thetech.com

Volume 139, Number 6



WEATHER

THU: 51°F | 42°F Mostly Sunny FRI: 61°F | 43°F Chance of Showers

SAT: 50°F | 30°F Mostly Sunny

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Dorms share room assignment designs

Proposals address design exercise constraints prohibiting mutual selection and requiring squatting

By Zoe Anderson, Whitney Zhang, and Rujul Gandhi

STAFF REPORTERS

Student leaders from all undergraduate dorms met with Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart PhD '88 and Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson in a design workshop March 2 to present proposals for rooming assignment processes.

The proposals had to meet two requirements: they must not involve mutual selection and first years must be permitted to squat their initial room assignments. Several dorm presidents shared information about their dorm's proposals with *The Tech* via email or interview.

Some dorms presented at least one version that met the requirements and at least one that did not, but improved upon the current system.

East Campus proposed a singlesided selection process in which first years would visit and rank all the halls. The dorm would then run an algorithm to assign first years to rooms based on those rankings 10 times to generate 10 sets of dormwide placements. Each hall's upperlevel students would rank the results, and EC would run another algorithm to optimize the halls' preferences for the first years' placements.

Adriana Jacobsen '20, EC president, told The Tech in an interview that EC's proposal was regarded by residents as the "best possible scenario if we had to do single-sided selection."

EC also presented its current system with improvements such as calling the current Floor Rush something more related to exploration.

Dorms, Page 2



MIT-educated astronauts return to speak at the Apollo 50+50 event held in Kresge Auditorium Wednesday, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landings.

Submit nominations for

CUP's Class of 2023 firstyear proposal is open until March 18.

Register to host or volunteer for CPW by March 22.

Nominate a professor for the Teaching with Digital Technology Awards by March 22.

Tech? Stop by for dinner Sunday at 6 p.m. or email join@ tech.mit.edu.

IN SHORT

Graduate student registration is open for fourth quarter Physical Education classes.

the MIT Awards by tomorrow.

The comment period for the

Interested in joining The

Send news and tips to news@ tech.mit.edu.

OneWorld@MIT will not host tent parties

Event to instead consist of early evening cultural festival, committee chair says

By Soomin Chun

NEWS EDITOR

This year's OneWorld@MIT event will be an early evening cultural festival. For the past three years, MIT held late evening dance parties colloquially known as "tent parties."

The change hopes to bring more inclusivity into the event, said Professor Raul Radovitzky, chair of the OneWorld@MIT Planning Committee, in an interview with The Tech.

This year's event will be a celebration of culture, performing arts, and food, according to a statement from Radovitzky emailed to *The Tech*. The theme has not yet been released.

"The feeling is that in the past nle of years, families were left sort of a little bit in the margins, because you cannot bring families with younger kids [to tent parties]. So we'd like to be a little bit more inclusive and give more people an opportunity to participate," Radovitzky said.

The cancellation of the tent parties also came up during the UA Council meeting Feb. 13. According to the minutes, the tent parties were considered "very expensive." The minutes also said a "different but fun event" is set to occur instead.

"One major reason [for the changes] is the cost of the tent parties was too expensive and unsustainable," UA President Alexa

Martin '19 wrote in an email to The Tech. "While we were not involved in this original decision to change the style of event, the UA has since been involved by nominating students to serve on the OneWorld planning committee.'

According to Radovitzky, however, the organizing committee has thus far not dealt with the budgetary side of the event and are unsure what the restrictions are. President L. Rafael Reif funds the event from his discretionary account.

Since students are the focus of the event, and it has been popular with both students and Reif, there is a reasonable chance they will return in the future, Radovitzky said. The committee hopes to plan tent parties at least once every four years so that students can experience them at least once in their undergraduate career.

The decision to change the event this year was made by the One-World@MIT Planning Committee as a whole, Radovitzky said. This committee is co-chaired by Radovitzky and Gayle M. Gallagher, executive director of institute events, and also includes graduate and undergraduate students.

The committee is converging on the theme for this year's event but is still working out the details, according to Radovitzky. In 2018, the theme was sustainability.

CSAIL responds to Trump tweet claiming 'pilots are no longer needed, but rather computer scientists from MIT'

President Donald J. Trump claimed in a tweet Tuesday that "pilots are no longer needed, but rather computer scientists from MIT."

