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## The Grizzly, April 20, 2017

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Photo Courtesy of Ursinus College Communications

Seismic Step performed during Airband on Saturday, March 25 in the Lenfest Theater.

## Seismic Step shares history and tradition *Ursinus' student step team has only grown since its founding a few years ago*

**Courtney DuChene**  
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Many students on campus are familiar with Seismic Step, the school's step team, but many of them may not know the group's history or the positive effects the team has had on both its members and the campus community. This week, The Grizzly sat down with five of the members to discuss their thoughts about the team and learn a bit more about its history and traditions.

The team is a relatively young organization on campus. Captain Ashlee Maldonado explained its origin.

"Seismic step was founded the end of 2009 by Tish," she said. "There was no such thing as a step team on campus and since Tish had always been involved in step, she wanted to bring it to the Ursinus campus community. So she gathered most of her friends

and anyone who had experience in step to create the organization."

Maldonado joined Seismic Step as a first-year student, but became interested in the group when visiting campus while in high school.

"When I was a senior, I was invited to come to Ursinus on Unity Day. I was assigned a beautiful and fun woman named Bobby. She was in Seismic and due to the scheduling of Unity Day, I just followed her into step practice. When I first saw the team I was amazed by how loud and talented they were. I saw that the step team was more than just a team, but more of a family."

The team members also shared what got them interested in the team. Junior James Daring joined the team as a sophomore.

"I joined my sophomore year because a friend on the team encouraged me to join," he said. "It was basically what he called

it, a family of steppers, because stepping was created as a way of communication and self-expression."

Junior Kelsey Jean-Baptiste echoed his sentiments about the team's family-like atmosphere.

"It's given me more friends and a family," she said. "I can talk to them about anything."

The precision of their performances has inspired some members to join the team.

"Before I actually joined I saw them and I was like, 'Wow. That's amazing, I want to be part of that. I want to say that I can do that too,'" said sophomore Juju Bonilla.

Students who join the team receive step names from their captains.

"[It represents your personality] in terms of, like, the way you step, the way you perform," said

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## Record Store Day comes to Collegeville

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The vinyl renaissance is in full swing, and it hasn't escaped the Collegeville area.

Now in its 10th year, Record Store Day has become a national movement of sorts. Started in 2008 as a way for independent record store owners and employees to celebrate their unique form of business, the movement has spread rapidly over the last decade. According to record-store-day.com, "today there are Record Store Day participating stores on every continent except Antarctica."

This year's Record Store Day will take place on Saturday, April 22. A full list of participating stores and special releases can be found on their website.

The premise of Record Store Day suggests that the culture surrounding vinyl records and their consumers is unique—especially in the context of today's streaming-heavy music market.

As their website relays, special vinyl and CD releases are premiered exclusively on Record Store Day and are available at participating stores until they sell out. Many stores may also choose to hold special events such as live music and food to further make the day a celebration.

Record Store Day also celebrates the role these independent record stores play in their communities.

Students may have noticed a new record store pop up on Main Street last fall—as we reported in the Oct. 13 issue of The Grizzly, MaTones Music is one of Collegeville's newest businesses, and its only record store.

MaTones has found success in the local vinyl market since its opening last fall, and in addition

to carrying a wide array of new and used records, owner Adam Matone has some big plans for his first Record Store Day.

In addition to offering many exclusive Record Store Day releases, Matone has assembled a variety of merchandise for customers to peruse. He will be featuring several hundred used records priced under \$5, which he describes as "a crate digger's dream." He also has around 200 new records coming into the store in time for April 22.

"The vinyl market has been fantastic since I opened," Matone said. "It is great to see so many people who are passionate about music coming out en masse and building a community together."

Matone noted that the vinyl market as a whole is in the midst of an upswing, and is projected to become a billion-dollar industry this year. He has experienced these effects firsthand, and hopes that an event like Record Store Day will further encourage community members to visit their local record stores.

Many of Matone's customers are already looking forward to the event.

"I chose to participate in [Record Store Day] in order to better serve my customers. It is an event that many of my customers are passionate about, and I wanted to take part in the celebration," Matone said.

Matone said that a fair number of Ursinus students frequent his store—some of whom even introduce him to new music. He likes to suggest titles to customers, too.

"It is a great give-and-take," Matone said.

Another local record store, Deep Groove Records in Phoenixville, is also participating in the Record Store Day excite-

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## Q&A with incoming music professor

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Next fall, Dr. Rosa Abrahams will join the Ursinus College Music Department as an assistant professor of music. She will be coming to Ursinus after completing her doctoral degree at Northwestern University. She will join the faculty in a tenure-track position and will primarily be teaching classes in music theory at Ursinus.

Abrahams has taught, studied, and made music for much of her life. She has studied music for fifteen years and has taught students ranging from Pre-K to seventh grade in the past as well as teaching, tutoring and giving music lessons at the college level.

In the fall, students will have a chance to take the two classes Abrahams is offering next semester. The Grizzly reached out to her to hear more about her research interests, her past experience with music, and her interest in the Ursinus community.

### What attracted you to Ursinus?

"I am passionate about teaching, and want to work at a school where students are interested and encouraged to learn deeply, connecting ideas throughout the liberal arts curriculum. The more I learn about the Ursinus educational model, and the campus climate, the more excited I am to join the community!"

### Where have you studied music?

"I earned my Ph.D. and Masters of Music in music theory & cognition from Northwestern University, and a Bachelors of Music in music theory from The Eastman School of Music."

