



FROM THE POLITY

Are You Registered to Vote?

On Friday, September 20th, one eighth of the polity registered to vote and requested their absentee ballots for the November 5th election. On that day, Reading Women ran a simple voter registration drive, made up of three sophomores with laptops, a pile of stamps and envelopes, and a homemade document of all the links to register to vote or apply for an absentee ballot from any of the 50 states. Sitting at a commandeered table in the FSK Lobby in the after-class rush, striving to outcompete the Friday Fare, I was thrilled to find that in just two hours, we helped almost 50 students make a plan to vote.

In part, I was surprised, having always thought of our campus culture as aloof from the rest of the world. Kept busy with demands like seminar readings and papers, it can be easy for us to forget the obligations we have to our greater community. But when those responsibilities look you in the eye with a handwritten “voter registration drive” sign and a smiling face, it’s incredible how eager Johnnies are to make a difference in this election. After helping students from New Jersey to Georgia to California, I was reminded that, of course, our polity cares about our community; they just needed a little nudge.

So, if you didn’t see our humble voter registration drive, here is your nudge. Presidential, congressional, and local elections are all happening on Tuesday, November 5th. But voter registration deadlines are coming much sooner. If you have never voted before, you must do this either through your home state or in Maryland, with those applications being due as early as the first week of October. Depending on your state, you may be able to do this online, or you may have to mail in an application. To ensure your right to exercise your voice in this election, take care of this as soon as possible. If you don’t plan on traveling home on a Tuesday to vote, you also need to apply for a mail-in ballot, which most states will happily send you, given enough notice. Because you will be dependent on the efficiency of the USPS, I highly encourage you to apply for these even sooner. I’ve attached a QR code (page 2) for the document linking the applications for voter registration and absentee ballots for every state.

For those from Maryland, the state requires that you vote in your district, so if you can’t make it home, you too should apply for an absentee ballot. If you aren’t from Maryland but would like to vote here, the state allows you to use your dorm address as a residence.
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MOVE OVER, PALESTRINA

Shape Note Singing Brings New Tunes to Pendulum Pit

Last Saturday afternoon, harmonious music filled the pendulum pit and drifted down the empty Mellon corridors. This time, though, it was not Sicut Cervus. In fact, it was not polyphony at all. It was more raucous than Ave Verum, rawer than Beatus Vir, and louder than any Sicut sing Mellon has ever heard. The voices sang not in Latin but in English, in four-part harmony:

*When Gabriel’s awful trump shall sound,
And rend the rocks, convulse the ground,
And give to time her utmost bound,
Ye dead, arise to judgement.*

The song seemed to echo like the mountain hollows of Appalachia. Who was singing it? What could it be?

This style of music is called shape note singing, a centuries-old tradition that Mr. Stoltzfus has recently helped introduce to St. John’s. He hosted the first sing on campus last month, and another last Saturday (Oct. 5). The singers were a mix of johnnies and non-johnnies, old and young, from experienced singers to total newbies. I (a newbie) showed up to sing, then hosted an impromptu interview with several of the singers afterwards, including a St. John’s alum. Now, I’m here to share the music with you.

Shape note singing has a unique notation style. The notes of the scale are represented by four different shapes which correspond to different musical syllables: rectangles (la), triangles (fa), diamonds (mi), and circles (sol). Each shape denotes two different intervals on the scale, except for mi, which is always the seventh.

The singings are arranged similarly to our Wednesday Sicut: the four voice parts face each other sitting in a square formation, with the leader in the middle. Leadership rotates around the room, with everyone getting the chance to choose and lead a song. When I first sat down in the alto section, I had no idea what I was doing. Someone handed me a Shenandoah Harmony songbook, someone else gave a pitch, and everyone began to sing. At first, they sang the syllables: *fa la sol mi*. They went through the song once this way, sightreading the note shapes, then sang it again with words. “This is a method of singing to teach basic music theory principles and get everyone up to speed as fast as possible,” RB Bartgis (A09) told me later. “So, you can sing a piece in four-part harmony with basically no rehearsal.”

RB got involved in shape note singing after hearing Mr. Stoltzfus’ madrigal choir sing a piece at winter

Collegium in 2005. “The first time that you sit in the square and have the music hit you is really amazing,” they told me. This year, they and Mr. Stoltzfus decided to bring that feeling back to St. John’s.