Random Acts of Kindness Week.

Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart and Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz

bring baked goods to the Banana Lounge Wednesday in honor of

"Airplanes are becoming far too complex to fly," Trump tweeted. "Always seeking to go one unnecessary step further, when often old and simpler is

Trump continued in a follow-up tweet, "I don't know about you, but I don't want Albert Einstein to be my pilot. I want great flying professionals that are allowed to easily and quickly take control of a

A few hours later, the official Twitter account of MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory replied, "We're very happy to help. But maybe we can keep the pilots, too?"

The MIT Technology Review's account also replied with a series of clapping emoji.

Trump's tweet appears to be in response to the Boeing 737 Max 8 plane crash in Ethiopia Sunday, which killed all 157 people on board. Another Boeing 737 Max 8 plane operated by an Indonesian airline crashed into the sea in October 2018.

-Jessica Shi

A NIGHT OF JAZZ

Honoring jazz legend Herb Pomeroy. ARTS, p. 8

WHEN STUDENTS BECOME **DATA POINTS**

The DSL's data-centric approach to reform overlooks the nuances in student experiences. OPN, p. 4



ONE HEROINE AGAINST ALIENS

She shoots light beams from her arms. ARTS, p. 8

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2 The Tech
Thursday, March 14, 2019

Several dorms propose that first years indicate desire to squat over summer

Dorms, from Page 1

Burton Conner proposed maintaining upper-level students' preferences, but weighing them more lightly in the room assignment process.

New House differentiated its proposals for its cultural houses and numbered houses. The proposal for the cultural houses' process maintained the current system, with a focus on providing more information to first years, according the the plan the New House government submitted to the Housing Design Workshop. The cultural houses would continue giving spots to students they believe would help grow and enhance their community. These students would not be expected to move from the rooms to which they are assigned over the summer.

In the submitted plan, numbered houses would require all their first years to visit each numbered house during in-house exploration

and then rank the houses in which they want to live. Any student who ranked their initial assigned house first would not be made to move. The housing chairs would assign rooms based on giving students their highest ranked choices.

Simmons Hall, BC, the numbered houses of New House, and EC all proposed that first years indicate their desire to squat on the summer housing form.

Simmons proposed one plan in which a student marking that they wished to squat would be binding and two plans in which wishing to squat would be non-binding.

Random Hall and EC each pro-

posed two plans: one that allowed squatting and one that did not. Random President Amanda Putnam '20 wrote in an email to *The Tech* that Random preferred the latter. "We believe we can better optimize for first-year happiness if the system has more flexibility, particularly with our very small num-

ber of open rooms to begin with," Putnam wrote.

In MacGregor House's proposal, the algorithm would be guaranteed to place first years into their current entry or an entry they ranked higher, and if they are reassigned into their current entry, they may choose to squat their room.

Anthony Cheng '20, Mac-Gregor president, told *The Tech* in an interview that the proposal, which meets both requirements, is "extremely unpopular" among residents.

Next House proposed a plan in which first years would discuss their motives for squatting with the house team, and approvals of squatting would be "fairly generous," according to Next's proposal.

The BC proposal required that first years participate in "FLEX," or floor exploration, before confirming their decision to squat.

Maseeh Hall, whose current rooming process already fulfills

both design requirements, proposed asking additional questions to incoming first years who ranked Maseeh highly in the summer. The Room Assignment Committee (RAC) would then use their answers to place them into rooms.

Barnhart and Nelson told *The Tech* in an interview that student dorm representatives brought up possible causes of undue stress on first years that they had not considered previously, including rushed decision-making during the room assignment process and in-house lotteries. Dorm representatives also brought up a need for clearer communications to incoming students over the summer.

Nelson said that more welcoming language and messaging could also reduce stress.

Barnhart said that at the workshop, students from some dorms said that they wanted more time in between when they got the final list of incoming residents (which is after FYRE) and when rooms were assigned, while others did not want more time.

Barnhart said that student dorm representatives noted that RACs currently have substantial responsibility and could use help with algorithms for the rooming assignment process and moving first years' belongings to their assigned rooms. Nelson also added that stress could be reduced by facilitating parking and helping to hand out keys and IDs.

Nelson said, "Mutual selection, where if someone gets in, that means someone doesn't get in, so that feels personal and it feels hurtful. That is something that concerned us. If that was something that was happening, it was unintentional."