### What prior experience do you have working with music and what instrument(s) do you

### play?

"I play classical piano, sing (primarily Jewish sacred music), and am currently learning the banjo. I have been studying and making music all my life. Most recently, I have taught classes and tutored in music theory and aural musicianship at the college level, and taught music to kids (grades PreK-seventh) in a synagogue religious school. As a performer I have participated in choirs, musical theater, and played in a Balinese Gamelan ensemble. As a scholar I have studied music for the past fifteen years, presenting my research at academic music conferences and giving workshops."

### What interests you about music and what are your research interests?

"Music is such a powerful shaper and reflection of culture and individual identity. I am interested in music theory because I like thinking about new ways to talk about musical experiences that are intangible and often seem ineffable. My main research focuses on meter and interactions between body and voice in Jewish and Greek Orthodox liturgical chant. I am also interested in Jewish identity in music, music philosophy, and analytical approaches for music of oral traditions more broadly."

### How did you become involved in music?

"My family of origin is quite musical and always encouraged me to sing, play piano, and incorporate music (both singing and listening) into every activity—from parties to chores around the house. As a young person I was lucky to be supported and challenged in my musical exploration by my piano teachers in high school and college, and by two different Cantor mentors. When I found music theory everything

seemed to fall into place—I finally was able to put words to what I was experiencing in music—and I've been a theorist ever since."

### What classes will you be teaching in the fall?

"Foundations of Music (MUS-100) and Music Theory I (MUS-221). It'll be an exciting semester!"

### What do you hope to bring to the Ursinus college music department?

"I look forward to bringing my love for learning and analyzing music, and hope to encourage my students, whatever their background, to approach sound experiences with open ears. It is my goal as music faculty to broaden the ways students think, talk, and write about music so they can better connect with the variety of sounds in our world, and with their own passions for performance, composition, listening, and scholarship. I'm excited to join the music department and Ursinus community!"

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ment.

"We will be offering an enormous amount of special release and limited edition LPs for Record Store Day," said owner Frank Dominici. "This will be our fourth year participating."

Dominici has also coordinated an in-store performance by Cliff Hillis, a local singer-songwriter who has been featured on WXPB and other area radio stations. Hillis will play a two-hour set when the store opens at 9 a.m.

Many Philadelphia record stores also have special events or promotions on Record Store Day.

Repo Records on South Street plans to open at 9:30 a.m., but their website cautions customers to arrive early if they plan to purchase a limited edition Record Store Day release, as these items tend to sell out quickly. The store also has a lineup of live bands performing from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Other participating stores all over the city include Creep

Records, Hideaway Music, Long in the Tooth, Beautiful World Syndicate, Milkcrate Cafe and Main Street Music.

Music lovers have their pick of stores to visit on Saturday, and if the mission of Record Store Day is successful, they will experience the unique community aspect of the independent record store.

Store owners and customers alike can share in this.

"I am glad to be a part of it because my passion is music," Matone said. "It is terrific to be able to go to work every day loving what you do and sharing your excitement with others."



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Photo courtesy of Henry Gustafson

MaTones Music opened on Main Street in Collegeville last fall and will participate in its first Record Store Day this weekend.

## THE GRIZZLY

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Photo Courtesy of Ursinus College Communications

UCDC performers James Daring and Kelsey Jean-Baptiste featured in ad for Jazzfest, where they will perform.

## Jazzfest to swing into action next weekend

*The music and dance departments worked together to create Ursinus's first Jazzfest*

**Erin McKinney**

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Students and faculty will have a unique opportunity to hear some contemporary jazz music within the next few weeks.

This year, for the first time in Ursinus history, the departments of music and dance are coming together to create Jazzfest, an interdisciplinary showcase of one of America's signature styles of music and dance.

The festival will be held over the weekend of April 28 and 29 and will showcase various "pop-up" performances from both student groups and professional performers alike.

This event has been wholly organized by students with the aid of professors and other Ursinus staff, and has received funding from the U-Imagine Center. The students in the History of Jazz and History of Jazz Dance classes have been coming together once a week throughout the semester to help plan Jazzfest.

There are "teams working on public relations materials, helping us with facilities planning and technical support, designing

Fest merchandise, and more," according to Dr. Holly Hubbs, professor of the History of Jazz course.

Skye Gailing, an anthropology and American studies double major and member of the History of Jazz class, is on the technical support team. She discussed the many benefits of a course like this, citing "artrepreneurship," a term created by Hubbs and Dr. Karen Clemente of the dance department.

Hubbs explains that "artrepreneurship" combines the skills of an artist with those of an entrepreneur.

"In today's competitive job marketplace, artists of all kinds need to be business-minded in order to succeed," said Hubbs. "Skills such as public relations management, digital marketing, contract legalities and other business skills require those in all areas of the arts to be business-minded in order to succeed."

The event promises to be memorable, as the student performers are being showcased alongside Philadelphia musicians Diane Monroe, Tony Micelli, and Ira Bond and professional choreographer Jeannine Osayande. Student performers include the

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Bonilla.

Sophomore stepper Megan Goldston got her name immediately.

"They call me Bullet because I'm so sharp in my movements," she said.

Daring also shared his step name, "Samurai," which he got because of his intense attention to detail.

"I believe it's because I like to focus my moves more on precision like a samurai sword," he said. "[It's] real corny, but I actually like it a lot."

After joining the team, Daring was surprised by the amount of students on campus that are interested in Seismic's performances.