RB loves the contrast of shape note singing with the music we study here: “This is not something you’re gonna find in the St. Matthew Passion,” they joked. Not only are the harmonies based around different intervals from baroque and classical music, but shape note singing is also never a performance. “We’re singing for ourselves and each other and it’s really in the moment,” said Susan Green, who’s been singing since the 70s. She met her husband Richard at a shape note group in grad school. “I sing in choirs,” Richard said, “and other groups where there is more musicology applied, and more performance. But I love this, because it’s different. You sing full-throated. The harmonies are beautiful. It supplements everything else I do.”

Despite the musical differences, shape note singing reminds me of our Sicut sings: we sing for each other, facing inwards, enjoying the music for its own sake without the thought of an audience. And it brings us together. One word came up again and again during my interview: *community*. “Singing is really as much about that community as it is about the music,” said Thomas Ward, a DC-based singer. Susan agreed: “the community is bound together by these songs.” There is something about group singing traditions—whether shape-note or polyphony—that connects people in a uniquely beautiful way. The harmony of our voices becomes an expression of our fellowship.

Our closing song on Saturday was called Overton. We all stood up to sing it, and I looked around at the people who I’d spent the last two hours making music with. Most of them were ostensibly strangers. Nevertheless, after our time together, the words of the song felt right:

*Brethren, with pleasure let us part,
since we are of one mind and heart;
No length of days, nor distant place,
Can ever break these bands of grace.*

The full interview will be published in Gadfly issue IV.

Helen Wagner

Mr. Stoltzfus hopes to continue shape note singing at St. John’s, and the next session in the pendulum pit is currently scheduled for the first Sunday in November. Show up and give it a try!

This Week in Seminar

Freshman:

- Thursday, October 10: Herodotus: *History*, V, 105; VI, 48–120; VII (entire)
- Monday, October 14: Herodotus: *History*, VIII; IX

Sophomores:

- Thursday, October 10: Plutarch: *Lives*, Caesar; Cato the Younger
- Monday, October 14: Tacitus: *Annals*, I-II

Juniors:

- Thursday, October 10: Spinoza: *Ethics*, Book 1 (selections), Book 2 (selections)
- Monday, October 14: Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics*

Seniors:

- Thursday, October 10: Marx: *Capital* (selections), The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (selections)
- Monday, October 14: Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling*, Through Problema I

Friday Night Lecture:

"The Ethics and Aesthetics of Sympathy in Sophocles' Philoctetes" - Professor Ellwood Wiggins

Upcoming Events:

Day of the Week, Date:

Saturday, October 12:

- Greenfield Library Annual Book Sale, 12pm to 3pm, Library patio

Monday, October 14:

- Monthly Music Mondays - "Sicut Cervus", 9:30 pm, McDowell Great Hall

SENIORS SAVE MELLON!
(Almost)

Exiting seminar before a long weekend is a strange experience, with a strange combination of the intellectual buzz that always accompanies the end of a good discussion and the elation of being free from classes for the next few days. Your faithful reporter was very much feeling this strange beginning of long weekend energy as he exited class on Thursday, but was quickly knocked out of it by an even stranger sight: a large pool of water on the floor of Mellon, dripping down from the ceiling.

This reporter looked over at Helen Felbek, who was accompanying him at that moment, and who immediately figured out what was going on. “It’s coming from the tank room!”

The two rushed up together, and after struggling for a moment to find the light switch, discovered water all over the floor, and a leaky fish tank. They set to work draining it, and were shortly joined by a pair of tutors. Your ingenious correspondent was convinced a siphon was the best way to solve the problem, and spent a good deal of time trying to get one set up, while more practically minded people present began draining it with a pitcher.

Fortunately for all, tank room assistant Louis Rosenberg shortly arrived, and took charge of the situation, and the tank was safely drained. However, a small lake still remained on the floor of the tank room, and presumably therefore in the ceiling of Mellon’s first floor. The tutors quickly disappeared, and no other responsible staff member was present, leaving students with a conundrum.

A LETTER OF FAREWELL
(Found on an Unspecified Seminar Room Table Monday Evening After Long Weekend)

I suspected something was afoot after seminar Thursday when the comment, “See you at math tomorrow” was the cause of amusement among you people. Failing to observe the humor in a fruitful discussion of the Ptolemaic system, I did not regard it. Little did I know that such a comment would be the harbinger of a pestilence of academic truancy making landfall on this sacred campus.

