

APR. 25, 2024

HARVARD

VOL LV ISSUE 24

# independent

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

*April Showers*



# MASTHEAD

April 25, 2024

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# May the Foam be With You

*Behind the suds of Mather Lather XVI: The Empire Strikes Bath.*

BY CLARA LAKE '27

We all know that famous line from *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back*: “Luke, I am not your Father, I am your Foamdaddy.” Oh, wait, that one is from *Episode XVII, The Empire Strikes Bath*. Well, Harvard nightlife might be “a movie” after Mather HoCo struck again last Friday night in a galaxy far, far, away (down at the end of Cowperthwaite Street) with the 17th Mather Lather.

Each year, Mather Lather, Harvard’s annual foam party, has a different theme and is titled with a related bath, soap, or foam pun. This year, it was a Star Wars play on words. And, thanks to the professional company that Mather hires, which provides a foam cannon called Foamdaddy, the foam was strong with this one.

After 1,000 students attended the first Lather in 2002, the sudsy soirée quickly became renowned. The New York Times mentions Mather Lather as one of the original Foam Parties, back when the theme started gaining popularity. Since its early days, Mather Lather has become a trademark of the House, as the only foam party at Harvard, and the execution of the event has improved. However, the Lather faced near-dissolution in 2019.

Concerns have been raised regarding the sanitarness of Mather Lather in the past, but the ultimate reason for its forced hiatus was the COVID-19 pandemic, when students were not on campus and mass gatherings were not allowed. In 2023, Mather Housing Committee (HoCo) circulated a form seeking interest in bringing back the event for the first time since 2019. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, and many seniors reflected that Mather Lather “is such a big part of being in Mather,” according to current HoCo Co-Chair Thor Reimann '25. Reimann is roommates with Co-Chair Anna Dean '25, who was also part of the team that successfully revived Mather Lather last year.

The absence of historic house-sponsored events like Mather Lather was a noticeable impact of COVID-19. “I think COVID did a number on house life,” said Reimann. “It’s these events that really crystalize why being in a house is so cool,” he said. “When are you ever going to build a foam pit in the dining hall again in your life, you know? I think it’s so college.”

The event helps boost Mather’s reputation. “It’s a great way to invite people to Mather,” said Reimann. “People don’t always come and visit Mather, so it’s a great time to get them to see the house, have some perks associated with the house.”

In 2023, 750 students attended Mather Lather XVI, according to Reimann. The goal for the 2024 event was “naturally 1,000, because that’s the next big number.” This year’s Lather had about 600 attendees, Reimann shared after the event.

Of this year’s 600 attendees, some were eager to experience Mather Lather for the first time. “I think it’s a really unique experience. I have heard about this but have never indulged in the activity.

I’ve never heard of a party where there’s a bunch of soap and suds,” said William Grant '24.

Fitting 600 to 1,000 students in a house dining hall is shockingly not a Jedi Secret. It’s a strategized process that finds success thanks to a huge team effort, a strict building schedule, and Mather dining hall’s open layout. The build runs from 9 a.m. on the day of the event until 10 p.m. when the Lather begins, and Mather residents volunteer alongside HoCo throughout the day to build a massive foam pit.

The foam pit is built from wooden frames that are reused each year. “A lot of these have special paintings on them that people maybe painted 10 years ago,” said Reimann. “Last year, being the first year after COVID, we had no idea what the paintings were on the tiles, so it’s like rediscovering institutional memory which is really cute.” The frames are then covered with layers of carpet and plastic tarp, so as not to damage the dining hall when foam starts spraying.

The foaming process has taken years of perfecting. “We’ve had 17 tries to get to this product,” said Reimann. “Before COVID, they used to...make the foam themselves.” The homemade foam solution unfortunately backfired in 2005, when the proportions were wrong and reportedly caused rashes. “I think this is where the rumors come from of it being unhealthy,” said Reimann. “But that’s why we hire our professional company.”

Reimann thinks that “it’s also just fun to, at a place that’s Harvard, have something that’s as unhinged as Mather Lather.” Perhaps it is this level of absurdity that makes the event the subject of speculation. “Freshmen this year were asking me, do you re-use the foam?” reported Reimann. “I was like, how would that be possible? Like literally what?”

Popular demand and preservation of house lore were what prompted the Lather to return, and working with house administration and HUHS to ensure a safe and healthy event is what will help it stay. “If it wasn’t going to be safe, it wouldn’t happen. We had to jump through hoops to make sure that we could bring it back, so it just wouldn’t have happened if it wasn’t something that could last,” said Reimann. “It’s just like one of those items of House lore and it’s like if you lose that, you’re losing a lot of spirit and a lot of things that make your community unique.”

Safety precautions include mandated shoe requirements and “a pretty strict no alcohol policy,” Reimann explained, since a bottle or can lost in the foam could cause harm. The foam makes it hard to grip onto drink containers. “We actually still have a phone that someone lost last year and never contacted us about,” said Reimann.

This year, some took full advantage of the Star Wars theme, and students dressed in many different variations of Princess Leia made the Imperial March to Mather. There was also a range of scantily clad Jedis, Sith Lords, and even some



droids in attendance. Maggie Swanson '25 wore a version of Princess Leia’s classic white gown originally featured in *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*.

Though the variety and creativity in outfits were stellar, many attendees simply wore swimsuits. Grant opted for a speedo. “I didn’t want to get all my clothes super wet and soapy. And I had a couple speedos laying around, so I thought it’d be a great idea to wear this,” he said.

Also sporting a pair of goggles, Grant was fully prepared for the space battle that was the Mather Lather dance floor. The Foamdaddy cannon, much like Darth Vader, had no mercy. In the middle of the crowd, foam covered all orifices, and at times it was hard to breathe and see. Picture elderly Princess Leia floating through space in *The Last Jedi*. Yet, (SPOILER) she survived, and so did all of the Mather Latherers. At the edges of the crowd, the foam was much more manageable, though still swamping up to peoples’ knees.

Though not as large a turnout as hoped, Mather Lather remained a hit and an admirable effort by the Mather HoCo. Perhaps even more impressive than the creation of the giant foam pit was the clean up. “We have to have the d-hall ready for breakfast in the morning. So clean up is 2 to 5, to 6 a.m. even; it’s an all hands on deck effort” said Reimann. “Our custodial staff, so blessed, they all show up at 2 a.m.,” he said, noting that some of the staff had even helped at the first Mather Lather.

At 3:57 a.m. on Saturday morning, the Mather House Instagram story revealed that all traces of the Lather were gone. Now, the Mather Dining Hall will remain a normally functioning dining hall until next year. Until then, may the foam be with you.

**CLARA LAKE '27 (CLARALAKE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WROTE THIS ARTICLE WHILE LISTENING TO THE ORIGINAL STAR WARS SOUNDTRACK**

**PHOTO BY CLARA LAKE '27  
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# FORUM

## More Than a Number

*The hidden implications of Harvard regressing back to mandatory standardized testing scores.*

BY RANIA JONES '27

My heart hurts thinking of my sixteen-year-old self who placed her entire worth into a two-digit ACT score. I recall the silence in my household that followed my first test score, which was below my parents' expectations, and the world of opportunities I was told to believe would only open up when I tested higher.

On April 11, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences announced that students applying to Harvard College's Class of 2029 must submit standardized test scores, hopping on the trend of a growing group of elite U.S. universities returning to standardized tests after a pause prompted by the pandemic. Some of these other universities include Yale, Dartmouth, Brown, and MIT.

In June 2020, as the pandemic severely limited access to standardized testing, Harvard began a temporary test-optional policy under which students could apply to the college without submitting scores. The admissions cycle for the Class of 2028 was the fourth in which students were able to apply test-optional.

For the Fall 2025 admission cycle, other eligible tests will be accepted, including Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, for what Harvard called "exceptional cases" when applicants are unable to access SAT or ACT testing.