"I didn't really think that Seismic, in the beginning, had such a big following," he said. "But actually, as it turns out, a lot of people on campus did, in fact, know them. That surprised me, but at the same time made me really happy that a lot of people on this campus wanted to see something like this, wanted to see stepping and musical dance made through the body. Being able to see an appreciation for that on campus was incredible."

Maldonado and Daring both discussed how Seismic offers a lot of value to the campus community.

Daring said, "Being able to see something as different as Seismic, which is a group that makes sound and music only through their body[ies] gives you a different perspective. It gives you something else that you can

Ursinus Jazz Ensemble, directed by Hubbs, UCDC, featuring works from Dunya Performing Arts Company, and student choreographer Donnay Burden.

When asked what she most looked forward to about Jazzfest this year, Gailing said she was excited for the student jazz ensemble concert which will be held outside of the Kaleidoscope and how fest goers will be encouraged to sit on the grass surrounding the venue to listen to the hard work and talent of the student musicians. There will also be accessible seating for those who may have trouble sitting on the ground.

Hubbs, who has been continuously involved with a jazz band since she was in seventh grade, thinks that jazz goes beyond just the music.

look at. Something else that you can look forward to."

"I think what is most unique and valuable about Seismic Step Team is the fact that we're different and able to unify such a diverse community together," Maldonado said. "We describe our purpose to be 'an organization that brings students (male, female, any race/culture) together to create sound as one cohesive unit' on the Ursinus website; and I find that to be completely true."

Daring said that people have consistently told him that they didn't know what stepping was before seeing a Seismic performance, and that they leave the performance interested in stepping.

Bonilla and Jean-Baptiste both agreed that their favorite performance was Airband.

"We killed Airband this semester. We looked so sexy it wasn't even funny," said Jean-Baptiste. "It was a great performance. It was one of my most favorite performances we've ever done."

Bonilla agreed.

"It was well put together," said Bonilla. "We tried really hard. We had a lot of fun, too."

Daring's favorite performance, on the other hand, is Seismic Jam, where the group shows off their entire repertoire.

"It's one of the few times where we do all the steps we know tracing back three-plus years of our stepping history and then [we showcase] new steps as well," said Daring. "It's a way for our new members to introduce themselves to the people

that they're stepping with and the people that they're stepping for."

Maldonado reflected on her four years performing with the group.

"It's an experience that I've loved as a senior and really showed what both myself and my team can do with both step and dance," she said. "I'm so excited to see what comes for the team in the future, especially with next semesters homecoming!"

Going forward, all the team members wanted to see Seismic Step continue its momentum and keep growing.

"I think it would be cool to have a big number because a lot of step is having to do everything in unison and be one," said Bonilla. "I feel like a lot of people feel discouraged when they see us and think 'We can't do that' and it's like 'Yeah you can.' We're very open to people coming to join us and it'd be cool to see us do a big number and see us all be one."

Jean-Baptiste would like to see the team perform more as well.

"[We need] more of our own concerts," she said. "We need more Seismic Jams."

According to Maldonado, Seismic Step's final performance of the year will be on Philanthropy Day on Wednesday, April 26.

"[I love] not just the improvisation in the music, but the larger aesthetic of spontaneity and risk-taking," said Hubbs.

This is partially why she looks forward to seeing how the students who coordinated the event actually execute it.

**"There should be nothing scary about jazz."**

— Holly Hubbs  
Professor of Music

"As in any major [event] planning scenario, things will arise, forcing our students planners to troubleshoot and improvise," she said.

To those who may be intimi-

dated by the genre, Hubbs says that this is a great opportunity to learn more.

"There should be nothing scary about jazz; you have to be willing to put yourself out there and take a chance by trying," said Hubbs.

Students will have the opportunity to put themselves out there and attend Jazzfest on Friday, April 28 to Saturday, April 29. More information can be found at <https://www.ursinus.edu/academics/music/jazzfest/>.



Photo courtesy of Sydney Cope

The Heefner Organ in Bomberger Hall recently celebrated its 30th anniversary on campus.

## Inside a campus tradition: the story of the Heefner Organ

**Brian Thomas**  
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When news of the Pearl Harbor attacks broke on campus, William Heefner headed to the Ursinus chapel to play the organ for anyone who wanted to listen. Decades later, music professor John French played an organ bearing Heefner's name to console mourners coping with the death of Ursinus president Bobby Fong.

The Heefner organ in Bomberger Hall had its 30th anniversary on campus this academic year. Since its installment, the music department has hosted a series of visiting organists and concerts by Alan Morrison, a professor at the Curtis Institute and the resident organist at Ursinus. This has generated a community centered on the organ and the performances that most students don't know about.

"It's largely a community of people who have been sort of long-term patrons of that organ series," said Holly Hubbs, professor of music. "Sometimes I feel like there's a disconnect ... and wonder if people even know

that stuff is going on because it is such an outside community attending [the series]."

Aside from the performance series, which attracts some of the most accomplished organists in the world, the instrument gets played for a number of traditions and services on campus. When memorial services are held, John French, professor of music, often plays. Students also get to hear it during academic convocation and baccalaureate.

*"It's stunning to look at, and a good instrument like that should be."*

— John French  
Professor of music

"There's this little bookend ... it's kind of ushering them in and ushering them out," said Hubbs, describing this tradition.

That said, most students are more familiar with the lore of the organ than its actual sound.

Ursinus students often hear on tours that the Heefner organ is the biggest organ in Pennsylvania, and while this is an over-exaggeration, it is pretty impressive. A

hand-out that outlines the organ's specifications says that "it has become known as one of the premier organs in the region, capable of allowing organists to perform the entire range of literature composed for the instrument." It has a total of 3,593 pipes, and each part was custom-built.