Next, Barnhart and Nelson are going to meet individually with leaders from all the dorms.

Kaitlyn Hennacy contributed reporting.

CLASSIFIED

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Roadkill Buffet PRESENTS
RKB PROFITED OFF THE WAR IN IRAQ

10PM FRIDAY, MARCH 15 6-120

Solution to Spring

8	3	6	1	7	9	5		2
7	2	4	6	3	5	8	1	9
1	9	5	8	4	2	7		6
6	8	3	5	1	4	2	9	7
5	7	9	2	6	3	4	8	1
4	1	2	7	9	8	6	5	3
2	5	1	3	8	7	9	6	4
9	6	7	4	5	1	3	2	8
3	4	8	9	2	6	1	7	5

Solution to Think

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R	I	S	K	S		S	Е	T	S		J	Α	В	S
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С	Α	С	Т	I		0	I	L	Υ		W	Ε	R	Е
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Solution to Showers

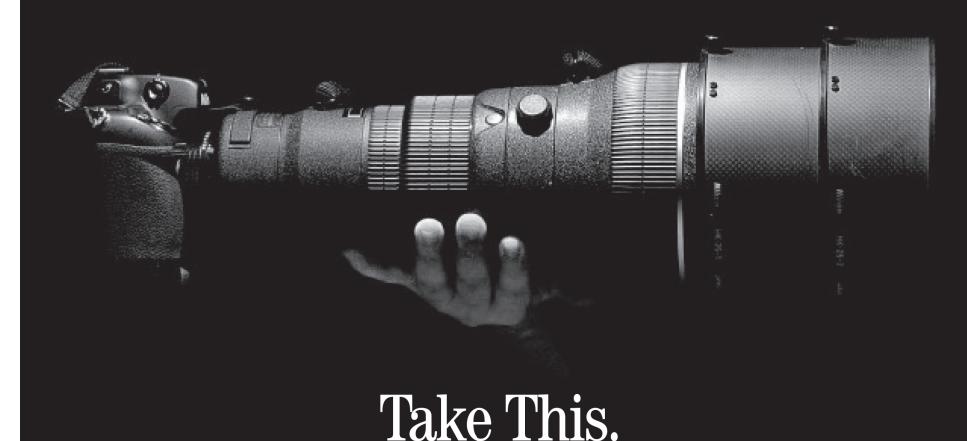
2	3	1	1	6	5
4		ı	4		3
1	2	6	3	5	4
5	6	4	1	3	2
4	5	3	6	2	1
3	4	2	5	1	6
6	1	5	2	4	3

Solution to Flowers

from page 7

8	7	5	1	9		4	3	6
6	5	3	8	7	9	2	1	4
1			3				5	
9			2					
3			5					
7		4					2	
5	4		7					3
2	1		4					
4	3	1	6	5	7	9	8	2

It's Dangerous to Go Alone!



photo@tech.mit.edu





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GUEST COLUMN

Data, inclusion, and the DSL

DSL's appeals to data are a disservice to the diversity of our community

By Jessica Adams

The Division of Student Life has a data problem. After several high-profile blunders in its handling of student input, the DSL continues to seek legitimacy in the form of student survey data. Most recently, this trend is evident in the planning of the New Vassar dormitory. On the same day an opinion piece in The Tech chronicled the DSL's failure to acknowledge student input in planning New Vassar, an email from Suzy Nelson solicited further student data in the form of the MIT Enrolled Student Survey. In addition to subjecting this survey to response bias, Nelson's email suggests a lack of awareness of the responsibility that comes with access to student data.

When students provide the DSL with information, they do so out of a belief that their experiences will be taken into account and enable the DSL to enact solutions with people like them in mind. Behind this belief is an implied trust, a trust that student data will be treated with care and will not be used against them; that questions about race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and class identity, for instance, are asked from a place of understanding of the myriad and complex ways in which these axes of identity interact and affect the lives of those who exist within them.

Data acts to justify unpopular intervention to disgruntled students, as well as a means of outwardly verifying MIT's status as a model university.