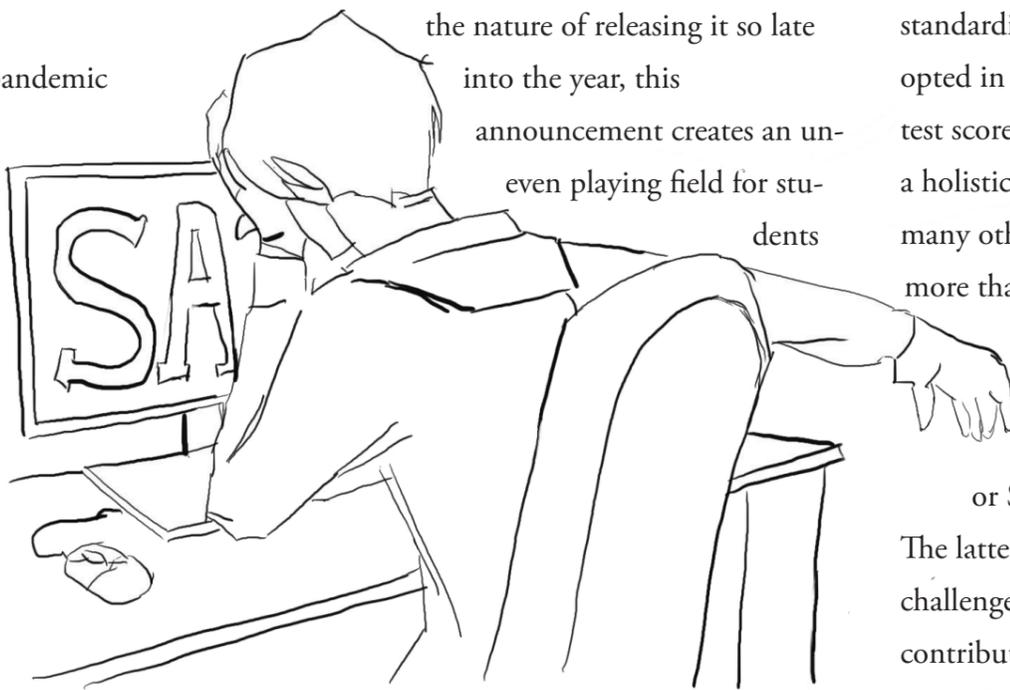
I admit that I did submit an ACT score in my application to Harvard. But, I also admit that I took the ACT three times, met twice a week with a standardized testing tutor, and had the time and ability to access hundreds of practice exams and resources. I recognize the privilege of access to these resources, and that this degree of accessibility is rare.

In theory, the virtue of standardized testing is its universality, and

while there is generally widespread availability of such testing, the playing field is not even. Not all students attend well-resourced schools, and those who come from modest economic backgrounds or first-generation college families may have had fewer opportunities to prepare for standardized tests.

In her message, Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dean Hopi E. Hoekstra wrote that access to testing should never prevent a student from applying to Harvard and included information for those who may not be able to access the SAT or ACT, as well as other sources for no-cost tutoring and test preparation.

However, there is a specific problem with the timing of the announcement. Given the nature of releasing it so late into the year, this announcement creates an uneven playing field for students



applying to college in the coming cycle. Many students assumed they did not need to take the SATs or ACTs, and they therefore are now likely unable to apply to Harvard in the fall.

There is, however, a bigger problem—prospective applicants are going to see this reversal as a sign to equivocate their standardized test scores with their ability to apply to top universities. Harvard, a globally renowned pinnacle of undergraduate education, can already feel untouchable in nature. Given the newly added pressure to submit a score, applicants will self-select in a more critical way as to whether or not they should enter the application pool. Many prospective applicants, who now may choose to not apply, are surely

qualified in all other aspects to attend Harvard, including strong extracurriculars, community service, essays, and recommendations. Harvard's Class of 2029 is undeniably going to miss out on these qualified individuals.

In 2023, economists at Opportunity Insights, based at Harvard, found that one-third of the children from the top 0.1 percent of parental incomes scored 1300 or higher on the SAT, while less than 5 percent of middle-class students did the same. As a result, students from low-income backgrounds and schools that typically do not send students to prestigious universities potentially might be more hesitant to apply to Harvard.

I have a fundamental problem with standardized testing, even as someone who opted in to submit my score. Standardized test scores do not work for everyone, and in a holistic process like college admissions, so many other things in someone's life matter more than a two or four-digit number. Some of the most brilliant people that I know and love—in the Harvard space and in others—did not submit an ACT or SAT score in their college application. The latter group are incredible people who challenge my thoughts, impact my habits, and contribute to my personal growth, just as much as the former.

Harvard prides itself on its ability to garner the world's next generation of thinkers and leaders who will contribute to shaping the future. At a university where we are taught to think critically, I cannot help but feel disappointed by this decision. Harvard roots itself in its commitment to a well-rounded admissions process that considers a variety of factors beyond standardized test scores. To cultivate the thoughtful, critical thinkers that Harvard seeks, a more transparent and well-timed admissions policy must be implemented.

**RANIA JONES '27 (RJONES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)'S LIFE-LONG ENEMY IS THE ACT SCIENCE SECTION.**

**GRAPHIC BY EMILY PALLAN '27**

# ARTS

## Eleganza Turns 30

The 30th anniversary of Harvard's greatest fashion show ushers in a new season of culture and fun.

BY ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26 AND CHIDIMMA ADINNA '25

Harvard's largest student-run charity, dance, and fashion show, *Eleganza*, celebrated its 30th birthday on April 20. *Eleganza* breaks the mold of a typical fashion show by exhibiting fashion pieces and social expression through a diverse array of dances. Produced by Bristol Fales-Hill '25, Norah Ostin '25, and Melanie Volz '25, this year's show included fashion pieces from brands including Chaveli's Playhouse, Boomerangs, and Vico Style. Ticket proceeds benefited The Front Porch Arts Collective, Artists for Humanity, and The Boston Foundation. *Eleganza's* commitment to showcasing beauty and artistic movement from different cultural backgrounds while maintaining a modern appeal has made it one of the most highly anticipated student-run shows of the year.

"There are very few opportunities on campus where one's artistic vision can extend to as many mediums that *Eleganza* has," said Van Tran '25, a dancer in the show. "*Eleganza* has dance. *Eleganza* has fashion. *Eleganza* has walks."

This semester, *Eleganza* hosted an excited crowd at the Bright-Landry Hockey Center. The show was titled "*Eleganza* Eternal" to symbolize the courage of *Eleganza's* founders and the never-ending determination of its current student organizers, models, and backstage team. *Eleganza* Eternal began with an action-packed opening number featuring the dancers that would perform in the show's three exciting scenes: Utopia, East2West, and Akoma.

Utopia, choreographed by Chalisa Hoskins '26 and Liliana Price '25, engulfed audience members with its dramatic dance moves and space-inspired clothing, all embellished with neon-colored lights. Featuring a mix of intense hip-hop to smooth rhythms, Utopia began the show with an electric performance, leaving the audience feeling euphoric and energized.

Tran, who was a part of Utopia, was able to explore a different side of himself and his dancing abilities in the scene. "Utopia felt different parts of my body moving which was refreshing to feel... I was overjoyed to explore these different styles and grow myself as a dancer [and] I was ecstatic to put

on different hats to bring the scene director's vision come to fruition."

Following Utopia was guest act Omo Naija X The Wahala Boys, Harvard's premier African dance troupe, which captivated the audience with African themes infused with modern hip hop and pop music. This guest performance also stunned audience members with sensual moves and coordinated group sets that went well with the performance of the main *Eleganza* ensemble.

Scene 2, East2West, was choreographed by May Chung '25 and Jamie Momoh '25. Scene 2 successfully bridged the gap between music and dance choreography popular in K-pop and the vibrant energy of Afrobeats.

This cultivated one incredible and electrifying performance that audience members could sing and dance along to. The fusion was not just an incredible performance but also a celebration of cultural exchange, crafted to honor and compliment the diversity of both genres.

"The title 'East2West' encapsulates the essence of the scene perfectly. It was a culturally diverse dance journey that transported both dancers and audience members across continents, from the east to the west," explained Laurinne Eugenio '26, a dancer in the piece. "I've always been captivated by African and K-pop dance styles, so having the opportunity to learn those moves was incredibly enjoyable. While the choreography initially posed a challenge, our choreographers, [Chung and Momoh], were exceptionally patient and supportive, guiding us through every step of the process until we fully mastered the dance routine."

Following Scene 2 were guest performances by the Harvard Contemporary Collective and Black Men's Forum (BMF) Step. No stranger to the *Eleganza* stage, each group wowed audiences with impressive tricks, innovative choreography, and long-lasting traditions, such as BMF's dance to the classic hit "Pony," which led to an eruption of cheers from the audience.

The final scene, Akoma, choreographed by Red Hamblin '27, mesmerized the audience with its breathtaking display of amazing dancers and fashion which spotlighted the profound impact of the African diaspora and the global influence it has

had on the world around us. In her pre-show Scene Director feature on the *Eleganza* Instagram, Hamblin shared that her scene was about "honoring the story of Black people and how far we've come." The performance transcended mere celebration, with a diverse array of choreography featuring triumphant movement and empowerment. "Akoma," a term rooted in Ghanaian heritage symbolizing love, goodwill, and endurance, felt present throughout the scene. "It was a labor of love and super cool to watch it all come together," said Nahla Owens '25, a dancer in Hamblin's scene.