The Heefner organ is not Ursinus's first. According to the recent project "Breaking Ground: A History of the Construction, Destruction, and Renovation of Ursinus College" from the Bears Make History course, it was predated by the Clark organ. The project was undertaken by Shelby Bryant, Morgan Kentsbeer, Breanna Knisely, Morgan Larese, and Rachel Zane.

Installed in 1916, the Clark organ was much smaller, and was a gift from Elizabeth Clark, the widow of Ursinus advisory council member Charles Clark. President George Omwake was "overjoyed" by the instrument, but it didn't last long. Unspecified fumes from a chemical lab in Bomberger wrecked the pipes beyond repair. The façade was kept

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## At the intersection of art and meaning, student musicians find their sound

**Sienna Coleman**  
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Music is ubiquitous: a catchy tune on the radio we sing along to, a favorite record we listen to on repeat, or even something we create ourselves.

While there are countless genres and artists we may feel this connection with, some musicians are closer to home than we may realize. Among the Ursinus student body, we found several music artists who share this goal of changing us and our world with their music.

Junior Kevin Choice is a physics major who loves making his own beats. He said he began to write his own lyrics because he felt that a lot of current music, especially hip hop, was too negative—he wants to avoid "glorifying anything negative or harmful."

Choice records under the moniker Kasey Zoned. He has already released an instrumental tape and will release a mixtape of 4 lyrical songs and 4 instrumentals on April 20. Kasey Zoned's music is available on SoundCloud.

Much of Kasey Zoned's music is based on Choice's experiences with the intersection of race and depression—experiences he hopes will resonate with his listeners.

"Those feelings of depression are not unique to myself; I'm hoping that maybe people that listen to this will [think] 'that's where I'm at too, I'm glad I'm not alone,'" said Choice.

Choice also makes the conscious decision of avoiding oppressive language in his lyrics.

"I don't feel like it's my place," he said.

Choice added that he hopes "when people hear my music, because it's a little different than the mainstream music, they are in a way a bit relieved that there

is a different voice being heard without all the misogyny, the homophobia, and all the hate and violence [that exists in mainstream hip hop]."

First-year student Andrew McSwiggan experiments in the genre of electronic music. McSwiggan, a history and business double major, currently records under the alias Op3rator but has plans to change his stage name to Luxoddo Menatti.

He draws inspiration for his music from everyday observations of the world and the people around him with the intention of creating meaningful art.

"What I want to do is to create electronic music that always has some sort of message or purpose, some question it's answering or some sort of distinct emotion it's evoking," he said.

McSwiggan explained that he makes his electronic music by experimenting with "sounds that don't traditionally work well together" and seeing if he can "have them work in a coherent song and stand as a piece of art."

His music is available on SoundCloud and bandcamp. He told us that eventual goals for his music are to have his listeners understand that electronic music is a unique art form, and hopes his music will allow people to get lost in the world around them.

One of Ursinus' most well-known student music projects is Suspect Maars, a collaborative effort of juniors Antonio Goode and Mario Heitman. More than just music, the project also includes a clothing and visual art collective.

Suspect Maars have one original track on SoundCloud, and played a concert on campus last semester. Over the summer they are planning on dropping a five-track EP as well as having a pop-

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**Musicians** continued from pg. 4

up shop in Philadelphia's Ruckus Gallery with over 300 hand-made pieces of clothing and 20 paintings.

Their upcoming mixtape is a concept album, which Goode described as a "philosophical exploration of ourselves and the world."

"We venture into a lot of abstract themes and we try to preach ... empathy and understanding [and] tolerance," he said.

Much of Suspect Maars' thematic material deals with the importance of recognizing the severity of drug use and addiction: "real things that we are bogged down with as humans," according to Goode. They market their project with a mascot called Goonbot, which serves as a metaphor for the toxic mentalities from that can result from drug use.

Goode and Heitman said they would like to change society so that people are more self-aware of their impact on the world; the pair also advocates for a more organic and sustainable way of life.

"We want to preach a clean kind of lifestyle ... [and] being

yourself and finding your own way," Goode added.

Another music artist on campus is junior Colin McCloskey, an English major who strives to make the kind of music he wants to hear, drawing inspiration from some of his favorite bands.

*"[I hope to] create a piece of art that [keeps] people together and [brings] people to an overarching sense of unity."*

— Colin McCloskey  
Ursinus junior

McCloskey posed the question, "What would a Tame Impala/Rolling Stones collaboration sound like?"

"I'm going to make that and find out," he said.

McCloskey currently has two official full length LPs and five EPs, all of which are available for free on bandcamp under the name P-body. He said his music evolves and changes with every release, but his new album is inspired by disco music from the late 70s and early 80s because he sees something beautiful in the

way that music can unify people on the dance floor.

McCloskey makes a lot of his music using his iPad and GarageBand, and said that despite their sub-professional quality, these recording programs have their merits; he compared them to a sandbox with a limited amount of toys that you are forced to use in new and interesting ways.

"[I hope to] create a piece of art that [keeps] people together and [brings] people to an overarching sense of unity," McCloskey said of his expectations for his new album.

McCloskey said his vision for his music is to cultivate the physical, emotional, and mental response that the audience experiences when they hear, and said he wants people to feel something, "whether it is joy, sympathy, empathy or a nuanced understanding of a particular relationship dynamic."

Also a DJ at Ursinus' WVOU radio station, McCloskey said he is looking forward to a music festival that the station is currently planning to celebrate local artists. More information will be available from WVOU soon.