Yet, it has become increasingly clear that, in the office of the DSL, data is not regarded as a means of holding the DSL accountable to students and their needs; instead, data acts to justify unpopular intervention to disgruntled students, as well as a means of outwardly verifying MIT's status as a model university. Data is much better at finding problems than solutions; data offers a single path of making changes to measured variables in attempt to relocate data points to within the acceptable or normal range, as defined by DSL. Even if this approach results in improvements to the DSL's target metrics, it is not worth treating students as data points. To do so is to adopt a painful strategy of normalization, a process that is not respectful of the diversity that benefits us all.

While the DSL has denied adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to the student experience, such normalization is evident

in its planning for New Vassar. Its failure to take into account students' thoughts on the presence of kitchens as opposed to dining halls is indicative of a lack of sensitivity to issues that affect low-income students. As Lilly Chin wrote in The Tech, the DSL offered no justification for this decision aside from a vague appeal to "the data." Though it's not clear what data the admin might be referring to, the rhetoric here is that creative alternatives and students' hard work can be disregarded in light of data, which somehow suggests New Vassar should have a traditional dining hall. Data acts as a substitute for student invention and self-determination, imposing a standard dormitory where there is potential for a transformative community.

Further evidence for corrective normalization can be found in the administration's response to the 2015 Healthy Minds Survey. In this survey, without their knowledge, students were given individualized links to the survey and their data was secretly linked to their dorm - an ethical shortcoming for which students never received an apology. Based on this data, which showed Senior House students were disproportionately affected by mental health problems and drug use, the administration chose to close the dorm and force Senior House students to find a new place to call home. In this decision, there is an implicit reasoning, resulting from the over-application of statistical reasoning, that Senior House was not like "normal" (in this case, other) dorms, and that its students would improve if relocated to a more normal environment. A solution that avoids treating students as data points would involve allowing them to take ownership over and solve their own problems. While this is a more difficult option, it is always better, especially in a world that increasingly seeks to understand humanity by the numbers.

These "data-driven" decisions are equally unaccountable to the facts in the effort to end mutual selection. While the DSL claims the data suggests the practice of mutual selection might cause certain students to feel rejected, to imply that the students of East Campus and other mutual selection dorms are lacking in understanding of inclusivity is misleading to say the least. As a resident of EC, I can speak to its radical inclusiveness: it opens up new spaces for all varieties of individuals and has little tolerance for those who express hateful beliefs. The average resident of EC has, in my estimation, a deeply nurtured sense of what inclusion or exclusion means, resulting in a community where those who might otherwise feel excluded can find a home. All of this is not to say it's inconceivable that EC's room assignment process could be improved; only that the

dorm requires little oversight in its effort to make freshmen feel included.

Burton Conner, East Campus, New House, MacGregor, and what used to be Senior House — the dorms most recently affected by this data-driven approach all, in their own way, provide spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals, students of color, or low-income students. Decisions that affect these dorms disproportionately affect these groups; changes that affect their support structures - which often do not exist elsewhere and have been built over decades - are a delicate matter. Yet, in the case of the Senior House and New Vassar decisions, residents' unique demographics went unacknowledged, in spite of students' repeated appeals.

The DSL must proceed with an awareness of the rift between supposed student survey data and actual student sentiment.

Moving forward in the room assignment design exercise and the construction of New Vassar, it is imperative that the DSL's decisions will not neglect the heterogeneity of the students they are meant to serve. The DSL must proceed with an awareness of the rift between supposed student survey data and actual student sentiment — an approach that requires nuance, flexibility and openness to the varieties of student experience. They must contend with the fact that our students' unique experiences provide them with access to correspondingly unique solutions, and allow students, not their data, to determine what constitutes a solution. Merely shifting individuals towards the DSL's definition of the norm is a disservice to the diversity of our community. It denies and cuts off at the root the innovative solutions students will adopt when permitted. Conversely, the creation of a highly intentional, adaptable space will drive the innovative spirit we seek to nourish.

Likewise, students have a choice to make: they can, in spite of the failed attempts that precede them, continue to act in good faith and cooperation with the DSL, or they can realize that merely sharing preferences with them will not make their experiences count. Data alone will never capture the diversity of student experience in its richness. To allow an illusion to the contrary to persist is to risk seeing that richness siphoned away.

Jessica Adams is a member of the Class of 2019 studying literature, a previous resident of Senior House, and a current resident of East Campus.