Moreover, Akoma served as a commemoration of *Eleganza's* 30-year journey since its beginning in 1994. Born out of the visionary spirit of a group of students in BlackC.A.S.T. (Community and Student Theater), Harvard's first Black student production group, *Eleganza* emerged from a recognition of the lack of performance spaces that had a blend of visual and performing arts all in one. Thus, this final performance not only paid homage to the past but also made a bold step forward in the continued celebration of diversity, creativity, and the enduring spirit of artistic expression.

For *Eleganza* lead Izzy Guillaume '24, meaning she danced in all three acts of the show, the magic of *Eleganza* comes from the opportunity it gives to "learn from all five of the scene directors who brought such different visions, cultures, and dance styles to the stage... Working alongside such talented, diverse dancers was an [unforgettable and] incredible learning experience." Through their efforts, the *Eleganza* crew made an unforgettable night for the students who attended.

"Seeing the whole production materialize from the first few rehearsals to the week of the show has also demonstrated just how talented the executive team is. They are running such a massive operation, and I have so much respect for all the work they put into it," explained Owens. "As a performer, it's also such a rare opportunity to have an audience of that size—there truly is no stage like the Ganza stage."

**ADEDOYIN ADEBAYO '26 (AADEBAYO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS IMPRESSED BY CAMPUS ART PRODUCTIONS. CHIDIMMA ADINNA '25 (CADINNA@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL DEFINITELY BE AUDITIONING FOR NEXT YEAR'S SHOW!**

**GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26  
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# Journeying Through *Eastbound*

Harvard's Asian American Dance Troupe's Dreamy 30th Annual Spring Performance.

BY CLARA CORCORAN '25

As I approached the historic Loeb Drama Center on the evening of April 19, filled with anticipation for the opening performance of *Eastbound*, I was met by a bustling queue of friends, family members, and dedicated fans, all eagerly awaiting the spectacle about to unfold. *Eastbound* is the annual spring performance and celebration of Asian culture presented by Harvard's Asian American Dance Troupe (AADT). *Eastbound* is always remarkable, showcasing the diversity and vibrancy within the Asian dance community and its presence at Harvard.

This spring, the 30th installment of *Eastbound* boasted a dynamic community of over 300 dancers and an entirely sold-out opening night. Waiting to take my seat, I watched as students ready with flowers and cameras fostered one of the most exhilarating atmospheres I've encountered at a Harvard-affiliated show.

A critical component of the AADT community is their commitment to the involvement of students from a variety of cultural and dance backgrounds. As explained on their website, AADT pride themselves on their non-audition, "all are welcome" policy, featuring dancers for their passion and eagerness to share their unique cultural experiences with a larger stage. Their mission explains, "We hope to encourage interaction and collaboration with other dance groups on campus and make AADT a reflection of Harvard's diverse and creative environment." AADT embodies a sincere and enduring commitment to spreading awareness of Asian-American culture on campus and a lasting dedication to fostering inclusivity and understanding within the broader community.

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As the curtain lifted and the first act of *Eastbound* began, audience members sat posed at the edges of their seats, absorbing the energy imminent from the stage and keen to be swept away by the magic of the performance.

"Flagship," *Eastbound's* opening number, began the show with a fusion of ethereal, mesmerizing beauty and raw power.

Dancers, draped in elegant, flowing gowns, glided gracefully across the stage, their dresses undulating like waves, synchronized with the rippling melody in the background. "Flagship" not only captured the essence of the dancers' collective grace and fluidity but also offered forth a captivating interplay of stillness and motion, evoking imagery of water flowing and crashing across the stage.

After "Flagship" concluded and the crowd's fervent roars dissipated, AADT captains Anthony Lee '24 and Si Chiang Wu '24 took the stage to address the audience and the troupe alike, reminiscing about their early shows in Lowell

Lecture Hall and speaking to the growth of the AADT community since their early days. I would be remiss not to mention that the captains' introductions of the AADT board members were extremely touching. Highlighting each and every person on board, from the treasurer to the technical chairs, the captains mentioned their co-board members with a level of sincerity and respect that exemplified a level of commitment and friendship within the group that I felt during the entire performance.

The next performance "HIVE," was an upbeat, hip-hop dance featuring an array of performers in yellow and black streetwear. The performance was angular and jazzy, featuring sharp, coordinated movements and fierce facial expressions while set against a dark, dynamic backdrop.

The next dance, "Immortal Magpie Bridge," was both delicate and precise. Dancers wearing long pastel dresses adopted swift movements as they bounded across the stage, once again juxtaposing the strength and power of the dancers with a soft gracefulness. Repeatedly dropping and picking up a cloth, the dancers crafted a narrative on grief and the subjective experience of loss in life. This metaphorical undertone to their third dance serves as an attestation to AADT's commitment to storytelling and cultural memory, using contrast in movement and lighting to further the emotional weight of their performances.

One of my favorite acts from the entire performance was "Hòn Sen Vi t" (Lotus Soul), a captivating traditional Vietnamese fan dance. "Lotus Soul" began with an upbeat K-pop soundtrack characterized by catchy melodies and dynamic beats. The music pulsed with energy, seamlessly blending elements of pop and electronic music with the dancers' striking coordination and setting a vibrant tone for a seemingly traditional piece. Dancers playfully made heart shapes with their hands in a lively, modernized transition that brought an incredibly fun and carefree energy to the auditorium. As the dance progressed, the stage became bathed in hues of red, intensifying the dramatic entrance of the fans being used and the intricacy of the dancer's coordination.

"Chosen Family" was also of particular note in the context of the larger *Eastbound* performance. A tribute to the dancers' time at AADT, the dance celebrated the robust community at AADT, celebrating queerness and cross-dressing through the performances' costumery and choreography. The sonic composition of the performance was also not to be forgotten, and the piece's transitions from subtle melodies to vibrant, crashing beats were seamless—a decision that mirrored the strength of the relationships that comprise our "chosen families." As the music swelled, so did the emotional intensity of the dance, culminating in a powerful expression of solidarity and acceptance.

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Sabiha Amin '27 joined AADT during her first semester at Harvard. For Amin, the organization was her first exposure to the dance

world. When asked about her experience specifically connecting with dance through AADT, on the grounds of community and her instruction, she explained, "I definitely improved so much. [AADT] makes you a lot more confident in your body and [with] the people around you, and it's just a really wholesome and energizing space that helps you relax from everything that's going on here." Amin characterized AADT as not merely a space for rigorous training and carefully coordinated practices, but also a respite from the outside world.

Amin described AADT's flexible structure that allows students to be involved to a variety of degrees. AADT's competitive team "AADT Beyond," performs at and outside of Harvard, offering a larger time commitment for those interested. There are also a variety of other lower-commitment branches that offer students outlets for a myriad of traditional and contemporary forms of dance. Amin continues saying that AADT is "truly one of the best communities on campus" and that the group's organizational precocity is one of the group's greatest merits.

Amin continued, saying "They're incredibly organized with how they go about the event, go about rehearsal, go about practices, go about ensuring people actually pull up to practices," a component of AADT's leadership that Amin views as fundamental to fostering community engagement in an environment where students are constantly asked to prioritize different academic and extracurricular priorities. For Amin, this structured approach not only enhances participation but also cultivates an environment where students feel supported in balancing their diverse academic and extracurricular commitments.

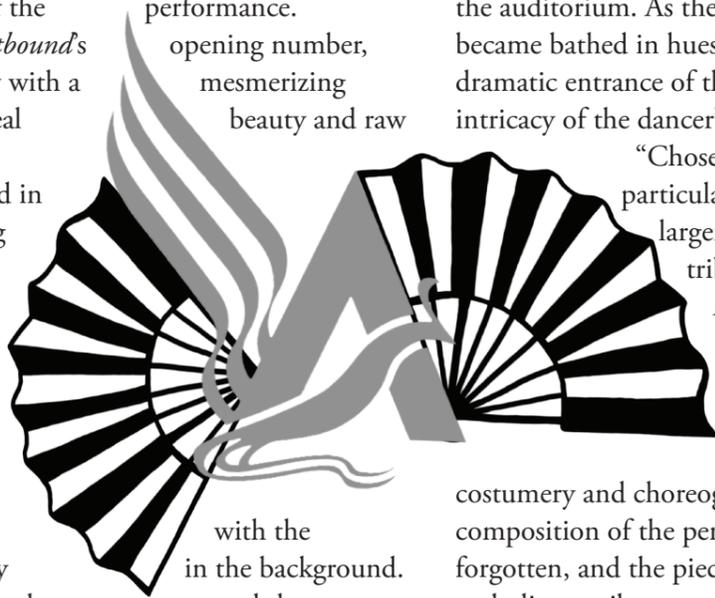
Laurinne Eugenio '26 shared the same glowing reviews as Amin, stating "This was my first time dancing with AADT, and it was incredibly fulfilling." Eugenio explains, "I was part of Serena and Carol's dance, which featured a Tagalog song. It felt amazing to be in a dance that represented and showcased my Filipino identity and heritage." Highlighting the spirit of representation and inclusivity that defines AADT, Eugenio poignantly illustrated that the magic within an organization like AADT is sharing a part of yourself with others through an outlet that is both creative and fundamentally communal, while simultaneously offering forth a diverse set of perspectives to a larger audience.