Photo courtesy of Suzanne Angermeier

Student musicians Colin McCloskey and Kevin Choice, some of the many Ursinus students creating their own recordings.

**Organ** continued from pg. 4

up for decorative purposes, and an electronic organ replaced the Clark organ in the 1940s.

The Heefner organ was a gift from Lydia Heefner, the mother of 1942 graduate, benefactor, and board member William Heefner. As a student, Heefner played the organ for Ursinus chapel services, and was the first to play the new one in 1986. It was built by Connecticut company Austin Organs, and specifically designed so students could access the internal components, according to the Bears Make History Project.

A good way to fully appreciate the complexity of the organ is

to do an organ crawl. "Crawl" is industry slang, but it's accurate—you literally have to crawl and climb to the top of the Bomberger auditorium. Last fall, I took the opportunity to go on the crawl.

You start in the basement, looking at the tanks that funnel air through the pipes.

Then, you enter a tiny door on the third floor of Bomberger, climb up a few rickety ladders, and carefully tip-toe across a dusty bridge that overlooks the auditorium, eye level with the back of the balcony. Here, you're surrounded by many of the pipes, ranging in size from miniscule to massive. It's hard to take it all in, and equally hard to not appreciate

the musical range of the instrument.

It can be hard to organize logistics, but French said that every fall he takes his music history class on the crawl before Thanksgiving break and welcomes visitors.

Still, for most students, according to Hubbs and French, the organ is mostly a visual and decorative phenomenon, which is understandable considering how it looks.

"It's stunning to look at, and a good instrument like that should be," said French.

The organ's size and complexity means that new types of sounds—which are made by com-

binning different pipes and stops—are always coming through when visiting organists come through.

"Their techniques differ, the way they combine sounds differ. I'm constantly hearing new [combinations of sounds]," said Hubbs. "That's the beauty of the organ, that, even though it's been there forever, you decide to can combine these different stops and it might be a sound that has never come out of it before."

French, who plays the organ, agreed.

"It's fabulous, it's a great instrument, it really is," he said. "It can just do all kinds of things. It has a wonderful variety of colors ... just because it's large doesn't

mean it's loud all the time. It's the variety of sounds you can get out of it."

This year's performance series has wrapped up, but the department is already looking forward to next year, when organ students at the Curtis Institute will come to campus, according to Hubbs. Students should watch out next fall for specific dates and times.



Have feedback on this story? Visit The Grizzly on Facebook!

## Happening on Campus

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Open Mic Night 7 p.m. Berman Museum	Wind Ensemble Concert 7:30 p.m. Lenfest Theater	Artist Demonstration and Hands-On Workshop 2 p.m. Ritter Studio Art Center	Student Showcase Recital 4 p.m. Bomberger Auditorium			Petting Zoo 11:30 a.m. Ritter Lawn



## Let “More Life” carry you through the summer

Leighnah Perkins  
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Drake fans had been haunted by a message since October that “More Life,” a new project, would be “coming soon.” Drizzy even dropped a set of three singles, “Fake Love,” “Two Birds, One Stone,” and “Sneakin’” just days after saying “More Life” would be coming soon. Still, it wasn’t enough and the waiting continued.

The last time I wrote in The Grizzly was actually to write about the damaging and problematic lyrics of “Two Birds,” in which Drake ribs Kid Cudi over his mental illness. What I didn’t mention was how I thought those lackluster three singles meant Drake might be over. It was almost as if it was too much music from him being released at once, as if he was working to keep up, yet losing his edge through rushing.

While fun to listen to, “Views” was not Drake’s best album. The songs and content became boring with the general theme being anger and annoyance at having to prove himself over and over again.

On one of my favorite tracks off of “More Life,” “Do Not Disturb,” Drake admits, “I was an angry youth [sic] when I was writing ‘Views.’” Even he knows that the 2016 release was not his best work.

With the three singles that followed, I wondered if Drake was washed. Could it be the end for a rap-crossover icon that had done so much for his city and the industry? Drake speaks a lot about redemption, but could he redeem himself after releasing sub-par music more suited to his enemies and people trying to drain him of his energy?

I should have known better. “More Life” proves that Drake is back and better than he ever has been. The playlist—Drake opts for this designation instead of calling

“More Life” an album—was released March 18 through Drake’s Apple Music Radio Show OVO Sound Radio. It’s a 22-song long volume of truly incredible “old Drake” music, even if some of the songs featured on the playlist were sung by other artists.

First of all, the features on the playlist were incredible. I have five words for you. Young Thug without auto-tune. Thug shines on the hard-hitting “Sacrifices” as well as the earworm-friendly and vastly under-rated “Ice Melts.” Current popular hip hop artist, Quavo, brings the heat for “Portland” flanked by Travis Scott to create the pompous-but-owning-it track. Jorja Smith, an R&B singer from the UK, absolutely slays “Get it Together” and “Jorja’s Interlude,” which are two of my favorites from the album. I can’t even talk about how much I love the Skepta or Kanye features because it’ll take too long.

The lyrical content of “More Life” was truly iconic. With “Views,” I found myself wondering if all Drake had to talk about anymore were Toronto references (though I love the city too), a take on some elusive manic pixie dream stripper that continued to break his heart, and constantly raging over having to prove himself. Sure, there were definitely some hits from “Views” (people are still playing “One Dance” after all), yet the album wasn’t inspiring and lacked the lyrical content Drake had captured in past albums like “Take Care.”