It was 9:03 AM on Friday that I knew something was wrong. No one had shown up to math, not even our tutor. Fortunately, I had prepared to demonstrate the remainder of book XII, and did so, vainly hoping that at least one of you would remember the unbreakable covenant to academics you made at convocation one short year ago. It was a productive class for me, no one was present to challenge my immaculate command of geocentrism, but I grew despondent when nobody was even there to lazily nod along as I demonstrated.

The sad condition of the polity continued in long music, where, once more, I was the only attendee. The tutors and (it goes without saying) the other students eschewed the musical perfection of their souls for, presumably, some baser, animalistic form of merriment, like billiards. I carried the class, having learned all four parts of Ave Verum Corpus.

Indeed, dear reader, your writer himself considered abandoning the place, leaving someone else to deal with it, but the rest of the students in the room immediately set to work, taking responsibility in their own hands, and thus your correspondent had no choice but to join in.

This noble band of seniors was soon expanded with the additions of Reggie Yang, Luke Widenhouse and Whitney Bixby, who assisted in scrounging around for mops, and then mopping away the flood, first in the tank room, and then on the first floor. Thanks to their efforts, mopping late into the night (10:30 pm, long past this writer’s bedtime), Mellon’s water damage was minimized, although not prevented. From this very humble writer’s point of view, there was something fulfilling about being able to get to action and actually take up a very concrete problem facing the polity in his own hands. Perhaps he, and the rest of the College, should do so more often.

El’ad Nichols-Kaufman

Aphorism of the Week

“Ὅσον γ’ ἡμεῖς οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀπὸ τῶν θηρῶν οἰόμεθα, τόσον θῆρ ὁ ἕκαστος ἀφ’ ἡμῶν τε καὶ πάντων ἄλλων θηρῶν.

Tarik Mahmud

It wasn’t easy going— my voice doesn’t go high enough for the soprano part— but persistence is the fount whence springs success.

Today, I held out hopes for a renaissance of academic motivation, but to no avail. I was greatly disturbed by this sudden change in the student (and tutor) body’s newfound lack of integrity, and so had neglected my translation duties. I regret to say this, but my misstep faced no consequences, for no one showed up to language tutorial either.

I see how it is now, St. John’s Polity. You carry on with your bonfires and see where it gets you. It appears absenteeism is what we’re doing now, but at least I have the common decency to let you know about it. I won’t be seeing you at seminar tonight, but something in me suspects you have no intention of going anyhow.

Your Disconsolate (Former)
Academic Comrade-in-Arms

UPCOMING SCI FORUMS
Courtesy of the Student Committee on Instruction

Oct. 16th: The Algebra Exam: Does it work?
Oct. 23rd: What are the rules of seminar?

WEDNESDAYS. 11:45. PRIVATE DINING ROOM.
Free lunch for off-campus students!

Voting article, cont’d

Do it early for peace of mind. Maryland early voting will begin Thursday, October 24th and be open for a full week. New voters can even register to vote during early voting or on November 5th, at the nearest polling location, just a short walk down West Street at 119 S Villa Ave. Reading Women will host a walk-to-the-polls event closer to election day to make it even easier.

I know you have opinions about this country. I know you want to share them. This is your sign to jump through the hoops to make your community listen to what you have to say. Take this opportunity and see the good that comes of it.

Delaney Costello

Scan the QR code for
registration applications
and absentee ballots!



CLUB BUDGET UPDATE
As of October 10 DC meeting

St. John’s Chorus: \$37.89
Delegate Council: \$67.51
Energeia: \$2750.99
Jazz Coalition: \$250

COME TO CSL FORUMS!

Courtesy of the Committee on Student Life
Lunchtime discussions about non-academic student life issues.
THURSDAYS. 11:45. PRIVATE DINING ROOM.

ABOUT THE ST.
JOHN’S
COLLEGIAN

The St. John’s Collegian is the weekly newspaper of St. John’s College Annapolis. We work to bring quick and timely coverage of important events going on, to help develop a more informed student body. If you’re searching for more in-depth investigations and reporting, as well as essays, art and culture, check out the Gadfly, our affiliated publication, which is published once every three weeks.

Want to submit an article? We always need more writers, whether for opinion or reporting! Submissions for news articles should be between 400-600 words, while opinion should be kept short at 350 words. Just email sjcacollegian@gmail.com with your article, and we will work to get it in print! Longer form articles and more in-depth exploration of ideas should go to the Gadfly, which accepts submissions at enicholskaufman@sjc.edu.

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