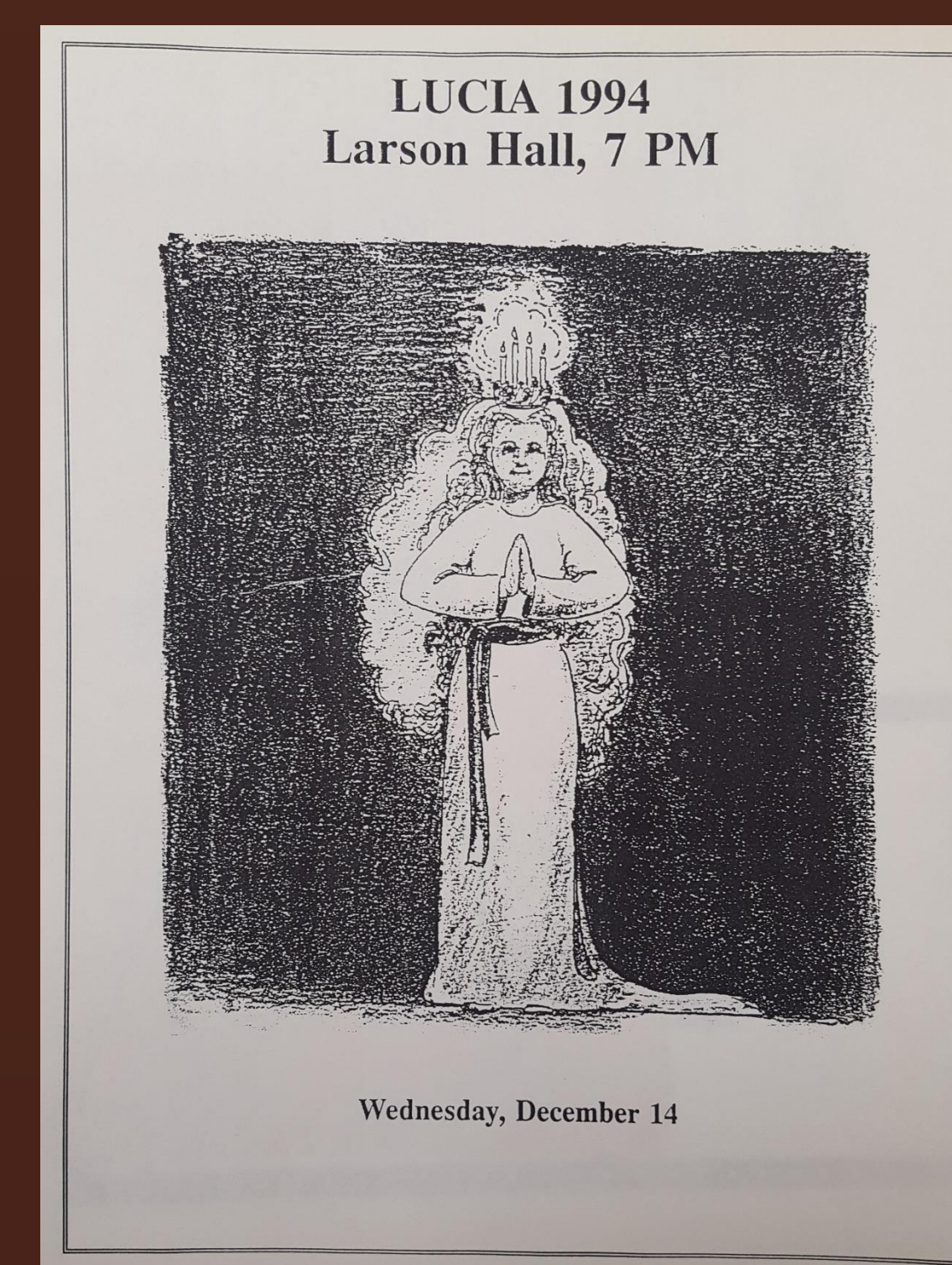
Event Profile:

The role of Sankta Lucia traditionally goes to the oldest daughter in a given family – the role is traditionally female. She wears a crown of flaming white candles, a robe of white and a red sash. She is accompanied in song and procession by men and women in the roles of "star boys" and angels respectively. All are garbed in white. At Augustana, the event has been celebrated for some 130 years at most – held in various locations, namely in Centennial Hall and later in Wallenberg Hall and retaining as much tradition as possible. Augustana still even uses real, burning candles, eschewing the battery-powered candles of most Swedish celebrations today. For many in the community, the event is a cherished holiday tradition.



In 2013, Erek Bell became the first male student to play the role of Sankta Lucia for the faculty and staff smorgasbord.

This change of traditional roles shows that while the longevity of the Sankta Lucia tradition has been preserved, it is still malleable to new influences.



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