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Stepping out of Loeb and into the night, the experience of *Eastbound* seemed to follow me as I walked: an evening of fun, beauty, raw talent, and incredibly creative choreography. Through their performances, AADT not only celebrates the skill and cultural diversity of its members, but reminds us of the beauty found in sharing our stories, traditions, and identities with one another. AADT exemplifies dedication, careful planning, and a space where self-expression is not only desired, but cherished.

CLARA CORCORAN '25 (CLARACORCORAN@COLLEGE.HAVVARD.EDU) WRITES ARTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY ALMA RUSSELL '26



# Building on the Past, Looking Toward the Future

A look into the Fogg Museum's new *Future Minded* exhibition.

BY GEMMA MALTBY '27

As I walked into the Harvard Art Museums' new *Future Minded* exhibition, my eyes struggled to focus on any single piece. My gaze traveled from documentary photographs to a long canvas splattered with paint. I saw modern sculptures standing across from Greek antiquities, which lay just steps away from a silk waistcoat from New England. The works came from different decades, continents, and cultures with, at first glance, little seeming to connect them.

But this is not a conventional museum exhibition. Rather, staged across two galleries on the third floor of the Fogg Museum, *Future Minded* is a diverse selection highlighting recently acquired works that "exemplify the Harvard Art Museums' collecting vision and strategies," according to the exhibition description.

Jackson Davidow, the John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Curatorial Fellow in Photography at the Harvard Art Museums—who worked closely with Soyoung Lee, the Landon and Lavinia Clay Chief Curator, to organize the exhibition—elaborated on the museums' vision and strategies. In an interview with the *Independent*, he stated, "Our collective vision is very much informed by the works that we have already. But thinking deeply about what are some new narratives that are important to foreground [and] what types of areas will stand the test of time, we're definitely interested in introducing diverse narratives."

Holding true to his word, the exhibition features works like Nicoleas Berchem's *Standing Man Seen from Behind*, a pre-modern Dutch drawing of a man leaning casually against a table. By acquiring this piece, the museum demonstrated how it is still seeking to build upon its historical areas of strength—like European art. However, the museum is also looking to expand and complement its current collection with art from different contexts. According to Davidow, "Knowing the deep history of our collection, you know, what works, can converse in meaningful and even provocative ways with what we already have and future generations and to engage critically."

The curators believe that

contemporary stories will allow viewers to reflect on and connect with the works on a deeper level. For example, a monumental series of documentary photographs, produced by Boston-based Melissa Shook between 1988 and 1991, resonates decades later, as the homelessness crisis persists across Boston and around the United States. Shook's portraits of the unhoused women with whom she fostered deep relationships are striking in how they show the dignity and worth of women who were often overlooked or uncared for in their lives.

In addition to sharing previously untold stories, the artists whose work is on display themselves come from many different, often underrepresented, backgrounds. Davidow said, "The show really brings into focus the ways in which we've been committed to foregrounding work by artists of color, queer artists, women artists, [and] many people who have been marginalized from histories of art that we might be more familiar with." For instance, the exhibition includes an artwork, *RED POWER*, by Choctaw and Cherokee artist Jeffrey Gibson, who is representing the United States at the Venice Biennale, a renowned international art show, this year. In *RED POWER*, Gibson masterfully combines various media: a photograph, beaded, threaded, and painted geometric patterns, and numerous vintage pins. *RED POWER* sheds light on Native American experiences while challenging the historically established boundary between "fine arts" and "craft."

There are many other works that, like *RED POWER*, touch on the themes of identity and performance that dominate much of the exhibit. A queer South African artist, Zanele Muholi, explores this intersection of identity and performance in a photographic self-portrait titled *Mihla III*, Port

Edward in which they transform themselves into a monumental being by wrapping a towel, a seemingly mundane object, around their head to create a magnificent makeshift headdress.

Davidow said, "I think [questions of fashion, self-presentation, and identity] is one thing that a lot of students are interested in and...is important, especially as we think about contemporary art as a terrain where new identities and desires and ways of being in the world are perhaps being illuminated in disparate ways."

The exhibition also highlights experimental works. Willie Cole's *Five Beauties Rising* are a notable example. The five prints were produced using ironing boards that were flattened in different ways—beaten by hammers and sledges, stood on, or run over by trucks, for example. The finished product, a collection of tombstone-like shapes, is a moving

tribute to the strength and resilience of generations of Black women in his family.

The curators hope that the pieces in this collection will stand the test of time and offer meaningful insights to viewers for years to come. This is a difficult task, made even more so because the curators must be highly selective in acquiring works due to limited space and resources at the Museums. Therefore, collaboration among people with different areas of expertise is essential to the curation process. Even so, it is important to note that many of the artists featured in the exhibition have already established names for themselves.

"I think most of these works are [made] by fairly well-known, even canonical, artists at this point, or at least very successful within art worlds, even if they're still just beginning to enter people's radar," Davidow said.

Despite the challenges of collecting contemporary modern art due to the uncertainty around which pieces will remain relevant, the Harvard Art Museums are investing heavily in the genre. According to Davidow, there is something particularly powerful and energizing about contemporary modern art, in part because there is an opportunity to engage with living artists.

Davidow himself was able to interview Chinese photographer Guanyu Xu about *Worlds Within Worlds*, a mesmerizing photograph of the artist amid an elaborate installation of other photographic works he hung in his parents' home. The work speaks to Xu's own identity as a queer artist hiding from his parents, touches upon geopolitical issues by referencing Chinese-American relations, and even alludes to issues around social media, all while participating in different image-making discourses and practices. Davidow was excited to cultivate a relationship with the artist and gain deeper insights into his work. "It's important, as a museum, that we look ahead, that we're future minded, that we think about people who are actively contributing to discourses and practices of art and cultural production," he said.

"This show is really hoping to welcome all types of people across the university and across the wider community and to help people get a better sense of what we have to offer as an institution," Davidow said.

After wandering around the exhibition, I left inspired and in awe of the inventive and surprising works I had witnessed. I encourage you to find out for yourself what is in store for the future of Harvard Art Museums at *Future Minded*.

The Harvard Art Museums' *Future Minded* exhibition is on display at the Fogg Museum through July 21, 2024. Admission is free to all.

GEMMA MALTBY '27 (GMALTBY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) THINKS EVERYONE SHOULD GO TO THE HARVARD ART MUSEUMS.

GRAPHIC BY ANNEISE FISHER '26



# Puff and Talk

BY SACHI LAUMAS '26

Francis' neck craned back as he lifted the glass to his thin, pursed lips, shaking it to savor the last drops. The ice cubes clinked against the sides of the glass. The wind chimes from the patio echoed the noise. His companion's glass sat untouched. Francis rose from the chair and retrieved a golden bottle from the stand to refill his glass. The blackened ashtray accompanied a forest of honey-colored bottles with twist-tops snaking into the air.

Williams sat perched like a blackbird, his back straight and gaze fixed downward. To his surprise, he opened his mouth, but no words came out. *A bird*

*with no song.* His gaze rose, and his eyes glazed over with a thick layer of adolescent innocence. Francis raised his pipe to his lips and puffed, feeling the smoke glide into the cold, stale air the way it always did. He exhaled through the side of his mouth as he clutched the chewed pipe between his teeth.

Kline wiped his hands one by one on his silk slacks as perspiration gathered at the top of his brow. The late afternoon glow of the sun filtering through the small square window highlighted the

particles of dust that had gathered in the air as if the room had captured and collected every word spoken in the room. Sentences spoken long ago hung suspended in the air as the two men waited for the boy among them to speak.