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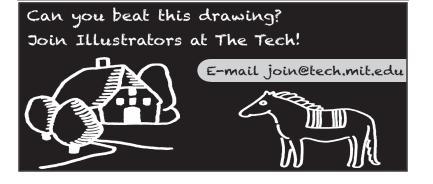
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CORRECTIONS

An article in last week's issue on the teach-in and rally surrounding the College of Computing launch misstated that MIT Students Against War was the sole organizer of the teach-in. In fact, Prison Education Initiative, Queer West, MIT Prison Divestment Campaign, the Black Student Union, Palestine @ MIT, and Radius were also involved.

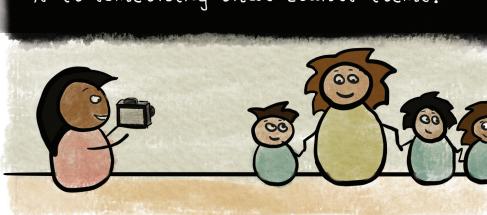


What is a number?

by Anshula Gandhi

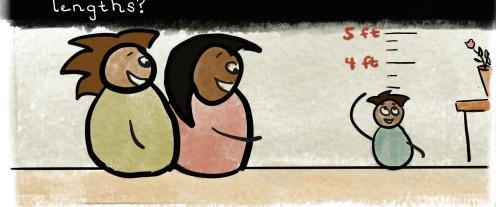
If someone math-splained what a number was to me, I'd be pretty annoyed. So I'll spare you. Just kidding. So what is a number?





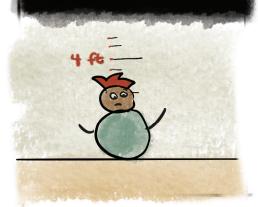


Is it something that measures lengths?

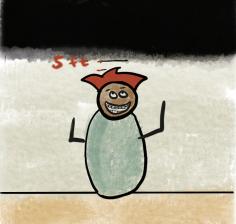




Let's take a step back. What do we do to numbers?



We add and multiply them.



So let's say numbers are the things we can add and multiply...

... and certain properties of addition and multiplication hold.

Addition should be commutative. atb=bta

Addition should be associative. (a+b)+c = a+(b+c) Multiplication should be commutative.

ab=ba

Multiplication should be associative.

(ab)c = a(bc)

Addition and multiplication should work together via the distributive property.

a(b+c)=ab+ac

Spring

Solution, page 2

		6	1	9			2
7		4	6				
1		5	8		7		
			5	4		9	
		9			4		
	1		7	8			
		1		7	9		4
				1	3		8
3			9	6	1		

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Showers

Solution, page 2

30×		24×	72×		1-
	60×			2-	
			1		2
4		72×			1
72×			20×		6
	8+				3

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1-6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

15

18

23

38

60

Think About It by Sandy Fein

Solution, page 2

ACROSS

- 1 Puts in jeopardy
- 6 Complete collections
- 10 Quick punches 14 Get 100 on a test
- 15 Quartet minus one
- 16 A Great Lake
- 17 Spiny desert plants
- 18 Greasy
- 19 "What __ you thinking?"
- 20 Occurs to a person, as a thought
- 23 Free (of)
- 24 "You've got mail" co.
- 25 See 29 Across
- 29 With 25 Across, large game fish
- 31 Shade tree
- 34 Whale's habitat
- 35 Actor Baldwin
- 36 Jai __ (indoor sport)
- 37 Decides on something else
- 40 Group of buffalo
- 41 Bottom numbers on a graph

- 42 Gives as an example
- 43 Commercials, for example
- 44 Clumsy ones
- 45 Author Hemingway
- 46 Drain of energy
- 47 Long-running CBS police
- series 48 Tries hard to think of something
- 56 Pepsi or Coke
- 57 Clothes-pressing appliance
- 58 Entertainer Midler
- 59 Prayer ender
- 60 Home for a robin
- 61 Ewes' little ones
- 62 Not as much
- 63 Exits the premises 64 Somebody __ (not mine)

DOWN

- 1 Marathon or sprint
- 2 "__ hardly wait!"
- 3 Religious offshoot
- 4 Flying toy with a tail 5 Mixing with a spoon
- 6 Got up from a chair

- 7 Ireland nickname
- 8 Wall's ceramic square
- 9 Sushi bar condiment
- 12 Eagle or oriole
- 21 Bad deed
- 22 Ground-chopping tool 25 Coffee/chocolate mixture
- 27 Raises, as children
- 28 Touch down at an airport
- 29 Gusts of wind