Yet, upon hearing songs like “Do Not Disturb” and “Teenage Fever,” I felt as though Drake had found his lyrical footing once more. “Do Not Disturb” sounds like a monologue of Drake looking back on his past life while “Teenage Fever” sounds like a mixture of summer and high school angst. Drake is truly reflective in this

playlist and wants us all to know it.

The songs essentially fall into one of three categories: summertime-appropriate, dancehall-inspired songs like “Blem” and “Madiba Riddim;” songs for when you want to feel like you’re better than everyone around you a la “Gyalchester” and “Skepta Interlude,” and songs for times of personal reflection like the aforementioned “Do Not Disturb” or “Lose You.” This is what his earlier track, “Views,” should and could have been.

While I will most certainly miss new Drake releases during his summer break (he ends the album describing in “Do Not Disturb” saying, “Takin’ the summer off, cause they tell me I need recovery...I’ll be back in 2018 to give you the summary”), it’s apparent he needs it. I’m just thankful he left us with 22 tracks to blast from the beach to our post-graduation existential crises. As 6 God would say, more life.

## Get it together and listen to Kendrick Lamar’s album

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“Y’all got ‘till April the 7th to get y’all shit together.” The great self-proclaimed King Kendrick Lamar prophetically spews this final definitive warning to top off “The Heart Part 4,” the Compton, CA native’s prologue to his newest sonic adventure, an album aptly titled “DAMN.”

If this track was any indication of what was to come from this new record, it was that our “rap-savior” was ready to cut throats of back-stabbing whack rappers, and that braggadocio and social justice discussions could artfully co-exist. And that the funky-soul-jam-flavored sound of his two most previous works would take a backseat to pummeling subwoofer-splitting bass lines, flagrant flows, and snapped-and-trapped percussive patterns.

Whether or not you had your shit together on April 7, Kendrick and his progressive label, Top Dawg Entertainment, revealed the April 14 release date for this highly anticipated follow-up to the controversial, social-justice-fueled, jazz-rap odyssey “To Pimp a Butterfly.”

“Butterfly” polarized fans with its dense soundscape (constantly evolving song structures and complex instrumental passages) and lyrical content (focused on issues of institutionalized racism, police brutality, all-in-all “hood politics,” and Kendrick’s rise to fame and its consequences).

This newest offering is quite the departure from its predecessor. However, Kendrick’s lyrical dexterity and instrumental integrity remain at peak form. On “DAMN.” the constantly evolving MC has mostly stripped the esoteric musicality, and in its place, opted for the more radio-listener friendly trap and boom-bap flavorings of his contemporaries: Drake, Migos, J. Cole, and Travi\$ Scott.

Lamar traverses this tenuous tightrope of mainstream rap appeal with confident ease on this record. “HUMBLE.,” his first offering as the lead single for this project, beautifully articulates the duality of this album’s content. Seemingly a satirical jab at the mediocre rappers at the forefront of the pop-rap scene, “HUMBLE.” suits the bouncy trap trash talk flavorings of typical radio-friendly rap.

According to Gary Trust at Billboard, “HUMBLE.” earned Kendrick his highest charting single on

the Billboard Hot 100, coming in at number two the week it dropped (just behind Ed Sheeran... great).

Regardless of this song’s wide appeal, Kendrick still attacks topics that are controversial such as female beauty standards and the devolving state of modern rap music. On “DAMN.,” Kendrick may be musically pandering to the masses, but his socially conscious messages that made “Butterfly” a masterful commentary still shine through. This is to say that the accessibility of his musical palette is no indication of the chill-inducing, poignant wordsmithing Lamar employs across this entire record.

“DAMN.” opens simply but lushly with a Spaghetti Western soundtrack a la Ennio Murriconi; plucky guitar and bass, strings and woodwinds with the warmth of a new sunrise, and suitably quiet acoustic drums. Kendrick sets the tone for the record with a spoken introduction; a tale that still confounds me and gives me goosebumps every time I listen.

After a quick snippet from the ignorant hosts of Fox News’ “The Five” criticizing Kendrick’s “Al-right” for its commentary on police brutality, “DNA.” pummels listeners with its raw energy and propulsive rhythms.

In the James Blake produced “ELEMENT.,” Kendrick out-Drakes Drake and lyrically dismantles the current scene while seemingly embodying its spirit in flow and execution.

The Rihanna-featured “LOYALTY.” showcases a backdrop of spliced, auto-tuned chipmunk choir, while she adds a welcomed female voice in an album dominated by men, beautifully ornamenting the track with her unique and melodic delivery.

Highlight “LOVE.,” which features up-and-coming singer Zacari, has major potential for hit status, with a psychedelic trap-soul churn, and a frank poetic portrait of modern romance.

The immensely bizarre U2 feature on “XXX.” is also a tasteful collaboration, with the band having songwriting credit. According to Noah Yoo, staff writer at Pitchfork, Bono’s soulful croon is a welcome addition to the track.

The final stretch of the album, “FEAR.,” “GOD.” and “DUCK-WORTH.” serve as the lyrical and musical pinnacles, chronicling Kendrick’s mentality throughout his growth from child to adult in Compton, the reveal of the story of T.D.E.’s birth, and also Kung-Fu Kenny’s musings on what it means

to be a rap God. The 55-minute journey ends where it begins, with a familiar phrase that resets the cycle, which warrants all repeated listens of this record. Hell, it’s only the day after its release and I’ve listened to it a solid ten times.