The corner of Francis' mouth curled up in a sly grin as he chewed the end of his pipe raw.



# Long Days in Argyle

*Inspired by Pablo Picasso's "Au Lapin Agile" (Harlequin with Glass).*

BY SACHI LAUMAS '26

The strumming of a guitar fills the silence. Her arm touched his elbow ten minutes ago. It hasn't touched it since, and she inched her body away from him a whole two minutes ago. Her gaze fixates on the opposite wall. As he moves his hand to grip his glass, some of his sweater brushes her upper arm. Her gaze narrows. He grips his glass tighter.

The man in the argyle sweater thinks about how his necktie is too tight and how his hair is tickling his forehead and how his sweater is itching the skin above his wrist. His thoughts stray to the distance between him and the woman. He tugs his thoughts away from her with a firm hand.

Her hands are delicate and bird-like. His are scarred

with disproportionately long fingers. He imagines them intertwined: fire-red fingernails against his cold palms. "Imagines" implies fantasy; the image he pictures used to be reality. He loved the way their hands fit together. The bar seems to blend into a uniform brown, and his ears block out the melodious guitar music. Only images of her flood his mind, but he refuses to move his gaze from the corner of the table. How did he come to sit so far away from her?

His stare appears vacant of her; his thoughts are anything but. She

rises from her chair, leaving her drink untouched. The curling feather of her hat brushes the top of the doorframe. Their thread snaps. The uniform

brown of his surroundings

breaks into individual objects, and his thoughts are no longer of her. The

strumming of the guitar fills the silence.



SACHI LAUMAS '26 (SLAUMAS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES ARTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

# Sports Spotlight: Stephanie Yakoff

*Translating high school success into a collegiate career.*

BY KATE OLIVER '26

When Steffi Yakoff '27 picked up a racket at age four, she had no idea that the sport she had watched her older brother Stan play for years would become such a dominant aspect of her life. By the time she reached college, she could beat her brother—in addition to boasting an undefeated high school record and being named USA Today's HSSA Girls Tennis Player of the Year. Now a member of Harvard women's tennis, Yakoff has been a key part of the team's success thus far this season. It is safe to say that at this point in her career, Yakoff is following in the footsteps of her namesake, tennis star Steffi Graf.

Being 14 years younger than her brother, Yakoff's first personal experience with the sport came after watching one of his practices. Yakoff shared with the *Independent*, "Making contact with the ball on my very first swing was something I definitely did not expect." Furthermore, she shared that after her dad saw her swing for the first time, he knew that she "would be following in [her] brother's footsteps." In Yakoff's words, "he's my role model, and I've always looked up to him growing up."

Yakoff would continue to grow her game, coached by the same mentors as her brother, and compete at the international level. Instead of opting for homeschooling to increase her time on the court, she decided to attend Fort Lee High School in her home state of New Jersey. Yakoff was able to stay successful in all aspects of her game: balancing homework, her school competition schedule, and tournaments all over the country. Yakoff stated, "What worked for me was definitely staying disciplined and working as hard as I could

on the court and in the gym." She also feels that her numerous commitments taught her "how to balance academics and tennis from a young age."

In her final year of high school tennis, Yakoff achieved her 63-0 record and won another state title; this long career of success also led to her nomination for the USA Today HSAA Girls Tennis Player of the Year. The award's selection process involves evaluation of "statistical analysis, game coverage, and Coach/Athletic Director feedback" by USA Today staff. An initial list of 50 nominees is published online, and the winner is later announced on a live stream. Yakoff shared, "When my

family and I tuned into the live stream, I had no idea I would end up winning the award. It was very exciting news, winning the title of one of the best high school tennis players in the nation." This award was a perfect capstone to Yakoff's decorated high school career.

Collegiate tennis was the natural next step for Yakoff, as she had watched her brother compete for the men's tennis team at Steven Institute of Technology. Reflecting on her recruiting process, Yakoff shared, "I knew that I wanted to go to an Ivy League school, and I fell in love with Harvard and the team as soon as I visited." After coming on an official visit in September of

her junior year, she decided to commit to the admissions process.

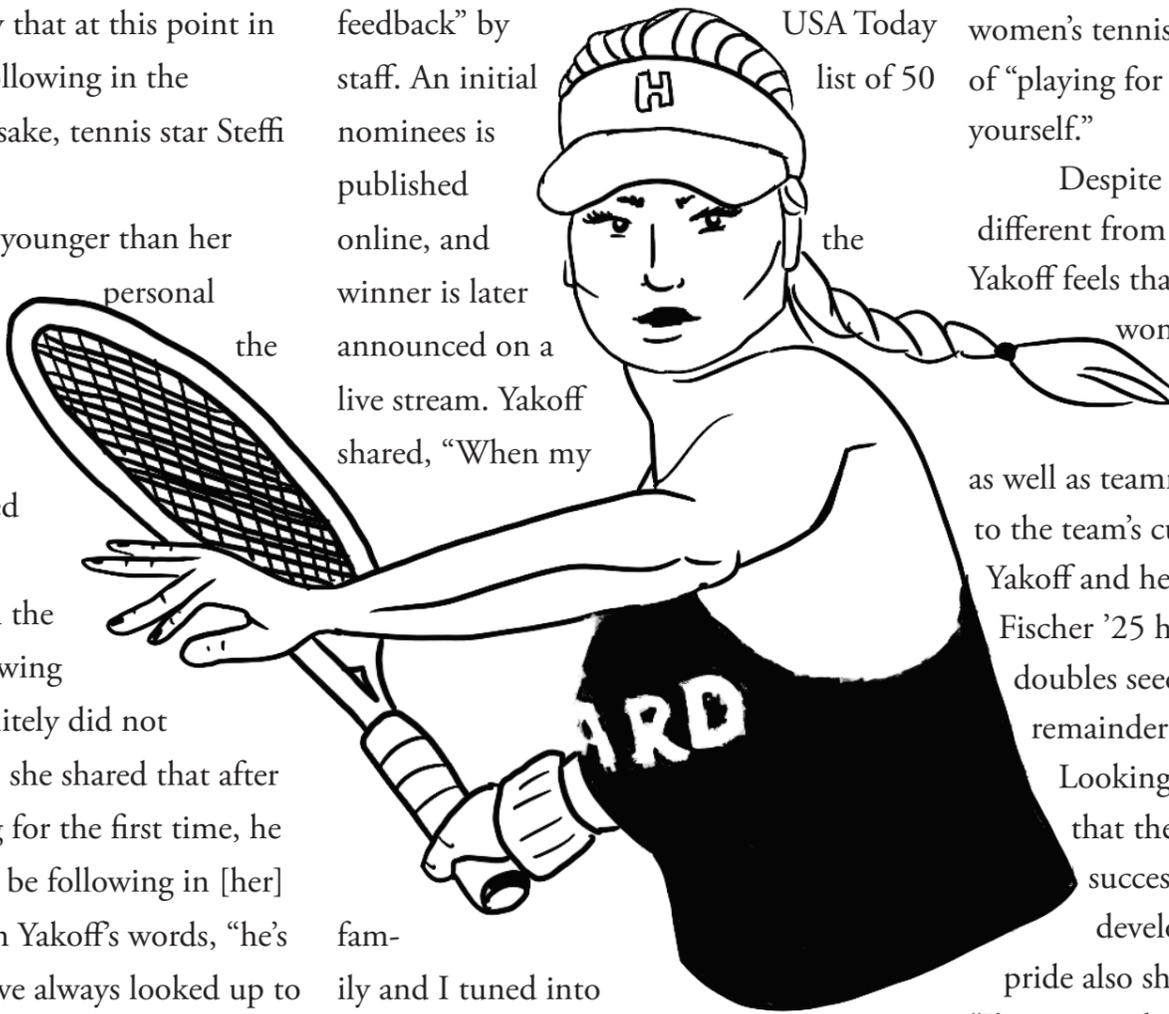
Transitioning to the Harvard team presented Yakoff with the opportunity to embrace the team mindset she loved from high school competitions in an otherwise individual sport. In her words, "Growing up playing in junior and semi-professional tournaments, you are essentially on your own on the court. There are no coaches to guide you or teammates to cheer you on—it's just you and your thoughts out there." Now that Yakoff has joined Harvard women's tennis, she has enjoyed the feeling of "playing for something bigger than yourself."

Despite the environment being different from her previous competitions, Yakoff feels that "being on the Harvard women's tennis team is like having a second family." She points to both her coaches as well as teammates as positive contributors to the team's culture of success. Thus far, Yakoff and her doubles partner Holly Fischer '25 hold a 14-6 record as the #1 doubles seed going into the remainder of the season.