- 31 Privileged group
- 32 Highway paths
- 35 __ yet (so far)
- 36 "I __ no mood to argue"
- 38 Slipping by, as time

- 47 Dollar fractions

- 10 Any precious stone
- 11 Vicinity
- 13 Catch a glimpse of
- 26 Was sore from exertion

- 30 Monocle part

- 33 Central part

- 39 Write sloppily
- 44 Acorn producer 45 Double-curve letter
- 46 Reads, as a bar code

14

17

20

37

40

43

59

25 | 26 | 27 | 28

- 48 Italy's capital 49 Pub drinks
- 50 Black-and-white cookie
- 51 Aroma-detecting organ
- 52 True-to-life
- 31 32 33 39 42 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 58 53 S&Ls' cash dispensers 54 "What'll __?" (bartender's

question)

55 Loch monster

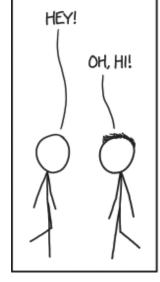
56 Baseball great Ripken

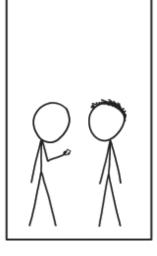
16

19

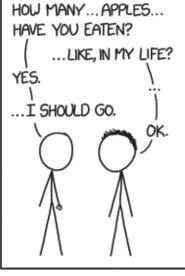
[1976] Friendly Questions











apples together.

Thursday, March 14, 2019 THE TECH 7

Flowers

Solution, page 2

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	432×	<u> </u>		48×	 	- 3÷		8+
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	 	- 192×	-	15×	210×			9
12×		-	┪		26+			
	!	1				!	!	

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–9. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.











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8 The Tech
Thursday, March 14, 2019

CONCERT REVIEW

Six decades, twelve trumpets, and infinite beauty

MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble, MIT Alumni Jazz Band, and trumpeter Sean Jones express the legacy of jazz with incredible technique and musicality

By Lani Lee

STAFF WRITER

The 12th Annual Herb Pomeroy Memorial Concert honored the legacy of the influential jazz performer, educator, and founder of the MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble (FJE) through exhilarating and heart-wrenching personal compositions. Most of the compositions were "personal" in the sense that they were either written by a player or conductor, or were important to people's lives. The performance showcased the talents of many musicians, presented a night full of beautiful music, and united the audience in emotional, spiritual ways.

The program opened with "Yesterdays," a jazz standard about nostalgia originally written in 1933. Particularly impressive in this piece were the watery, smooth introduction from the piano and the incredible volume control and articulations of all the players. This set the scene for the world premiere of "Wizard." Written by FJE trumpeter Alan Osmundson '19, "Wizard" featured a solo trumpet solo performed by special

guest artist Sean Jones. This piece was indeed befitting of its name, from the beginning mysterious mood to the mind-blowingly high notes and smooth arpeggios.

The soloist, Sean Jones, enthusiastically welcomed by the audience, led a major portion of the concert and shared the backstory to the music with the audience. A smaller group from the FJE performed with him, and it was clear that Sean Jones was not only a performer, but also a leader and educator in jazz.

The most memorable piece of the concert was "BJ's Tune," composed by Sean Jones himself. Before playing this, Jones explained to the audience his inspiration to write this piece, "There's a lot that unites us. If you can't think of something I'll give you one thing," he said. "Fried chicken," he continued and began the piece. The tune was beautiful and uplifting, and became more powerful over time. Right after the climax, the trumpet played a slow solo section that took everyone's breaths away. It was like a movie scene, where the unaccompanied trumpeter was alone,

on stage, with the lights focused on him. It was a hymn, and toward the end, the rest of the ensemble joined him in warm harmony. I could see audience members nearby shedding a tear at the sheer beauty of the piece. This received a well-deserved standing ovation, even though it was in the middle of the concert.

This concert brought out the theme of unity in the world of jazz, and toward the end, it showed us the unity of generations and backgrounds. The MIT Alumni Jazz Band represented six decades of musicians and even had members who were father and son. "In Search of the Master," a flugelhorn feature written by trombonist Richard "The Chief" Orr '62, was dedicated to Herb Pomeroy, the "Master" who led jazz at MIT for so long.