“DAMN.” is crackling with catchy beats, but does not sacrifice content. It’s musical and lyrical diversity keeps listeners on their toes. It is an album of great dichotomy, with the track listing reflecting in its titles (“PRIDE.”-“HUMBLE,” and “LUST.”-“LOVE.”). The dual nature of what it means to be a rapper in the modern age: having an honest (truth-telling and testifying being critical to all black art), yet egotistically fabricated sense of self-presentation.

Kendrick boasts like the rest of them, but he also brings to light the subtleties of the current state of hip-hop and the world at large by sometimes embodying and simultaneously defying them. “DAMN.” is a musical masterpiece: It casts its net wide and deep; it resonates; it’s brutally transparent; and it’s most shamelessly open. It is a portrait of an artist who constantly has our mouths agape in astonishment. We are only capable of uttering the word that blaringly sits atop the album cover in bold red: “DAMN.”



**Banks** continued from pg. 8

scrawny walk-on second baseman is now a captain and senior leader on a Bears team which is poised to make the postseason for the first time in the Exeter era.

Banks doesn't plan on leaving his two life passions anytime soon. He plans on getting into the music industry, hoping to one day open up his own record label. As for the immediate future, he is trying to pursue his masters in music business. Baseball is also part of the plan.

"I don't want to have an ordinary job. I don't want to have the 9-5 sitting in a cubicle. I want to go out, I want to travel, I want

to see some things, shake some hands, meet people," explains Banks. "That's the kind of job I want."

After Banks makes his living in the music industry, he'd like to revert back to his first love, baseball.

"After I retire, I'd like to move to a baseball complex that I built, and just be the old man who cuts the grass and soaks up in the sun in my final days. That would be the life," said Banks.

As of right now, baseball is still on his mind. Banks and Bears will be competing against Johns Hopkins on Thomas Field for senior day on Saturday, April 22 at 12:30 p.m.



Photo Courtesy of Amelia Goldstein

Banks throwing a ball in from the outfield. Banks and the rest of the senior class have lead to Bears in an impressive season thus far. The Bears are in contention for a conference playoff spot.

## UC athletes share the best pump-up music before competition

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"The music just gets me pumped up and in the zone," said first-year Ursinus College football and track and field athlete Matt Gallagher, when asked about the potential impacts of pre-competition music.

Like Gallagher, most athletes across the wide world of sports will jam to their favorite songs before every contest. Here at Ursinus, track and field athletes do the same; many runners and throwers plug in their headphones and rock out to their favorite tracks before competing.

"A majority of my pregame music is rap," said Gallagher. "I [also] tend to listen to some alternative rock and some hip/house remixes."

Gallagher likes to keep things

consistent. Whether he is playing football or competing in track and field, he does not make any drastic changes to his pregame set.

"No matter what sport I'm doing I will generally go through the same routine to get focused," he said.

Matt's go-to track is "Horse" by PNB Rock, featuring Kodak Black and A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie.

"I really enjoy the beats and some of the lyrics," he said. By featuring a fair amount of rap and hip hop on his playlist, Gallagher is jamming to some of the more popular trends in today's music industry.

"Even though I do not have a favorite genre of music, I love listening to country and rap music," said junior middle-distance runner and newly minted thrower Connor Lent.

Lent has been busy during this spring's outdoor season. Since he has been kept out of the 800-meter run by a nagging leg injury, Lent has used music to help him transition to the throwing events and make the most out of what could have been a lost season.

"I listen to a lot of country music before competing," he added. "It's not the most typical type that people listen to, but it helps get me in the zone before competition."

Lent has a wide ranging taste in music—country and rap are two very distinct categories. As for his go to track, Lent toggles between two songs, "DNA." by the ever more popular Kendrick Lamar and "Somethin' I'm Good At" by country star Brett Eldredge. Unlike Gallagher, Lent works to keep a fluid playlist, updating it with his changing tastes in music.

"In high school I listened to exclusively rap and hip hop," he said. "I've expanded out since my Ursinus track career started."

Like Lent, Ursinus College sophomore distance runner Evan Cirafesi also tunes into his favor-

ite country songs before competing.

"Before warming up, I'll listen to country music," said Cirafesi. "It helps me settle down."

People tend to call pregame music pump-up music, but this is not always the case: Some athletes, like Cirafesi, use music to calm their nerves before competing. Despite his love for country, Cirafesi turns to a classic rock song right before he hits the track. His go-to is Guns N' Roses' hit track "Welcome to the Jungle." Cirafesi has also used music to help get through what has been a tough year, as he has spent a majority of the fall, winter, and spring with the trainers, sidelined by continuous leg injuries.

"While doing rehab I listen to music," he said. "It gives me added energy."

One major reason for listening to pregame music is that it may help improve athletic performance.

"I think it definitely helps," said Gallagher. "It gets me going and puts me into a mentality that I do not think I can get without music."

This is a rationale used by not just Ursinus track and field athletes, as pregame music is a mainstay at most sporting events. According to an online article by Alejandra Ruani and The Health Sciences Academy, pre-competition music has been found to improve athletic performance. Whether this is true or not is disputable, but it seems to be a common feeling among most athletes that it does help.

"I do not necessarily believe that the music helps me perform better," said Lent. "Although I do think it helps me focus more on the challenge ahead, which can be advantageous."

Music is a major part of almost all sporting events as athletes prepare themselves for battle using their favorite tunes. Although the music may not be the same for each sport, athletes ultimately have the same goal of placing themselves in a position where they can be successful.