Looking to the future, Yakoff hopes that the team can continue their successful run as she continues to develop her game. Her humble pride also shines through, as she shared, "I'm extremely grateful for this opportunity, the next couple of years, and will cherish every moment." For this season, she hopes to qualify for the NCAA DI team and individual national championships, in addition to winning a team Ivy League championship—to do so would be a natural transition for Yakoff, channeling her personal goals into team goals.

**KATE OLIVER '26 (KOLIVER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ENDED HER TENNIS CAREER AT AGE 10.**

**GRAPHIC BY SEATTLE HICKEY '25**



# NHL Playoff Preview

*Historic regular season paves the way for a wild race for the Stanley Cup.*

BY JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27

The 2023-2024 NHL regular season has come to an end, and the quest for the Stanley Cup has begun. Will Connor McDavid and the Oilers finally live up to their potential? Will the New York Rangers break the Presidents' Trophy curse? Will the Nashville Predators be the second consecutive wild card team to make the finals? Probably not, but in hockey, you never know. You could be the greatest regular season team in history, and get bounced in the first round (looking at you, 2023 Bruins).

## EASTERN CONFERENCE

### New York Rangers (M1) vs. Washington Capitals (WC2)

Ohhhhhhhh baby. The Presidents' Trophy-winning New York Rangers vs. the hobbling Washington Capitals. The Capitals had the fourth-worst goal differential in the NHL this year, above only the three worst teams in the NHL this season. The Capitals have no business being in the playoffs. Goaltender Charlie Lindgren might steal them a game here, but that's it. Not only were the Rangers the best team this season, but also the best New York Rangers team ever. They set the franchise record for most wins and most points, had the third-best special teams in the league, and Artemi Panarin had the second-best season in Rangers history. The Rangers thumped the Capitals in Game 1, they're going to give them a beatdown this whole series, and I am loving it.

*Prediction: NYR over WSH in 5*

### Florida Panthers (A1) vs. Tampa Bay Lightning (WC1)

Last year, the Florida Panthers shocked everyone by defeating the all-time wins record-setting Boston Bruins in the first round, overcoming a 3-1 series deficit. This historic upset set high expectations for the Panthers in the 2023-2024 season, where they excelled as one of the top three teams in the league all year long. With impressive offensive depth and the second-best defensive record, the Panthers are strong contenders, especially if goalie Sergei Bobrovsky continues to be lights-out.

On the other hand, the Tampa Bay Lightning have appeared in three of the last four Stanley Cup Finals, powered by potential 2023-2024 MVP Nikita Kucherov—the fifth player ever to record 100 assists—and backed by top talents. The Lightning are a perennially good team, but they had an average season, they're aging, there's uncertainty around defenseman Mikhail Sergachev's return, and their opponents have all the momentum in the world. No one should ever count out the Lightning, but I'm giving this series to the Panthers.

*Prediction: FLA over TBL in 6*

### Boston Bruins (A2) vs. Toronto Maple Leafs (A3)

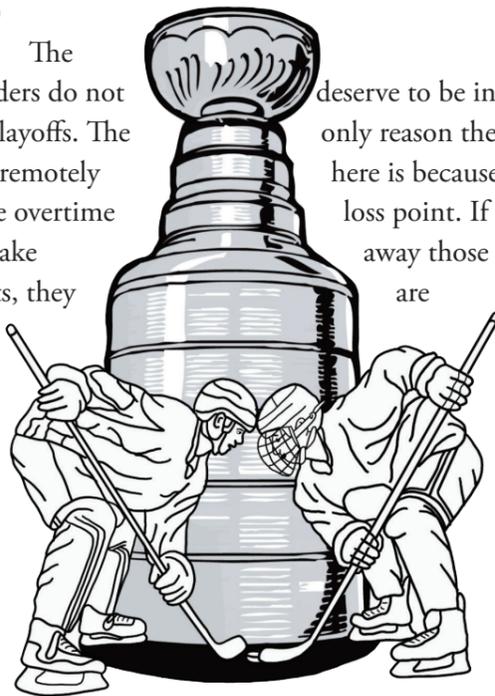
I'm a New Yorker who despises the Boston Bruins, but I think they're beating the Maple Leafs. They've

been the Leafs' boogeyman since 1959, winning every playoff series since. While Toronto's Auston Matthews continues to deliver an all-time performance, the rest of the team's leading scorers have disappeared. On the other hand, the Bruins are one season removed from being the greatest regular season team in hockey history. They've got outstanding depth and some real star talent with David Pastrňák being a top-five finalist for league MVP. This is a historic NHL rivalry, and you can be sure the Bruins would rather die than face first-round elimination embarrassment for the second year in a row.

*Prediction: BOS over TOR in 6*

### Carolina Hurricanes (M2) vs. New York Islanders (M3)

The Islanders do not deserve to be in the playoffs. The only reason they're even remotely here is because of the overtime loss point. If you take away those 16 points, they are



second-to-last in the Metropolitan division. They are near the bottom of the league in every team stat, while Carolina is top 8. If Carolina loses this series, sell the team. I wouldn't be surprised if the Islanders steal a game, but anything more than that is blasphemous. There's not that much to say here. Make this easy, 'Canes.

*Prediction: CAR over NYI in 5*

## WESTERN CONFERENCE

### Dallas Stars (C1) vs. Vegas Golden Knights (WC2)

I'm picking the Stars in this series, but it could be the closest series of the first round. The Stars finished second in wins behind the New York Rangers and have been on fire with an 8-2-0 record in their last 10 games. Their third line alone has amassed 139 points this season. Despite a slight dip, goalie Jake Oettinger remains a top netminder, and Dallas ranks ninth in fewest goals allowed per game. Their special teams outperform the Knights, ranking 6th in power play and 8th in penalty killing, (the Knights are at 20th and 16th, respectively). It won't be easy, though. Vegas swept Dallas in their regular-season matchups and boosted their lineup at the trade deadline. It's not suspicious at all that for the third year in a row, someone on the team has gotten injured right before the deadline (giving Vegas a few extra million dollars to work with). Please beat the wheels

off these cheaters, Dallas.

*Prediction: DAL over VGK in 7*

### Winnipeg Jets (C2) vs. Colorado Avalanche (C3)

The Avalanche have three of the best players in the league (MacKinnon, Makar, Rantanen) and were top 10 in the league in every team stat except penalty killing. They won the cup in 2022, with largely the same team. It didn't matter for Game 1 on Sunday, though, with the Avalanche scoring 6 on Winnipeg (the second time all year Winnipeg gave up 6 goals) and still losing. This was a fluke for Winnipeg, and potentially a sobering reality for the Avs. The Jets have figured out how to play against the best offense in the league, and Colorado clearly doesn't have the goaltending to support. Maybe the Avalanche skaters can make up the difference, but it's going to be hard without a change in net. I'd recommend a walrus. I seriously think a walrus would be a better goaltender.

*Prediction: WPG over COL in 6*

### Vancouver Canucks (P1) vs. Nashville Predators (WC1)

At some point this season, the Predators had a 7 percent chance to make the playoffs. Then, they went on an 18-game point streak. In the last few months, they've been a top-three team in the NHL. The Canucks haven't been in the playoffs since 2015, and the Predators are here to rain on their parade. Game 1 was shockingly close (and in Vancouver no less). Canucks goalie Thatcher Demko's injury is a doomsday scenario made manifest. Of all the wild card matchups this season, I think this one has the biggest potential for an upset. Yes, the Canucks stars are probably better on paper, but the Predators have veterans with real playoff experience. That could really matter here. This is likely going to be a tough, amazing series, and I think there's a chance Nashville gets it done in the end.

*Prediction: NSH over VAN in 7*

### Edmonton Oilers (P2) vs. Los Angeles Kings (P3)

In 2022, the Oilers defeated the Kings in seven games. In 2023, the Oilers won in six games. In 2024, the Oilers are winning in six again. Connor McDavid is the best player in the world. He could score fifteen goals in four games, and I wouldn't be surprised. I think he goes nuclear against the Kings and wills the Oilers to the second round. That's not to say that the Kings don't stand a chance. The Kings' stars have been effective, and at the beginning of the season, they looked like a real cup contender, until they forgot how to play hockey for like 30 games. They have a ton of playoff veterans, but there are consistency and goaltending issues. I don't see them keeping McDavid, Draisaitl, and the rest of the Oilers at bay.