The finale brought all the musicians together in a standard B-flat blues. Composed and conducted by Mark Harvey, "3Bs & A Bop" had many different instruments playing solos, cued in by a pointed finger. It was a casual setting and a way to hear all of the amazing musicians in the entire concert.

MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble

MIT Alumni Jazz Band

Sean Jones

Kresge Auditorium

March 9

The Festival Jazz Ensemble, the MIT Alumni Jazz Band, and trumpeter Sean Jones performed together to honor jazz legend Herb Pomeroy while showing off all of the recent compositions, impressive techniques, and talented musicians. The program was well-designed and balanced to deliver different emotions through jazz, from excitement to nostalgia. The Ensemble hosted an unforgettable night of jazz for all of the audience and continued a strong tradition of jazz here at MIT.

MOVIE REVIEW

Captain Marvel, the MCU's newest powerhouse

Marvel's newest and first female-led action flick delivers a compelling story but limited character development

★★★☆☆

Captain Marvel

Directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck

Screenplay by Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck, and Geneva Robertson-Dworet

Starring Brie Larson, Samuel L. Jackson, Ben Mendelsohn, Jude Law

Rated PG-13, Now Playing

By Rogers Epstein and Lior Hirschfeld

In *Captain Marvel*, Vers (Brie Larson), a soldier on an elite task force from the Kree alien society, must confront her past while defending the Earth from an extraterrestrial invasion of shapeshifting Skrulls. The film takes place in the 90s, and reminds viewers of this with references to Blockbuster, dial-up internet, and period music. As avid fans of the Marvel franchise, we were excited to see how this prequel would fit into the larger universe. Would it be consistent? Would it feel unique? The trailers did little to inspire confidence. Despite the inclusion of a young Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) and Phil Coulson

(Clark Gregg), both fan favorites, the film's hype hinted at a generic storyline where our heroine "remembers who she is." This, coupled with a preview of relatively characterless, unoriginal villains (ugly aliens are bad) and powers (lasers galore), made us feel like the film would be, at best, unmemorable.

Luckily, the movie defied our expectations in several ways.

Despite our initial fears, Captain Marvel's flashbacks are handled well and fit seamlessly into the main story. The movie avoids the tiresome trope where the main character sees something from their past life that triggers an important flashback. *Captain Marvel* also never wastes time on a predictable "shapeshifter revealed plotline," and it incorporates the Skrulls in a less cookie-cutter fashion.

The film intelligently uses Nick Fury as a main supporting character, and sets a lot of groundwork for the (until now) very mysterious assembler of the Avengers. His buddycop dynamic with Captain Marvel keeps the movie grounded and relatable, given that the main conflict is between two different alien species.

This interstellar war is mirrored as Captain Marvel's struggles between her dual identities: a cold, controlled Kree soldier and a caring, instinctual human pilot. This leads to a major theme of the film: emotions — how should we deal with them? Throughout the film, she's torn between the advice of two mentors — one who claims that "there's nothing more dangerous to a soldier than emotion," and another who argues that emotion is "what makes [us] human." While the payoff of this struggle was dampened by the audience not getting a strong sense of her

feeling side, her independent thinking leads her to emerge triumphantly as the first female lead in the MCU.

However, the film falls short when it comes to action. While Captain Marvel's story is compelling, her fight scenes are decidedly less so. It's fun to watch as she develops her personal fighting style, but at a certain point, it's not super interesting to watch a battle between a bad guy with no powers and someone who can fly and shoot light beams from her arms. Despite the symbolic significance of such a moment, we felt moments like this grew stale over the course of two hours. The audience never feels that

Captain Marvel can get hurt or lose a fight. Vulnerability is an important part of any good superhero film; otherwise, it's hard to be invested in the conflict.

As a result of Captain Marvel's apparent invulnerability, the climax feels a little empty. While the first two acts do a great job of progressing the story and the characters' journeys, the threads they set up are not properly tied off. Clear opportunities for the movie to deal with interesting issues are flipped into the bad end of a joke. We left this movie enjoying the ride but felt that with a tighter conclusion, it could have been amazing.



Brie Larson stars as Captain Marvel in the latest Marvel Studios film, *Captain Marvel*.

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