### Scores as of Monday, April 17, 2017

M. Lax (8-3)	W. Lax (6-6)	M. & W. Track (0-0)	Baseball (20-7)	Softball (12-16)	M. & W. Tennis (11-5)	M. & W. Golf (0-0)
April 12; Ursinus 15 - Elizabethtown 10	April 15; Franklin & Marshall 9 - Ursinus 4	April 12; Mid-Week Twilight Invitational @ Gwynedd Valley, PA*  *For full results see ursinusathletics.com	April 14; Ursinus 9 - Franklin & Marshall 0  April 15; Ursinus 16 - Gettysburg 2	April 11; Ursinus 6 - Muhlenberg 1  April 15; Ursinus 4 - Gettysburg 2	April 15; Men Ursinus 9 - McDaniel 0  April 8; Women Ursinus 9 - McDaniel 0	April 11; Men Ursinus Spring Invitational 8th place  April 11; Women Ursinus Spring Invitational



Photo Courtesy of Amelia Goldstein

Senior Jake Banks during an at-bat in a recent game. Not only is Banks a captain of the baseball team, he is also the vice president of the all-male identifying a cappella group, the Bearitones.

## UC baseball captain also hitting the high notes in a cappella club

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It's Sunday, Sept. 8, 2013, and Jake Banks is home for the first time since arriving at Ursinus three weeks prior.

He sits at the dinner table with his family, scarfing down his mother's homemade grilled chicken, mashed potatoes, and roasted vegetables—paying no attention to the time. A sudden realization hits. In just a short amount of time, he will be auditioning for one of the most prestigious and exclusive clubs Ursinus has to offer: The Bearitones,

Ursinus's all-male identifying a cappella group.

"I completely missed the group warm-up because I showed up late," said Banks. "I thought, 'I'm a freshman, I don't know how this works, they're probably not going to let me in now.'"

Banks stood at the end of a line that ran about 40 people deep waiting for his shot to impress the selection committee, hoping to secure one of the four available spots that the other singers were also auditioning for.

"I got in there and saw the panel, which is also scary because you just have a bunch of people looking at you like, 'Let's hear

you sing!'" said Banks.

With little practice and no warm-up at all, Banks stepped into the audition room and masterfully belted out Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine," and the rest is history.

Not only did Banks secure his spot in the Bearitones; he found out a week later at the first practice that the Bearitones would be singing Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" in that year's concert. Banks would sing the solo.

Banks is now a senior and the vice president of Bearitones. Ironically, singing initially wasn't a love of his.

"I went to an all-boys school

for elementary school, and in fourth grade you were required to do either hand bells, or join the boys' choir," said Banks. "I was basically forced into singing, and I didn't like it at first; I actually hated it. I even tried to flub singing in order to play the hand bells."

Banks continued to sing in the boys' choir and opted not to play the hand bells like most of his friends were doing. He had one gift that they didn't: a great voice.

By the time Banks got to high school, his love for singing and music grew into something that he wanted to make part of his everyday life.

"Once you got to ninth grade, you were required one art class and my schedule automatically fed me right into choir," explained Banks. "My music teacher was a really cool guy and we had a great relationship. He's the one that convinced me to audition for the acappella group at [Chestnut Hill Academy]."

Much like the Ursinus Bearitones, Chestnut Hill Academy also has a very exclusive acappella group with a rich tradition dating back to when the school first opened its doors in 1861. At the suggestion of his teacher, Banks auditioned for "The Hilltones" acappella group. Just like with his Bearitones audition, he impressed the panel and was inducted into the organization.

Although Banks is a very talented singer, that one hobby doesn't define him. He is also a senior captain on the baseball team, a position that seemed so improbable three years ago that not even he could have predicted it.

"I saw Coach Exeter my junior year at Penn—this is when he was still the coach of Swarthmore—

and he seemed like a nice guy, so I thought I'd reach out to him in the future," said Banks. "After Coach [Exeter] came here, I took a look at Ursinus, applied, got in, and emailed [Exeter], and told him I'd love to play for the Bears if possible."

Coach Exeter didn't guarantee him a spot on the team, but allowed Banks to try out for the team as a walk-on second baseman and outfielder. That fall, Banks joined the rest of the team and walk-on hopefuls during fall ball, the month long "try out" where players can showcase their talents.

"Coach pulls me into the office in the fall and says, 'I appreciate your hard work, but I don't see you traveling with this team, I don't see you playing at all with this team, and I think it will take a herculean effort for you to make this team,'" said Banks.

Banks, standing 5'10" and weighing just 140, had the odds stacked against him. Most kids would have heard that and thrown in the towel, but he wasn't about to give up on one of his greatest passions.

"I was pretty upset, but then I worked my [butt] off in the winter, came back in the spring, and middle of the season [Exeter] came up to me one practice and said, 'You're traveling with the team for a game against Lebanon Valley. Congratulations,'" recalls Banks. "That's when I knew I made the team, but every year he says nothing is guaranteed and just keep working your [butt] off, and that's what I've been trying to do ever since that call up to Lebanon Valley."

Three years later, the one-time

See Banks on pg. 7

### Upcoming Games

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sat. Cont.	Sat. Cont.	Sunday	Monday
	M. & W. Track and Field vs. Widener Invitational  Baseball @ Swarthmore 3:30 p.m.	M. & W. Track and Field vs. Widener Invitational  W. Golf vs. CC Championship	W. Lacrosse vs. Haverford 12 p.m.  Baseball vs. Johns Hopkins 12:30 & 3:30 p.m.	Softball @ Franklin and Marshall 1 & 3 p.m.  M. & W. Tennis vs. Johns Hopkins 1 p.m.	W. Golf vs. CC Championship	