*Prediction: EDM over LAK in 6*

**JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27  
(JWASSERBERGER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS GOING TO SYNAGOGUE EVERY FRIDAY OF THE PLAYOFFS TO PRAY FOR THE RANGERS.**

**GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26**

# Indy Sportsbook: Looking for the Larry O'Brien

*Our picks and predictions for the upcoming NBA playoffs.*

BY ANDREW CHRISTIE '26

Once again, the NBA regular season has come to an end, and viewers across the nation are tuning in to watch some of the best athletes in the world compete for the ever-coveted NBA championship. While this season has been one for the ages, there are still some things that reign true: LeBron is quickly approaching 40, yet he still averages over 25 points per game. The Celtics are in the playoffs for the 10th season in a row (and are favorites once again), and fans of the Washington Wizards are stuck at home after yet another disappointing season.

A recent addition to the NBA has also taken the basketball world by storm. The most hotly anticipated prospect since LeBron James, 7'4" rookie Victor (Wemby) Wembanyama, has lived up to the hype. Coming from the French Professional Basketball scene, Wembanyama chose to bypass the typical one-year college route and go straight to the NBA draft. This decision was well warranted, as Wembanyama immediately proved himself after the San Antonio Spurs drafted him first overall. He has the mobility and handling ability of a guard while simultaneously leading the NBA in steals and blocks). This is just one of many statistical categories that highlight his utter dominance, and, as such, he was anonymously voted by NBA players as the best player to start a franchise with. Unfortunately, the rest of the team is still in a significant rebuilding process, so we will have to wait at least another year to see Wembanyama in the playoffs.

Everyone knows how the NBA regular season games, for the most part, lack a certain energy, whereas an intangible franticness accompanies every playoff game. Now that we are in the playoffs, we can see that players are no longer being load-managed and resting, but rather stars are refusing to be subbed off and are putting their all on the line in every single game for their team.

Every year, something unpredictable happens during the playoffs. Whether that is an eighth-seeded team making a run to the championship series, or star players and MVPs failing to produce when it matters even more, playoff basketball is an unpredictable science.

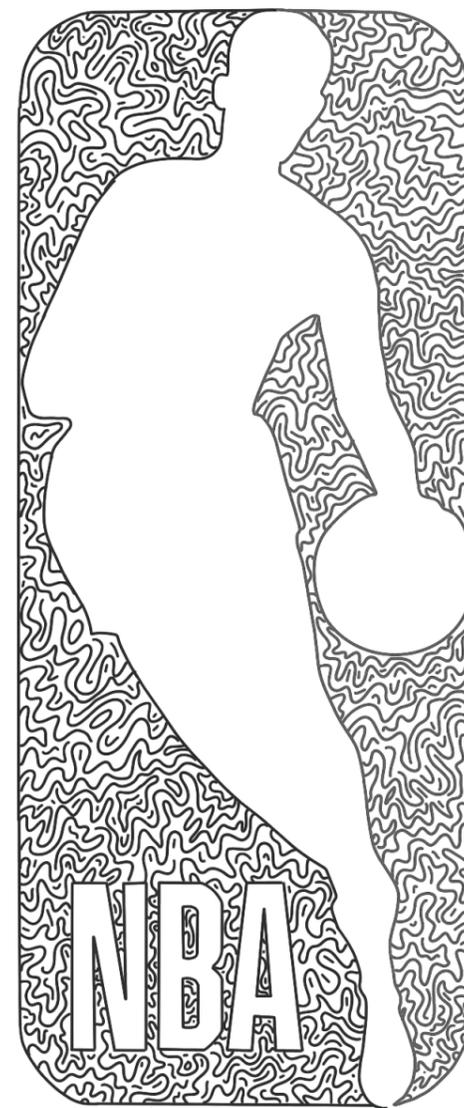
And in the end, one team will manage to come out on top. With that in mind, here are some squads to consider betting on to take home the championship.

**Celtics (+120):** The Celtics enter the NBA playoffs as the favorites—and rightfully so. Having the best overall record definitely does not hurt, and their roster depth and distribution of scorers leave the Celtics once again as the betting favorite. After a dominant season and ending atop the Eastern Conference standings by 14 games, they are looking to finally claim the elusive 18th banner that they have just missed out on in the last few years. Their playoff performance will be once again largely dependent on Tatum and Brown, but the addition of Kristaps Porzingis and Jrue Holiday will help ease the responsibilities and potentially lead them to success.

**Nuggets (+290):** The Denver Nuggets are looking to defend their title and take home their second championship ever. Key to their success is MVP Finalist Nikola Jokic. Jokic has been dominating the league for the past few years, winning the MVP award in 2021 and 2022 and winning the championship in 2023. He is surrounded by a largely unchanged squad, and considering their dominance last postseason, the Nuggets are a great team to consider. However, time will tell how big the loss of Bruce Brown really was, so keep an eye on the West to see if the Nuggets can still thrive.

**Thunder (+1300):** Being the second youngest team in the NBA, it may surprise some to see OKC on top of the Western Conference standings, especially considering their performance in recent seasons. However, their resurgence is in large part due to Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Chet Holmgren. Gilgeous-Alexander had an excellent regular season averaging 30.1 points per season, leading him to be a finalist for the MVP award. In another world, Chet would be rookie of the year (unfortunately, Wemby exists), but this just goes to show that their team has real potential and star power, and they could surprise many come June.

**Knicks (+1800):** The Knicks are an interesting team—riddled with inconsistencies



over the past few years, they strung together an excellent regular season to end as the second seed in the East. To get to the championship, they have a tough road ahead: beating the 76ers, most likely the Bucks, and either the Celtics or Cavaliers is no easy path.

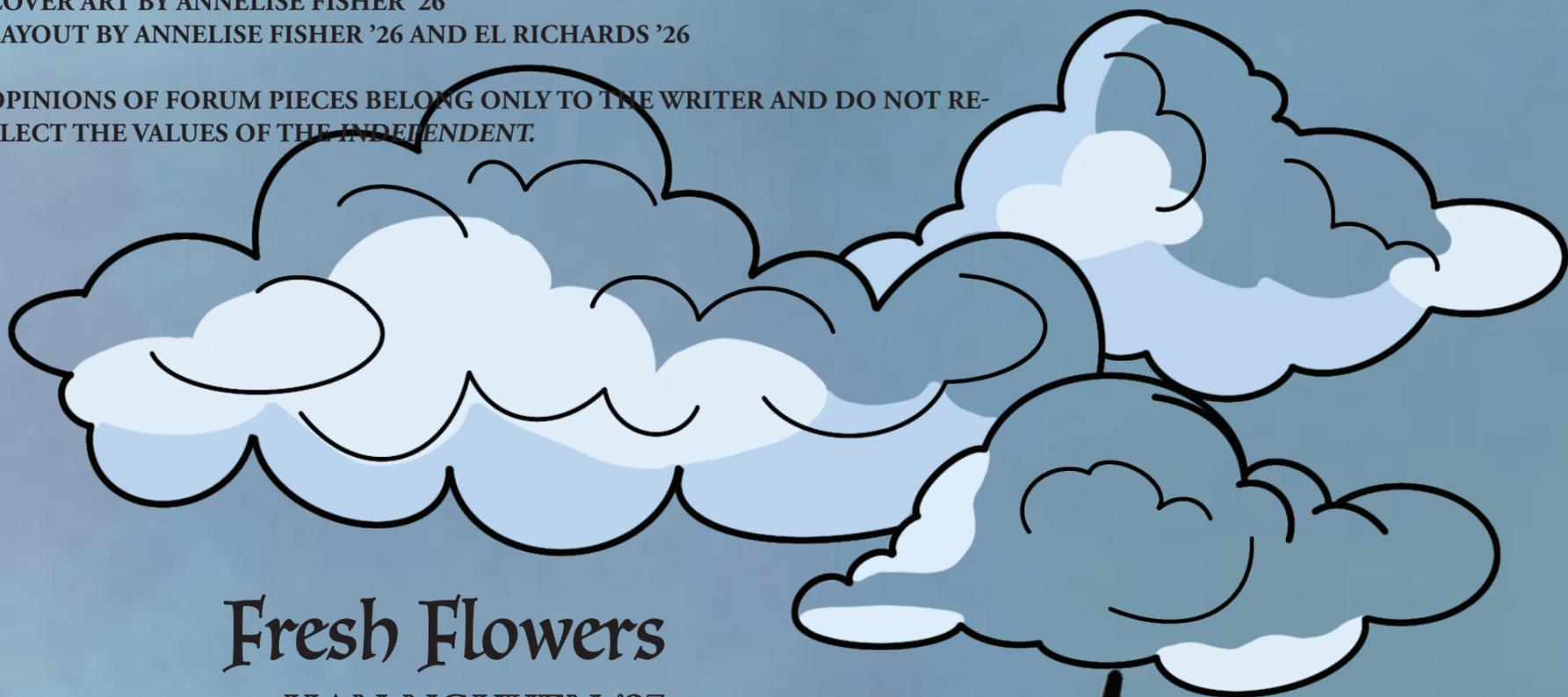
However, the Knicks match up well with almost any team; superstar Jalen Brunson usually leads the scoring, but he is supported by many players who have the ability to change the game at any moment. Any opponent should be wary of matching up against this team.

These are four teams with real hopes of taking home the chip. Due to their strong regular season performances and obvious team strengths, the Celtics and Nuggets are clearly the betting favorites. However, anything can happen. It might be worth sprinkling a little bit on the Knicks, Thunder, or any of the other less obvious teams in the playoffs.

**ANDREW CHRISTIE '26 (ANDREWCHRISTIE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WOULD LOVE TO FINALLY PICK THE CORRECT NBA PLAYOFF WINNER. (HE ALWAYS BETS ON THE CELTICS AND GETS LET DOWN.)**

GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26

OPINIONS OF FORUM PIECES BELONG ONLY TO THE WRITER AND DO NOT REFLECT THE VALUES OF THE INDEPENDENT.



## Fresh Flowers

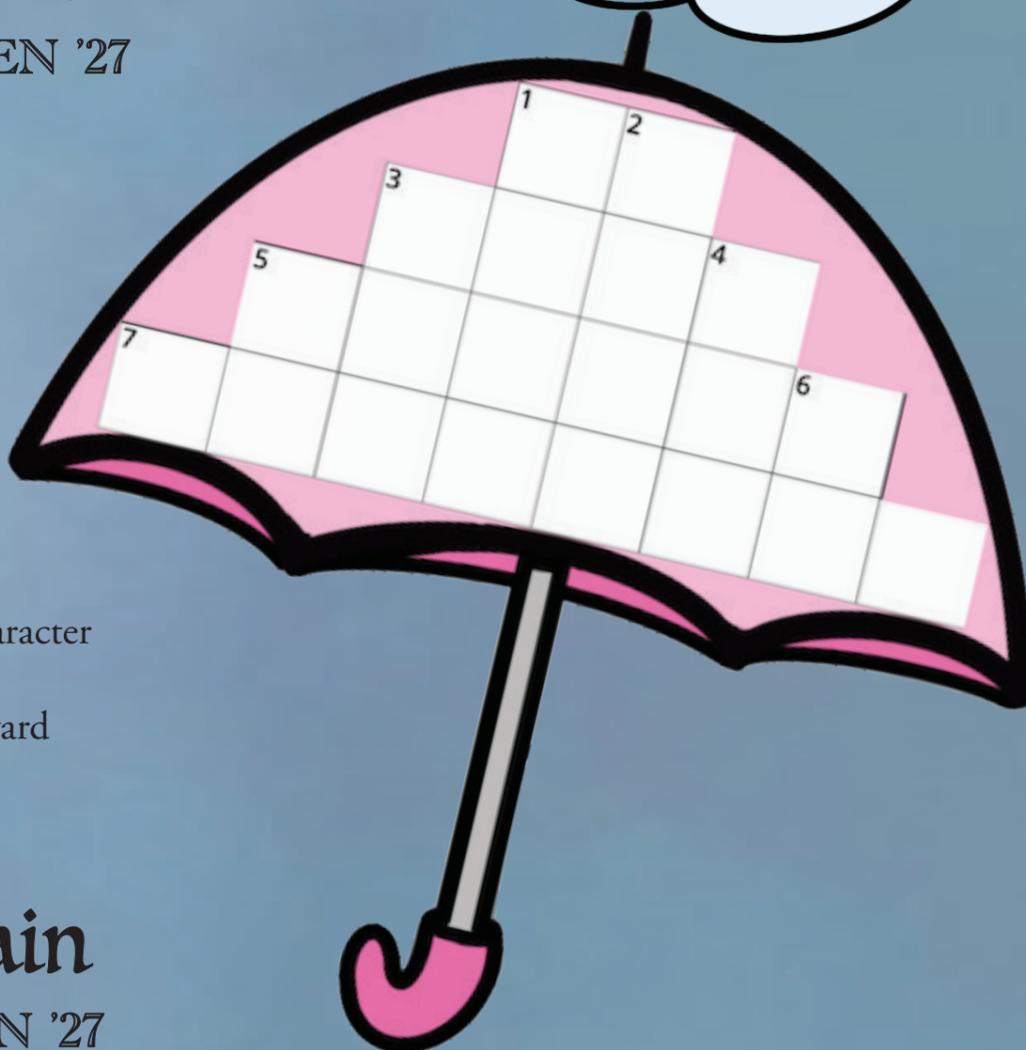
BY HAN NGUYEN '27

### ACROSS

1. Article
3. Nitpicky
5. British secondary school exam
7. April rained

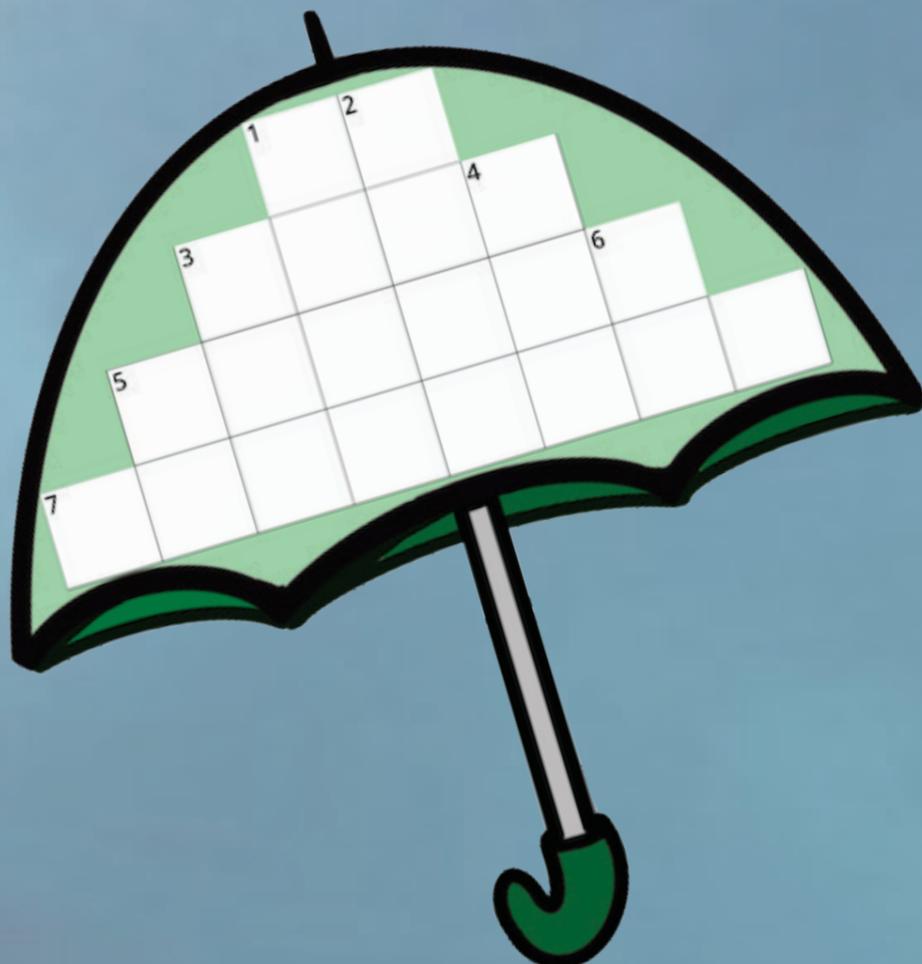
### DOWN

1. Fresh start
2. Church area
3. Yoga apparel retailer
4. The Once-\_\_: "The Lorax" character
5. "No kidding!"
6. Vietnamese restaurant in Harvard Square



## Bloom Again

BY HAN NGUYEN '27



### ACROSS

1. When doubled, toy with a string
3. Harvard freshman dining hall
5. Blossom
7. Slogan for a green-bottled brand

### DOWN

1. Michelle of "Crazy Rich Asians"
2. "...That this shall be, -- will fall for it?": "Julius Caesar"
3. Deli order
4. H.S. proficiency test
5. Fee-fi-\_\_-fum
6. Concerning

THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT PUBLISHES EVERY WEEK DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR BY THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT, INC., 12 ARROW STREET CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

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